

# Challenges Faced by Libyan English Instructors in Using E-Communication Tools

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**Abstract**—The popularity of online teaching has increased significantly due to the outbreak of Covid-19 which prompted a sudden shift of educational activities to the online environment. In Libya, the government imposed online teaching and television learning programs as “emergency online education”. However, while online education offers numerous benefits as a flexible mode of knowledge delivery, both instructors and students tend to face various obstacles in the teaching and learning process. This study aimed to ascertain the challenges of using e-communication tools and their correlation with teaching experience among EFL instructors in Libyan universities. A total of 100 EFL instructors were examined using a cross-sectional survey method. The data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using the mean, frequency, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. The findings showed that major challenges faced by Libyan EFL instructors in using e-communication tools result from inadequate technical skills and lack of institutional support, followed by lack of student engagement and poor internet connection. The study also revealed a weak correlation between challenges of using e-communication tools and teaching experience among the instructors. This study was envisaged to provide information that can be useful to the Libyan government and higher learning institutions in the process of e-teaching implementation in the EFL context.

**Index Terms**—cross-sectional survey, EFL instructors, e-communication tools, technology acceptance

## I. INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus outbreak in 2019 prompted a sudden shift of educational activities to the online environment to ensure a smooth continuity of the teaching and learning process (Langford & Damsa, 2020). This phenomenon has increased the popularity of online teaching at all levels of education across the globe. Accordingly, the Libyan Ministry of Education, in particular, took relevant measures by imposing online teaching and television learning programs (Atia & Ganoun, 2020), which are adopted as “emergency online education” (Marinoni et al., 2020). As a result, most Libyan higher education institutions embraced online learning (Abrik & Jawber, 2021). However, online educational facilities and courses could be difficult to design or adapt within a short time (Langford & Damsa, 2020).

Additionally, while online education offers numerous benefits as a flexible mode of knowledge delivery, both instructors and students tend to face various challenges that can be significant obstacles to the implementation of e-education. The unexpected change brought by the Covid-19 pandemic has posed several challenges to instructors as many of them experienced online teaching for the first time and may find it difficult to adjust to the new method (Carolan et al., 2020). This situation provides researchers with chances to investigate the challenges and benefits of online education (e.g. Hassan et al., 2021; Li, 2022; Paudel, 2021; Sengupta, 2022). In particular, research indicates the need to further “investigate the challenges of online teaching faced by English instructors” (Nugroho et al., 2021, p. 277).

In Libya, English a Foreign Language (EFL) is gaining popularity and increasingly used for business and educational purposes, especially by young generation. Nevertheless, despite the significance of EFL education, previous studies have not focused on the challenges of online teaching among Libyan English instructors. Also, in the Libyan context, the relationship between online instruction and teaching experience was not established but has been hinted in previous research (Bosaninh & Al-bazar, 2021). In addition, none of the previous studies focused on e-teaching challenges among Libyan EFL instructors. As such, there is a need for systematic investigations into the challenges faced by Libyan EFL instructors to inform educators about changes that are necessary to improve the quality of EFL education. Therefore, the current study sought to investigate the challenges faced by Libyan EFL instructors and their correlation with teaching experience. The study aimed to achieve the following objectives.

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1. To ascertain the major challenges faced by Libyan university EFL instructors in using e-communication tools?
2. To determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between challenges of using e-communication tools and teaching experience among Libyan university EFL instructors?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Online Instruction and E-Communication Tools*

Online instruction refers to teaching activity that is accompanied typically online (Baran et al., 2011). Several terms are used to refer to online instruction, such as online teaching, e-instruction, and online tutoring. The three popular components of online instruction entail blended, synchronous, and asynchronous teaching (Juhary, 2020; Şener et al., 2020). Blended instruction is a combination of face-to-face and online instructional methods using suitable e-communication tools (Oh & Park, 2009; Saliba et al., 2013). Synchronous teaching is described as an instructional method that occurs online without delay in the delivery of information, such as “audio and video transmitted “live” between instructors and students via TV, Internet, or radio” (Vasquez & Straub, 2012, p. 33). On the other hand, asynchronous communication is described as a text-based computer-mediated interaction that allows people to connect with one another “without the constraint of time and place” (Hew et al., 2010, p. 572) using platforms such as emails, websites, discussion boards, and voice mails.

