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**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel**  
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**  
**Department of English**

**Investigating EFL Students' Attitudes towards the Integration of  
Google Meet Application for Oral Classes**

**The Case of First-Year EFL Students of English, Mohamed Seddik Ben  
Yahia University, Jijel**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master degree in  
didactics of foreign languages

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Investigating EFL Students’ Attitudes towards Using Google Meet Application for Oral Classes” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarised the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signature

Date

## **Dedication**

First and for most, I praise Allah for showing me the way and giving me strength through  
the long road of this piece of research;

To the one who believed in me when no one else did “**Mr. Taha-Elamine Tina**”, thank  
you for being there whenever I needed. I will be grateful to the end of my time;

To number one for me, my dearest parents: **Chafia Ridouh** and **Rachid**, only Allah knows  
how much you mean to me, thank you

for being by my side through days and nights, thank you for all your love and sacrifices. I  
would like to put a smile on your faces every day;

To my beloved siblings “**Ahmed**”, “**Mohamed-Tahar**” and “**Amina**”. I love you so much,  
To my lovely husband “**Mourad**”. Thank you for your support and patience;

To my big family “**Djoufelkit**”, and my second family “**Benziada**”;

To my best friends **Nadia, Houda** and **Zahra**

To my friend and partner **Fadia** whom I have worked with for months. Thank you for the  
unforgettable life experience.

To all my teachers;

I dedicate this work

**Hassiba**

## **Dedication**

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most compassionate, this humble piece of work is lovingly dedicated:

To my beloved mother, **SISSAOUI Razika**, for her patience, encouragement and all the sacrifices. I owe you so much that no words will express my gratefulness.

To my sweet, kindhearted and strong grandmother, **BEN YAHIA Houria**, May Allah have mercy on her.

To my dearest brothers **Youcef, Bassem**, and **Allaoua** who were always by my side and encouraged me to keep going. Thank you for your unconditional care and support.

To all my colleagues at **Fly High School** especially the wonderful **DJAGHRI Nadjat** for whom I wish all the best and **Mr. Aissam ABDELLOUCHÉ** to whom I would love to express my heartfelt gratitude for his time, constant guidance, and precious pieces of advice.

To my partner in this work **Hassiba** for the time we spent together helping each other and sharing memorable moments.

To all my teachers, family members, friends and everyone who has supported me in this journey. Thank you all.

**Fadia**

## **Acknowledgements**

### **In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Gracious**

First and foremost, I thank Almighty Allah who endowed us with strength, confidence, and a lot patience to fulfill this research.

We are fortunate and blessed to have **Dr. Abdeldjalil BOUZENOUN** as our supervisor. Words cannot express our overwhelmed gratitude for his constant guidance, encouragement, profound support, generous sharing of knowledge , insightful feedback, politeness, positivity and for devoting his time for the realisation of this research project.

We would like to extend appreciation to the board of examiners

**Dr. Meriem BOUSBA** and

**Dr. Safia NEGHIZ** for their careful reading and evaluation of this humble work.

We would also like to acknowledge all the volunteered students for their valuable contribution.

Special Thanks to **TEFL Academy** staff for their caring, generosity, and kindness.

## **Abstract**

The use of learning-based applications has remarkably increased in the Algerian universities since the last couple of years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Google Meet was used as a learning platform to deliver an online oral course in the department of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yehia University, Jijel. This study attempted to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' attitudes towards using the Google Meet Application as an alternative to face-to-face oral course. Besides, it evaluated the extent of EFL students' interaction in this unusual learning atmosphere. Subsequently, it was hypothesised that the good mastery and appropriate use of the Google Meet Application will develop learners' positive attitudes towards online classes, and therefore, increase interaction amongst them and enhance their language learning achievement. Practically, data was gathered using a qualitative approach. First, a semi-structured interview was conducted with (09) randomly selected first-year EFL students at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yehia University to elicit their learning experiences in using this application. Then, classroom observations were arranged with two first-year groups three and four (3&4) to have insights about the learners' interaction. The findings revealed that EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University held positive attitudes towards using Google Meet Application for their oral course, and proved that it was an adequate learning application that made students no longer isolated, but more interactive though the internet bandwidth and connectivity hurdles. Given the results obtained, it was recommended for EFL departments to provide their teachers with the necessary training and support to generalise the use of Google Meet to other courses that require real-time interaction.

**Key Words:** attitudes, interaction, Google Meet, EFL students, oral course.

## **List of Abbreviations**

- 1- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- 2- **ESP:** English for Specific Purposes
- 3- **CALL:** Computer-Assisted Language Learning
- 4- **CMC:** Computer-Mediated Communication
- 5- **GALL:** Google-Assisted Language Learning
- 6- **ICT:** Information Communication Technologies
- 7- **TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- 8- **TESOL:** Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

## Contents

General Introduction.....	1
1. Background of the Study .....	2
2. Statement of the Problem .....	6
3. Aim of the Study .....	6
4. Significance of the Study.....	7
5. Research Questions .....	7
6. Hypothesis .....	7
7. Research Methodology .....	7
8. Organisation of the Dissertation .....	8
Chapter One: Literature Review.....	9
Section One: The Impact of Attitudes on Learners' Interaction .....	9
Introduction .....	9
1. Attitudes.....	9
1.1. Definition of Attitudes .....	9
1.2. Aspects of Attitudes.....	10
1.2.1. The Cognitive Component .....	10
1.2.2. The Affective Component (Evaluative) .....	10
1.2.3. The Behavioural Component .....	11
1.3. Importance of Attitude .....	11
2. Interaction .....	12
2.1. Definition of Interaction .....	12
2.2. Importance of Interaction.....	12
2.3. Moore's Theory .....	13
Section Two: Computer-Assisted Language Learning.....	15
Introduction .....	15
1. Historical Background of CALL .....	15
2. Basic Concepts.....	17
2.1. E-Learning.....	16
2.2. Online Learning.....	16
2.3. Distance Learning .....	16
2.4. Hybrid Learning .....	17
3. Google-Assisted Language Learning.....	16

4.The Pedagogical Approach.....	18
5. Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning .....	18
5.1. Asynchronous Learning .....	18
5.2. Synchronous Learning.....	19
Section Three: Web-Based Conferencing .....	22
Introduction .....	22
1. Videoconferencing.....	22
1.1. Definition .....	22
1.2. Advantages .....	23
1.3. Disadvantages.....	24
2. About Google Meet .....	25
Chapter Two: Field Work.....	27
Introduction .....	27
1.Data Collection Procedures .....	27
2. Population and Sampling .....	27
3. Students' Interview .....	28
3.1. Description of Students' Interview .....	29
3.2. Analysis of Students' Interviews.....	31
3.3. Interpretation of Students' Interview .....	41
4. Classroom Observation.....	43
4.1. Description of Classroom Observation .....	44
4.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation .....	45
4.3. Interpretation of the Classroom Observation Results .....	47
5. Overall Discussion of the Results .....	48
Conclusion .....	50
General Conclusion .....	52
1.Putting It Altogether .....	50
2. Pedagogical Recommendations .....	51
3. Limitations of the Study .....	52
4. Suggestions for Further Research .....	52
<b>References.....</b>	<b>54</b>
Appendix A .....	
Appendix B.....	
Appendix C.....	
Résumé .....	

**ملخص .....**

## **General Introduction**

Online education has evolved as a revolutionary approach for learning since the mid of the last century. The massive growth of communication innovations has brought a big change to English language teaching and learning (Calis, 2008; as cited in Chakraborty, 2017; Nugroho & Nartiningrum, 2020). However, the urgent and total shift of learning from the traditional settings to the virtual ones has created various challenges and obstacles for both the students and the tutors (Crawford, Butler-Henderson, Jurgen, & Malkawi, 2020). One of the major hurdles of early online courses was the lack of learners' interaction (Karal, Cebi, & Turgut, 2011). Interaction is considered of primary importance for second or foreign language acquisition (Nugroho & Nartiningrum, 2020). In the same vein, Kearsley, Lynch, and Wizer (1995) affirmed that for an online course to be successful, a high level of interaction is strongly required. As a result, many scholars are in constant pursuit of more appropriate technological tools that attract learners and motivate them; therefore, allow interactive knowledge construction (Bryant & Bates, 2015).

The recent advancements in technology have witnessed the incorporation of synchronous tools in which the learning process takes place in real-time through different geographical settings (Hrastinski, 2008; Karal et al., 2011). Synchronous e-learning might provide much more opportunities for language students to engage effectively in online learning environments (Repman, Zinskie, & Carlson, 2005), as it increases flexibility in learning (Xia, Fielder, & Siragusa, 2013). This type of communication is usually supported by media such as audio, videoconferencing, chat rooms, interactive whiteboards, application sharing, instant polling, emoticons, and breakout rooms (Wang & Reeves, 2007).

Learning via videoconferencing has been said to be an effective platform as face-to-face learning (Jung, 2013) since it can enrich meaningful interaction in which body language and nonverbal communication cues are used by the participants (Wang & Reeves, 2007; Loranc-Paszylk, 2015). Google Meet is a new videoconferencing tool developed in 2017, and it has gained large popularity among its users in many fields. Based on these considerations, many research projects have been established to investigate the learners' attitudes towards synchronous virtual learning (Baz & Tetik, 2019). The current study is designed to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards using Google Meet their oral course.

## **1. Background of the Study**

A large number of studies have indicated that the success or failure of learners in any educational process is highly related to their attitudes. It is claimed that attitudes pave the way for language learning as they impact learners' outcomes (Finch, 2008; Zainol, Pour-Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012). Specifically, positive attitudes of learners enhance their learning achievements whereas negative attitudes decrease learners' engagement, and therefore, they hinder successful language learning (Oxford, 2001; as cited in Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013). Many researchers have also investigated the relationship between attitude and proficiency in language learning, and they found that it is badly influenced by how the learners are going to behave when they encounter certain learning situations (Bachman, 1990; as cited in Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). For instance, Wang C. et al., (2019) and Payne (2020) reported that online education can boost learners' attitudes towards learning. However, the value of online learning, regardless of the exceptional prospects provided by the internet as a learning medium, will not be effective unless it is reinforced by the positive attitudes of the participants (Gardner, 1980 as cited in Ushida, 2005). Henceforth, learners' attitudes and online learning situations affect each other interchangeably. This

mutual impact plays a primordial role in assisting EFL students to realise their learning objectives.

Regarding the impact of EFL learners' attitudes while studying online, Kitchakarn (2015) conducted a research study using computers as a learning tool in language learning among undergraduate students in a private university in Turkey. He found out that students had positive attitudes towards using computers as a learning tool. The integration of ICTs in digital classes may help in building a student- based-learning environment (Hrastinski, 2008; Apriani, Superdan, Sartika, Superjo, & Nul, 2019). One can understand that online learning can develop EFL students' positive attitudes as well as self-learning which promote language learning and achieve better outcomes.

In a similar direction in a Turkish state university, Cinkara and Bagceci (2013) explored EFL learners' attitudes towards online courses in correlation with their success rate. The findings showed that the students with positive attitudes obtained higher scores at the courses than those with negative attitudes. Hence, positive attitudes are viewed as the most significant component, regardless of the importance of the course design and the methodology, that contribute to the students' outcomes.

