

Innovations

The Acquisition of the English Language through E-Learning Innovations for Elementary Students in Jordan during COVID-19 Pandemic

Samah Fayez Al-Qammaz^a & Raed Mahmoud Al-Atiyat^b

^aAl-Hadeeb Elementary School, Qasbat Al-Salt Directorate, Ministry of Education, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

^bMutah University, Mutah, Karak. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

*Corresponding Author: [Raed Mahmoud Al-Atiyat](#)

Abstract: *This study aims to find out the perceptions of learners and their parents about acquiring English language skills during the COVID-19 pandemic for first graders in Jordan. The study used the innovative descriptive approach by surveying 313 primary school students in all governorates of Jordan. Considering the accessibility of the internet, the technical performance of teachers and the level of difficulty in acquiring language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) during the online learning innovative process are questioned. Accordingly, the results of the study indicated that transferring face-to-face learning to online learning, especially for primary grades for English language learners, is an effective method during the epidemic when the Internet is mostly accessible by students. In addition, students positively stated that most of the lecturers know how to teach learning English online using the Ministry of Education innovative platform "DARSAK". Students also agreed that speaking section is the most difficult skill to learn in English language lessons online. The study also indicated that online learning is an important alternative means to assist in teaching in the case the epidemic spreading again. However, the use of appropriate technology must be considered to enhance and encourage students participating in the online learning environment.*

Keywords: *Online learning, student learning needs, coronavirus, skills acquisition.*

1. Introduction

The spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in entire countries of the world has affected all sectors of life. Industrial, economic and even educational

activities have changed dramatically. In fact, all routine activities of these sectors have been suspended due to COVID-19. This situation applies to Jordan, especially in the education sector, because no students were able to attend school, college, or university during the pandemic. However, in order to keep all activities running in an acceptable and good manner, the government has taken the decision to complete the most important educational activities using technology where students were asked to continue their studies from home using the online learning system.

The Online strategy (Electronic Learning) or what is sometimes called (E-Learning), is the best solution to keep students learning during this pandemic. Jena (2020) explained that online learning is an educational system using the Internet. It includes the non-faceted presence of teachers in the virtual classroom by creating a supportive and comfortable environment for students (Joshua 2020). The online learning system has been adopted by many international governments with the trend to close schools and colleges due to the spread of the new Corona virus.

In the online learning system, all educational subjects are taught including English language teaching and learning. In this regard of the English language, teachers and learners use studies and perspectives in teaching English so that they are almost in communication during the learning processes (Alam et al 2012; Hromova 2019; Alda, 2023). There are many tools and platforms that have been used while learning English online such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft office, email and WhatsApp, to replace the face-to-face meeting with students and use it as a virtual face-to-face meeting. Here, teachers provide all the educational materials that students can access in learning English online and create an interactive and relaxing atmosphere during class online.

However, based on observations during the online class, it has been reported a lot of challenges including students not attending class effectively, cannot practice the language as an educational objective and cannot use it within their daily activities as in the regular classroom. They feel more stressed when doing many tasks and cannot socialize with friends and stick to these supposed language-learning activities. In addition, most students live in different areas where Internet access is restricted or inaccessible. This was considered the predominant challenge, which made students look for alternatives or reluctance to continue learning. Moreover, when teachers practice English speaking or listening by video conferencing or using a specific app, not all students may participate because their devices such as their smartphones do not support those dedicated software and apps. As a common thought, the Internet data package is not free of cost; it is considered the main problem facing the students. Overall, Gudea (2008) stated that teaching online is not

always easy, as it requires guidance and hard work. He concluded that educational supervisors and teachers should assume additional time spent on developing materials and activities, assessing students, and other activities related to online teaching. Thus, to make teaching and learning English more feasible during online classes for students, and within what this research aims at knowing the needs and requirements of students for effective English language acquisition using online learning strategy. Yalden (2012) reported a needs' survey and analysis described students' need, want and lack in online English language teaching and learning. Since it is to assess students' needs in relation to English language learning, a need analysis is very effective to be conducted for this purpose of finding out what students need, want and lack, as explained earlier (Nation & Macalister 2010).

Conducting a research or study that adopts a survey method and needs analysis is expected to be beneficial to the teacher or teacher of English, its students, and their parents. It charts the effective method of teaching and learning English online during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the competence of students and suits their needs and desires. English language teachers may also prepare the materials they will teach and the type of technology that used while teaching English online. So that many activities are carried out when learning English face to face including the basic form of abilities that must be mastered such as listening, speaking or spelling, writing and reading.

