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Knowing, Learning and Experiencing: Problems of ELT during Online Classes in Pakistan

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Abstract

The Global Pandemic introduced new challenges in pedagogy, methodology and curriculum. However, it offered some novel solutions for academia to rapidly shift from traditional teacher-centered classrooms to student-oriented interactive classrooms using online tools. Hence, this study aims to identify the technical, institutional, and academic problems English language teachers face during online classes for undergraduate students at a public sector University in Karachi-Pakistan. For this purpose, the study utilized a mixed method approach, and the target population included sixteen teachers teaching virtually. Data was collected in two stages using purposive sampling through an online teaching form from all the respondents and to know teachers' experiences while conducting the classes, interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. The findings suggest that teachers faced problems in ICT skills, digital resources, content development, assessment and using different online platforms for tasks and activities. The results indicate that teachers also met multiple economic, technological, interaction, attention, and motivation of learners and well-being issues during the online classes. Comparatively, some young teachers reflected the opposite trends and were motivated to explore this new education system. Therefore, the higher education institutes in Pakistan should immediately develop new curricula in alignment with the technological needs. Also, sufficient training for ELT practitioners and teaching language skills must be provided for the betterment of future generations.

Introduction

Technology has facilitated online Learning, using laptops or tablets connected to a network for studying anywhere and at any time (Acosta-Tello, 2015). According to Yang and Li (2018), an online teaching and learning environment can improve student learning by utilizing various devices, innovative technology, and the internet to give them an asynchronous or more modern learning experience. It is accepted that incorporating technology into language classrooms improves language learning and instruction, which raises language competence levels. This tendency has been further accelerated by online education, which provides flexible and easily accessible learning possibilities.

The advent of information communication technology (ICT) has improved the quality of many disciplines including Language Teaching (Chapelle, 2001; Ferretti, 2001; Wang and Li, 2000). As time passes, language instruction and acquisition must adapt from all perspectives. The online classroom environment of today is influenced by technology, which has entered the breach. Online learning environments allow teachers to use the full range of electronic resources. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, educators worked to establish fresh environments for language acquisition. Due to technological improvements and digitization, teaching techniques have gotten more complex since the worldwide emergency was declared. Following the spread of the deadly virus, most nations switched to online instruction. Nevertheless, there are difficulties when switching from traditional in-person instruction to online instruction.

Covid-19 brought life worldwide to a virtual standstill where global life virtually came to a halt. Educational institutions were developing competencies for efficient online teaching-learning practices to ensure crucial time is not squandered during the pandemic and to keep the doors of learning open (Eachempati and Ramnarayan, 2020). In reaction to the shift from a traditional classroom setting to an online one, adaptation is required (Almaiah et al., 2020; Mamluah & Maulidi, 2021; Yen, 2020). Given the importance of education in these unstable times, the goal was to manage home-based education in a way that would make it both safe and effective in terms of virus prevention (Chang et al., 2020; Kkese, 2020; Mailizar et al., 2020). A meaningful change in higher education towards online Learning occurred during the epidemic in terms of both teaching and Learning. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic in response to the coronavirus's unexpected debut in China in December 2019 (Cucinotta and Vanelli, 2020). Responding to this epidemic in Pakistan, the National Security Committee (NSC) decided to shut down educational establishments, including universities (Higher Education Commission, 2020). During this social distancing period, many teachers shifted to online teaching-learning platforms and took an initiative-taking approach to minimize academic loss. Closing of educational institutions allowed for the shift from traditional classroom instruction to online instruction, or "emergency e-learning" (Russell and Murphy, 2020). Before Covid-19, online Learning, a novel teaching technique, was not widely used in Pakistan. In online Learning, electronic devices served as the exclusive medium of instruction and the primary means of communication between the teacher and the student (Dobre, 2007). Different social networking sites, TV broadcasts, video conferences, podcasts, YouTube channels, audio/video lectures, and synchronous (live) and asynchronous (recorded) teaching methodologies and learning platforms presented additional nuances of online teacher-learner interaction. Online meetings and classes were conducted using various software programs, such as Zoom, Teams, Google Classroom, etc.