In a recent study, Ramadhan (2019), in Kurdistan, Iraq, investigated perceptions and attitudes of EFL learners towards English online courses. The findings revealed that the participants have positive attitudes towards using the internet for English language learning. In addition to that, the use of the internet and applications as platforms enhance language learning and interaction among students. The majority of online learning scholars argued that effective interaction must be established to motivate students to learn in online environments (Brindley, Walti, & Blaschke, 2009; Jackson, Jones, & Rodriguez, 2010; Apriani et al., 2019). As a consequence, positive attitudes are of paramount importance for

EFL learners to interact effectively and to maintain their success in the virtual learning modes.

More recently, Nugroho and Nartiningrum (2020) explored online learning amidst the global pandemic in Indonesia. The purpose of their study was to uncover the EFL learners' challenges and suggestions during online classes. Relying on a qualitative data method, they disclosed that the unsteady networks and the less direct interactions were the main problems faced by EFL students in attending online courses. Furthermore, Nugroho and Nartiningrum (2020) stated "most students proposed to use video conference applications such as Zoom or Google Meet" (p. 127). These applications afford active engagement and collaboration amongst peers which would improve learners' reflection and autonomous learning (Jordan et al., 2008; as cited in Bennacer, 2019; Nugroho & Atmojo, 2020). In the same vein, some other studies in South Korea showed that high English proficiency and vocabulary outcomes go hand in hand with positive attitudes of learners beyond face-to-face settings (Lee & Lee, 2019; Lee, 2019; Lee, 2020).

The results of the aforementioned reviews as well as many other studies revealed an overall picture of online courses conditions for the betterment of virtual EFL settings. This would encourage learners to develop positive attitudes, particularly during the unusual learning situation of the Covid-19 outbreak. Nevertheless, other studies concluded that EFL students adopt negative attitudes towards fully online learning. The latter can hinder their achievements. Orlando and Attard (2015) argued that the application of virtual classes using Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) will not be effective unless it is supported by the appropriate selection of technological tools.

In an Indonesian survey, Fakhurrazi and Sundari (2020) examined the EFL students' preferences on digital platforms during the emergency remote teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The focus of their study was on three different digital learning platforms: Cisco

WebEx Meeting videoconferencing, Google Classroom learning management system, and WhatsApp mobile messenger application. The findings showed that, despite their high positive acceptance amongst the students, the three digital platforms made a lower score on a positive impact on most participants than face-to-face learning. One can understand that the full online digital learning system the learners encountered is less desirable than the traditional learning environment. Grundmann (2010) argued that the lack of laboratory and hands-on experience within the format of online courses is viewed as a major disadvantage (as cited in Abramenka, 2015). On the other hand, the intensive use of technological tools creates a compressed learning environment (Warden C., Stanworth, Ren, & Warden, 2013). Consequently, students may develop negative attitudes, and therefore, show reluctance towards the online learning activity.

Moving to the Algerian online learning status, Guemide and Maouch (2020) declared that online learning in Algerian higher education was not successful. High-quality learning platforms, as well as good mastery of technological tools, are strongly demanded. Similarly, Benkhider and Kherbachi (2020) analysed the challenges encountered by Algerian students who experienced the sudden shift to the online mode of learning during the pandemic. The findings revealed the following factors: the weak technological devices utilised, the lack of self-learning awareness, and the format of digital resources provided. In another study, Chelghoum and Chelghoum (2020) attempted to provide a general review of the hurdles of online learning at the time of the lockdown. The results disclosed that the main problems faced in online learning were the bad internet accessibility and the students' demotivation. The researchers recommended the integration of online learning platforms and different online resources. In his turn, Bensafa (2014) shed light on the Algerian English for specific purposes (ESP) postgraduate students' perceptions of using videoconferencing as an alternative to face-to-face interaction. Learners showed positive

attitudes towards using videoconferences despite the existence of technological problems which were consistent with the findings of the aforementioned Algerian studies. Consequently, Covid-19 uncovered the fact that Algerian online education needs more in-depth investigations for the betterment and modernisation of the field.

In the light of the reviewed studies, it is seemingly obvious that video conference applications have been well embraced by a large number of EFL students in various parts of the world. Yet, they have also received poor responses from other learners. Google Meet as one of the newest learning platforms, has not been extensively studied, hitherto. The 2020 pandemic lockdown has forced some EFL teachers at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University to adopt Google Meet as a medium to teach the English Oral courses. As a consequence, many concerns were raised about EFL students' reactions to these unusual learning circumstances. The current study is designed to investigate the EFL learners' attitudes towards using Google Meet for their oral course.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The Algerian universities, like all the other educational systems in the world that have been affected by the covid-19 pandemic, were compelled to turn to online instruction after the complete closure of face-to-face educational institutions. Consequently, EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University have had to cope with this unusual situation. This study attempts to explore the EFL students' attitudes towards using the Google Meet Application and their potential role in enhancing learners' interaction and their oral proficiency.

## **3. Aim of the Study**

The purpose of the present study is to explore EFL learners' attitudes towards online learning. Particularly, this research aims to shed light on the potential role of interaction,

provided by Google Meet, in developing students' oral proficiency that has been affected negatively by the preventive measurements against the 2020 pandemic.

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

This research study seeks to change the traditional EFL teaching/learning approach that underestimates the importance of integrating Google Meet as an innovative learning platform. Furthermore, it provides teachers with the necessary information that may help them to better understand students' concerns, attitudes, as well as expectations about the synchronous learning environment. It is also a call for adjusting and improving the quality of online learning in Algeria, in general, and in EFL departments, in particular.

#### **5. Research Questions**

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the Algerian EFL students' attitudes towards Oral Expression online courses via Google Meet and what difficulties do they encounter when using it?
- 2- To what extent do Algerian EFL learners interact with their instructors and peers in Oral Expression online courses?

#### **6. Hypothesis**

Based on the background of the study and the aforementioned questions, it is hypothesised that the good mastery and appropriate use of the Google Meet Application will develop learners' positive attitudes towards online courses, and therefore, increase interaction amongst them.

#### **7. Research Methodology**

To answer the research questions and fulfil the needed information for this study, data will be gathered using a qualitative method, which consists of two data collection means. First, semi-structured interview will be conducted with a random sample of first-year EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University to elicit their attitudes towards using

Google Meet. Second, classroom observation will be arranged to get an understanding of what exactly happens during the online oral courses in terms of interaction.

## **8. Organisation of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into two chapters, the literature review and the field work. The first chapter is composed of three sections. The first section covers attitudes and their impact on EFL learners' interaction, while the second section deals with the use of ICTs in language learning, particularly synchronous ones. The third section is dedicated mainly to the Google Meet Application as a videoconferencing learning tool. The second chapter represents the practical part. It displays the adopted research design as well as the description, the analysis and the discussion of the results derived from the descriptive study (semi-structured interviews and classroom observations).

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

### **Section One: The Impact of Attitudes on Learners' Interaction**

Introduction

1. Attitudes

1.1. Definition of Attitudes

1.2. Aspects of Attitudes

1.2.1. The Cognitive Component

1.2.2. The Affective Component

1.2.3. The Behavioural Component

1.3. Importance of Attitudes

2. Interaction

2.1. Definition of Interaction

2.2. Importance of Interaction

2.3. Moore's Theory

### **Section Two: Computer-Assisted Language Learning**

Introduction

1. Historical Background of CALL

2. Google-Assisted Language Learning

3. Basic Concepts

3.1. E-Learning

3.2. Online Learning

3.3. Distance Learning

3.4. Hybrid Learning

4. The Pedagogical Approach

5. Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning

5.2. Synchronous Learning

### **Section Three: Web-Based Conferencing**

Introduction

1. Videoconferencing

1.1. Definition

1.2. Advantages

1.3. Disadvantages

2. About Google Meet

## **Section One: The Impact of Attitudes on Learners' Interaction**

### **Introduction**

The success or failure of learning a language has been proved to be influenced by various factors other than mental ones. This means that besides the cognitive abilities, the nature of language learning is also approached to contextual, social, and psychological aspects such as motivation, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, personalities, and attitudes (Lehmann, 2006 as cited in Hashwani, 2008; Pacwick, 2010). Subsequently, students' attitudes are highlighted as one of the most vital factors that impact the language learning process (Fakeye, 2010).

### **1. Attitudes**

#### **1.1. Definition of Attitudes**

Language learning specialists consider several definitions of attitude from different perspectives (Alhmali, 2007). Gardner (1985) defined attitudes as a person's positive or negative responses to an object based on his/her beliefs and values. Thus, they are responsible for the enthusiasm or reluctance of an individual towards all realms of activity.

Similarly, Montano & Kasprzyk (2008) declared "Attitude is determined by the individual's beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes" (p. 71). In the sense that learners' performance is affected by their convictions and impressions about previous learning experiences.

In the "Longman Dictionary of Teaching and Applied Linguistics", Richards, Platt, and Platt (1992) defined language attitudes as follows:

the attitude which speakers of different languages or language varieties have

towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. (p.199)

## **1.2. Aspects of Attitudes**

Generally, learner attitudes have been explored in relation to three concepts: learners' attitudes towards language itself, learners' attitudes towards native speakers of the target language, and learners' attitudes towards language learning situations (Wesely, 2012 as cited in Cinkara & Bagceci, 2013; Riyanto, Setiyadi, & Kadariyanto, 2015). The latter, which is the concern of the current investigation, refers to the persuasion, emotion, and response elicited by the language learner to any item, material, situation, and even the instructor while the process of learning (Finch, 2008; Zainol et al., 2012). Thus, it is a primordial component in language performance (Visser, 2008).

As soon as an individual engages in a specific learning situation, his/her thinking is supposed to be influenced, and therefore, a difference is remarked in his/her behaviour (Kara, 2009). Subsequently, Wenden (1991) classified the term "attitude" into three interrelated components namely, cognitive, affective, and behavioral (as cited in Riyanto et al., 2015):

### **1.2.1. The Cognitive Component**

This aspect of attitudes consists of the beliefs and thoughts of the language learners about an object, people, event, and knowledge and their understanding in the process of language learning. This component has a profound effect on learning as it is linked to one's perception.

### **1.2.2. The Affective Component (Evaluative)**

This component covers the person's emotions towards an object. Those inner feelings have a powerful impact on one's choices to express whether he/she likes or dislikes the

objects or surrounding situations. This aspect is also labeled “emotional” (Feng & Chen, 2009).