2. Research Aim

In general, the most important thing to emphasize in learning a foreign language is to continue to practice and acquire. Therefore, the most important thing to consider is simulating face-to-face learning by creating effective online interactions that meet the objectives to be achieved. Thus, based on the issues mentioned above, this study aimed to examine the acquisition of English language skills of listening, speaking and writing and reading through e-learning by first graders (primary students) in all governorates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during the Corona pandemic (COVID-19) event.

3. Research Methodology

In this study, the descriptive approach was used to conduct a survey of students of the first primary grades (the first to sixth grades) from randomly chosen schools within all governorates of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The data were collected through an electronic questionnaire (<https://forms.gle/kvzV44koSWimM1cJ9>) that was distributed randomly. It consists of questions and has multiple-choice answers. The questionnaire was prepared by adopting an innovative electronic questionnaire tool that consist of e-learning knowledge, accessibility, effectiveness and technical

skill, and the level of difficulty in learning English online. The validity of the questionnaire was tested using expert opinions. The data and responses were collected electronically from the students, through their answers, and then analyzed the data using descriptive analysis, distributing the percentages obtained, and creating tables and figures that summarize the results.

4. Results and Discussion

During the outbreak of the Corona pandemic in mid-March 2020 in Jordan, distance learning began for all students at all levels and grades and continued for the academic year 2020/2021. The students moved from face-to-face education to online (electronic and distance) learning. This was accompanied by a complete change in the educational method since the appearance of the first cases of the Coronavirus in Jordan. The government preferred to move away from traditional face-to-face education and go to Online as a kind of precautionary measure to protect students and teachers from infection of virus. That year brought great changes in the absence of school, and teachers. Parents assumed double responsibilities in teaching and following up on homework for children with new technologies that were not present in the past, especially for public school students. The shift from face-to-face learning to online learning has led to a change in all educational processes and associated activities, and even in the way exams are delivered (Guofang Li 2020).

The online learning began including two forms of learning, the first is simultaneous education, which requires the presence of the teacher and the student at the same time through technologies and means related to the Internet and reliance on direct transmission through different software such as ZOOM and GOOGLE. This type is more practiced in private schools. The second type is asynchronous which is indirect and does not require the presence of the teacher and student at the same time. It depends on the idea of educational platforms and does not include direct interaction between the teacher and the learner. This is the form adopted by the Ministry of Education in Jordan through an innovative platform known as Darsak platform (<https://darsak.gov.jo>) for its public schools. Darsak platform is an educational platform for students from kindergarten to grade 12. It provides content from organized videos that correspond to the curriculum and its sequence for each grade separately. However, this trend faced great challenges in many areas, including the availability of the Internet to students, regular availability at time of lectures, and follow up on their commitment to learning processes, performing educational duties, entering the platform, watching lessons, and the extent of skills acquisition and learning outcomes by students. The latter is the subject of research, especially regarding the acquisition of English language skills.

The results of the questionnaire are shown in the figures below, as Figure 1 expresses the composition of the students according to the social type (gender), male and female, and the order of their classes, as well as the composition of their parents, male and female. The percentage of female students is greater than the male respondents who participated in the questionnaire, but it reflects the percentage of male and female students in Jordanian schools, according to the strategic plan for the years 2018-2022 (2018MOE). The percentage of female parents who are expected to be the students' mothers was 64.1%, which reflects the expected percentage of parents of mothers who follow their children, knowing that the percentage of participants who are not declared gender or combined gender is 9.3%, and it is expected that most of them are female. Finally, the proportion of males as parents represents a quarter of the participants. On the other hand, the percentages of students by grades were close, apart from sixth grade students with the highest percentage (24.7%), which constitutes a quarter of all students participating in the survey.

