

Attitudes towards Online Learning: Insights from Iranian EFL Lecturers and Postgraduate Students across Educational Levels

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Abstract: Online learning has become a crucial aspect of contemporary education. This study has attempted to investigate the viewpoints of Iranian EFL lecturers and postgraduate students on online learning and the impact of level of education on their attitudes towards this variable. It employed a mixed-method approach, with a sample of 40 EFL lecturers from Azad Universities in Isfahan and Fars provinces, along with 100 postgraduate students (40 PhD students and 60 MA students) studying English Language Teaching at Islamic Azad Universities in Isfahan and Fars provinces. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a researcher-made online questionnaire and a structured interview protocol designed by the researcher. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Kruskal- Wallis and Mann-Whitney non-parametric tests. The viewpoints of Iranian EFL lecturers and postgraduate students were investigated through descriptive statistics of questionnaire and interview, and the impact of level of education on their attitude was shown by non-parametric tests. The findings revealed that Iranian EFL lecturers and postgraduate students hold positive viewpoints on online learning and the respondents' level of education significantly affects their attitudes towards online learning. This study has both theoretical and practical implications for education officials, EFL teachers and learners.

Keywords: COVID-19, Educational Levels, EFL Lecturers, Online Learning, Postgraduate Students

Introduction

The shift to online learning has been met with different levels of success, with learners with higher education levels showing more ability to take online classes. The level of education of a student's significantly influences their online learning results, as studies indicate that individuals with advanced qualifications often report higher engagement and satisfaction with online courses. Although there are many advantages to online learning, the effect of educational level on learning outcomes highlights the necessity for educators to provide appropriate assistance to students from different educational backgrounds. E-learning can help the educational divide for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, but this is possible only if educators recognize the obstacles and difficulties these students might encounter and can modify their teaching strategies as needed. Bates (2016, p.2) claimed that "online learning is a form of distance education in which a course or program

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is intentionally designed in advance to be delivered fully online". According to Dhawan (2020), the teaching-learning process is more flexible, more innovative and more student-centered by using online learning. Online learning has a constructivist environment that is learner--centered and collaborative (Bolt & Redmond, 2006).

Anderson (2011) characterized online learning as a mode of education where the learner is separated from the instructor, utilizing digital tools to access course materials and interact with both the instructor and fellow students. This form of education involves a system where learners are geographically separated from their educators, leveraging various resources provided through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Furthermore, the distance learning framework is implemented through an online learning methodology (Chun et al., 2016). According to Efriana (2021), e-learning is a part of distance learning, which specifically combines electronic technology and internet-based technology in learning. Online learning is a program for setting up online learning courses to reach a huge and varied student body. Online learning that takes place over the Internet is an educational process that is a form of distance learning. This process provides a learning experience for students (both children and adults) who access their education remotely or who, for various reasons, cannot attend school, college, or university (Kim, 2020).

Al Zumor et al. (2013) found the use of technology tools in the classroom environment effectively improves English proficiency and increases student confidence and collaboration in language learning. By integrating new technologies in education, the process of learning will be supported in many fields, such as English Learning Management Systems (LMSs) (Adnan et al., 2019). Information technology (IT) is one of the most fundamental transitions in our lives (Alfallaj, 2020). Technology offers language learners boundless resources (Bull and Ma, 2001). Students have positive attitudes about e-learning and consider it useful during the crisis caused by the pandemic (Allo, 2020). According to Bull and Ma (2001), unlimited resources are provided for language learners by technology. Online students may find it easy to become distracted and lose concentration. E-learning relies on technology, including computers and the internet, which some students may not have access to. Interruptions or other system errors may also occur during classes (Sadeghi, 2019).