### **1.2.3. The Behavioural Component**

The Behavioural Component, which is the focus of this study, deals with the way an individual behaves and reacts in certain situations. In fact, the behavioural aspect of attitudes have a major role in the learning process, as Choy and Troudi (2006) pointed that it tends to prompt learners to adopt particular learning behaviours towards the target language. Similarly, Kara (2009) declared,

positive attitudes led to the exhibition of positive behaviors toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Such students were also observed to be more eager to solve problems, to acquire the information and skills useful for daily life and to engage themselves emotionally. (p.102)

### **1.3. Importance of Attitude**

The importance of attitudes lies in the way they influence behaviours. Gardner (1985) and Kara (2009) stated that attitudes towards learning another language have an obvious impact on motivating learners to learn that language, and consequently on their performance, too. One can understand that positive attitudes lead learners to have a positive orientation towards learning another language. In other words, they will limit the chances of reluctance, enjoy more the course, and as a result, achieve better outcomes. Conversely, negative attitudes towards learning a language is considered the most effective factor that is responsible for the students’ poor performance (Kiptui & Mbugua, 2009; as cited in Beiranvand & Entezamara, 2016), in the sense that learners with negative attitudes will be reluctant and less interested during the learning activity. Hence, attitudes, significantly, influence one’s behaviour when encountering a certain situation. They would render learning either an interesting or a boring task.

Ultimately, the extent of student engagement in the learning process will not be affected by the instruction or the technology; instead, it will depend on individual learner differences and attitudes (Corder & U-Mackey, 2010).

## **2. Interaction**

### **2.1. Definition of Interaction**

Interaction plays a significant role in the process of language learning. During classroom interaction, students have the opportunity to learn English in a meaningful and constructive way. According to Brown (2000), interaction is a term that is used to refer to the exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas; it requires at least two people and results in a reciprocal influence amongst the participants. Likewise, Moore (1993) defined interaction in a learning environment as communicative incorporation that can occur between students and instructors, students and contents, and students with each other. Similarly, Wagner (1994) defined interaction as the communicative interchange that takes place between the learner and either the teacher or another learner. Therefore, interaction involves not only arranging a message together but also means reacting to other people to facilitate communication among them (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008). That is to say, interaction is a response to what others say, negotiate, and exchange ideas to fulfill their learning objectives.

### **1.3. Importance of Interaction**

Nunan (1991) stated that active interaction contributes to the development of learners' speaking skills during the foreign language learning process. Moreover, interaction helps learners to construct their knowledge and enhance their learning that takes place through active engagement and collaboration with peers and teachers. The latter would increase learners' motivation, attitudes, and autonomous learning (Jordan et al., 2008; as cited in Bennacer, 2019). Subsequently, active interaction helps to create "a positive learning

environment and establish a community for learners who support each other" (Bromley, 2008; as quoted in Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013, p. 111). Then, interaction in classroom offers students opportunities to get feedback from the teacher or other students; the thing that encourages them to improve their language system (Hedge, 2000). Nonetheless, learners' attempts to interact with their teacher and peers are strongly related to personal factors like attitudes, motivation, knowledge, and willingness to learn (Pacwick, 2010). Consequently, online real-time classroom interaction makes learners no longer isolated, but more interactive, collaborative, and active within the surrounding environment to achieve the aim of a better understanding.

### **2.3. Moore's Theory**

One of the most prominent theories discussed in distance education is Moore's Transactional Distance Theory (1993). The latter considered distance as a pedagogical phenomenon (McBrien, Jones, & Cheng, 2009), in the sense that it is concerned with students' interaction and engagement beyond the geographical distribution during the online learning experience.

Transactional Distance Theory highlighted communication, course organisation, and learner autonomy which affect learners' engagement directly (Moore, 1993). That is to say, the emphasis is on the correlation of learner-instructor, learner-learner, learner-content, and learner-interface interactions. According to Moore (1993), distance learning could not be successful unless mutual coordination is implemented between communication, course organisation, and learner autonomy. In the same vein, Moore (1993), Chen and Willits (1999), and Jung (2001) argued that distance education is more challenging than face-to-face education; as a consequence, further efforts must be made to reduce the distance experienced by the student. Adding to that, Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) stated that the flexibility of online courses provides learners with more opportunities for higher self-

directed learning and independence. The latter is viewed as a critical component of students' engagement in their learning process (Moore, 1993). Subsequently, the sense of distance and isolation experienced in virtual contexts would be much more minimised.

In accordance with the Transactional Distance Theory, synchronous online platforms present an example that combines the essential elements that provide instructors as well as learners the opportunities for meaningful real-time interactions (McBrien et al., 2009). One can understand that synchronous virtual classrooms have the power to increase interaction more than one-way tools of communication.

## **Section Two: Computer-Assisted Language Learning**

### **Introduction**

It is believed that information and communication technology (ICT) is a vigorous delivery vehicle that permits educational courses to be distributed to lots of people from different residential areas (Chen & Liu, 2007). The integration of computers and communication technologies is viewed as a key factor that enriches education, in general, and English language teaching, in particular (Hampel, 2006; Wang, 2006). In other words, educators can benefit from the various privileges provided by computers and technologies to improve their learners' achievements.

#### **1. Historical Background of CALL**

Computers have been used in the field of language teaching since the mid of the last century. However, the acronym CALL (Computers-Assisted Language Learning) was not introduced until 1983 out of a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) convention in Toronto, Canada. The term CALL “refers simply to the use of computers in different manners to facilitate the process of teaching and learning” (Bennacer, 2019, p. 83). Similarly, Levy (1997) defined CALL as “The search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (as quoted in Chappelle, 2010, p.1). Chappelle (2005), in turn, declared that CALL is “the broad range of activities associated with technology and language learning” (p.743). According to Brett and Gonzalez-Lloret (2009), CALL refers to a wide range of communication tools, the internet, software, and applications that are particularly generated for language learning and teaching. Hereafter, CALL embraces various ICTs and approaches directed to teaching and learning foreign languages. Technology has moved from CALL to Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which does not only transmit information to learners through networks but also requires the learners to employ their critical thinking to participate in different tasks

(Hampel, 2006). Subsequently, the ultimate goal of CMC is not only to transfer digital information but also to promote interaction amongst learning communities.

## **2. Basic Concepts**

To avoid obscurity, it is essential for a distinction between some terminologies related to CALL to be made. These terms include E-learning, Online learning, Distance learning, and Blended learning.

### **2.1. E-Learning**

It is the use of information and communication technology to learn at anytime and anywhere; it covers a wide range of electronic tools that enables the delivery of just-in-time information and guidance from educators (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2014).

### **2.2. Online Learning**

Although e-learning and online learning are most of the time used interchangeably, it is of salient importance to recognise that “e-learning can encompass any form of telecommunications and computer-based learning, while online learning means using specifically the internet and the web” (Bates, 2005, p. 08). In other words, online learning takes place via the net while e-learning occurs with the use of any electronic device and not necessarily online.

### **2.3. Distance Learning**

Distance education is that type of learning where the teacher and the learners communicate with each other while they are in different physical environments and timelines (Moran, 1997; as cited in Martins, Sergio, & Silva, 2018). In distance learning, both electronic and non-electronic media are used. In a similar vein, Anderson (2005) argued that online learning is that kind of learning that takes place via the net whereas e-learning takes place through all electronic media not only the net. Then, e-learning is broader than online learning, but it is a subset of distance learning.

## **2.4. Hybrid Learning**

The terms “Blended Learning”, “Hybrid Learning” and “Mixed Learning” are used interchangeably in the literature sources (Martyn, 2003; So & Brush, 2008), and they represent the combination of physical and virtual environments where learners and instructors can interact with each other by using digital tools (Staker, 2011). Blended learning “represents a compromise, combining a face-to-face component with computer-based distance learning where teacher and learner interact dynamically” (Jordan et al., 2008, p. 228; as quoted in Bennacer, 2019). Moreover, it is defined as “learning that combines online activity with more traditional periods of face-to-face contact and classroom interaction” (O'Dowd, 2007, p. 18). Thus, Hybrid learning is a space where physical and virtual environments are merged to provide direct interaction without the need for the physical presence of participants.

## **3. Google-Assisted Language Learning**

More recently, Chinnery (2008) introduced the acronym GALL (Google-assisted language learning) that refers to the use of Google Apps as tools that support online language learning. He emphasised that the communicative, productive, and collaborative nature of these applications have been proved to provide pedagogical uses. Examples of Google tools and Apps are Google Docs, Google Scholar, Google Groups, Google +, Google Earth, and Google Meet. Covili (2012) argued that Google contributes to the language learning process through the offering of successive technological evolutions that give learners opportunities to collaborate from anywhere and at any time (as cited in Abdel-Raheem, 2020). That is, GALL opens the doors for learners as well as instructors to more flexible learning.

#### **4.The Pedagogical Approach**

The pedagogical approach, which is embedded under the blended learning, refers to the appropriate ICTs' selection concerning the characteristics of the different learning situations (Jordan et al., 2008; as cited in Bennacer, 2019). Furthermore, Dooly (2007) explained “new technologies and telecollaboration is not a cure-all, nor can telecollaboration be perceived as a one-size-fits-all effort” (p. 214). Accordingly, the integration of technology alone does not guarantee the desired outcomes, rather it depends on its relevance to the pedagogy. Henceforth, the technology selected must be easy to access and use without much training. That is, teachers' choice of a specific ICT has to suit learners' levels and avoid increasing workloads (Hrastinski, 2008). Besides, they should consider the possible way of the course content delivery that can be transmitted either synchronously or asynchronously (Akkooyunlu & Soylu, 2006). Thus, E-Learning model can be implemented using two different systems of ICTs.

### **5. Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning**

#### **5.1. Asynchronous Learning**

##### **5.1.1. Definition**

Lim & Morris (2009) defined asynchronous e-learning as a standalone approach that was designed particularly for self-study through which the learners work with their peers and instructors each from his/her place and desirable time. Similarly, Johnson (2006) defined asynchronous communication as a form of distance learning that does not rely on simultaneous access for educational outcomes, and it enables all the participants of a learning community to contact each other over the internet (Algahtani, 2011). That is, asynchronous learning is a mode of online education in which participants are not required to attend instruction sessions at the same time or from the same place. E-Mail, Discussion Boards, Blogs, handouts, articles, podcasts, and audio/video recordings are good examples

of asynchronous tools (Perveen, 2016; Raymond, Atsumbe, Okwori, & Jebba, 2016) that allow people to share information outside the constraints of time and place.

### **5.1.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Asynchronous ICTs**

The special feature of delayed response in the asynchronous mode enables learners to brainstorm about their tasks for an extended time; therefore, they develop divergent thinking and produce more creative and ingenious responses (Huang & Hsiao, 2012; Xie, Liu, Bhairma, & Shim, 2018; Amiti, 2020). The latter can be achieved due to the low affective filter since there is less pressure and less shyness. That is, this type of learning helps learners to alleviate the fear factor. Moreover, asynchronous tools promote self-paced and student-centred learning (Murphy, Rodrigues-Manzanares, & Barbour, 2011) in which “the students have to be self-disciplined to keep themselves active as well as interactive to keep track of e-tivities” (Perveen, 2016, p. 22). In other words, learners should use the asynchronous mode cautiously, so they keep engaged and avoid getting distracted. Besides, the internet bandwidth is not considered an obstacle in asynchronous distant learning because it does not require direct interaction.

On the other hand, the lack of interactivity among the instructors and learners is the major problem of asynchronous media instruction methods (Chen, Liu, & Wong, 2007). Particularly, learners will be deprived of any instant feedback which can be frustrating (Algahtani, 2011; Huang & Hsiao, 2012). This dilemma can be solved by implementing synchronous distant education which is more advantageous in terms of providing visual and voice communication.

