Challenges of learning speaking skills in online learning environments: A study of Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions

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Abstract

E-learning opens a new horizon within educational contexts worldwide. Previous studies showed a dearth of research identifying EFL teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' hardships in speaking skills. Hence, this article investigates the Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the current challenges of learning speaking skills EFL learners experience in an e-learning environment. The research instrument was a cross-sectional questionnaire delivered to 218 Jordanian EFL teachers. Descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA and an independent sample paired t-test were employed for data analysis. The results revealed that most Jordanian EFL teachers are aware of the current challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. Such challenges involve a lack of vocabulary, motivation and self-confidence, grammatical mistakes, stress, anxiety and problems in pronunciation. Moreover, concerning research independent variables, the effect of gender and age did not record any significant differences whereas the academic degree and years of experience showed significant differences among Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions in favor of those who hold bachelor's degrees (BA) and those who fall within the category of 5-10 years of experience. This paper recommends implementing remedial programs related to developing speaking skills.

Keywords: EFL Jordanian teachers, E-learning, Online learning, Perceptions, Speaking challenges, Speaking skill.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature
E-learning has become an effective platform of training worldwide. In e-learning settings, most Jordanian EFL teachers are considerably aware of the challenges of learning speaking skills. Moreover, the effect of gender and age did not record any significant differences whereas the academic degree and years of experience showed significant differences among the participants.

1. Introduction

Technology has been recently improved   This enhancement has positively affected the education sector worldwide (Alhumsi, 2024; Kauffman, 2015; Liu & Ren, 2022). This helps teachers seek a novel method of learning depending on technology known as e-learning . Bui, Ha, Nguyen, Nguyen, and Ngo (2021) argued that e-learning has become an effective domain and a platform of training worldwide for many years. In addition, face-to-face and e-learning have been adopted in most different countries to promote learners' learning environments. EFL learners must have few chances of speaking the English language in the traditional environments (Boonkit, 2010). In those contexts, learners are afraid of speaking English. This mitigates their willingness to communicate with English native speakers. Hence, applying multiple methods involving e-learning potentially helps learners needing more time to practice speaking skills.

Speaking skill is a pivotal language ability particularly targeted by English as a foreign language (EFL)/English as a second language (ESL) learners when they attend a foreign language class (Mohammed & Mohammed, 2021). Egan (1999) pointed out that "speaking is the heart of the second language learning. Speaking has until recently largely been ignored in schools and universities" despite its importance (p. 277). In the Jordanian EFL context, Khasawneh (2023) found that students' poor speaking abilities are a serious problem due to a lack of language practice among Jordanian EFL learners. Moreover, Huwari (2019) argued that Jordanian students still face difficulty in acquiring oral skills for the sake of English communication and this could potentially affect their progress while joining the university. Significantly, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) emphasized that the less learners train themselves to be good at speaking, the less oral skill comprehension learners will acquire. This is why the current paper comes to examine the reasons based on Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions behind the challenges faced by EFL Jordanian students since oral skills have been given inconsiderate attention. In addition, the influence of instructional technology has been sensible; academic teachers and decision-makers   should greatly consider the benefits of virtual educational environments in enhancing learners' speaking skills. Therefore, the objective of the current paper is to investigate the perceptions of Jordanian EFL teachers towards the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. It also examines whether there are substantial differences among EFL teachers' perceptions in terms of gender, age, years of experiences and academic degree. Thus, the research questions for this paper involve the following:

1. What are Jordanian EFL teachers' opinions of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment?
2. Are there any significant differences in terms of gender, age, years of experience and academic degree among Jordanian EFL teachers' opinions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Learning Environment

According to Boyette (2008) online learning can be defined as an educational approach where students and teachers are geographically or temporally apart and where communication and participation in a range of educational activities are facilitated primarily through the use of a personal computer and the Internet for material delivery and student-teacher interaction. It should be noted that the online learning environment has lately gained a remarkable reputation for multiple reasons. Mohammed and Mohammed (2021) listed several reasons including the growing number of students who are motivated to pursue higher education in light of global geopolitical shifts, the increased accessibility of technology to nearly everyone with a tech-enabled device, the internet's massive growth and the world's transformation into a knowledge-based global village. It is probably the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic occurring in 2019 that strongly and directly led to the creation of the virtual world of learning. Thus, many researchers' works focused on improving such virtual environments seen as replacements to the traditional ones (Al-Ahdal & Alharbi, 2021; Chen, 2017; Jamiai, 2021).