ELT is more difficult in a virtual setting since it requires students to be actively always engaged. However, there are certain difficulties in switching from in-person instruction to online instruction. The proliferation, adoption, and application of technology in language education have created an environment that is conducive to examining issues related to online platforms for language instruction (Chapelle, 2010). In developing countries, technical glitches and lack of experience have affected the effectiveness of online classes.

The virus caught everyone unprepared and unsettled. Since online teaching and Learning was not practiced widely in the country before, many instructors struggled with the logistics of this change. While most students in the current generation of learners are comfortable using online learning platforms and are technophiles, this may not be the case for all educators. Many of the teachers have a fear of technology and are technophobic. According to research on the use of technology in online learning environments, teachers must overcome a number of challenges, one of which is a lack of digital literacy to properly incorporate online resources into their lesson plans (McCormick and Scrimshaw, 2001). Furthermore, the suddenness of the change prevented the institutes from preparing the teachers for a completely new teaching platform. Hence, to get in-depth insights from a public-sector Pakistani university, the current study explores the various challenges ELT practitioners faced and their coping strategies. The research question that has guided this study is: "What are the technical, institutional, and academic problems faced by English language teachers during online classes for undergraduate students at a public-sector university in Karachi, Pakistan?"

Literature Review

The development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the contemporary era has had a profound impact on society worldwide, including Pakistani education. The use of online instruction may cause a focus on soft characteristics like scheduling flexibility and pedagogical obstacles to become overemphasized. These factors have a significant impact on how the entire teaching and learning environment is shaped. Therefore, scholars stress that several critical elements are necessary for the effective implementation of online teaching and Learning. The main enablers for integrating online teaching and learning methods are acknowledged to be adequate financial resources, well-thought-out training programmes, prudent resource allocation, and the development of a robust technical infrastructure (Kim, 2020; Gonzalez and Louis, 2018; Abbas et al., 2021b).

The use of technology in online language instruction has drawn a lot of attention in ELT literature during the last few decades. More than 850 million students had their classes suspended due to the global spread of COVID-19, upsetting the original lesson plans of all nations and regions (Chen et al., 2020; Abbas et al., 2021a). This was followed by a switch from traditional to online Learning (Basilaia and Kvavadze, 2020). In at least ninety-six nations, the online library, TV shows, guidelines, resources, lectures, and video channels were accessible (UNESCO, 2020). Pakistan, like all other nations, made the decision to close all educational institutions nationwide (Ali and Maksum, 2020). Pakistan's Ministry of Education and Federal Training (2020) identified technology-based education interventions as a means of supporting students via online learning platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams that can be accessed through internet-connected computers and Smartphone mobile technology. In addition, the Higher

Education Commission (HEC) developed the Online Readiness Policy Guidance Note and Policy Guidelines for universities on COVID-19 in response to the rapid shift from in-person to online training.

Despite these prompt steps by the HEC, institutes would still need to go over a lot of obstacles and challenges to meet the demands of instructors and students for online Learning. One of the studies of Adnan and Anwar (2020) highlights the challenges faced by teachers and students at various levels. The study has brought attention to issues with financial hardships, poor home environments for Learning, and internet access. Students may not be able to respond quickly in online learning situations since they have more freedom to turn off their webcams, in which case they might as well be asleep (Littlefield et al., 2019).