Whereas, the Covid-19 outbreak possibly resulted in “emergency remote teaching” which is viewed as “a temporary and unplanned teaching solution due to a sudden change of the teaching environment” (Juhary, 2020, p. 188). This instructional approach is commonly conducted using Learning Management System (LMS) tools (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle), social networking tools (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Skype), or synchronized tools such as Google Apps, Dropbox, and Zoho Apps (Alias & Zainuddin, 2005; Al-Samarraie & Saeed, 2018). E-communication tools are popularly and flexibly utilized by English teachers. This is because both teachers and students can freely access useful language materials and interact directly through e-communication tools (Abdullahi et al., 2020; Abdullah et al., 2022).

### B. *Challenges of Online Teaching*

The educational system has witnessed tremendous changes due to the proliferation of new media and the recent Covid-19 outbreak. Specifically, the unanticipated “shift of English language teaching from face-to-face classroom interaction to online learning activities using digital platforms has resulted in a number of challenges for English teachers and students” (Nugroho et al., 2021, p. 277). As such, previous studies investigated challenges of online instruction faced by English teachers in different contexts. For instance, a study of online teaching conducted by Langford and Damsa (2020) reported that the most significant obstacles faced by instructors in Norway include inadequate facilities, limited technical skills, as well as a low level of students’ engagement. According to the study, instructors with adequate technical skills in using e-communication tools tend to perform their teaching tasks effectively.

Additionally, Şener et al. (2020) used a cross-sectional survey method to investigate online teaching experiences among 39 English instructors at a Turkish private university. According to the findings, English instructors experience various challenges, including shortage of technical facilities for e-classes, increased workload, and inadequate funding from the university. The study also pointed to some critical aspects, such as inability to create virtual interaction prospects, low level of motivation and lack of autonomy among students, and unreliable internet connectivity. In addition, Cutri and Mena (2020) revealed that many traditional faculty members “are new to online teaching and lack formal education in how to successfully teach online” (p. 361). According to Hakim (2020), challenges faced by EFL instructors have increased due to the integration of technology into EFL education. However, this significant change can eventually “lead to improved teaching and learning with a positive impact on language learners’ proficiency level” (p. 33). Therefore, some previous studies have investigated such aspects of challenges and benefits as well as the readiness of online education (Abdullah et al., 2022; Alwaheebi & Al-Qahtani, 2022; Cutri & Mena, 2020; Hassan et al., 2021; Li, 2022; Sengupta, 2022).

Moreover, Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) used interviews to investigate online teaching activities and challenges faced by EFL instructors in Indonesian institutions. According to the study, EFL instructors employed several e-platforms, for example, Learning Management System (LMS), video conference, and Google Classroom. However, they encounter challenges such as difficulty in creating online teaching materials, inadequate online facilities, limited interaction with students, and limited online teaching experience. In the same context, Nugroho et al. (2021) investigated university EFL instructors’ challenges of online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The findings revealed that major challenges facing EFL instructors are associated with e-learning platforms, students’ enthusiasm and engagement, as well as time for the preparation of online learning materials.

Similarly, Gustine (2021) employed focus group interviews to explore the anticipations and online teaching challenges encountered by pre-service English instructors during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. According to the findings, challenges faced by pre-service English instructors include lack of technical skills and pedagogical knowledge to conduct online tests and evaluate students’ performance. Also, a study conducted by Mouchantaf (2020) demonstrated that the main challenges faced by English language instructors in Lebanon are related to internet access, online pedagogical training, institutional support, and the use of technology among students. Another study conducted

by Zou et al. (2021) employed a survey method to examine the readiness for online instruction among 149 English instructors in China. The study demonstrated that the major concern among English instructors relates to students' low level of engagement, followed by troubles in tracing the students' learning outcomes. Also, a large number of instructors faced technical challenges, for example, poor internet connection, difficulty in software management, and poor configuration of teaching devices.

Furthermore, Hakim (2020) used questionnaires and interviews to investigate the influence of technology integration in virtual EFL classrooms and the challenges faced by EFL instructors at a university in Saudi Arabia during Covid-19. The findings showed that despite having access to several virtual teaching platforms, Saudi EFL instructors encounter many challenges, such as weak network connection, lack of suitable assessment tools, and learners' low level of motivation. Likewise, Hamad et al. (2021) used a survey method to determine the challenges of online teaching among EFL instructors at a university in Saudi Arabia during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that Saudi EFL instructors face challenges associated with the evaluation of students' learning outcomes and online interaction with students. Also, Lukas and Yunus (2021) used an interview technique to explore e-learning challenges faced by English instructors during Covid-19 in Malaysia. According to the study, English instructors face e-learning challenges such as poor internet connectivity, students' low level of participation and readiness to adopt e-learning.