Literature Review

Cojocariu et al. (2014) asserted that many of the terms (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning, m-learning, for instance) are synonymous and possess the same potential for utilizing a computer connected to a network, allowing for the ability to learn at any time, in any place, and through any method. Online learning involves students in the educational experience through the Internet and digital technologies (Stephenson, 2018). E-learning refers to the new format of learning delivery that allows for linking the transmission of learning materials through technological tools such as computers and the Internet (Carliner, 2004). Online learning is a kind of learning system without direct contact between instructors and learners (Allen & Seaman, 2007). In simple words, e-learning means using technology to make learning easier and not limited to a specific time or place. Students are considerably more engaged and active in this form of learning than in conventional approaches (Abbasi Kasani et al., 2020). In terms of physical health, there are also disadvantages and drawbacks to online learning. Online students and teachers may experience eye or back problems as a result of spending so much time sedentary and in front of a screen, and their outdoor activity may also be diminished (Nazarlou, 2013). Online learning refers to learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous settings using various devices (like smartphones, laptops, etc.) that have internet connectivity. In such learning environments, students can learn from anywhere and connect with teachers and fellow students (Singh & Thurman, 2019). A type of mobile learning through mobile computational devices is called line learning. As long as the electronic devices are by your side, learning can happen anywhere and anytime with the advances in technology (Almutairi et al., 2020).

An online learning environment can also improve students' classroom engagement, communication abilities, and self-confidence. In addition, the environment may be more convenient for

both teachers and students (Halim & Hashim, 2019). Designing interesting and enjoyable online learning tasks can also increase students' motivation (Morat et al., 2016). Online learning has a number of benefits, including the fact that it is not contingent on being in the same physical location and therefore, can increase participation rates. It can be cost-effective because online learning reduces travel and other expenses required to attend face-to-face classes, in addition to providing learning opportunities for adult students who work full-time or part-time, it can also be a convenient way for communicating between participants and instructors as the participants do not have to meet in person (Kim, 2020).

The benefit of online learning in education is that it puts the needs of individual students first as an important consideration in the educational process, as opposed to the needs of the teachers or the institutions of higher learning (Fitri, 2020). Online learning offers learners a great deal of flexibility in terms of the time and location where information is delivered or received (Smedley, 2010). The appropriation and utilize of online learning give individuals with disabilities the opportunity to further their education from any location (Brown et al., 2001). Because both students and instructors have had the wonderful opportunity to learn about and interact with educational technology tools like mobile-based learning, computer-based learning, and web-based learning, accessing online learning is now less difficult (Byun et al., 2020).

Ahmadi and Reza (2018) have shown that using the right technology for language learning can motivate learners to learn language skills effectively. There are also many benefits for instructors and learners when it comes to solving learning problems in meaningful ways and having ongoing interactions and connections to understand the course. Most students consider platforms of online learning in teaching and learning English as successful and satisfactory tools, and they agree to develop English language skills, acquire new vocabulary and enhance their understanding of the lesson contents by using the effectiveness of the online learning platforms (Cakrawati, 2017). Technology integration in education can transform traditional teaching methods and create a more engaging learning environment (Talebzadeh et al., 2024). According to Azizi (2022), online learning is not without flaws. A primary concern is that students may miss out on the engaging and interactive experience of traditional classroom settings. The limitations of virtual learning platforms in the country, including restricted capacity, can hinder meaningful teacher-student interactions and ultimately compromise the quality of instruction and learning outcomes.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study implemented a mixed-method approach, which is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. The mixed-method design was used to investigate the viewpoints of EFL lecturers and EFL postgraduate students about online learning. In fact, the quantitative data were obtained by using survey questionnaire: online learning questionnaire, and the qualitative data collected through interview protocol: online learning interview. In the quantitative phase of the study, the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, they were given the option to volunteer for interview.

Participants

The participants in this study were 40 EFL lecturers teaching English at different branches of Islamic Azad University in Iran, whose age ranged from 35 to 60, from Azad universities of Isfahan, and Fars province, and 100 postgraduate students (40 PhD students and 60 MA students), whose age ranged from 25 to 45, who were studying English Language Teaching at Islamic Azad Universities of Isfahan and Fars province. The participants were selected by using convenience sampling.

Instruments

The data were collected by researcher-made online questionnaire and online interview. This online learning questionnaire has one question with 40 statements for lecturers and their postgraduate students). The validity of the questionnaire was established using a panel of experts who were experienced lecturers at the university. The questionnaire was given to 5 lecturers and they were asked for their feedback. So, it was revised and rechecked under the supervision of those lecturers. The questionnaire was in English, and has only one main question. This question had some statements with 5 choices: strongly disagree, disagree, not agree not disagree, strongly agree, and agree. Participants should read each statement and choose their choice. Online interview was conducted with each participant in order to check their viewpoints on online learning. The researcher-made structured interview protocol was used in this survey. The interview included four questions (Appendix B). The validity of the interview test was established using a panel of experts who were experienced lecturers at the university; they revised and simplified the questions of the interview. The online interview was conducted with each participant in order to check their viewpoints on online learning.