The effect of technology in virtual classes has been tangible. Recent technological developments have facilitated the teaching- learning process through establishing an online class in learning a language (Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2021). Using technology, students become more independent due to language instructors' support as well as optimizing their learning objectives through online learning environments (Ong & Quek, 2023). Ataiefar and Sadighi (2017) claimed that technology involvement and use probably enhance the development of students' language skills particularly speaking while doing language activities.

Moreover, research has demonstrated that a significant number of students face anxiety when it comes to oral presentations and when speaking in front of an audience (Grieve, Woodley, Hunt, & McKay, 2021). Hence, online learning is anticipated to mitigate students' anxiety levels due to their physical absence. In addition, Grant, Huang, and Pasfield-Neofitou (2014) argued that less stressful educational situations for interaction and communication have been initiated through online learning environments. However, the above studies have not addressed the perceptions of EFL teachers of the challenges of learning speaking skills in e-learning settings. For example, Grieve et al. (2021) had two distinct objectives in their study addressing a qualitative survey. Its initial goal was to learn more about the anxieties students had and the mechanisms they employed when public speaking in front of an audience. The second goal was to find out if their fear had an impact on how they experienced their college. The sample of their research consisted of 46 undergraduate and graduate students studying at the University of the West of England. It is important that all the participants had worries about

oral presentation in front of an audience and they answered four open-ended questions in a qualitative survey. As for the comparative research conducted by Grant et al. (2014) the researchers found that the degree of foreign language anxiety experienced by students is closely associated with their perceptions of the authenticity of written text chat and conversation with non-player speakers in online environments compared to real-world interactions.

In Jordanian context, many educational institutions underwent online education because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mahfouz and Salam (2021) found that learners showed negative responses towards online learning; their preferences were in favor of traditional classrooms since their physical attendance offered direct contact with their teachers. In other contexts, the findings of Al-Qahtani (2019) research found that Saudi EFL virtual classrooms have a remarkable duty in fostering learners' interaction since such online learning classrooms create a strong environment for participation and interaction. Furthermore, a virtual classroom offers a more comfortable and less anxious environment to enable students' interaction given that shy students having problems practicing speaking skills in face-to-face classes class reduce their worries and anxiety. Similarly, Grant, Huang, and Pasfield-Neofitou (2013) noted that students' anxiety regarding committing mistakes is less stressful in online language classes when compared to face-to-face classes. Besides, the online environment is less anxious concerning the usage of language. However, in a study conducted by Kaisar and Chowdhury (2020) the researchers found that language learners experience stressful feelings in online classrooms when they cannot practice presenting their communication skills well.

It is crucial to consider the involvement and importance of communication in speaking skills and since this study tackles EFL teachers' perceptions of speaking skills challenges during online classes, the theoretical model, the online learning model presented by Anderson (2011) has been viewed as appropriate for this paper. In his model, Anderson (2011) argued that online learning will involve learning quality that encompasses critical components of knowledge-centered, learner- centered, community-centered, and evaluation- centered.