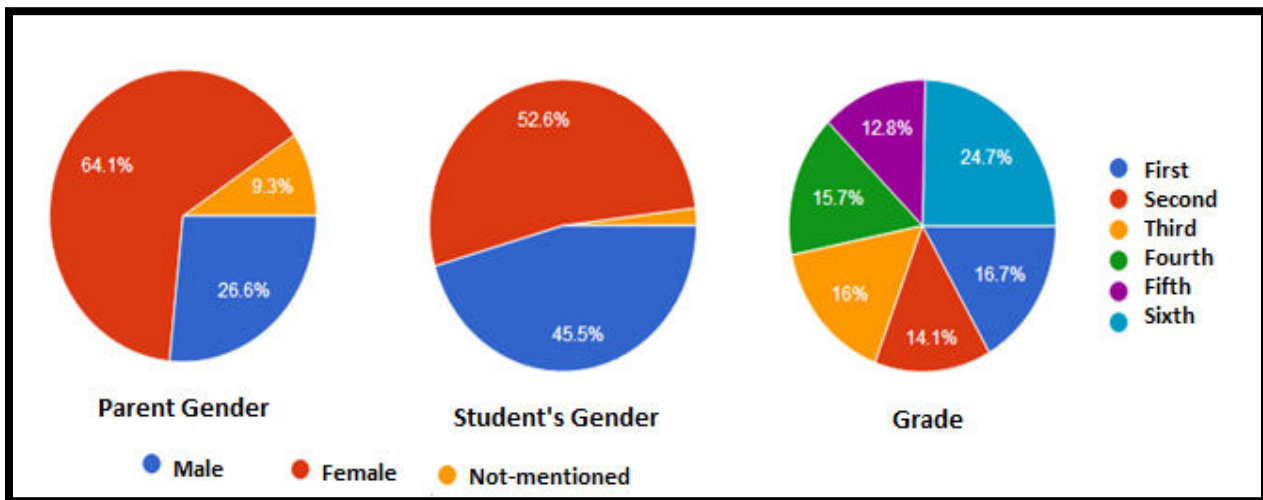


Figure 1 Gender structure of primary school students and their parents in Jordan participating in the study and their classification within the classes.

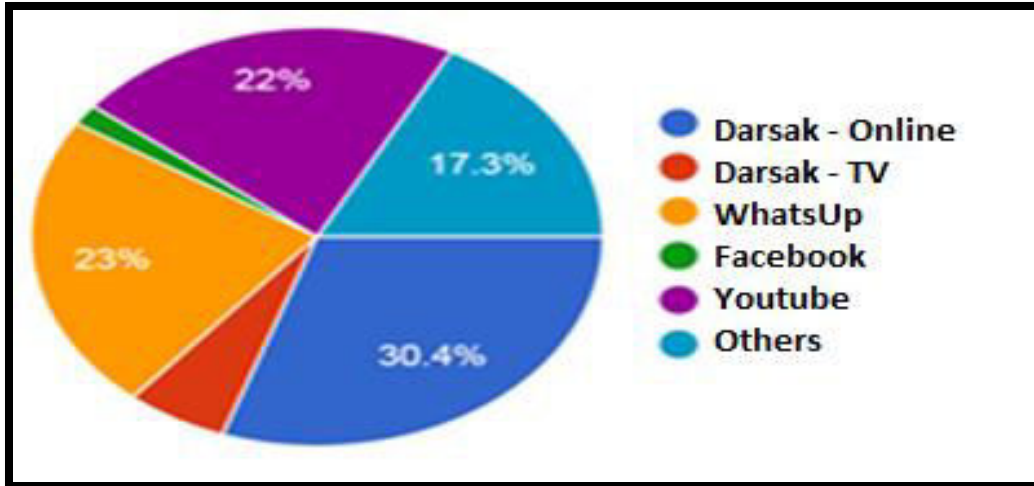


Figure 2. Platforms for teaching and acquiring English language through E-learning during the Corona pandemic.

As for the teaching platforms that students used for learning platforms and acquiring English language material through E-learning due to the Corona pandemic (COVID-19), it was mentioned with the percentages of use as in Figure 2. The use of online platforms for teaching was a trend before the events of the Covid-19 pandemic. (Mihaiu et al, 2010). In general, the platforms provide learning in any location, and they can access it using computers, tablets or smart phones. An example of the platforms that have been used globally to support the continuity of learning during this pandemic are Zoom, Google Classroom, or Google Meet. (Rifiyant 2020). The platform that was officially approved for students was DARSAK platform (via TV broadcast and can be accessed at the beginning of the situation or via the Internet and continues for this current time; June-2021. It allows teachers to create and share lessons and provide student learning support. Within this platform, first, the materials are sent in the form of a video clip by the teacher, who is appointed by the ministry and not the schoolteacher. There is a space for interaction between the teacher and students by asking questions and raising assignments. In detail, the teacher explains materials for students, as well as students can ask questions to the teacher through this platform but not directly at the same time. Moreover, there is another matter that the schoolteacher would give assignments or homework to the students and the students send their work back within it. This certainly applies to English language teachers in the practice of teaching English language skills. Many researchers have stated that the platforms used to teach English are effective online teaching in terms of content and objectives (Ghirardinin 2011; Rifiyant 2020). However, it is possible that some deficiencies occur in the teaching and language learning process online. It is worth mentioning that transition from on class learning to online learning platform has presented educational institutions with both

challenges and opportunities (Alda, 2023). The teachers can maximize opportunities to enable more engaging online classroom activities with students.