Some studies were conducted to determine whether instructors' teaching experience is associated with instructional challenges (Abrik & Jawber, 2021; Bosaninh & Al-bazar, 2021; Hashemi, 2021; Langford & Damsa, 2020). For instance, Hashemi (2021) investigated the opportunities, teaching experience, and challenges of e-teaching among Afghanistan university lecturers. According to the study, there is no a statistically significant correlation between teaching experience challenges faced by instructors. However, very few studies generally focused on Libyan instructors (Abrik & Jawber, 2021; Bosaninh & Al-bazar, 2021). These studies, nevertheless, have not paid particular attention to the use of e-communication tools among EFL instructors. A case study of a Libyan university conducted by Abrik and Jawber (2021) showed that instructors with less teaching experience are likely to face difficulties during online teaching. Bosaninh and Al-bazar (2021) reported that lecturers with PhD degrees and high levels of teaching experience (7 years and above) tend to face more challenges during the pandemic compared with those who have masters' degrees with less than 6 years. Therefore, this study focuses on challenges faced by Libyan English instructors and their correlation with teaching experience.

### *C. Theoretical Facet*

This study utilizes the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989) in a study comprising 152 technology users. According to the study, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of technology considerably define users' acceptance of technology. In addition, both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were reported to relate with "self-reported current usage and self-predicted future usage" (p. 319). Nevertheless, perceived usefulness had a substantially greater relationship with user behavior when compared with ease of use. Recently, TAM has been successfully employed in prior studies to investigate user acceptance of technology in different contexts (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2022; Girish et al., 2022; Sun, 2022). For example, Sun (2022) revealed that perceived usefulness turned to be a significant predictor of instructors' actual usage of online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on TAM's presumptions, the current investigation sought to investigate the challenges of online instruction faced by Libyan EFL teachers and their correlation with teaching experience. Understanding the challenges of online instruction among EFL instructors is paramount as the accomplishment of online teaching depends on the level of technology integration.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Design*

The current research used a cross-sectional survey method to investigate online teaching challenges faced by EFL instructors in Libyan universities. The survey method is beneficial due to its ability to help researchers examine large samples of population. This approach, according to Allen et al. (2008), occurs in representative settings that allow researchers to draw general inferences. In addition, Wimmer and Dominick (2009) mentioned that surveys allow researchers to competently classify variables and quantity people's usage of communication media.

### *B. Data Collection*

The data were gathered from a random sample of 100 Libyan English language instructors from six universities: Dernah University, Benghazi University, Sabha University, Zawia University, Al-Margab University, and Sabratha University. A self-administered questionnaire instrument, adopted from previous research (Hashemi, 2021), was used to collect data. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section contains the respondents' demographic information, including gender, academic qualification, and years of teaching experience. Whereas, the second section entails 15 items concerning the respondents' challenges of using e-communication tools in teaching the English language. The items were designed using the five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

### C. Validity, Reliability, and Data Analysis

To guarantee validity, the items were evaluated by experts in communication technology and language education. The experts' comments were carefully considered, and necessary changes were made. Subsequently, the reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's (1951) Alpha test. The result revealed a reliability level of .844 for the questionnaire items. According to Moore and Benbasat (1991), Cronbach's reliability levels are acceptable at 0.7 and above. The analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean, frequency, and standard deviation were performed to analyze the challenges of using e-communication tools among the instructors and their teaching experience. Whereas, Pearson's correlation was employed to determine the correlation between the two variables. The data were coded and computed via the SPSS software Version 23.0 at an alpha of  $\leq 0.05$ .

## IV. FINDINGS

All copies of questionnaires were completed, returned, and found valid for analysis, representing a 100% response rate. The demographic data shows that most of the instructors (58.0%) are females, whereas 42% are males. Also, more than half (52.0%) of the instructors hold Master's degree, 41.0% hold PhDs, whereas very few of them (7.0%) are professors. The respondents' years of teaching experience are represented in Table 1 as follows.

TABLE 1  
INSTRUCTORS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	N	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1 year	100	8	8.00	8.00
1-5 years	100	22	22.00	30.00
5-10 years	100	20	20.00	50.00
10-15 years	100	18	18.00	68.00
15-20 years	100	24	24.00	92.00
20 and above	100	8	8.00	100
Total		100	100	100

As shown in Table 1, most instructors (24.0%) have 15-20 years of teaching experience, while 22.0% of them have 1-5 years of experience. Also, 20 of the instructors have 5-10 years of experience, while 18.0% have 10-15 years. Eight of the instructors, representing 8.0%, have 0-1 and 20-above years of teaching experience respectively. These outcomes indicate that a large majority (70.0%) of the respondents have 5-above years of teaching experience. Additionally, about half (50.0%) of the respondents have 10-above years of experience. Conversely, almost one-third (30.0%) of them have less than five years of experience.