2.2. Challenges of Speaking Skills Confronted by EFL Learners

Multiple studies tackle the problems and challenges confronted by EFL learners (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Mudhsh & Laskar, 2021). In order to learn a language, basic language skills should be acquired and learnt. One of the most significant skills is speaking. It is globally considered a rigorous skill utilized for the sake of communication (Ying, Siang, & Mohamad, 2021). Most educational institutions have turned to virtual environments due to the corona virus pandemic. However, Sayuti et al. (2020) argued that in virtual lessons students' communication and confidence were low causing a heavy burden on the speaking skills appropriately. Researchers noted that the students struggle with their own expressions themselves as they are hesitant and get frightened of committing mistakes due to the lack of their own adequate practice and vocabulary negatively affecting their fluent conversation in English language lessons (Syafiq, Rahmawati, Anwari, & Oktaviana, 2021).

Furthermore, poor adequate language content has made students tentative and anxious because they do not have the ability to practice speaking skills. They are unable to say anything due to the fear of being ridiculed and committing grammatical mistakes (Meinawati, Harmoko, & Rahmah, 2020). As for class interaction, e-learning restricts students' communication in contrast with traditional classrooms. For example, Hernandez and Flórez (2020) pointed out in their mixed methods study that students' communication in speaking lessons is inadequate for practicing the speaking skills despite their teachers' interest and encouragement in providing enjoyable activities. In their systematic review study, Kaur and Aziz (2020) assured that when students tend to speak, they find it difficult to do so during online learning since most of them did not get used to e-learning in addition to the difficulty of getting feedback from passive students. On the contrary, a qualitative study conducted by Bakar, Latiff, and Hamat (2013) revealed that online discussion probably presents a non-threatening environment for students who are withdrawn and shy. It is proposed to mitigate their anxiety when getting embarrassed as their communication is conducted in the form of traditional class technique. Nevertheless, the studies mentioned above have not tackled the issue of EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in e-learning settings.

Adedoyin and Soykan (2023) accentuated that students depend on themselves when they practice learning a language struggling with comprehending and understanding a learning situation in class in a way that poses a challenge to them during the COVID-19 outbreak. In another study, Zhang (2009) mentioned some challenges creating speaking problems for EFL students. Such challenges include low motivation, low engagement, low involvement, poor speaking exposure, self-consciousness, low inspiration, passive language transfer and anxiety.

In Jordan, Salameh (2022) confirmed that there has been a considerable weakness in language competence among Jordanian EFL learners especially in writing and speaking skills. In Arab contexts, speaking skills have been widely neglected among Saudi learners (Alhmadi, 2014). Numerous teachers noted that students experience particular challenges in the English language acquisition. Thus, after reviewing literature, it has been found that there is a need to address teachers' perceptions on difficulties experienced by EFL learners in oral communication in English online sessions. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to examine Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment.

3. Method
3.1. Research Design and Sample of the Study

This descriptive study used a quantitative approach as it statistically involved numeric data (Creswell, 2012). It employed an online cross-sectional questionnaire including items referring to Jordanian EFL teachers' views of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. It is interesting to note that Appendix A presents the online quantitative survey administered to EFL teachers teaching English language in different secondary and primary schools in the city of Jarash in Jordan. The participants of this study consisted of 218 Jordanian EFL teachers; specifically, 178 females (81.7%) and 40 males (18.3%) had their own teaching English schedule and represented the sample of the study. They had different levels of age groups, academic degrees, and

years of experience. For example, the highest percentage (60.6%) of teachers within the category (45-55) of age groups was recorded. Teachers holding a bachelor degree (BA) form the highest percentage (74.3%) and finally teachers with 5-10 years of experience recorded (25.7%). Table 1 describes the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic features of the participants.