Perceptions about the effectiveness of online English language science show that most of the students (71.8%) indicate that they follow lessons on DARSAK platform (Figure 3). Most of them (85.6%) are able to interact and do assignments well. Despite the presence of DARSAK platform, a good percentage of students (69.6%) interact with their teachers (Figure 3) via other online platforms that are used by (63%), while the percentage of use of DARSAK platform was (36%) (Figure 2) during the pandemic Covid-19, which has enabled them to better absorb and understand the material provided by the school teachers.

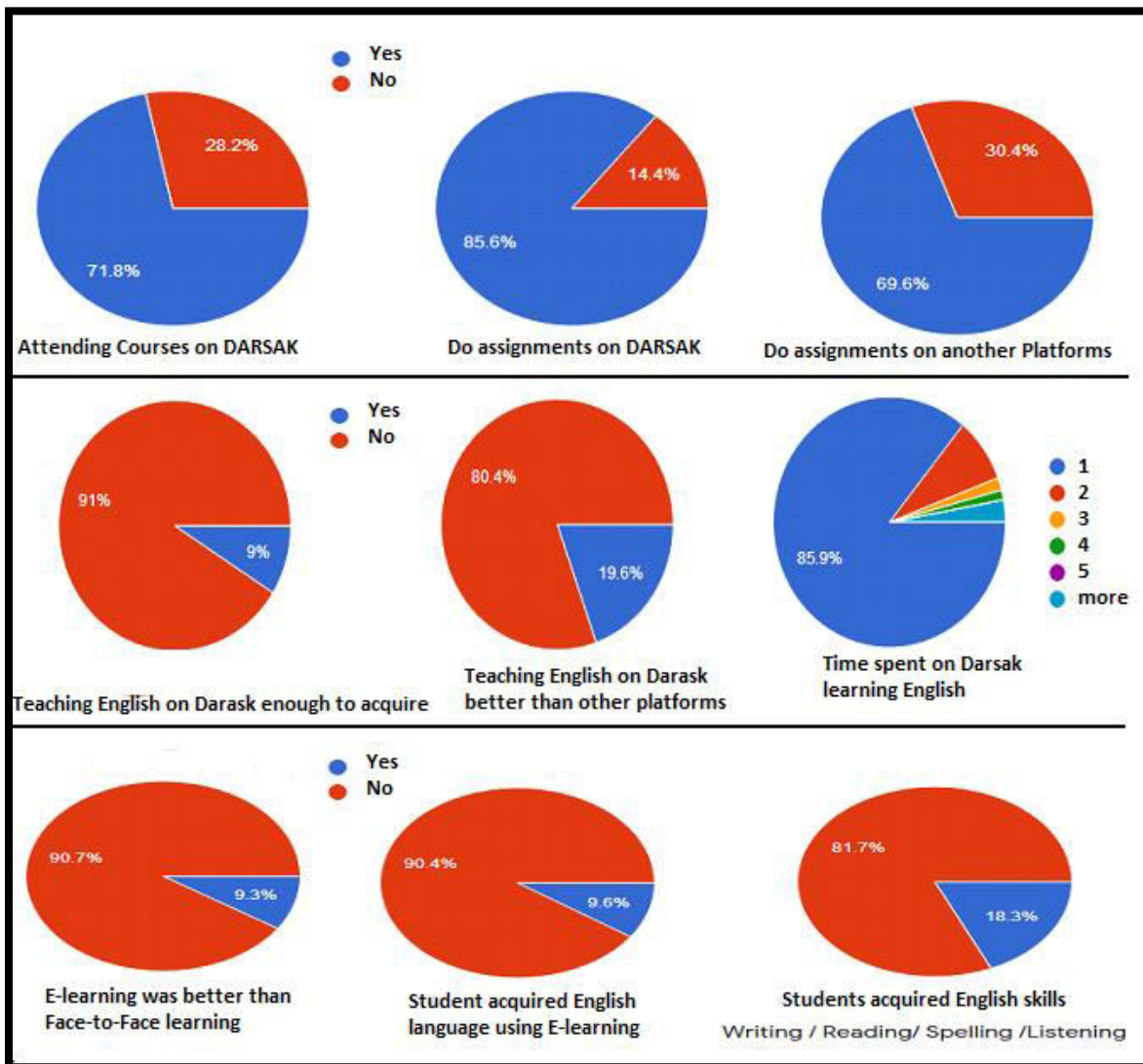


Figure 3. Factors related to the effectiveness of acquiring English language through e-learning due to the Corona pandemic (COVID-19).

On the other hand, the results of the effectiveness of learning and acquiring English online are shown in Figure 3, where perceptions of students' parents about the effectiveness of learning English online. Limited percentage of the students (9.3%) answered that it was an effective solution to learn English online. While 90.7% of them said that this method is not an effective way to learn English online. Effectiveness is an indicator of the score obtained for achievement programs and reflects the performance that someone has done (Roddy et al. 2017). Most of the students also expressed that they do not find it feasible to learn and acquire English through the Internet. Note that most of them used to take an hour or less to attend lessons and fulfill the requirements of the English language, and most of them prefer platforms other than DARSAK platform to learn English.