### A. Challenges Faced by EFL Instructors in Using E-Communication Tools

The first objective of this study aims to investigate the challenges faced by English instructors in selected Libyan universities. The outcome related to this objective is depicted in Table 2. The "Agree and Strongly Agree" option is represented as A+SA. Also, the "Disagree and Strongly Disagree" option is denoted as D+SD. Whereas, the "Neutral" option is represented as N. Since the five-points Likert scale was used, 5.00 represents the highest mean value.

TABLE 2  
CHALLENGES FACED BY EFL INSTRUCTORS

SN	Items	Mean	SD	Total (F/%)		
				A+SA	D+SD	N
1	I find it difficult to use e-tools in teaching English due to a lack of technical skills	4.8333	.38925	61.00	34.30	4.70
2	A lack of institutional support affects my use of e-tools in teaching of English	4.8333	.38925	61.01	29.99	9.00
3	A lack of e-teaching training affects my use of e-tools in teaching of English	4.0000	.60302	52.10	40.30	7.60
4	A lack of constant power supply disrupts my use of e-tools in teaching of English	4.5000	.52223	46.40	26.20	27.40
5	A lack of access to ICT facilities at home disrupts my use of e-tools in teaching of English	3.1667	.93744	39.70	36.50	23.80
6	A lack of face-to-face interaction with students makes my e-teaching challenging	4.0000	.85280	52.10	39.00	8.90
7	I experience difficulty in receiving meaningful feedback while teaching English using e-tools	2.8333	1.26730	38.40	15.50	46.10
8	I face difficulty in time management while teaching English using e-tools	4.1667	.38925	39.60	14.40	46.00
9	I have concerns about academic honesty in using e-tools to teach English	3.3333	1.15470	48.60	5.10	46.30
10	I have difficulty preparing for English instruction using e-tools	4.1667	.38925	39.80	7.60	52.60
11	I find it difficult to perform my English teaching tasks using e-tools	3.5000	1.00000	40.50	38.83	20.67
12	I find it difficult to use e-tools in teaching English due to a lack of experience	4.0000	1.20605	52.10	42.20	5.70
13	Poor internet connection disrupts my teaching of English using of e-tools	4.6667	.49237	47.50	33.42	19.08
14	The teaching of English using e-tools is challenging due to students' lack of engagement	3.6667	1.15470	47.10	41.40	11.50
15	The use of e-tools in teaching English has caused a reduction in my monthly income	4.3333	.77850	48.54	41.50	9.96
	Total	3.9999	1.00196	47.63	29.75	22.52

Note: "Level indicator: low=0.1-2.99, moderate=3.0-3.49, high=3.5-5"

As depicted in Table 2, inadequate technical skills (Mean=4.83; SD=0.389) and lack of institutional support (Mean=4.83; SD=0.389) represent the major challenges faced by English instructors in using e-communication tools in Libyan universities. Also, poor internet connection and lack of student engagement represent the second most significant challenges with a mean value of 4.67 respectively. Whereas, a lack of constant power supply represents the third most significant challenge faced by the instructors (Mean=4.50; SD=0.522), followed by a reduction in monthly income (Mean=4.33; 0.779), poor time management (Mean=4.17; SD=0.389), and difficulty in preparation (Mean=4.17; SD=0.389). Additionally, lack of e-teaching training, inadequate teaching experience, and lack of face-to-face interaction with students were significant challenges with a mean value of 4.00 respectively. Other challenges faced by Libyan English instructors in using e-communication tools were difficulty in performing teaching tasks (Mean=3.50; SD=1.000), concerns about academic honesty (Mean=3.33; SD=1.155), and lack of access to ICT facilities at home (Mean=3.17; SD=.937). Conversely, difficulty in receiving meaningful feedback represents the least challenge faced by the instructors (Mean=2.83; SD=1.267). Overall, English instructors in the selected Libyan universities face challenges in using e-communication tools to a high extent (Mean=3.99; SD=1.002).