The viewpoints of EFL lecturers and postgraduate students on online learning were demonstrated by analyzing data obtained from questionnaire and interview. All data obtained from the questionnaire and interview were analyzed. A mix of qualitative and quantitative data was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics provided general information regarding the results of the questionnaire. Quantitative analysis of questionnaire data was performed using the SPSS program, and qualitative analysis of interview data was conducted using descriptive statistics. The Kruskal- Wallis and Mann-Whitney non-parametric tests were utilized to show the effect of the level of education on the attitudes of EFL lecturers and postgraduate students toward online learning.

Results

Iranian EFL Lecturers ' Viewpoints on Online Learning

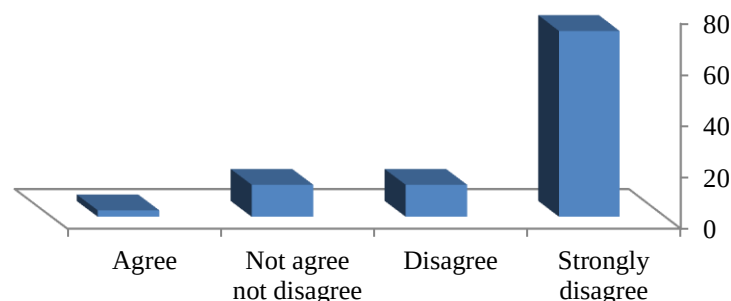
The answers of lecturers to the learning questionnaire and learning interviews were analyzed. Table.1 shows the viewpoints of EFL lecturers about online learning. According to this table, 15% of lecturers disagreed and 72.5% of them agreed with online teaching. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage frequency of EFL lecturers' viewpoints about online teaching.

Table1.
Viewpoints of Iranian EFL Lecturers about Online Learning

Choices	Frequency	Percentage of frequency
Strongly disagree	1	2.5%
Disagree	5	12.5%
Not agree not disagree	5	12.5%
Agree	29	72.5%
Strongly agree	0	0
Total	40	100%

Figure 1.

Viewpoints of Iranian EFL Lecturers about Online Learning



According to a qualitative analysis of the lecturers' answers in interviews about online learning, this mode of learning has its own advantages and disadvantages; however, they are satisfied with it. They endorse online learning, as they stated that students' learning styles have changed, and this change has been for the better. In the following section, the analyses of responses from some EFL lecturers regarding online learning are reported.

Online Learning and Its Continuity in the Future

In terms of online learning and its continuity in the future, the responses in the interviews indicated that most of the EFL lecturers agreed with online learning and continuity of it in the future by referring to its advantages and its effect on learning of students. For example, Dr. Sympathy and Dr. Hopeful stated respectively that:

In my opinion, as technology in every field has progressed, and it has affected our lives and social interactions, every job has become easier thanks to technology. So, learning online would be better than learning face-to-face in a society driven by technological advancement. I personally don't have a problem with this type of learning. When the person's goal is to learn and learning is important to him, then online learning doesn't have any problem. It all depends on the person himself, his perseverance, and efforts. And I agree with continuing this new learning in the future because everything is being updated, and we have to accept it.

Well, talking about my personal points of view on online learning, I have to say that as students have developed a sort of affection for online learning, I think online learning is going to continue even in the future, regardless of the existence or nonexistence of the pandemic. In the same way, Dr. Resource pointed out that students' learning styles have changed. He further elaborated his opinion when he said:

I have to say that, as students have developed a certain affection for online learning, I believe it will continue in the future, regardless of whether the pandemic persists or not. Personally, I think that students' learning styles have changed, and this change has been for the better because they can now easily check and recheck whatever information they want to access immediately using online platforms and resources.