Demographic factors	N	Mean	SD	Percentage
Gender				
Male	40	36.55	7.32	18.3 %
Female	178	35.57	6.59	81.7 %
Age				
22-34	4	34.50	5.19	1.8 %
35-44	28	34.29	6.09	12.8 %
45-55	132	35.41	6.58	60.6 %
Over 55	54	37.43	7.31	24.8 %
Degree				
Diploma	16	27.38	11.36	7.3 %
Bachelor	162	36.09	5.50	74.3 %
Master	32	37.94	7.29	14.7 %
PhD	8	36.75	2.76	3.7 %
Experience				
Less than 5	28	32.29	7.47	12.8 %
5-10	56	33.88	7.83	25.7 %
11-15	46	37.22	6.30	21.1 %
16-20	44	36.05	5.35	20.2 %
More than 20	44	38.50	4.69	20.2 %
Total	218	35.75	6.729	100 %

3.2. Instrumentation and Research Procedure

This research utilized an online cross-sectional questionnaire that involved 10 Likert-scale items adopted from Ningias and Indriani (2021). The participants were requested to fill out an online questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills they face in an e-learning environment. The online survey begins with participants' information such as their gender, ages, academic degrees and years of experience in a multiple-choice format. The second section tackles items associated with their perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment to highlight their degree of agreement or disagreement in relation to their responses employing a 5-Likert scale. It took the participants about ten minutes to finish the whole survey. For the sake of validity, a panel of expert university professors as well as EFL instructors checked the items of the survey providing their meticulous suggestions and recommendations. Furthermore, the alpha coefficient test was used to measure reliability analysis for the whole survey and recorded 0.850. This indicates the research instrument is reliable. Once the questionnaire items were collected and calculated, SPSS software version 22 was run for data analysis. It is important to note that all permissions from the whole participants and the adopted research tool have been granted for ethical issues.

4. Results

4.1. Findings of the First Research Question

The first research question tackled Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment. Statistical analysis was run for mean and standard deviation to answer this specific question. Table 2 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of the responses of EFL teachers in relation to the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment.

Table 2. EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills.

No.	Items	Mean	SD
1	Online learning offers a suitable environment for learning.	3.05	1.09
2	I have a good background in online learning.	3.31	0.97
3	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they do not have enough vocabulary to express themselves.	3.83	1.03
4	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they cannot pronounce some English words.	3.74	0.97
5	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they lack self-confidence.	3.60	1.07
6	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they are afraid of making mistakes.	3.83	1.03
7	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they cannot form correct grammatical sentences.	3.63	0.99
8	English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they lack motivation to practice speaking.	3.55	1.09
9	EFL students fail to communicate orally in English online sessions because they cannot understand their teacher's speech.	3.52	1.04
10	EFL students feel stressed when they practice speaking skills with others in English online sessions.	3.69	0.97

Given that the mean score of EFL teachers' perceptions ranged between 3.05 and 3.83 (out of 5), their responses failed to record high mean scores. Nevertheless, most of the respondents showed their agreement with

the whole items in the questionnaire. It should be noted that the survey starts with two items addressing EFL teachers' views on the online learning environment and their knowledge of online learning. For instance, item 1 (M=3.05; SD= 1.09) represented the lowest mean score and reported that many participants believed that online learning offers a suitable environment for learning. Item 2 (M= 3.31; SD=0.97) showed that most EFL teachers agreed that they have a good background in online learning.

It is important to note that items from 3 to 8 concentrated on the difficulties EFL learners experience in oral communication in English online sessions. Such difficulties include a lack of required vocabulary, pronunciation problems, lack of required trust, committing mistakes, grammatical mistakes and lack of motivation when practicing English speaking. For example, item 3 (M=3.83; SD= 1.03) represented the highest mean score indicating that the majority of EFL teachers believed that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they do not have enough vocabulary to express themselves. In terms of learners' ability of pronouncing English words, item 4 (M=3.74; SD= 0.97) reported that most of the EFL participants thought that EFL students struggle with English spoken communication in online sessions because they cannot pronounce some English words. Item 5 (M=3.60; SD= 1.07) indicated that most of the EFL participants believed that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions as they lack self-confidence. Like item 3, item 6 (M=3.83; SD= 1.03) represented the highest mean score. This item showed that most EFL participants agreed that EFL students struggle with English- spoken communication in online sessions since they are afraid of making mistakes. As for item 7 (M=3.63; SD=0.99), it reported that most EFL respondents believed that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions as they cannot form correct grammatical sentences. Item 8 (M=3.55; SD=1.09) indicated that most of the participants agreed that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they lack motivation to practice speaking.