To successfully incorporate online resources into their instruction, teachers must overcome a number of challenges, one of which is a lack of digital literacy, according to research on the use of technology in online learning environments (Mccormick and Scrimshaw, 2001). Nova's study (2017) has also reflected technical glitches, weak internet connectivity, internet accessibility, and the attention of the students as the main hurdles in online language teaching-learning process. Another research study has spotlighted learners' perceptions and attitudes towards online classes as the main factors affecting learning motivation (Dumford and Miller, 2018). In online class settings, students' attention, interest, and learning motivations are shaped by their per-interactions and the engagement with the course facilitator and the course contents (Guo et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2017). It is further emphasized that students' engagement and interaction in online setting could influence their propensity to learn online that supports and encourages their active involvement and engagement in online classrooms. These virtual learning opportunities assess students' heightened motivation (Joo et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2017; Mohammadi, 2015).

Various research studies have investigated the challenges that online classrooms bring for learners and the facilitators. Mathew and Iloanya (2016) have investigated the opportunities and challenges of employing technology in open and distance Learning (ODL) within the higher education system of Botswana. The findings of the study revealed advantages of integrating technology into online instruction for content sharing, accessibility to the most up-to-date information, and students' involvement. But these effective techniques of online instruction came with the challenges of affordability, lack of training, technological anxiety, and access issues.

Sepulveda Escobar and Morrison (2020) also investigated the potential and difficulties of remote Learning in Chile. The key factors affecting the learning process, according to the results, were an unanticipated change in location and a lack of direct connection or in-person interaction of peers and with the teacher. In another study on the challenges and hurdles teachers face in virtual settings, Altakhaineh (2021) made the case that teaching English oral skills online presents a number of difficulties for both learners and teachers in secondary schools in Jordan. The results spotlighted the challenges of time management, instructional strategies, a lack of support or motivation, and ignorance of online teaching resources. Ilonga et al. (2020) studied the problems encountered by students in an online language class. The results showed a number of variables that can impact the learning process, including a lack of structure in the online learning program, untimely instructors, insufficient face time with the lecturers, and a dearth of study materials available in the schools. Hence, the room for more flexibility in an online setting leads to an ineffective learning process.

Nobre (2021) conducted a quantitative investigation to examine the difficulties experienced by educators in remote Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed the variety of challenges faced by educators when teaching remotely, including inadequate preparation, spotty internet access, technical glitches, power outages, a lack of experience, apprehension about taking online classes, plagiarism on online tests, and a lack of nonverbal communication. Similarly, Şevik and Yücedağ (2021) examined the views of EFL teachers on the use of online Learning in EFL contexts with a qualitative study. The data were collected through an online questionnaire to 40 Turkish EFL teachers. The findings showed that a number of common issues experienced by educators included lack of resources, poor internet connections, a dearth of gadgets, troubleshooting technical issues, and a lack of technological understanding regarding distance education. The study concluded that EFL teachers were not well-trained in online Learning and lacked the necessary experience. In their reflective study on online teaching, Perrotta and Bohan (2020) highlighted some significant challenges encountered in this setting. The survey brought to light issues of feeling cut off from students and the campus community, as well as difficulties getting professional pedagogical training and mentoring. Additional obstacles included concerns about curriculum management and upholding academic integrity.

One big problem of online classes is the monotonous learning scenario and the easy visual fatigue of the learners (Zhou and Ren, 2019). Sometimes, students consider online teaching uninteresting and unpleasant because online teaching videos are too long, diminishing learners' excitement and interest in learning (Wang and Li, 2022). Even with the high degrees of flexibility and reaction time that asynchronous online learning offers, students still struggle to find the time to do assignments (Knox, 2016).

Several additional research has also brought attention to the difficulties and limitations associated with remote instruction and Learning. Online Learning is conducted improperly and is ineffective, according to Syamsuardi and Irfan (2021). They illustrate this by citing a number of issues, including inadequate internet access, educators' incapacity to integrate online education, and the lack of cooperation given by parents. Contrastingly, Awal et al. (2023) found that online Learning is effective but inefficient. They acknowledge that online education is a helpful tool in addressing the urgency of the epidemic; but, because it is expensive to buy appropriate internet packages, learning objectives cannot be accomplished. Moreover, Wargadinata et al. (2020) believe that online Learning is beneficial since it makes using different programmes like "WhatsApp," "Zoom," and "Google Classroom" easier. But Wildana et al. also note that internet packages and access limit how effective online Learning can be.