Differences between Online and Face-to-Face Learning in Terms of Design and Delivery

The interviewed lecturers reported that there are not many differences between online learning and face-to-face learning. Most of them indicated that the sources of materials, the methods of learning, and the instructors in both face-to-face and online learning are identical. For example, Dr. Hope stated that:

The sources of material, the methods of learning, and the instructors in both face-to-face and online learning are identical. The only differences lie in the conditions, environment,

interactions, and presentation of materials. In face-to-face learning, teachers and students are present in a physical classroom where many interactions occur, facilitating the learning process. In contrast, online learning takes place in a virtual classroom, where interactions between teachers and students are limited, and learning occurs through internet-based platforms.

Similarly, most lecturers believed that online learning is more beneficial than face-to-face learning, and it has effect on students' confidence. This point was mentioned in Dr. Sympathy's words:

Online learning is often more beneficial than face-to-face learning because students can record classes and replay them, allowing for better comprehension. Additionally, shy students can ask questions without feeling self-conscious. Online learning does not decrease students' confidence. In fact, it can enhance their confidence, particularly for shy students, as they feel more comfortable asking questions in a virtual setting.

Dr. Resource referred to the students' participation in online activities, exercise and discussions. He stated that:

Students enjoy online activities and discussions, leading to good participation rates. They are eager to engage in online activities because the format is new and interesting for them. They tend to be more active and motivated in online classes because they enjoy using technology and the internet.

He also referred to this point that online learning is not stressful for students when he stated that:

Online learning isn't inherently stressful for students. While the initial sessions may cause anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the online platform and technical issues, many students adapt quickly.

Similarly, several lecturers mentioned that a driven and outstanding student consistently participates in class activities and assignments, whether conducted online or in-person. For instance, Dr. Sympathy expressed that:

When a student has a question or does not understand the lesson, he asks his question. It doesn't matter if it is an online class or face-to-face class; he asks his question. However, for shy students, asking questions in online learning is more comfortable than in face-to-face learning. A motivated and excellent student is always actively participating in class activities and assignments, regardless of whether those activities and assignments are online or face-to-face.

He added that:

I really disagree with the idea that students are more active and motivated in online learning, because when a student is not active and motivated to learn, there is no difference between face-to-face learning and online learning for him. Maybe online learning has a negative influence and demotivates students.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

With regard to the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, the analysis of responses showed that most of the lecturers referred to these points: cost-effectiveness, accessibility, internet connection, infrastructure, technical issues, and isolation. For example, Dr. Sympathy stated that:

As we know, each method has its own advantages and disadvantages. Although this method is more convenient and easier for some people, it also has its disadvantages and advantages. Its advantages are as follows: it does not require the presence of teachers and students in the classroom, easy access to the classroom and materials, effective cost reduction, and the ability to record lessons.

He added that

Its disadvantages include: isolation (students feel like they are sitting alone in the room and the classroom is not warm and intimate), lack of much interaction between teacher and students, lack of discipline (the discipline of some teachers or students), problems of internet (speed of internet, or maybe do not access internet), online learning causes harm to health (pressure on eyes and eye weakness, physical and mental problems due to incorrect sitting posture).

In the same way, Dr. Resource confirmed Dr. Sympathy’s view by saying:

The advantages of online learning are as follows: lower costs, long-term access to educational materials, no time or place limitations for learning, and the ability to study in a calm and comfortable environment. The disadvantages of online learning include a lack of social interaction, increased pressure on families, the need for individual responsibility, a requirement for high discipline, as well as potential internet and technical issues, distractions, and challenges with time management.

Satisfaction with Online Learning

When the lecturers were asked about their satisfaction with online learning, most of the lecturers believed that there is not any difference between online learning and face-to-face learning. For example, Dr. Sympathy stated that:

I am satisfied with this type of learning because there is no difference in methods and materials, only the classroom environment and conditions are different. When the goal is learning, then there is no difference between face-to-face learning and online learning, and we should accept this type of learning because maybe we will not have face-to-face learning in the future.

Similarly, some of the lecturers believed that online learning has an effect on learning and learning styles. This point was explained in Dr. Hope’s and Dr. Resource’s words respectively:

I personally agree with online learning because I believe that students' learning styles have changed for the better. Now, they can easily check and recheck whatever they want to say immediately using online platforms and resources.

I am satisfied with online learning because I can see its positive impact on student learning. It motivates students and keeps them engaged.