Regarding the last two items (9 and 10), they addressed EFL learners' failure in oral communication due to their inability to understand instructors' speech and feelings of anxiety and stress. Item 9 (M=3.52; SD=1.04) reported that the majority of EFL teachers agreed that EFL learners fail to communicate orally in English online sessions because they cannot understand their instructors' speech. As for feeling anxious and stressed, the majority of EFL participants believed EFL learners feel stressed when they practice speaking skills with others in English online sessions as expressed by item 10 (M=3.69; SD=0.97).

4.2. Findings of the Second Research Question

This specific research question came to check whether there are significant differences in terms of gender, age, academic degree and years of experience among Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. For statistical analyses, t-test analyses for gender and one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for age, academic degree, and years of experience were run to check whether there are significant differences among the aforesaid variables.

Table 3 depicts the influence of gender on the EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment through employing an independent sample t-test. From the output, Jordanian male and female EFL teachers' perceptions did not record any significant differences. Hence, gender has no salient effects on EFL teachers' perceptions when recording the insignificant p-value = 0.40.

Table 3. Independent sample T-test for EFL teachers' perceptions in terms of gender.

Items (1-10)	Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment.	Male	40	36.55	7.32	0.83	0.40
	Female	178	35.57	6.59		

With respect to the age variable, Table 4 describes EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment by running a one-way ANOVA analysis. The findings revealed that that significant difference is not recorded among Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment in terms of age category. Thus, the calculated p- value (0.16) indicates the insignificant difference.

Table 4. ANOVA for EFL teachers' perceptions and their age group.

Items (1-10)	Age	N	Mean	SD	F	P
Perceptions of EFL teachers on the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment.	22-34	4	34.50	5.19	1.73	0.16
	35-44	28	34.29	6.09		
	45-55	132	35.41	6.58		
	Over 55	54	37.43	7.31		
	Total	218	35.75	6.72		

Running one-way ANOVA analysis, Table 5 shows EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment in terms of academic degree. It has been found that there is a significant difference in EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment in terms of academic degree as the p-value= .000. This indicates that the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table 5. ANOVA for EFL teachers' perceptions and their academic degree.

Items (1-10)	Degree	N	Mean	SD	F	P
Perceptions of EFL teachers on the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment.	Diploma	16	27.38	11.36	10.90	0.000
	Bachelor	162	36.09	5.50		
	Master	32	37.94	7.29		
	PhD	8	36.75	2.76		
	Total	218	35.75	6.72		

Concerning the variable, Table 6 describes the analysis of Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment in relation to this specific variable. For this analysis, the results showed a significant difference among EFL teachers' perceptions. The p-value was recorded at 0.00 estimated to be less than 0.05. Therefore, this variable influenced Jordanian EFL teachers' opinions.

Table 6. ANOVA for EFL teachers' perceptions and their years of experience.

Items (1-10)	Experience	N	Mean	SD	F	P
Perceptions of EFL teachers on the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment.	Less than 5	28	32.29	7.47	5.82	0.000
	5-10	56	33.88	7.83		
	11-15	46	37.22	6.30		
	16-20	44	36.05	5.35		
	More than 20	44	38.50	4.69		
	Total	218	35.75	6.72		

5. Discussion

The aim of this research is to pinpoint Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment as described by the first research question. This paper also investigated whether their views are influenced by independent variables including gender, age, academic degree, and years of experience as expressed by the second research question.