## **5.2. Synchronous Learning**

### **5.2.1. Definition**

It is a learning model that involves real-time communication between educators and their students, through different spaces (Johnson, 2006; Shi & Morrow, 2006; Chen, Liu, &

Wong, 2007; Algahtani, 2011; Perveen, 2016). This means that synchronous media tools are time-bound with which their users need to attend the classes simultaneously but from different places. According to Arkorful and Abaidoo (2014), “the synchronous timing comprises alternate on-line access between teachers or instructors and learners, or between learners, [...] it allows all participants to post communications to any other participant over the internet” (p. 400). Synchronous systems include text chats, audio/video conferencing, and two-way live satellite broadcast lectures (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005; as cited in Chen et al., 2007).

### **5.2.2. Advantages**

Like any other technological learning tool, the synchronous model has its pros and cons (Repman et al., 2005). Many researchers in the field of e-learning mentioned different benefits of the synchronous virtual classroom (Park & Bonk, 2007; Chen, et al., 2015; Xie, Liu, Bhairma, & Shim, 2018). Its prime advantage is that it strengthens social presence that provides a high level and dynamic interaction; therefore, it helps learners to get rid of the feeling of isolation (Morse, 2003). Likewise, Offir, Lev, and Bezalel (2008) argued that dynamic interaction is indispensable in a synchronous class since it allows instant feedback. The latter includes immediate access to real-time discussions, questioning, sharing of knowledge, and exchanging multiple perspectives; hence, more in-depth learning is founded (Algahtani, 2011; Denton, 2014). All of these social features of synchronous virtual learning foster learners’ motivation and responsibility and create a sense of learning community (Perveen, 2016). In addition, Bender (2003) pointed that learners’ feeling of comfort with technology is a significant factor for successful online learning. In this sense, students will neither get distracted nor feel bored while using digital platforms. As a result, the abovementioned privileges make synchronous learning modes closer to the traditional class (Reinhart & Schneider, 1998; Gillies, 2008; Amiti, 2020). To

put it in a nutshell, the unique aspects of synchronous virtual classes offer a more comfortable environment for learners and might be a good alternative for face-to-face learning.

### **5.2.3. Disadvantages**

This type of learning is not free from some hindrances. It is a time-bound learning system (Skylar, 2009) that requires a fixed time for a meeting. This opposes the common trait of “anytime, anywhere” learning promoted by online courses. Another remarkable obstacle is the unstable bandwidth of the internet that may include audio and visual interruptions (Bensafa, 2014). This can create a feeling of annoyance and discomfort amongst participants who may develop negative attitudes towards synchronous online learning.

To sum up, each mode with appropriate facilitation can support different forms of critical thinking. Students’ use of each mode serves a distinct learning objective. However, synchronous e-learning is viewed as more advantageous than asynchronous one, especially in terms of direct interaction which is the essence of learning/teaching foreign languages.

## **Section Three: Web-Based Conferencing**

### **Introduction**

Synchronous virtual classrooms are commonly known as web-conferencing or e-conferencing systems (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Walker, 2009). Web-based conferencing is one of the most powerful forms of communication which is becoming indispensable in the field of education in both developed and developing countries (Bensafa, 2014). It is widely used to deliver instruction across distances (Loranc-Paszylk, 2015). It can be used in conjunction either with audio or both audio and video feeds to allow file transfer or collaborative work (Repman et al., 2005). Audioconferencing refers to “a synchronous technology that allows verbal interaction among individuals or groups at a distance” (Repman et al., 2005, p. 65). Videoconferencing is another synchronous media method that provides both verbal and non-verbal interaction which is lacking in audioconferencing (Chen et al., 2007). Therefore, videoconferencing is becoming more and more embraced in the field of distance learning (Bensafa, 2014). This drove the researchers to raise questions and conduct a study about this innovative type of learning.

### **1. Videoconferencing**

#### **1.1. Definition**

Videoconferencing is viewed as an advanced learning technological tool in the field of distance education since it provides intensive interaction and motivation, and reinforces collaborative work (Wheeler, 2005). According to Rouse (2016), videoconferencing refers to a synchronous and interactive tool through which participants can exchange voice, video, and information from different parts of the world via an internet connection and an appropriate software (as cited in Upshaw, 2019). In other words, the term videoconferencing is used to describe a system that enables participants in different

locations to interact while seeing and hearing each other in real-time with the assistance of the internet and a collection of technologies.

## **1.2. Advantages**

Videoconferencing is regarded as interesting and beneficial (Wong & Fauverge, 1999). It is characterised by several distinctive features, which have tempted many educational institutions to adopt it as a medium. One of the remarkable privileges that should be mentioned here is that video conferencing virtual spaces are similar to the traditional face-to-face classroom settings, especially in the one-to-one situations (Wang, 2006). That is, being able to see each other via cameras is regarded as a tremendous factor that serves instructors a lot to know more about their learners and their needs. Similarly, Wang (2004) stated that videoconferencing contributes a lot to create a learner-centred environment, and it uploads the social interaction levels that were impeded by the absence of visual communication before (Wang, 2006). Subsequently, videoconferences help learners to get rid of the feeling of isolation and apathy. In the same vein, Hopper (2014) declared that video conferencing can be utilised to “act as a medium for incorporating critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, independent learning, information media, global and cultural awareness, and technological literacy” (p. 78). Another advantage of the videoconferencing technique is that it “[...] can reduce barriers such as travel safety, costs and time that can impede trips designed for intellectual exchanges as it offers a viable means to develop a framework for addressing social and workplace changing” (Bensaifa, 2014). One can understand that videoconferencing characteristics enable students and instructors to connect through different means such as oral communication, exchanging typed messages, uploading PowerPoint presentations, transmitting videos, and more.

### **1.3. Disadvantages**

Some researchers argued that despite its high qualities and intensive interaction opportunities, learning via videoconferencing platforms is still not as effective as traditional learning (Schweizer, Paechter, & Weidenmann, 2003). Technical and connection problems, lack of learner's computer skills, and not providing appropriate pedagogical training for instructors are all factors that may hinder learning via videoconferences.

The most widely noticed limitations during videoconferencing education process are those related to technical issues (Chen et al., 2007). The latter may include voice and visual interruptions, limited internet bandwidth, and accessibility at a given time (Karal et al., 2011; Warden, Stanworth, Ren, & Warden, 2013; Bensafa, 2014). These types of problems "can be difficult to solve or even explore" (Warden et al., 2013, p. 200) since they are usually caused by a low-speed internet connection.

Learners' lack of digital experiences is another factor that affects their learning via videoconference tools; "users without computer expertise may find setting up the systems and connecting for a conference challenging" (Repman et al., 2005, p. 65). Thus, a videoconference requires all its users to be digital natives and have adequate technological skills.

Another key obstacle in the process of learning via these tools is the lack of instructors' training. According to Crawford et al. (2020), the effectiveness of videoconferencing classes requires more than simply posting the material in a web application. Yet, successful videoconference courses require tutors to be digitally competent and to deliver a course in a way that fosters effective students' engagement. For example, they have to offer personalised feedback and discussion boards for interaction. Furthermore, some students,

despite the synchronous visuality and auditory offered by videoconferencing tools, still miss the human touch like eye contact (Turgut & Karal, 2014).

Adding to that, many times, the participants' exposure to a camera or video recorder makes them feel unnatural (Chen et al., 2007). In this vein, many students view courses held via video conferencing as a television program (Bozkaya, 2006 as cited in Turgut & Karal, 2014). Such feelings may lead learners to lose attention from the instruction, and therefore, their learning outcomes will be affected.

All in all, these kinds of barriers can cause confusion and frustration for both students and instructors and may lead to undesirable delays and even withdrawals of courses.

## **2. About Google Meet**

Learning through video conferencing can be applied via diverse platforms such as Google Meet. It is a video-communication service that was formally launched by Google in March 2017, and that consists of the replacement for Google Hangouts and the integration of Google Chat. It has been used as a medium in English language teaching and learning (Mannong, 2020). “Google meet is an interactive and alternative media used for online learning” (Agung, Nurfina, Paidi, Tyasmiarni, & Kusdianto, 2020, p. 3925).

It has been claimed that Google Meet plays a primordial role in enhancing EFL learners' language four skills, especially for speaking (Fakhruddin, 2018). Therefore, its users are offered more engagement and interaction opportunities to improve their learning. Furthermore, Google Meet assists tutors to deliver courses in virtual learning spaces. Thus, Google Meet has become the most valid and favourite substitution to the traditional classroom (Altmann, 2015). Adding to that, Mannong (2020) stated that the interactive nature of Google Meet has unequivocal contributions to the students' construction of knowledge and the accomplishment of learning objectives.

Google Meet is characterised by the ease of use and security that make it one of the top lists recommended tools in online teaching (Aswir, Sofian Hadi, & Dewi, 2021). These tempting qualities stimulate colleges and universities to adopt Google Meet (Martin-Garcia, Martinez-Abad, & Reyes-Gonzalez, 2019). In this sense, Google Meet has gained this high position over the other technological means because it offers the feeling of safety and confidence, and simplicity within instant communication (Saeed Al-Maroof, A.Salloum, Hassanien, & Shaalan, 2020; Aswir et al., 2021). To explain another way, Google Meet has several pros that facilitate the distance teaching/learning process. In this vein, Saeed Al-Maroof et al. (2020) listed some of the main qualities of Google Meet. First of all, its availability on smartphones and laptops aids to join classes easily. Secondly, the links that are provided to accede Google meetings can be used many times, which enables learners to connect with their tutors and peers at any point in time. Last but not least, students' sensation of hesitation and fear might diminish.

## **Chapter Two: Field Work**

Introduction

1. Data Collection Procedures

2. Population and Sampling

3. Students' Interview

3.1. Description of Students' Interview

3.2. Analysis of Students' Interview

3.3. Interpretation of Students' Interview

4. Classroom Observation

4.1. Description of Classroom Observation

4.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation

4.3. Interpretation of Classroom Observation

5. Overall Discussion of the Results

Conclusion

## **Chapter Two: Field Work**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the empirical framework of the current study, which aims at investigating EFL first-year students' attitudes towards the use of Google Meet for their oral course. First, it provides general information about the fieldwork design (the methodology, the setting in addition to the population and sampling of the study). Further, it gives a detailed description of the research instruments, namely, the students' interview and the classroom observation checklist. Moreover, it presents the analysis and interpretation of the interview collected data, followed by the analysis and interpretation of the classroom observation findings. This chapter, then, ends with an overall discussion of the results obtained from all the analysed data to answer the research questions and to confirm or reject the already stated hypothesis in the research proposal of this study.

#### **1. Data Collection Procedures**

In response to the purpose of this study, the researchers opted for a qualitative approach of data collection, which "provides an explanation of the process of interest, or the subjective feelings and perceptions of those involved in it. It leads to in-depth and rich data [...] and detailed analysis of the phenomenon of interest" (Peel, 2010, p.55). This can be achieved through different tools; however, a semi-structured interview and a classroom observation were believed to be appropriate to collect the needed data for this work. Adding to that, a descriptive analysis approach is employed to elicit EFL learners' interaction and attitudes towards using Google Meet for their oral course.