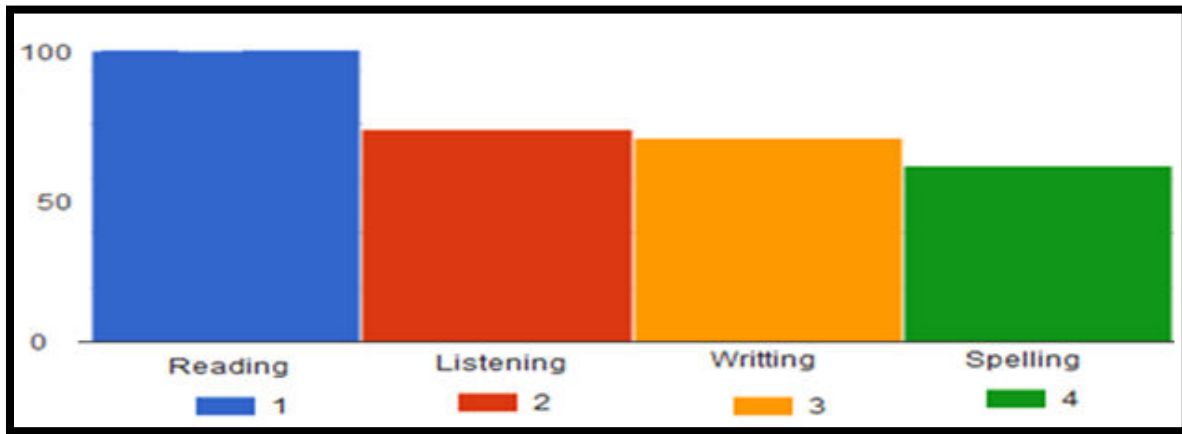


Figure 4. reflects the perceptions of the level of difficulty (Arranging the acquired skills according to speed and effectiveness of the English language subject)

Figure 4 reflects perceptions of the level of difficulty of language skills and their arrangement according to the speed of acquisition and effectiveness of the English language subject through e-learning due to the Corona pandemic. Figure 4 shows that the learners had a level of difficulty in acquiring the language skills they had to learn within the online English language course. In this questionnaire, the level of difficulty was given four levels coded in numbers, which are 1-4. It was found that speaking or spelling is the most difficult English language skill to learn online, and the second level of the difficult skill was writing and then listening. The results came in accordance with the findings of İşler& Elmas (2022). Finally, the easiest skill to learn was reading. The issue of success in learning and acquiring language skills online was linked to several factors. These factors for online language learning were students, teacher, teacher and student support, content characteristics, instructional design, technology, and language skills characteristics (Aji, 2017). Accordingly, it

requires teachers to use different teaching approaches to enable students to complete the acquisition of all skills equally.