5.1. Perceptions of Jordanian EFL Teachers Speaking Skills Challenges

The considerable level of agreement obtained from item 3 to item 8 emphasized that the majority of the Jordanian EFL teachers highlighted the difficulties EFL learners experience in oral communication in English online classes. For example, item 3 addressed the lack of vocabulary EFL learners suffer from the point of view of Jordanian EFL teachers as most of them thought that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions since they do not have enough vocabulary to express themselves. This finding goes in harmony with recent works conducted by Chand (2021); Khan, Radzuan, Shahbaz, Ibrahim, and Mustafa (2018); Normawati, Nugrahaeni, Manggolo, and Susanto (2023) and Syafiq et al. (2021). To highlight this point, Khan et al. (2018) found that the lack of vocabulary is one of the major factors in students' inability to speak English. Furthermore, current results are also consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Hamad (2013). The same researcher found that the limited knowledge of vocabulary leads to EFL learners' weak achievement in speaking skills. Hence, this is remarkable evidence that proves the significant role vocabulary learning plays in oral communication in English online classes.

Item 4 highlighted the problem of EFL learners' inability of pronouncing some English words. It has been found that large numbers of the EFL teachers agreed that EFL students struggle with English spoken communication in online sessions as they are not able to pronounce some English words. One should not ignore this problem since learners potentially experience various difficulties in speaking skills if they are not sufficiently aware of how to correctly pronounce English vocabulary. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Jahara and Abdelrady (2021). The researchers contended that a common challenge to successful communication for many EFL students could be word pronunciation. This strongly implies that pronunciation is a pivotal factor that helps EFL learners in oral communication.

As for item 5, the majority of EFL respondents believed that English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online sessions because they lack self-confidence. It is important to meticulously listen to people to improve EFL learners' speaking and pronunciation. Once they are trying to speak and communicate, large numbers of EFL learners probably confront inhibition. This psychological problem negatively influences their self-confidence when pronouncing English words properly. It should be noted that the research conducted by Alshehri (2020) and Jahara and Abdelrady (2021) goes in line with the current study. For instance, Alshehri (2020) argued that "pronunciation is vital for the EFL learners in terms of intelligibility of pronunciation and understanding of oral material" (p. 208). He found that EFL learners lack confidence in oral communication among their peers and teachers. Additionally, item 6 highlighted the point that being afraid of making mistakes is another critical reason behind the difficulties EFL learners experience in oral communication in English online sessions from the point of view of Jordanian EFL teachers who largely agreed with that point. This finding goes along with research conducted by Sokip (2020). In his research, Chand (2021) found that the fear of committing mistakes is one of the key problems experienced by learners during practicing the skill of speaking English. Another problem expressed by item 7 is EFL learners' inability to form correct grammatical structures. Most EFL participants showed their agreement that EFL students struggle with English-spoken communication in online sessions since they cannot form correct grammatical sentences. This result supports Alam and Ashrafuzzaman (2018) study. In their research, it has been revealed that during identifying the difficulties of EFL learner's speaking skills development, committing grammatical mistakes is one of the major problems experienced by EFL learners (Alam & Ashrafuzzaman, 2018). Item 8 accentuated the lack of motivation while practicing English speaking. Similarly, most EFL participant teachers agreed that EFL learners confront difficulty in oral communication in English online sessions because they lack motivation to practice English speaking. It should be noted that this finding is in harmony with the results of research conducted by Zhang (2009) and Sokip (2020). Jahara and Abdelrady (2021) found that the pronunciation of EFL undergraduates improved because they were always motivated and eager to take the examinations that were created using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra which is one of the learning management system (LMS). It is crucial to note that items 9 and 10 tackled EFL learners' failure in oral communication due to their inability to understand instructors' speech and feelings of anxiety and stress. EFL teachers substantially showed their agreement in that EFL learners fail to communicate orally in English online sessions because they cannot understand their instructors' speech as well as feel stressed when they practice speaking skills with their peers in English online sessions. For example, Guzman, Albela, Nieto, Ferrer, and Santos (2006) found that the inability to understand the instructor's speech is considered as one of the core challenges that learners

experience while they are learning. Concerning feeling stressed while speaking English in online classes, this result is consistent with Kaisar and Chowdhury (2020) study that concluded that learners confront stressful feelings in online classrooms when they are not able to practice the skills of presentation and communication skills appropriately. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2018) claimed that a significant number of EFL learners believe that speech anxiety is another issue that causes a delayed impact when speaking.