#### **2. Population and Sampling**

This study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 at the University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. Data was sought from first-year-license

students of English at the Department of English language. The sample of the interview consists of nine (9) randomly selected learners from groups three (3) and four (4) based on their availability. About the classroom observation sample, the aforementioned interviewees and some other students from groups three and four (3 and 4), on average twenty-five students (25), were present during the observed online course.

The selection of this sample was simply based on the consideration that first-year students, group (3) and (4), in particular, are the only ones who have been exposed to the use of Google Meet as a learning medium for the oral course since the start of Covid-19 crisis. Adding to that, discussing issues pertaining to attitudes would also help learners improve their performance during the videoconferencing courses.

### **3. Students' Interview**

Tuckman and Harper (2012) stated that “by providing access to what is inside a person’s head, it makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)” (p. 244). In this vein, Kerlinger (1970) suggested that the causes of the participants acting in a particular way can be highlighted through interviews. Moreover, it allows face-to-face conversation, in which the researchers can interpret the reaction of the participants through their gestures and facial expressions. As a result, a students’ interview was used in the present work to gather primary data about the interviewees’ educational experiences and to explore their attitudes towards taking the online oral course via Google Meet.

According to Robson (2011), when conducting an interview, the researcher can take one of its three types, namely, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, depending on their structure and standardisation. Subsequently, a semi-structured interview was considered appropriate to provide more reliable data in this research project; within which

the researchers have a predetermined outline of topics and questions to be covered, yet they have the freedom to control the order, depending on the flow of the interview, edit the wording as to give further explanations, ask extra questions based on the interviewee's answers, or even omit questions that seem irrelevant to a specific participant (Robson, 2011).

### **3.1. Description of Students' Interview**

The semi-structured interview was scheduled at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. It was conducted by meeting 09 first-year licence students individually at two separated classrooms (3 and 4) in the department of English. The duration of each student's interview ranged between 15 to 20 minutes. First, an interview consent form and questions template (see Appendix A&B) were developed and handed to the participants to inform them about the current study and the procedures of the interview, and to get their consent to record it via smartphones. Every interview was then transcribed word by word from the original audio records to be analysed and interpreted.

The interview consists of ten questions with sub-questions. The first two questions (Q1&Q2) are set to explore students' experiences with online learning in general, and Google Meet in particular. Question (3) investigates the challenges they encountered when learning via Google Meet to uncover their effect on learners' attitudes. Question (4) addresses learners' feelings that reflect the extent of their interaction in this unusual learning atmosphere. Both (Q5&Q6) seek to shed light on students' behaviours during the online course; question (5) focuses on the impact of the teacher on his learners' performance, whereas question (6) aims to capture the frequency of learner-learner interaction. Question (7) is asked to elicit learners' interests in the tasks applied which determine their extent of communication. The remaining three questions, (Q8, Q9&Q10),

are concerned with learners' performance appraisal, their satisfaction with Google Meet, as well as their suggestions to improve it.

### **3.2. Analysis of Students' Interviews**

#### **Student 1**

This student has two years of experience in using digital resources to improve her English language. She clearly stated that she benefited from online learning to the point that she recommended watching YouTube videos as well as taking advantage of BBC learning English and WordUp apps. Once she was invited to take the oral course via Google Meet, she panicked and thought she would not be able to work with it as she declared “I thought it will be a waste of time [...] I was confused and afraid at the beginning because I didn't know how to use it” (student 1). However, she changed her mind after attending the first session due to Google Meet's ease of use and the benefits of the discussion during the session. The unstable internet bandwidth was the only obstacle that kept frustrating her regardless of her constant attempts to overcome this “I tried to get closer to the router as well as I changed the device” (student1).

According to the interview data, the student found that discussions via Google Meet were interesting; “I didn't feel anxious or bored. I was excited to learn [...] I liked the conversations. So I always interrupt them to give other opinions” (student1). Moreover, she explained that the interaction was easier on Google Meet compared to real classrooms even for shy students; “it was a bit better than the real classroom ...on Google Meet, shy people can talk” (student 1). With regard to her interaction with the teacher, she clarified that he encouraged her to interact more with her peers and tried to get everyone involved in the discussion.

Concerning the tasks that were given during the online oral course, she declared that “they were interesting [...] especially debatable conversations” (student1).

In the end, the student acknowledged her good performance during the online course. In other words, she was satisfied with the learning journey via Google Meet; “it was a good

experience to me” (student1). Subsequently, she showed her readiness to attend more sessions although the presence is not compulsory.

## **Student 2**

This student mentioned that she uses digital resources to improve her English language depending on YouTube channels; “for British English, I watch English with Lucy and for American English, I watch Linguamarina” (student 2). Once she was informed that the oral course is going to be via Google Meet, she got excited but a little bit stressed. As revealed by the interview’s answers, this was because she was not familiar with it; “I was excited, but at the same time, a little bit stressed because I have never used it” (student 2). She also pointed that she was disappointed in the first session mainly due to the internet’s cuts off. Besides, unlike what she expected, she was not able to interact with her classmates visually since they did not use the Webcam. However, she made it clear that the second session was really good as she did not encounter any problem except for the instability of the internet. That is to say, her impressions about Google Meet changed positively.

As far as learners’ interaction is concerned, she revealed that Google Meet does not make it boring, but learners may feel a little anxious, especially the shy ones unlike what student 1 reported. Furthermore, she stated “Google Meet helps to share ideas, listen to others how they express their opinions and learn from each other” (student 2). On the other hand, she argued that Google Meet does not make interaction easier than real classes because according to her; it is related to student’s interests, ideas, and linguistic repertoire in the first place. She added that she prefers studying in traditional classes where the use of body language helps her expressing herself while losing words because webcams were off. This, regarding the interview data, affected her active performance; “I just stop talking and give the chance to others” (student 2). Concerning the teacher’s impacts on the online class, she agreed with student 1 that he kept motivating and encouraging everyone to

participate, especially when they seemed hesitant or shy. Unsurprisingly, she expressed that discussions are not her favourite tasks; “I don't interact so much [...] and you know, when I like the topic I may interact” (student 2).

Finally, the student admitted that she is dissatisfied with her performance during Google Meet classes, and thought that she should do more; “hopefully, I learnt my lesson from my first experience that if I have an idea I should never keep it for myself and share it” (student 2). This meant that she becomes more aware of her weaknesses and she will make more efforts in the coming online sessions.

### **Student 3**

This student reported that she used digital resources to improve her English language such as Oxford Dictionaries. However, she declared that she first used Google Meet in her online oral course. Accordingly, she was not sure about her performance during this unusual learning process. Nevertheless, her uncertainty changed totally after her first session; “It was amazing because it was new, and you know that excitement with new things. I was excited” (student3).

According to the interview data, this student did not encounter any kind of problems with the application itself; however, she only complained about the unsteady connection. With regard to her feelings, she expressed that she was more anxious than bored at the beginning of the course. She reported: “I was afraid that I am not going to do well [...] I was anxious about the lack of vocabulary; I guess [...] but I was more afraid about my accent” (student 3).

Concerning the aspect of interaction via Google Meet, the student mentioned that it was easier than in other applications “such as Zoom” (student 3) but not as attractive as in real classes. She further demonstrated that she feels alone at home; “I am an outgoing person [...] in traditional classrooms we sit together and speak to each other, but in Google Meet I

am just alone in my room with my smartphone" (student 3). Moreover, she clarified that the time devoted to each session was not sufficient for her; "if we have an oral session for one hour and a half, or two hours every day, we will interact more with each other" (student 3). Accordingly, her interaction level with other peers was affected. Regarding the teacher's role, this student had typical answers to students (1) and (2). Adding to that, she acknowledged the adequacy of the tasks that were applied during the course as she stated "they were beneficial and interesting enough to make me engaged in the discussions" (student 3).

In the end, the student expressed conviction with her performance during her learning experience via Google Meet, and she showed interest in joining the coming online classes. And once again, she indicated her frustration about the internet speed as well as the sessions' duration hoping for future betterment.

#### **Student 4**

This student stated that she benefits from free online courses to develop her English language. Before starting her oral course via Google Meet, she perceived that she will not perform well; "I was pretty anxious because I am quite a shy person. So I thought it will be hard to talk to others" (student 4). Nevertheless, those impressions changed radically after her first online session; "I felt more comfortable. Actually, I did not focus on my speaking mistakes or errors I might make. I just wanted to interact with my classmates and my teacher to improve myself" (student 4).

As far as the obstacles encountered are concerned, and just like the previous interviewees argued, she made it clear "Well, the only difficulty was the internet speed [...] otherwise, I did not face any problem. Sometimes I found myself out of the class, so I had to rejoin. This took me some time and then missing the discussion" (student 4). Adding to that, this student expressed two different feelings about interaction via Google

meet; “I found it exciting to experience a new thing, but at the same time it makes me feel anxious since I am not familiar with this kind of learning” (student 4). Though, the sessions were fun for her; “It was not boring because there was no homework, and the teacher did not give us something hard [...] it was just talking about different topics, exchanging ideas and opinions. So it was fun”.

Concerning interaction via Google Meet, the student announced the easiness of engagement in the discussions since all the students had the chance to participate and express their opinions. Unlike the previous students, this one found that English oral course becomes more interesting and attractive when using Google Meet as she declared:

you feel like you are more comfortable to talk and have more chances to express yourself because! you know! while talking face to face, everyone wants to talk at the same time. But when we had our online class, everyone got a chance to talk. So it was quite easy to understand each other. (student 4)

With regard to the instructor’s role, the interviewee confirmed that he is the cornerstone of the Google Meet oral course. She further explained:

he helped us to get familiar and interact with each other. He also encouraged us to talk by introducing interesting topics that we all could discuss and express opinions about. So, it became easy for us to say whatever we want regardless of the mistakes we would commit. (student 4)

From the interview collected data, this student becomes more engaged in the discussions with her peers after attending some sessions, especially that those discussions were interesting. Accordingly, she seemed satisfied with her performance during this course; “I think we could reach the goal of the oral course which is to talk as much as possible”. In conclusion, the student showed optimism about the coming online oral course.

## **Student 5**

This student uses digital resources in her English language learning; accordingly, she expected to have a good online learning experience via Google Meet. In contrast, the first

session was really disappointing for her; “it was so bad, so bad” (student 5). The most problematic issues, according to her answers, were “bad connection, and I have a lot of noise in my house” (student 5). She made it clear that her impressions did not change; as consequence, she stopped attending her online classes. She further clarified the reason behind her quitting this online course, which was that it made her feel anxious and bored. Besides, the absence of the Webcam made the situation even worse for her “it was difficult than the real classroom because [...] I cannot see anyone of my mates [...]” (student 5).

As revealed by the interview data, this student did not take part in any discussion during the course; “I have not made any reaction, and I was silent all the time though the topics were interesting” (student 5). Furthermore, she admitted that the teacher spared no effort to get everyone involved in the discussions, especially the shy ones.