Iranian EFL Postgraduate Students’ Viewpoints about Online Learning

The answers of postgraduate students to the learning questionnaire and interviews were analyzed. The results related to the viewpoints of postgraduate students about online learning are presented in Table 2. According to this table, 16% of postgraduate students disagreed and 75% of them agreed with online learning; it is concluded that most of the postgraduate students agree with online learning. Figure 2. shows the percentage frequency of postgraduate students’ viewpoints about online learning.

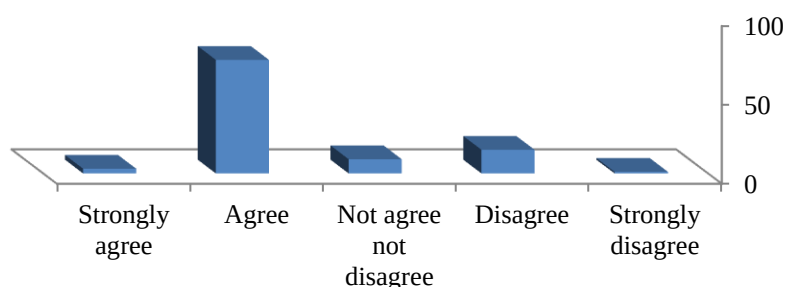
Table 2

Viewpoints of Iranian EFL Postgraduate Students about Online Learning

Choices	Frequency	Percentage of frequency
Strongly disagree	1	1%
Disagree	15	15%
Not agree not disagree	9	9%
Agree	72	72%
Strongly agree	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Figure 2

Viewpoints of Iranian EFL Postgraduate Students about Online Learning



Qualitative analysis of the answers of postgraduate students to online learning interviews showed that they agree with online learning because they believe that this kind of learning gives them motivation to learn, attracts them to participate in online classes and gives them courage and self-confidence to ask their questions and answer the questions and even make mistakes. In the following section, the analyses of the responses of some postgraduate students about online learning are reported:

Online Learning and Its Continuity in t the Future

In terms of online learning and its continuity in the future, the responses in the interviews indicated that most of postgraduate students agree with online learning and continuity of it in the future by referring to its flexibility and convenience. For example, Mr. Calm (an MA student) stated that:

I personally support the continuation of online learning in the future because I appreciate its flexibility and convenience. In my opinion, online learning should persist as it offers better and more beneficial features than traditional face-to-face learning.

Mr. Generosity (a PhD student) also referred to the immense advantages and opportunities of online learning, regardless of time and location. He stated that:

My perspective on online learning and its future prospects is quite positive. Online learning offers immense advantages and opportunities for individuals, regardless of their geographical location or time constraints.

In the same way, Mrs. Politeness (an MA student) referred to the effect of online learning on transportation issues and individuals with disabilities. He said that:

Believe it or not, online learning is one of the best options for people who have transportation issues. For example, for someone living in a village or small town far from the educational institution, studying online may be the most practical solution, as they can easily access the internet and attend classes. Additionally, individuals with disabilities may find it difficult to go to learning centers, and online learning can address this challenge.

Differences between Online and Face-to-Face Teaching in Terms of Design and Delivery

The interviewed postgraduate students reported that there are some differences between online learning and face-to-face learning by referring to the 'flexibility', 'the accessibility and inclusivity of online learning', 'collaboration and interconnectivity among learners from different backgrounds and cultures and 'confidence'. For example, Mr. Generosity (a PhD student) and Mr. Calm (an MA student) stated respectively that:

Online learning is better than face-to-face learning in these economic conditions. It is not stressful for learners but it provides comfortable conditions and situations. It not only gives

students self-confidence, but also gives them the opportunity to ask their questions and be active.

Online learning can be more useful in certain contexts due to the integration of technology. However, whether it is "better" than face-to-face learning often depends on individual learning styles and preferences. Some students thrive in a traditional classroom environment where direct interaction with instructors and peers is possible.

Mrs. Politeness (an MA student) stated that:

Online learning environments may make some students less confident in asking questions. The lack of physical presence can lead to a feeling of detachment, and some students may hesitate to speak up in virtual settings compared to a traditional classroom where they can gauge the reactions of their peers and instructors more easily.