5.2. Research Independent Variables

Four independent variables have been gauged to examine whether there are significant differences among EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. Two variables, namely gender and age group did not highlight any significant differences among EFL teachers' perceptions from the results gained from the statistical analysis. However, the other two variables namely, academic degree and years of experience categories highlighted compelling differences among the perceptions of EFL teachers. This means that the effect of their perceptions has been emphasized in relation to the latter variables. No compelling differences existed in Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment from the results obtained from the analysis of the variable "gender". This indicated that this variable did not have an impact on Jordanian EFL teachers' opinions. This can be attributed to their overall agreement concerning their perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. Thus, EFL participants were aware of such challenges in online settings. According to Francis et al. (2008) the characteristics of a teacher could not possibly be determined by the variable gender alone. The features of a teaching career are the availability of competent female and male teachers. Studies conducted by Abdelmola, Makeen, Makki Hanafi, and Ageeli (2021); Tzivinikou, Charitaki, and Kagkara (2021); Dinsa, Seyoum, and Dinsa (2022) and Yu (2021) notably supported the finding of the current study. For instance, Dinsa et al. (2022) revealed that "gender does not influence students' speaking strategies used to exercise oral communication" implying that gender did not form an impact factor on learners' speaking skills of English. Yu (2021) found that gender is insignificantly associated with online learning consequences in online settings. Nevertheless, gender influenced participants' perceptions. The analysis results of the variable "age" showed no existence of any significant differences in Jordanian EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment like the analysis of the findings of the gender variable. This implies that this variable did not influence Jordanian EFL teachers' opinions due to EFL participants' overall agreement in relation to their perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. Thus, regardless of age group category, EFL participants were aware of such challenges in online environments. This result goes along with studies conducted by Abdelmola et al. (2021) and Kumar (2020) that found no significant effect on perspectives in terms of age group about online learning. Kumar (2020) argued that age is not an obstacle in promoting confident perspectives since teachers are able to virtually learn and teach. It should be noted that other studies such as Garzón, Martínez, Ortega, Marín, and Gómez (2020) and Navarro (2020) did not support this finding. The researchers found significant differences concerning the variable age.

After running the analysis of one-way ANOVA based on EFL teachers' academic degrees, the results disclosed that a compelling difference existed in EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e- learning environment. When reviewing the demographic information, it has been that 74.3 % of participants have held BA degrees. Thus, this finding is remarkably affected by the highest percentage representing the category of academic degree. The holders of a such category have been more aware of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment. This result goes along with Marek, Chew, and Wu (2021) study that revealed differences in perspectives based on academic ranking. However, Abdelmola et al. (2021) found no significant differences with respect to that variable in another study disagreeing with the findings of the current research. The results showed the existence of a compelling difference was found among EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e- learning environment based on their years of experience similar to the academic degree variable. From the demographic information, it has been found that 25.7 % of EFL teachers had 5-10 years of experience. Hence, the results are considerably influenced by this percentage representing that category. EFL teachers who fall within this group have been more aware of the challenges of learning speaking skills learners experience in an e-learning environment. This finding concurs with the study conducted by Hinojo-Lucena, Aznar-Diaz, Cáceres-Reche, Trujillo-Torres, and Romero-Rodriguez (2019). It should be noted that this result is not surprising. Studies propose that teachers having previous experience would appreciate additional secure transition into online learning (Marek et al., 2021; Westwick & Morreale, 2021).