Finally, the student seemed to hold negative attitudes towards learning via Google Meet, and she hopes that the education system returns to face-to-face learning; “let's just stop this online mode of learning and come back to real classes” (student 5). Otherwise, she stated that she is compelled to adapt with Google Meet providing that the Webcams will be used.

## **Student 6**

This student utilises vocabulary-building applications to develop her English language learning such as Word Up and other free online courses. Before the online oral course was started, she declared that she was doubtful about the use of Google Meet as a learning platform for this subject; “to be honest, I did not expect much. I was kind of sceptical as to whether or not it will work [...] those were my expectations [...] I just, I just went on” (Student 6). Nevertheless, this unsureness faded when she attended the first session as she reported “so it was better than I expected, and I felt like we got all of our thoughts across, and it was an OK experience [...] I reckon we should use Google Meet in different

modules and more often as well" (Student 6). In fact, like all the other interviewees, this student made it clear that; "[...] obviously, attending school in person is much better than doing it online. But, of course, online is better than nothing at all, like just sending us the pdfs is not sufficient" (Student 6).

According to this student's answers, she argued that in addition to the logging in struggle, the major obstacle for her was the lack of non-verbal communication; "I felt like most of us did not convey our thoughts as much as we would like to because most of the communication is done, you know, non-verbally, but through body language and stuff" (Student 6). She claimed that her ability to interact was affected since the Webcams were off;

so we were all just communicating with our voices that is why I am saying it is difficult to convey ideas through just voices [...] I mean, if all of us used cameras, for example, I guess that problem could be solved. (Student 6)

Talking about her emotions, she revealed that she did not feel any anxiety or boredom; "[...] I am quite extroverted, so I am comfortable talking to people, even strangers and stuff [...]" (Student 6). She further explained that she got easily distracted when using Google Meet; "[...] even though I was immersed in the conversation when I see something out of the window, I would get distracted, or someone runs by or my brother makes a noise, I always, you know, whatever, I still get distracted and not focused [...]" (Student 6). With regard to the teacher and students' interaction, she stated that he had a great impact on the process of the online course as he kept motivating students to get involved in the discussions, especially the ones who seemed reluctant and never took the initiative to express their opinions. Nonetheless, some students did not engage.

In the end, she declared that she is satisfied with her performance but not with the whole experience; "because of those who were not interested enough [...] if they get comfortable with the situation, and you know, start talking more and engaging more the

entire class will be a lot livelier” (Student 6). Last but not least, she confirmed the benefits of using the Webcams; “I would recommend making it an obligation to switch on the camera [...] and then you know, students will be more focused, and then feel like they have to look presentable and engaged in the conversation” (Student 6).

### **Student 7**

This student declared that she takes advantage of technological applications to develop her speaking skills such as Hello Talk App which she found really helpful. Before taking the course, she revealed “oh! actually I was afraid and I was having butterflies in my stomach [...] I was terrified that I will misunderstand the teacher and my classmates” (student 7). However, she stated that she found the very first session of the course enjoyable and exciting; “but when we start talking and chit-chatting, I actually find it very useful. Moreover, I had the opportunity to talk and represent my ideas more than I did in class” (student 7). According to her answers, Google Meet is not free from some shortcomings despite its usefulness. She argued that the bad connection is a major concern; “in fact, the frequent internet cuts off annoyed me a lot. For instance, I remember once I missed the discussion because I could not join the online session till almost the end” (student 7).

Regarding the online interaction, she indicated that she did not feel anxious or bored at all; “yeah, just the environment was good. At home you find it comfortable, like you would not be annoyed or judged by your classmates [...]” (student 7). She made it clear that interaction via Google Meet is easier than face-to-face learning, particularly when the Webcams are off; “you feel comfortable when you are off-screen, no one will judge you. It is okay as you are not facing someone [...] many people are shy and afraid of making mistakes in front of others in traditional classes” (student 7). As far as the teacher and the learners’ interaction is concerned, she acknowledged his sensible role in monitoring the

flow of the course; “in fact, he was really helpful. He paid attention to our opinions and gave us chances to talk and represent our ideas” (student 7). Furthermore, she reported that he made them understand that they should not feel embarrassed about making mistakes while speaking since the goal of this online oral course is the improvement and not the perfection of speaking skills. “He makes us feel much better,” she said. On the other hand, she was not happy about the level of interaction amongst the classmates; “[...] not all students were involved. Yeah, they were present but silent” (student 7); even though, the tasks applied during the course were interesting and purposeful as she clarified.

In conclusion, this student expressed satisfaction about her online performance as well as the course itself regardless of the technical problems she mentioned above. She further added that she would like to get closer to her classmates so they can have stronger interaction; “I would love to know my classmates better and become friends so we get all involved well in the discussions” (student 7).

## **Student 8**

This student benefits from digital resources to enhance her English language; “especially YouTube channels, websites, and applications such as English Classes 101, Grammarly and Duolingo”, she declared. Subsequently, she embraced the idea of taking the oral course via Google Meet as she reported “I felt excited and ready and I liked the idea” (student 8). Accordingly, she demonstrated that her first online session was pleasant; “[...] in the beginning, we felt shy but when our teacher motivated us, we felt more comfortable [...] I think it was good” (student 8). Adding to that, she stated that she did not face any technical difficulty, apart from some connection cuts off, since she is knowledgeable about programming systems.

The interview data revealed that this student found the interaction via Google Meet easy and attractive as she was neither anxious nor bored during the sessions; “for me, I took part

in all the discussions with no fear of being judged because I am an outgoing person who is willing to learn" (student 8). However, this was not the case for some other students who felt afraid of making mistakes, according to her. With regard to the teacher's impact on the course, she admitted his significant role just as the previous students did. Moreover, she declared that interaction with her peers went well; "so when we got familiar, the interaction became easier [...] we took the initiative, we shared our ideas and we discussed different topics" (student 8). This meant that the new learning atmosphere was convenient for her, particularly the tasks were interesting enough to get her engaged as she reported "[...] they were so helpful and beneficial for developing our speaking proficiency, and also for our lives and personalities [...] like how we avoid procrastination and how we become active students [...]" (student 8).

In the end, the student expressed her satisfaction with the whole course process which she prefers over the traditional face-to-face learning. This was obvious in her answers; I am satisfied with my online class because I have improved my learning, and, yeah, I think that online classes are better than traditional ones because in online classes I do not really waste time in studying rules and I can do different things at home with comfort (student 8).

She also hopes that her classmates will interact more frequently in the coming online sessions to harness the opportunities provided in this course.

### **Student 9**

This student declared that YouTube, Wikipedia, and podcasts are her favourite learning platforms she uses to improve her English language. This made her feel excited to join the online oral course via Google Meet as she stated. Therefore, she googled the application to learn how it works and she discovered its ease of use. Subsequently, she indicated that she became more confident and comfortable; "[...] I found it an easy-peasy process and this made me feel relieved" (Student 9). She added that once she attended the first online session, she found it interesting and helpful as expected; "it was

supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!! Yeah, I love it so much. I could share my thoughts about different topics” (Student 9). However, she argued that the unsteady internet connection was really frustrating for her.

With regard to the teacher’s role, she stated that he had a positive impact on the online course as he facilitated the learning process for his students; “our teacher kept pushing and motivating us to talk and he was positive all the time. Yeah [...] he also gave us the chances to take part” (Student 9). Moreover, she made it clear that she often interacted and liked to share her ideas with her classmates without considering the mistakes she might make and the judgments she might receive. According to her, this was due to the fact that the tasks applied were interesting enough to get her involved. Consequently, she thought she had a good performance during her online experience as she reported “[...] to be honest, emm [...] it was good, it was very good” (Student 9).

Finally, this interviewee expressed her conviction with this unusual mode of learning, and she attempts to do even better in the future online oral course, she added. She also proposed the integration of the Webcams as well games as parts of the course to guarantee the effective interaction of all the participants.

### **3.3. Interpretation of Students’ Interview**

The results obtained from the interviews’ analysis revealed that all the learners use digital resources to improve their English language. Nonetheless, most of them seemed to have what is called “ICT phobia”, which could be due to the sudden shift of the learning mode and the doubts they had about the usefulness of Google Meet as an alternative. Within a short period, these impressions changed due to different factors which might be as follows: they discovered Google Meet’s ease of use, the teacher provided the necessary help they needed, and they found the tasks applied interesting enough to get them engaged

in the discussions. This contributed a lot to decrease the level of anxiety, therefore, enhance interaction between the learners, especially the shy ones.

The same interviewees, on the other hand, demonstrated their preference of the traditional classes over the distant ones in spite of the privileges they provided. This could be related to the absence of non-verbal communication, which is of primordial importance for first-year EFL learners, since the Webcams were off. The latter might be due to the fact that the participants were not familiar with each other as a result of the education system followed by the universities in the application of Covid-19 preventive measures. Some cultural factors such as parental concerns as well as the uncomfortable environment inside the Algerian houses that affect students' behaviours, especially females, not to use the webcams could be another reason. Besides, it is important to mention that the teacher decided to give his learners freedom to open the cameras in consideration of some learners' circumstances. In contrast, this badly affected the visual learners who depend more on the non-verbal language for learning but felt embarrassed to oppose their peers' idea of turning off the cameras. Dispensing Webcams served the shy learners to engage more comfortably as they avoided the visual contact with their teacher and peers. However, this contradicted with the purpose of creating videoconferencing platforms which is to upload the social interaction levels by incorporating the distinctive feature of visual communication.

The major difficulty that all the participants agreed on was getting access to Google Meet due to the unsteady internet bandwidth. The latter prohibited them from engaging in the discussions; hence, their participation was influenced negatively. Despite the serious ICT challenges the learners faced, the majority were ready to repeat the experience and suggested a better internet connection, more time devoted for each session (one hour and a half or more), and the use of Webcams. However, some students disagreed with their peers

on the use of Google Meet. They refused it because of the problems encountered during the link.

#### **4. Classroom Observation**

In this current study, the researchers opted for classroom observation as a second instrument to have in-depth information and truthful insights about what is actually happening in the virtual classrooms. Marshall and Rossman (1989) defined observation as “the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study” (p. 79). That is, it gives the researchers the chance to gather data from natural settings. Moreover, it helps to enrich and verify the interview findings of this study; Dornyei (2007) stated “from a research perspective, observation is fundamentally different from questioning because it provides direct information rather than self-report accounts, and thus it is one of the three basic data sources for empirical research” (p. 178). Thus, it is an attempt, in the current research, to observe the real behaviours as well as the non-verbal expressions of the participants when attending the online oral course via Google Meet; therefore, to give the researchers more authentic results. Adding to that, classroom observation seeks to measure the extent of students’ online engagement and how teachers encourage them to do so as it provides the chance to determine who interacts with whom (Schmuck, 1997).

Classroom observation was carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 with first-year licence students of the English language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. Approximately twenty-five (25) students from group three (3) and four (4), including the interviewees, were observed online during the oral course via Google Meet during the first two weeks of June with two sessions per week. The researchers first took permission from the teacher of both groups, Mr. BOUZENOUN. After that, the teacher sent a link to the online session via email. The researchers then

relied on a checklist (see Appendix C) form and note-taking to monitor the behaviours of the participants in the online learning atmosphere.