In the same way, some of the postgraduate students believes that online learning is stressful. For example, Mrs. Politeness (an MA student) and Mr. Calm (an MA student) stated respectively that:

Online learning can be stressful for some learners, particularly those who may struggle with technology or lack a conducive learning environment at home. The absence of immediate support from instructors can also contribute to feelings of isolation and stress.

It can be stressful for learners who doesn't have knowledge about technology.

Similarly, some of the postgraduate students referred to the participation and activities of students in online learning. For example, Mrs. Politeness (an MA student) and Mr. Generosity (a PhD student) stated, respectively, that:

Participation in online activities, exercises, and discussions can vary widely. While some students engage actively through discussion boards and collaborative tools, others may be less inclined to participate due to the virtual format or a lack of engagement strategies employed by instructors.

Students typically have participation in online activities, exercises, and discussions as part of their learning experience. These activities are designed to enhance engagement, facilitate collaboration, and promote a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In the same way, Mr. Calm (an MA student) stated that:

When a student is active and wants to participate in activities, it is not important for him that class is online or face-to-face. Good students are active in online and face-to-face learning. But some of the students like shy students are active in online class only and online class gives them motivation.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, the analysis of postgraduate students' responses revealed that most of them mentioned these advantages and disadvantages: availability and flexibility, promoting accessibility and inclusivity, enhancing engagement and understanding, cost reduction, increased confidence, technological challenges, and lack of interaction. For example, Mr. Generosity (a PhD student) stated that:

Online learning has some advantages such as, flexibility allows learners to access materials and lectures at their own pace, facilitating balance with other commitments, providing diverse multimedia options such as interactive videos and virtual reality, enhancing engagement and understanding, promoting accessibility and inclusivity by breaking down geographical barriers and accommodating individuals with physical disabilities or personal limitations, making education more equitable.

Online learning has some disadvantages such as, a lack of interaction with peers and instructors which can hinder social connections and group discussions, technological challenges, including unstable internet connections and limited access to necessary equipment, can disrupt the learning process and lead to frustration.

In the same way, Mr. Calm (an MA student) said that:

The advantages of online learning are as follows: recording classes for later viewing, cost reduction, easy access to online learning materials, and the flexibility that allows students to study while working, increasing confidence among students, especially those who are shy, encouraging greater participation in class. The disadvantages of online learning include potential for increased distractions, a lack of discipline, and diminished patience without motivation, significant concerns related to internet connectivity and the availability of necessary devices like computers and smartphones.

Satisfaction with Online Learning

When the postgraduate students were asked about their satisfaction with online learning, most of them believed that they are satisfied with it because not only there is not any difference between method of online learning and face-to-face learning, but also it helps to work and study at the same time. For example, Mrs. Pilotless (an MA student) stated that:

I am satisfied with online learning because I am balancing work and studies in two different cities. Online learning provides me with this valuable opportunity.

In the same way, Mr. Generosity (a PhD student) said that:

I might not be completely satisfied with online learning. While it offers flexibility and convenience, I may miss the in-person interactions with classmates and teachers, which can make learning more engaging and collaborative. Additionally, some subjects may be more challenging to learn effectively through online platforms.

The Impact of Respondents' Level of Education on Their Attitude towards the Online Learning

In this section, the objective is to explore whether the respondents' level of education significantly affects their attitude towards online learning. In this section, we intend to determine whether, from the viewpoints of MA students, PhD students, and lecturers, there is a significant difference in the variable of student learning in online conditions. Hypotheses H₀ and H₁ are written as follows;

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} H_0 = \text{The averages are equal} \\ H_1 = \text{At least one mean differs from the other means} \end{array} \right.$$

Considering the multi-level variable of education level, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The results related to the average ranks in different educational levels are shown in Table 3. and the values of test statistics and significance probability are shown in Table 4.

Table 3

The Average Ranks Obtained in the Kruskal Wallis Test According to the Level of Education

Education Level	Number	Average Ranks
MA student	60	80/15
PhD student	40	64/51
Lecturer	40	62/01

Table 4

Kruskal-Wallis Test in Examining the Difference between the Averages of the Learning Variable According to the Level of Education

Research Variables	Kruskal-Wallis Statistic Value	Test Degree of Freedom	Significance Probability (P-Value)
Learning	6/044	2	0/049

The results listed in Table 4.show that the significance probability for the learning variable is less than 0.05. Therefore, the respondents' level of education has a significant effect on their attitude towards the online learning.