6. Conclusion

In educational online settings, the cultivation of learners' speaking skills has been influenced by the application of online learning (Kardana, Pusparini, & Kasni, 2023). Speaking skills are significant in practicing communication and interaction among students. In this study, it is critical to identify the challenges that EFL learners confront when they experience speaking skills in an online environment from the point of view of Jordanian EFL teachers. It has been found that fear of committing mistakes, stress, self-confidence, a lack of vocabulary and grammatical mistakes are some of the problems EFL learners' experience. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the perceptions of Jordanian EFL teachers of the current challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. The findings of this research article demonstrated that the majority of Jordanian EFL teachers are considerably aware of the current challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. This reflects the idea that EFL learners face difficulties in oral communication in English online session because they experience a number of challenges such as lack of vocabulary, motivation and self-confidence, grammatical mistakes, stress, anxiety, and problems in pronunciation. Furthermore, the findings revealed that gender and age variables did not record any compelling differences whereas academic degree and years of experience showed significant differences among the perceptions of Jordanian EFL teachers. Bachelor's degree (BA) holders have more awareness of the challenges of learning speaking skills

compared to those holding other academic degrees. Additionally, EFL teachers with 5-10 years of experience are more aware of the challenges of learning speaking skills in an e-learning environment. The latter variables showed significant effects on EFL participants' perceptions.

7. Recommendation and Further Studies

Due to the potential difficulties EFL learners experience during practicing speaking skills in online contexts leading to negative impacts on learners' development in speaking skills in the future, decision-makers at educational institutions are recommended to implement remedial programs related to developing speaking skills. It is also crucial to consider pedagogical implications, essential requirements to mitigate the challenges of speaking skills in online environments are of importance by increasing the EFL teachers' content knowledge on speaking difficulties mentioned earlier and faced by EFL learners. This paper recommends that a mixed-method study on such a topic may provide additional scientific data in EFL contexts. One limitation of the present paper is that it tackles EFL teachers' opinions. Therefore, it is interesting to consider undergraduate students' perceptions of the issue of learning speaking skills in virtual settings.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Survey instrument.

Challenges of Learning Speaking Skill in Online Learning Environments: A Study of Jordanian EFL Teachers' Perceptions

Dear EFL teacher,

You are invited to participate in this research investigating the perceptions of Jordanian EFL Teachers on the challenges of Learning Speaking Skill in Online Learning Sessions in Jordanian EFL Contexts. This research is being conducted by the **Dr. Mohammad Husam Alhumsi**. He is an Associate Professor working at the college of sciences and theoretical studies at **Saudi Electronic University**. Kindly note that all your personal information and responses will be anonymous.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of Jordanian EFL Teachers on the challenges of learning speaking skill in online learning sessions in Jordanian EFL contexts.

You may ask the researcher any question you are interested in.
Thank you for your assistance in completing this survey. Your prompt response is appreciated.

Best Regards,

The researcher

Research Survey

Challenges of Learning Speaking Skill in Online Learning Environments: A Study of Jordanian EFL Teachers' Perceptions

Instructions:

This survey will be used to achieve greater awareness of the teachers' perceptions toward the challenges of learning speaking skill in online sessions within EFL contexts. It involves two sections:

> 1-Demographic Information.
>
> II-Perception of the challenges of learning speaking skill in online sessions within EFL contexts.

I. Demographic Information

Gender	☐ Male	☐ Female
Age	☐ 22-34 ☐ 35-44	☐ 45-55 ☐ Over 55
Experience (Choose one)	☐ Less than 5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 11-15 ☐ 16-20 ☐ More than 20	
Degree (Choose one)	☐ Diploma ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master ☐ PhD	

II. Questionnaire

Items	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Undecided 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
1- Online learning offers a suitable environment for learning.					
2- I have a good background in online learning.					
3- English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they do not have enough vocabulary to express myself.					
4- English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they cannot pronounce some English words.					
5- English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they lack self-confidence.					
6- English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they are afraid of making mistakes.					
7-English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they cannot form correct grammatical sentences.					
8- English oral communication presents challenges for EFL students in online session since they lack motivation to practice speaking.					
9-EFL learners fail to communicate orally in English online session because they cannot understand their teacher's speech.					
10-EFL learners feel stressed when they practice speaking skill with others in English online session.					