According to a study by Adnan and Anwar (2020), the efficacy of online Learning is weakened by poor technology, poor internet access, and a lack of interaction between students and teachers. According to a study by Hazwani et al. (2020), the infrastructure of an organization plays a critical role in how well its online programs perform. Inadequate infrastructure will limit the capacity of learners to access the internet. The efficacy of online Learning is also influenced by the attitudes of the students. Students who approach online learning irresponsibly present a problem that all stakeholders should endeavour to solve (Hazwani et al., 2020). Some more highlighted challenges of online language teaching, according to Judd et al. (2020) are inadequate infrastructure, a lack of institutional mentorship and support, and teachers' lack of ICT expertise in using digital media are some additional issues associated with teaching languages online (Huber and Helm, 2020). Other contemporary challenges with remote Learning, like a deficiency in technology, concerns with internet access, insufficient time management abilities, and issues with online student assessments, are also mentioned (Mendes, Bastos, Amante, Aires, and Cardoso,2019; Blau, Shamir, and Avdiel, 2020).

The study conducted in 2021 by Shaikh et al. also investigated the difficulties experienced by ELT practitioners. Key arguments based on study findings show that during the pandemic, ELT practitioners made the most of e-resources to optimize learning possibilities. Teachers have a number of difficulties when introducing online instruction, including a lack of technological infrastructure, a lack of digital competence, and low student interest and engagement. Shenoy et al. (2020) acknowledge that students often view their online teachers as passive because the teacher-student exchange of ideas does not usually happen in real-time in these settings. A "lack of human interaction" in an online classroom can lead to deficient performance and attitude since face-to-face interaction between teachers and students is crucial for language learning (Bertea, 2009). In a study, revealing learners' perceptions about online classes, one of the main drawbacks of online Learning is that student engagement is lower than in-person instruction because the teacher cannot always see the student on the screen. This makes it easier for students to become distracted and pay attention than in-person instruction (Altakhaineh et al., 2023).

Numerous obstacles to online teaching and Learning have been brought to light by the reviewed literature. These obstacles fall into four categories: individual, course, teaching, and cultural, which differ from nation to nation due to readiness and different contexts (Sahito and Vaisanen, 2017). In developing countries, the main obstacles to the adoption of online Learning were found to be connectivity problems, a lack of ICT knowledge, content delivery, and students' IT skills (Aung and Khaing, 2015). Similarly, Kanwal and Rehman (2017) identified three major obstacles to the digitization of the Pakistani education system: computer self-efficacy, system characteristics, and internet experience. Another study revealed that the technological challenges, which are the key to the success of e-learning systems, indicate that 45% of e-learning initiatives in poor countries are total failures, 40% are partial failures, and only 15% are successful (Al-Araibi et al., 2019). Students have short attention spans, lecturers cannot evaluate their understanding during online courses, and there is no instant feedback (Mukhtar et al., 2020).

Many of the challenges that come with technology are related to downloading, installation, login, audio, and video problems, among other things. Conferencing capabilities like file sharing, whiteboards, and annotation are difficult to use, which leads to their underutilization (Ming et al., 2021). At the same time, students' sense of alienation from the learning community, technological problems, and difficulties comprehending the objectives of the course are the main barriers to online Learning (Song et al., 2004). It is important to note that some of the difficulties encountered in online classes can be attributed to instructors' lack of experience in teaching online, their inability to prepare lessons using thorough lesson plans, and their inability to receive the necessary assistance from technical teams.

Methodology

This study focuses on exploring the technical, institutional, and academic problems faced by English teachers during online classes. Therefore, a mixed method study has been undertaken. Quantitative data was collected in the first phase for investigating the problems and learning of English language teachers. Similarly, for the second phase and detailed insights about the experiences of teachers. Qualitative data was collected via interviews; qualitative approach provides a detailed insight and exploration of the problem (Creswell, 2020 & Savin-Baden and Claire, 2014).