To determine which averages in education and learning variables have a significant difference, the Mann-Whitney test between two-by-two levels of the education variable was used. The results of the tests are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Average Ranks and the Mann-Whitney Test for Two-by-Two Categories of Education

Variable	Education	Number	Average Ranks	Mann-Whitney Statistic Value (U)	Significance Probability (P-Value)
Learning	MA student	60	54/93	934/50	0/061
	PhD student	40	43/86		
Learning	MA student	60	55/73	866/50	0/027
	Lecturer	40	42/66		
Learning	PhD student	40	41/15	774/00	0/802
	Lecturer	40	39/85		

In Table.5, in the online learning variable, significant probability values for MA students, with PhD students and lecturers, are less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in opinions between MA students and PhD students and lecturers regarding how much students learn in online terms. However, there is no difference in the opinions of lecturers and PhD students concerning students’ online learning.

Discussion

Analyzing the EFL lecturers' responses to the learning questionnaire and interview showed that they agree with online learning. According to their responses in the learning interview, online learning is very useful because students' learning styles have changed, allowing them to easily check and recheck whatever they want to say using online platforms and sources immediately. The lecturers pointed out an important advantage of online learning: students have more courage to ask questions and even make mistakes. However, the type of activities in which students are involved is crucial, as it can increase or encourage their engagement in those particular activities. This approach gives them the confidence and courage to ask questions, especially shy and academically weak students, thus boosting their self-esteem. Analyzing the responses of postgraduate students to the learning questionnaire and their interviews about online learning showed that they agree with online learning. According to the answers from most of them to the questions in the learning interview, online learning is very useful for their education because it provides the conditions in which they feel confident to ask their questions and motivates them. They also stated that it creates a good learning environment; they sit at home in their rooms and learn, where it is neither cold nor hot, and they don't experience stress. This study supports the findings of studies conducted by Zare et al. (2020), Gholami et al. (2021), and Bernard et al. (2004), showing that online learning is effective and that student satisfaction and engagement levels are greatly enhanced by using interactive tools such as discussion boards and live sessions.

The analysis of quantitative data and qualitative data from questionnaires and interviews showed that the qualitative data obtained from the interviews support the quantitative data obtained

from the questionnaires. The analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires showed that lecturers and postgraduate students agree with online learning. The analysis of data revealed that the respondents' level of education does have a significant impact on their attitudes towards online learning among EFL lecturers and postgraduate students. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Shahbazi et al. (2021), Muilenburg and Berge (2005), Hosseini et al. (2020), Aminul Islam et al. (2011), and Ko et al. (2014). The influence of education level on attitudes towards online learning underscores the importance of considering individuals' educational backgrounds when examining their perceptions and preferences in the context of online education.

Conclusion and Implications

Considering the findings of the analyses, one overall conclusion could be that EFL lecturers and postgraduate students agree with online learning as well as the continuity of it in the future. Furthermore, online learning is viewed positively by EFL lecturers and postgraduate students. Surprisingly, however, their perspectives in questionnaire and interview revealed satisfaction with it, highlighting its usefulness for speaking and listening skills among students. The responses of participating lecturers and students in both interview and questionnaire were consistent. This indicates no disparity between their viewpoints in questionnaire and interview, where they provided reasoning for their responses and engaged in discussion. The quantitative data from questionnaire responses and the qualitative data from interview were compared. The analysis of quantitative data from the questionnaire and qualitative data from interview showed that the qualitative data obtained from the interview supported by the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire. Based on their responses to interview questions, online learning is very useful because the learning style of students has changed, and this change has been for the better. They can easily check and recheck whatever they want to say by using online platforms, online sources, immediately. They can easily give themselves the chance to talk about this because a lot of people argue that students are less confident to propose problems or to ask their questions. Lecturers pointed to an important advantage of online learning, that students like more courage to raise questions and to even make mistakes.