**B. Correlation Between Teaching Experience and Challenges in Using E-Communication Tools**

The second objective of this research aims to determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between teaching experience and challenges in using e-communication tools among Libyan English language instructors. As stated previously in the methodology part, the correlation between challenges in using e-tools and teaching experience among English language instructors is examined using Pearson's correlation test. The outcome is represented in Table 3 as follows.

TABLE 3  
CORRELATION BETWEEN CHALLENGES AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Variables	Challenges	Teaching experience
Challenges	Pearson Correlation	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.352
	N	100
Teaching experience	Pearson Correlation	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.352
	N	100

Note: "Inferences set at an alpha of  $\leq 0.05$ "

Table 3 reveals a p-value of 0.352, which is somewhat above 0.05. This result signifies that the correlation between challenges of using e-communication tools and teaching experience among the instructors is weak ( $p=0.352 > 0.05$ ). Therefore, can be inferred that instructors' teaching experience slightly predict their challenges of using e-communication tools in teaching the English language. This outcome indicates that Libyan English instructors with teaching experience may face challenges in using e-tools.

## V. DISCUSSION

The current research revealed several important findings. First, major challenges faced by Libyan EFL instructors in using e-communication tools result from inadequate technical skills and lack of institutional support, followed by lack of student engagement and poor internet connection. These findings are consistent with most previous studies on e-teaching challenges in different countries (Hakim, 2020; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Şener et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2021). For example, Langford and Damsa (2020) found that limited technical skills and low level of students' engagement are major obstacles faced by English instructors in Norway. Instructors' technical skills and students' engagement are critical in determining the success of e-teaching. These findings are consistency with the presumption of TAM that when users consider technology to be complex, they are likely to form a low level of engagement with the technology (Davis, 1989). Based on this supposition, Libyan EFL instructors' difficulty in using e-communication tools, including poor internet connectivity, may affect their engagement in e-teaching, which can affect their performance. Likewise, the low level of engagement among students could be due to a lack of motivation or inadequate technical skills.

Moreover, the lack of institutional support concurs with the findings of some previous studies (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Mouchantaf, 2020; Şener et al., 2020). The lack of institutional support is a critical aspect of e-teaching as moving from conventional (face-to-face) to online teaching practicum requires extra instructional facilities and financial support from the institution to create a team of skillful instructors with adequate technical skills and expertise. Instructors tend to succeed in e-teaching based on institutional support and their attitudes toward the usage of technology, which could help them to from positive thoughts about teaching purpose and conduct teaching tasks effectively. Therefore, a more strategic approach to e-teaching is required by the Libyan government and higher learning institutions by providing support to instructors.

In addition, the current research found that the correlation between challenges of using e-communication tools and teaching experience among Libyan EFL instructors is weak, which suggests that instructors' teaching experience may not predict their challenges of using e-communication tools in teaching the English language. This outcome seems to support the findings of Bosaninh and Al-bazar (2021) which revealed that Libyan instructors with high levels of teaching experience tend to face more instructional challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic compared with those who have a few years of experience. This is, perhaps, because young instructors, who are conversant with new technology, tend to effectively employ the alternative teaching approach (online strategy) during the crisis. This outcome, however, contradicts the findings of Abrik and Jawber (2021) that instructors with less teaching experience are likely to face difficulties during online teaching, most likely because the research focused on a case study of an institution.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the challenges of using e-communication tools and their correlation with teaching experience among EFL instructors in selected Libyan universities. According to the findings, major challenges faced by Libyan EFL instructors in using e-communication tools result from inadequate technical skills and lack of institutional support, followed by lack of student engagement and poor internet connection. Accordingly, TAM considers technical competency as a significant predictor of use engagement with technology. Additionally, this study found a weak correlation between challenges of using e-communication tools and teaching experience among the instructors. For the successful integration of e-teaching into EFL education, the Libyan government and higher learning institutions have to consider developing technical competency among instructors and providing them with adequate support.

The findings of this study were envisaged to provide useful information to the Libyan government, higher institutions, instructors, policymakers, and relevant authorities in the process of e-teaching implementation, especially in the EFL context. Moreover, the present study could increase our understanding of challenges faced by EFL instructors in using e-communication tools and their association with teaching experience. This is because, in the Libyan context, research into e-teaching problems tends to focus merely on instructors with no particular attention to the EFL context. However,

the present study is limited to a cross-section survey with a small sample of respondents. Therefore, further research may consider a larger sample you yield more generalizable conclusions. Likewise, a longitudinal method can be employed to determine the phenomenon changes with time. Also, this research can be replication from the students' perspective.

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