#### **4.1. Description of Classroom Observation**

The observation sheet form consists of four (4) sections that contribute to the understanding of the learners' attitudes towards the online teaching and learning atmosphere via Google Meet. Under each section, there is a set of statements that were scaled (1: not evident, 2: evident, 3: strongly evident).

The first section deals with the teacher's role in managing the online oral course. It covers six different strategies used by the teacher which are: opening the session with a warm-up, stimulating learners' interest, adopting a learner-centred approach, designing collaborative tasks, keeping learners engaged, and assisting learners with technical problems.

The second section is devoted to observing the learners' participation during the online course. The first statement is about the learners' interaction with each other. More particularly, the last four statements are designed to eliciting the interaction level of different learners (starting from the learners who took independent initiatives to participate arriving at the ones who withdrew from the discussions).

The third section is structured to exploring the teacher-learner's relation. It consists of four items: the interaction opportunities afforded to the learners, the instant correction of learners' mistakes, the teacher's interference during the discussions, and the feedback provided by the end of each session.

The last section is about the different technical problems encountered by the participants during the online sessions. They mainly include internet cuts off, audio/video delays, and learners' reactions towards those technological obstacles.

## **4.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation**

### **Section One: Teacher's Role**

As described above, this section deals with the teacher's role in managing the online oral course. It was obvious that the teacher opened all the sessions with a warm greeting and a friendly chit-chatting with each learner. After that, it was strongly noticed that the teacher inspired his learners' interest and enthusiasm for the course material by designing collaborative tasks which were in the form of discussions, debatable questions, and games. As a result, most learners kept involved, apparently. This supported the learner-centred approach adopted by the teacher during all the sessions that were observed. It was strongly evident that the teacher assisted his learners with the technical problems they encountered as he continuously checked and directed them to solve those obstacles, so they will not get distracted.

### **Section Two: Learners' Interaction**

As discussed before, the second section in the observation checklist is concerned with the learner's interaction when the online sessions took place. The collected data indicated that the attendance rate of students was approximately 25 per session with the fact that the presence was not obligatory. The researchers discovered two types of learners with regard to their interaction level. The first type included the learners who took independent initiatives to participate and engaged actively by sharing their opinions whatever the topic was; paying attention to the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation; self-correcting or even neglecting their mistakes; using some idiomatic expressions to show off their language skills. This evidently reflected a high interaction level of those students. The second type, on the other hand, represented the learners who were hesitant to engage or barely interfered as was clearly noticed during the first observations. Later on, a good number of them succeeded to make remarkable progress in their communicative

competence, and this was due to the positive impact of their teacher and peers as observed by the researchers. Unfortunately, there were still a few students who kept reluctant and withdrew from the discussions, in spite of the encouragement and the insistence of their teacher. These learners are believed to have the lowest interaction level during the whole observed sessions.

### **Section Three: Teacher-Learners' Interaction**

As far as this part is concerned, it was strongly evident that the teacher managed to organise the online course. As clearly observed, he provided opportunities for all learners to interact and he gave them the freedom to express themselves. Adding to that, it was noticed that he did not interrupt their discussions unless to provide instant correction when necessary. Moreover, it was strongly evident that the learners were frequently encouraged and praised for their efforts by their teacher, especially the ones who were hesitant to have some say at first. At the end of each observed session, the learners received their teacher's feedback about their participation as well as some highlights of the important points related to the language use.

### **Section Four: Technical Problem**

The last section in the observation checklist covers the technical aspects of the Google Meet Application. It was strongly evident that all the participants did not have reliable internet connection as they often complained about the difficulties they faced in accessing the course. Even though it was remarkable that most of the learners got frustrated because of the bad internet bandwidth, they managed to find their way around Google Meet. It was also noticed that there were no audio cuts off or delays since the teacher took charge of the sound feature by muting all the microphones and allowing only one learner to speak at a time. This guaranteed the sound good quality and prevented chaos during the sessions. As discovered in the interviews' analysis, all the participants' Webcams were off except for

the teacher's and one male student who turned it on a couple of times. This was disappointing for the researchers who expected an authentic videoconferencing course.

#### **4.3. Interpretation of the Classroom Observation Results**

The findings of the classroom observation analysis uncovered the reality of the online oral course via Google Meet in the department of English language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University. First, it was found that the teacher had a powerful part in facilitating the online oral course. He took the utmost care of creating the best possible atmosphere for learners through building good relations with them to reduce the distance of online education during Covid-19. Adding to that, establishing different tools for communication and various types of tasks helped the teacher in scaffolding learners and encouraging them to engage. And thanks to him, many students got rid of their shyness and tended to interact more.

Second, the students' attendance ratio reflected their positive reaction to Google Meet although they were not obliged to be present. As mentioned in the analysis above, two types of learners were discovered. The high interaction level of the first type might be related in the first place to the suitable learning environment provided within which the learners could alleviate the feeling of isolation resulted from homeschooling. Besides, the course was rich with interesting topics and collaborative tasks that motivated learners to interact. Moreover, the teacher's sense of humour is believed to affect the learners' behaviours positively as it reduced their anxiety; hence, they took the initiative to express themselves more openly. In addition, their strong will to develop their speaking skill supported them to take advantage of the online oral course. In contrast, the second type of learners whose interaction was weak did not exploit the aforementioned features. This could be due to the negative impressions they hold against distant learning in general,

some psychological aspects mainly related to shyness and lack of self-confidence, and some other issues concerning their linguistic competence.

Last but not least, the researchers were concerned with the impact of technical aspects on the learners' performance. They realised that some difficulties such as the internet connectivity and the sound quality caused the participants annoyance, loss of attention, and misunderstanding of the content. Consequently, these circumstances impeded the appropriate use of Google Meet. However, the teacher's digital skills enabled him to overcome the problem of audio delays as explained in the classroom observation analysis. In a nutshell, the availability of adequate internet bandwidth is of critical importance to the learners' effective engagement in a videoconferencing course as found by the researchers during the observation.

## **5. Overall Discussion of the Results**

This section sets out the essence of the present research work as it discusses the data that has been collected and analysed through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The discussion is organised in terms of the two research questions and with respect to the literature reviewed. First, it deals with the Algerian EFL learners' interaction with their instructors and peers in the online oral course. Then, it addresses their attitudes towards the online oral course.

### **Research Question 1**

What are the Algerian EFL students' attitudes towards Oral Expression online courses via Google Meet and what difficulties do they encounter when using it?

The obtained data from both research tools reported that the majority of students hold positive attitudes towards the use of Google Meet for their online oral course even though they sometimes encountered technical issues. The participants welcome its use in their learning process and think that it is a good way to reduce distance during the lockdown

because it enables them to interact with their teacher as well as with their classmates. Besides, the respondents value their teacher's encouragement, feedback, and choice of interesting topics that motivate them to join in online conversations and exchange ideas. Furthermore, enough opportunities were provided for all students to participate in the tasks, and express their opinions; nevertheless, most of them ask to extend the time devoted for each session and to allocate more sessions per week. This proves that they can benefit and enjoy their online oral course. Adding to that, the findings revealed multiple advantages of online learning via Google Meet such as applying student-centeredness, removing the barriers of space, and allowing multiple users to communicate for long periods.

Some students, on the other hand, easily lose focus while studying online due to various environmental disruptors such as the noise made by their family members or neighbours, lack of adequate learning space, or even the technical issues generated not by the platform per se, but by the poor quality of telecommunication services in the country. All these elements reflect a less positive attitude of some students towards the online education process and justify their reluctance from the use of Google Meet. However, they still acknowledge this mode of education as a solution in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the results showed a high level of learners' satisfaction with this online class, and their readiness to engage and repeat this experience in the coming academic semester though attendance is always optional. Thus, when it comes to students' attitudes towards the use of the Google Meet platform, students, in general, consider it a suitable and useful tool for online learning despite the existing technical difficulties.

## **Research Question 2**

To what extent do Algerian EFL learners interact with their instructors and peers in Oral Expression online courses?

The findings of the interviews and the classroom observations revealed that interaction was a key factor in the whole Google Meet experience. They highlighted many points that depicted the importance of interaction within EFL online oral courses. It was found that the majority of the participants have a good level of interaction within this online course. According to the results, the use of Google Meet as a learning platform enhances interaction among students. The latter is considered critical for effective outcomes of EFL learners, especially outside the classroom. These results are highly consistent with (Ahmed, 2019; Apriani et al., 2019) who dealt with the implementation of distance learning through digital platforms and applications. The results also showed that in terms of interaction, the vast majority of learners claimed to gain benefit and improvement, but with some differences in their reactions towards Google Meet as a digital learning application. Henceforth, a student's ability to exchange and cooperate with others in a certain learning environment is related to the component of attitudes towards that environment. In other words, the extent of student interaction in the learning process is not only affected by the technology used, but also depends on learners' differences and attitudes. These findings are in line with (Corder & U-Mackey, 2011). Furthermore, almost all participants showed interest in using Google Meet as they limited the chances of reluctance, enjoyed more the course, were highly involved, and as a result, achieved progress in their learning process.

According to the analyses of the interviews and the classroom observations, one can understand that Google Meet provides many aspects that have a role in the students' interaction.

## **Conclusion**

To put it in a nutshell, the overall results of the current investigation are congruent with some reviewed studies in the literature such as (Kitchakaran, 2015; Cinkara & Bagceci,

2013; Bensafa, 2014) whose findings reported that EFL learners have positive attitudes towards online learning despite its shortcomings. Similarly, the general findings of this research revealed that EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University hold positive attitudes towards using the Google Meet Application for their oral course though the internet bandwidth and connectivity hurdles. In a previous study, McBrien et al. (2009) stated that videoconferencing classes provide instructors as well as learners the opportunities for meaningful real-time interactions. This was echoed by the findings of the current study which proved that Google Meet is an adequate learning application that makes students no longer isolated, but more interactive. More importantly, the findings confirm the already stated research hypothesis and support the fact that the good mastery and appropriate use of the Google Meet Application will develop learners' positive attitudes towards the online oral courses, and therefore, increase interaction amongst them and enhance their language learning. Additionally, they indicate that there is a strong correlation between the teacher's role and the student's attitudes towards online learning, and therefore, their performance.

## **General Conclusion**

1. Putting It Altogether
2. Pedagogical Recommendations
3. Limitations of the Study
4. Suggestions for Further Research

## **1.Putting It Altogether**

The present study investigated EFL learners' attitudes towards using Google Meet as a learning medium for their oral course, and how they affected interaction among them in an online course. The overall research contained two main chapters: the first one covered the theoretical framework while the second dealt with the practical part of the inquiry.