However, the type of activities that students are involved in is very important because it can increase or encourage their involvement in that given activity. It gives them confidence and courage to ask their questions, especially shy students and academically weak students. It encourages and gives them confidence. So, the findings of this study support those of Carliner (2004), Kim (2020) showing that online learning is very useful because it can help learners to learn everywhere, in every situation and condition. This study supports the findings of a study done by Al Zumor et al., (2013) in which using technology tools in the classroom environment effectively improves English proficiency and increases student confidence and collaboration in language learning. The findings of the present study confirm those found by Cakrawati (2017) showing that most students consider platforms of online learning in teaching and learning English as successful and satisfactory tools. The findings of the present study support the findings of a survey done by Ahmadi and Reza (2018) in which they showed that using the right technology for language learning can motivate learners to learn language skills effectively.

This study has significant implications for education officials, government officials, EFL lecturers, and students. These individuals are among those who are supposed to enjoy the results most directly. This survey could help improve the quality of online education. Additionally, government and country officials are among those who are supposed to benefit directly from this survey, as it addresses the main problems of online education, such as internet and infrastructure limitations for distance learning and the lack of standards for creating high-quality content. Therefore, it is necessary for government officials to supervise content preparation and improve distance learning infrastructure if they want to establish online education in our country. The main stakeholders are EFL lecturers who teach English and students who study English at the university. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of any study, and this research is no exception. One limitation identified was the focus on EFL lecturers and postgraduate students, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings beyond this specific group. Therefore, the sample size used in the study is a potential limitation. The sample

size is crucial in determining the generalizability of the results, as a small sample size may constrain the applicability of the findings to a broader population. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's outcomes and implications. Another limitation was that it was impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews with all the sample participants due to place and time constraints.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

In the Name of God

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the viewpoints of EFL lecturers and postgraduate students about online learning and their level of satisfactions with this kind of education. Your exact answers to the items will be highly valuable for gaining insights regarding online education and continuity of it in the future. Your effort to respond to this questionnaire will be considered as part of your life-long dedication to the academic community of this land and that is why it is heartily appreciated. To help us, please fill in this questionnaire according to your opinions. All responses provided will be confidential and used for research purposes only. Thank you very much for your cooperation. To respond to the items, please checkmark the selected choice. Thank you.

1) What's your idea about online learning?

	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not agree, not disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I am satisfied with online learning.					
2	I prefer online learning to traditional learning.					
3	Online learning is better than traditional learning.					
4	Online learning has a good quality.					
5	Online learning is not different in terms of quality than traditional learning.					
6	I agree with online learning.					
7	I agree with the continuation of online learning in the future.					
8	Learners show less interest and desire in online learning.					
9	Learners need to spend more time in online learning.					
10	Online learning is tedious for the learner.					
11	Online learning is more engaging for the learner.					
12	Learners are more active and involved in online learning.					
13	Online learning is stressful for learners.					
14	Online learning makes learners more confident in asking question.					
15	Online learning is more difficult than traditional learning for some learners.					
16	Learners are eager to participate in online learning.					
17	Learners struggle with online learning.					

18	The learner can develop and strengthen listening and speaking skills in online learning.					
19	There is learner participation and interaction in online learning.					
20	There are variety of exercises and activities that enhance learner's motivation in online learning.					
21	In online learning, class activities encourage learners to assume responsibility for independent learning.					
22	There are sufficient communicative activities in online learning.					
23	There is balance between controlled and free language practices in online learning.					
24	Activities are engaging in online learning.					
25	There are most engaging activities in online learning.					
26	In online learning, it is possible to establish interaction and communication between learners of the class.					
27	There is a balance between language-focused and communicative activities in online learning.					
28	It is more difficult to focus during online learning.					
29	All the learners don't have access to the technology and the Internet.					
30	Online learning is not affordable.					
31	Online learning is economically viable.					
32	Online learning has many challenges.					
33	Online learning has many disadvantages.					
34	Online learning has many advantages.					
35	The disadvantages of online learning are more than its advantages.					
36	The advantages of online learning are more than its disadvantages.					
37	The online learning environment is not an interactive teaching environment.					
38	I see no change in students' achievement levels as a result of online learning.					
39	Online struggling has no negative effects on students' performance.					
40	I recommend only using online learning in the future.					