Explanatory sequential design (Creswell, 2020) has been selected as quantitative data has been collected first, followed by qualitative data. In this way, all English Teacher filled the online questionnaire while selected respondents gave interviews. Explanatory sequential design was deemed to be the appropriate design, as the study explored the problems and addresses similar issues in the department.

The population of the study includes English teachers in public sector universities. While the target population includes permanent and visiting English teachers in a reputed public sector engineering university where English was taught as a compulsory subject. Purposive and convenience sampling has been utilized to elicit data from experienced and novice English teachers teaching English subjects. The sample size of the study includes all sixteen teachers in the department. For the first stage, data was collected from all sixteen participants, while interviews were conducted with five participants. The sample size for the interviews study was sufficient as it reaches the saturation point and the nature of study is exploratory in nature, therefore it does not require large bulk of information. Data was collected from all the sixteen English teachers (regular and visiting) who were teaching at the department during pandemic. Table 1 shows the details of the participants. For an in-depth examination of Sartre's existential ethics, the phenomenological technique, a qualitative research project, has been used.

Table 1
Teacher's Profile

S. No	Participants	Gender	Total Teaching Experience in years	Online Teaching Experience/Certification
1	KLEPOM1	Male	8 years	Certification
2	KLEPOM2	Male	5 years	None
3	KLEPOM3	Male	4 years	None
4	KLEPOM4	Male	Novice	None
5	KLEPOM5	Male	3 years	None
6	KLEPOF6	Female	2 years	None
7	KLEPOF7	Female	8 years	Certification
8	KLEPOF8	Female	2 years	None
9	KLEPOF9	Female	7 years	Certification
10	KLEPOF10	Female	Novice	None
11	KLEPOF11	Female	Novice	None
12	KLEPOF12	Female	2 years	None
13	KLEPOF13	Female	Novice	None
14	KLEPOF14	Female	5 years	Certification
15	KLEPOF15	Female	2 years	None
16	KLEPOF16	Female	8 years	Certification

Data was collected in two stages from the teachers. To know about the ICT and knowledge of teachers about digital education, online Google form was utilized to collect the data. The form contains close-ended statements and two open-ended questions. The form was divided into four sections. The form was shared with the teachers via email and WhatsApp group. All the teachers voluntarily participated and filled in the Google form. After the form was filled in by the teachers, it was analyzed for frequency analysis. After the analysis, more in-depth information was required about the problems of teachers. Therefore, semi-structured interviews (Galletta, 2012 and Rubin & Rubin, 2005) were conducted using Josselson (2013) guidelines. Out of the sixteen participants, only five participants were interviewed due to the time limit and objectives of the study. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis using Saldana's model (2016) was undertaken. The transcribed data was analyzed for codes, categories, and themes. Four themes were identified from the data collected from the teachers.

Before the start of the study, ethical approval was taken from all the teachers. The teachers voluntarily participated in the study and gave consent to record the interview as well. The teachers were assured that their identity would not be disclosed, and the data would be used for research purposes only. Hence, pseudo names were given to participants as shown in Table 1.

Findings

Data for knowing about technological skills, awareness about digital gadgets and accessories, online training, online resources, content development and assessment was collected using an online Google form from all the English language teachers. Frequency analysis of the statements in the forms showed the responses of the teachers from Strongly Disagree (5), Disagree (4), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5).