The first chapter was divided into three sections. The first one provided a review of some recent studies related to the impact of attitudes on EFL learners' success or failure within the online learning mode in different parts of the world as well as in Algeria, especially in the time of Covid-19. The importance of interaction in online EFL classes and the learning theory on which it is based were also highlighted in this section. Section two included different aspects of attitudes and explained how they affect learners' language performance. Then, for a better understanding of the concept of application-based learning, a brief history of online learning was introduced in the third section. It provided a clear distinction between the terminologies related to CALL which were: e-learning, online learning, distance learning, and hybrid learning. Afterwards, the paradigm shift from the asynchronous ICTs to the synchronous ones was discussed with regard to the type of interaction they provide. According to the reviewed authorities, the synchronous ICTs offer real-time interaction that is critical for online oral courses. Google Meet was presented as a good example of videoconferencing synchronous ICTs which is exploited for the delivery of online courses. Its interactive nature, ease of use, and sense of security prompted the educational institutions and universities to select it as the best technological tool that assists their learners to communicate with each other.

As far as the empirical phase is concerned, the researchers decided to adopt a qualitative approach to analyse and interpret the data collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with first-year EFL students during their online oral course at the

University of Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia. On the ground of the results obtained, most EFL learners had positive attitudes towards using Google Meet for their oral course. Consequently, they tended to interact with each other more frequently despite the unusual learning conditions within the application under study. Last but not least, some recommendations and suggestions were set by the researchers to help EFL teachers and learners to take advantage Google Meet Application to the fullest.

## **2. Pedagogical Recommendations**

In the light of the study findings, the researchers recommend the following:

- The authorities should reinforce internet bandwidth to minimise the technical issues that hinder the use of Google Meet.
- The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research have to support and promote EFL learning by providing more online courses.
- EFL instructors should undergo workshops on digital training to guarantee the good mastery of the application.
- The administration should schedule longer sessions' duration within the oral courses.
- EFL teachers should encourage their learners with frequent feedback and praise to keep them involved in the online real-time interactions.
- The use of Google Meet as a learning tool should be generalised to other oral courses as well as TEFL courses that require interaction.
- Various collaborative tasks and debatable topics should be designed to satisfy the learners' needs and differences.
- Taking advantage of the webcams is strongly recommended to enhance interaction. However, this requires a high internet speed as highlighted above.

### **3. Limitations of the Study**

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that, like any other research work, the researchers confronted several difficulties all along the process of conducting this piece of research, which restricted its implementation and resulted in certain limitations:

- The major obstacle encountered was that the participants did not open the Webcams when using Google Meet; hence, this prevented the researchers from exploring a real videoconference class.
- One weakness was the unavailability of primary resources in the literature concerning the use of Google Meet in education as well as the lack of prior research studies on it.
- Another obstacle was the limited number of representatives with whom the interview was conducted; thus, does not allow for different views to be expressed and give more valid results.
- Only a small sample of students in one oral course at one university was observed. The researchers intended to interview and observe a large number of students in different subjects, but unfortunately, only two first-year groups had an online class via Google Meet. Therefore, the data gathered were limited and cannot be generalised.
- Conducting a classroom observation required more time; however, the researchers could not manage to attend more sessions due to the new education time management system during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **4. Suggestions for Further Research**

Based on the limitations of this study, it is noteworthy to suggest some recommendations for future research:

- Further studies could adopt a mixed-method approach and involve more participants to obtain more authentic data about the topic under investigation.
- Experimental research is suggested to measure the effectiveness of the Google Meet Application as a language learning medium. It could extend to different TEFL subjects in which the experimental group should be given online courses via Google Meet, whereas the control group keep studying in the traditional way.
- Future researchers could conduct a comparative study to explore the impact of instructors on the success of the online oral courses via Google Meet. This could include EFL learners who are at the same academic level but have the oral course with different teachers.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Consent Form**

Dear Student,

We are undergraduate EFL students. As part of our research project, we are kindly asking you to take part in this interview which is about your attitudes towards using Google Meet for your oral course. Your participation will help us better understand EFL students' behaviours in digital-supported English learning and teaching. Meanwhile, your precious answers will also contribute to the improvement of online learning and teaching of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, and will lead to the development of innovative online learning and teaching of English as a foreign language. This interview will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. You just need to answer the questions based on your English learning experience and your thinking. Responses obtained from you during the interview will be recorded and kept confidential and anonymous (You do not need to write your name on it and your identifiable information will be protected securely).

By signing below, you indicate you agree to participate in this study and you allow the researchers to use the provided information.

Thank you for your cooperation. We do appreciate your participation.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Guiding Questions for Students' Interview**

1. Have you ever used digital resources to improve your English learning? What type do you use?
2. I want you to recall the first time you were invited to take oral classes online via Google Meet, obviously there were so many things you considered before taking the course.
  - a. What have you expected before taking the course?
  - b. How was your experience with the first online course?
  - c. Have your expectations of online courses changed since then? How?
3. What difficulties did you encounter when learning using Google Meet? and what did you do to solve them?
4. What can you say about the following statements?
  - a. Online interaction makes students feel anxious and/or bored.
  - b. Google Meet makes interaction easier between EFL learners.
  - c. English oral classes become interesting and attractive when using Google Meet.
5. What impact do instructors have on the online courses? How do you feel about the level of interaction with instructors in your online oral class?
6. Now tell me about your interaction with other students in your oral course: How often do you interact with other students?
7. What do you think of the tasks that were applied for oral classes in Google Meet? Were they interesting enough to get you engaged in the discussion?
8. How do you evaluate your performance in online learning?
9. Do you think that your enrollment in the coming online classes will be better? Why?
10. Are you satisfied with the current online learning/teaching in your oral course? Why?

## **Appendix C**

### **Observation Schedule**

Title of the research project: **Investigating EFL Students' Attitudes towards Using Google Meet Application for Oral Classes.**

**Rating Scale:** 1- Not evident; 2- Evident; 3- Strongly evident

#### **a) Teacher's Role**

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	The teacher opened the meeting warmly.			
<b>2</b>	The teacher inspired interest in the course material.			
<b>3</b>	The teacher created a learner-centered learning environment.			
<b>4</b>	The teacher kept students involved in the conversation.			
<b>5</b>	The teacher designed collaborative tasks to engage learners in conversation.			
<b>6</b>	The Teacher assisted his learners to overcome the technical problems.			

#### **b) Learners' Interaction**

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	The learners were interested in the topic of the discussion.			
<b>2</b>	The learners took independent initiative to participate.			
<b>3</b>	The learners were motivated and engaged actively.			
<b>4</b>	The learners seemed hesitated to engage.			
<b>5</b>	The learners withdrew from the discussion.			



## Résumé

Les applications basées sur l'apprentissage ont sans aucun doute gagné de plus en plus d'importance dans le domaine de l'éducation. Cela a considérablement augmenté dans les universités algériennes depuis les deux dernières années en raison de la pandémie du COVID-19. « Google Meet » a été utilisé comme plate-forme d'apprentissage pour donner des cours en ligne d'expression orale dans le département d'anglais à l'Université Mohamed Seddik Ben Yehia, Jijel. Cette étude visait à explorer les attitudes des étudiants de l'EFL à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'application « Google Meet » comme solution de rechange aux cours (face-à-face). En outre, on a évalué l'étendue de l'interaction des étudiants EFL dans cette atmosphère d'apprentissage inhabituelle. Par la suite, on a émis l'hypothèse que la bonne maîtrise et l'utilisation convenable de cette application « Google Meet » développeraient les attitudes positives des apprenants envers les cours en ligne et, par conséquent, augmenteraient l'interaction entre eux et amélioreraient leur apprentissage de la langue anglaise. Dans la pratique, les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'une approche qualitative. Tout d'abord, une entrevue semi-structurée a été menée auprès de (09) étudiants de la première année de l'EFL sélectionnés au hasard à l'Université Mohamed Seddik Ben Yehia afin d'obtenir leurs expériences d'apprentissage dans le cadre de cette application. Ensuite, des observations en classe ont été organisées avec deux groupes de première année (3et4) pour avoir un aperçu de l'interaction des apprenants. Les résultats ont révélé que les apprenants de l'EFL à l'Université Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia ont adopté des attitudes positives à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'application « Google Meet » pour leurs cours d'expression orale et ont prouvé que « Google Meet » était une application d'apprentissage adéquate. Et grâce à cette dernière, les étudiants ne sont plus isolés mais plus interactifs malgré les obstacles de connexion d'internet. Par conséquent, l'hypothèse de recherche a été confirmée. Compte tenu des résultats obtenus, il a été

recommandé pour le ministère de l'éducation supérieure et la recherche scientifique de fournir les enseignants d'anglais : la formation et le soutien numérique nécessaire pour généraliser l'utilisation de « Google Meet » à d'autres cours qui nécessitent une interaction en temps réel. Pour terminer, les autorités concernées ont fait l'objet d'un appel pour l'ajustement et l'amélioration des services Internet afin de minimiser les problèmes techniques qui entravent l'utilisation de « Google Meet ».

## ملخص

ما لا شك فيه أن المنصات والتطبيقات الإلكترونية قد اكتسبت أهمية كبيرة في ميدان التعليم. وقد زاد ذلك بشكل ملحوظ في الجامعات الجزائرية في السنين الأخيرتين بسبب وباء كوفيد-19. حيث تم استخدام تطبيق "Google Meet" كمنصة لتقديم دورة التعبير الشفهي لطلاب السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحي-جيجل، هدفت هذه الدراسة لاستكشاف موافق الطلاب من استخدام هذا التطبيق كبديل للصفوف العادية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، سعى هذا البحث إلى تقييم مدى تفاعل الطلاب ضمن هذا الجو التعليمي الغير عادي. وعلى ذلك، تم افتراض أن الإستخدام المناسب لهذا التطبيق من شأنه تطوير موافق إيجابية للمتعلمين اتجاه الدراسة عن بعد، وبالتالي زيادة التفاعل فيما بينهم وتعزيز تعلمهم للغة الإنجليزية. من الناحية العملية، جمعت البيانات باستخدام منهج نوعي. أولاً، أجريت مقابلة شبه منظمة مع (09) طلاب للسنة الأولى مختارين اختياراً عشوائياً من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحي-جيجل. لاستخلاص خبراتهم التعليمية في هذا التطبيق. بعد ذلك، تم ترتيب ملاحظات الفصول الإلكترونية للتعبير الشفهي مع مجموعتين مختلفتين من طلاب السنة الأولى للحصول على رؤية معمقة عن التفاعل بين المتعلمين أثناء استخدام التطبيق. كشفت النتائج أن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية للسنة الأولى بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحي-جيجل يحملون موافق إيجابية اتجاه استخدام تطبيق "Google Meet" لدورس التعبير الشفهي. وأثبتت أن "Google Meet" تطبيق تعليمي مناسب جعل الطلاب غير معزولين ولكن أكثر تفاعلاً رغم عراقيل الإتصال والأنترنت، وبالتالي تم تأكيد فرضية البحث. بالنظر إلى النتائج المُتحصل عليها، إنقرحت الباحثتان على إدارة القسم توفير التدريب والدعم اللازمين للأساتذة وتعزيز استخدام التطبيق على الفصول التي تتطلب تفاعلاً مباشراً بين الطلبة. علاوة على ذلك، ناشدت الباحثتان السلطات المعنية لتعديل وتحسين نوعية الأنترنت للحد من المشاكل التقنية التي تعيق الإستخدام الفعال لتطبيق "Google Meet".