In the end, many researchers have reported large gaps in learning basic subjects such as Arabic, English, science and mathematics that require greater effort from the teacher and learner in learning them and mastering the basic skills for them (Stern 2018; Vonderwell 2004). Thus, poor learning of basics such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, discussing or spelling, asking questions and self-assessment of the student is expected. The negative effects of distance learning are reflected on the learning outcomes and student performance. One of the downsides of E-learning is also the learner's stress because of the time he or she spends on smart phones and others to follow the study materials. On the other hand, the role of the teacher is limited to the theoretical side, and the educational role was limited. This role was assigned effectively to the teacher in the face-to-face educational environment. It is expected that this research will be a useful study for the English language teacher, as it charts the effective method of teaching and learning English online during the Covid-19 pandemic according to the competence of students and suits their needs and desires. Summing up, English language teachers may adopt the outputs of this research to prepare the materials they will teach and the type of technology they can use while teaching and learning English online.

5. Conclusion

Shifting face-to-face learning to online learning especially for English for the primary classroom is an effective way to do it during the COVID19 pandemic based on students' perceptions. Online learning platforms using DARSAK Platform include limited interaction with the teacher and other online learning platforms are effective mediums of learning anywhere conditioned on access to the Internet availability during COVID-19 and many other factors. Another consequence relates to students' perceptions of the required level of English language skills; they had to learn how to use online tools first and then complete the required learning outcomes. The students realized speaking and spelling are the most difficult skills to learn in online English lessons. Thus, these students' perceptions and outcomes should be considered as inputs into improving the English language learning process and to pay more attention and improve the quality of online English language learning. Thus, the desired results are from the full and equal acquisition of all skills. Finally, we suggested further studies to explore and improve learning and teaching especially in online English language learning for primary grades.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' contributions

Both authors conceived and designed the study, analyzed the data and wrote the paper.

References

1. Aji, P. (2017). *English listening blended learning: the implementation of blended learning in teaching listening to university students*. *Kajian Linguistik dan Sastra*, 2(1), 25.
2. Alam, Z., Waqar, A., Zaman, K., Shehzadi, B. & Mehmood, Y.. (2012). *Perception of Students towards Distance Learning: A Case Study of Pakistan*. *Journal of American Science*, 509-517.
3. Alda, R. (2023). *From Onsite to Online: Perspectives on Preservice Teachers' Instructional Engagement*. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22 (3), 128-140.
4. Ghirardini, B. (2011). *E-learning methodologies: a guide for designing and developing e-learning courses*. In Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
5. Gudea, S. (2010). *Expectation and Demand in Online Teaching, Practical Experience*. Information Science Publishing; New York.
6. Guofang Li (2020). *Principles for Developing Learner Agency in Language Learning in a New Eduscape with COVID-19*. *Language Learning*, 5, 30-40
7. Hromova, N. (2019). *Students' perceptions and motivation for learning foreign languages*. *Advanced Education*, 6(11), 76–83.
8. İşler, C. & Elmas, B. (2022). *The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching Speaking Skills*. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 12(2), 36-54
9. Jena, K., P. (2020). *Online Learning During Lockdown Period for COVID-19 in India*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 9 (5),8.
10. Joshua S. (2020) *Introduction to Online Teaching and Learning*. Retrieved on June 20, 2020 from www.wlac.edu
11. Mihaiu, D., Opreana, A. & Cristescu, M. (2010). *Efficiency, effectiveness, and performance of the public sector*. *Romanian Journal of Economic Forecasting*, 13(4), 132–147.
12. MOE (Ministry of Education) (2018). *Strategic plan for the years 2018-2022* ([www.unesco.org › new › pdf › ESP_ARABIC_Final](http://www.unesco.org/new/pdf/ESP_ARABIC_Final)), Amman, Jordan.
13. Nation, I. S., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language Curriculum Design*. New York: Routledge.

14. Rifiyanti H. (2020). *Perceptions of Online English Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic. Journal of English Language, 5(1):2541-0334.*
15. Roddy, C., Amiet, D.L., Chung, J., Holt, C., Shaw, L., McKenzie, S., Garivaldis, F., Lodge, J.M. & Mundy, M.E. (2017) *Applying Best Practice Online Learning, Teaching, and Support to Intensive Online Environments: An Integrative Review. Frontiers in Education, 2, 1–10.*
16. Stern, J. (2018). *Introduction to online teaching and learning. International Journal of Science Education, 3, 1–10.*
17. Vonderwell, S. (2004). *Online learning: student role and readiness. Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 3(3), 38–42. prx-keiser.lirn.net*