Responses of the Participants

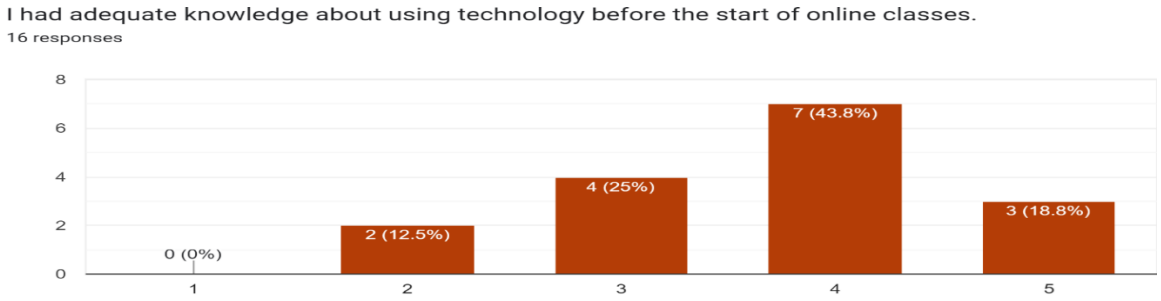
This study has identified the technical, institutional, and academic problems faced by English language teachers during online classes for undergraduate students at a public sector University in Karachi-Pakistan. For this purpose, the study utilized a qualitative case study method, and the target population included sixteen teachers who were teaching online. Data was collected in two stages using purposive sampling through an online teaching form from all the respondents and to know the experiences of teachers while conducting the classes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. The findings suggest that teachers faced problems in ICT skills, digital resources, content development, assessment and using different online platforms for tasks and activities. The results indicate that teachers also faced multiple economic, technological, interaction, attention, and motivation of learners and well-being issues during the online classes. Comparatively, some of the young teachers reflected the opposite trends and were motivated to explore this new education system. The findings are categorized in various sub-headings.

ICT Skills

Section I of the form inquired about the technological skills of the teachers before conducting the online classes. The first statement showed the responses of teachers regarding knowledge about technology prior to the start of online classes. 18.8% strongly agreed and 43.8% agreed that they had adequate knowledge about technology, 25% remained neutral, and 12.5% disagreed about having sufficient knowledge about using technology before the start of online classes.

Figure 1

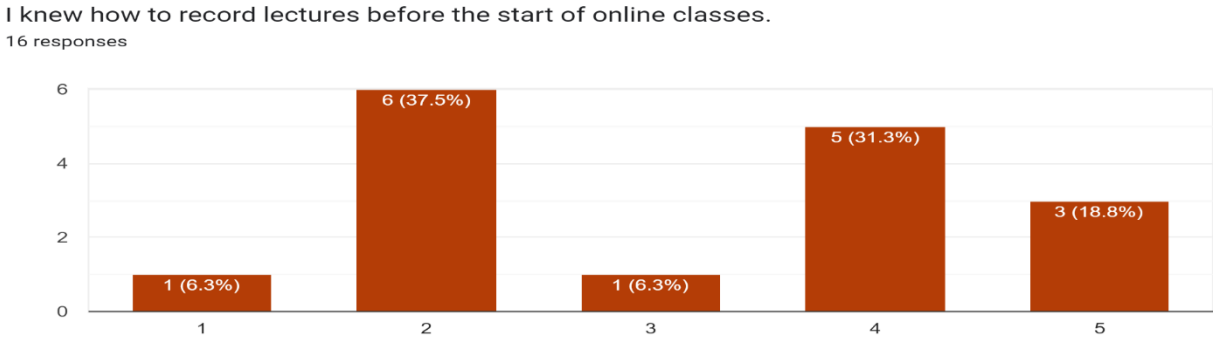
Knowledge of Technology



Similarly, the second statement inquired about the knowledge for recording online classes. 50.1% responded that they know how to record online classes while 43.8% did not know how to record and 6.3% remained neutral. Figure 2 shows the responses of the teachers below.

Figure 2

Recording Online Lectures



Similarly, the institute utilized OBS video recording with multiple screen sharing options and PowerPoint voice recording software for recording the online lectures. When inquired about the post-recording experience of the participants in the online classes. 18.8 % (strongly agreed), 25% (agreed), 18.8% (neutral), 31.3% disagreed) and 6.3%

strongly disagreed that they faced problems in recording online lectures using OBS software and PowerPoint voiceover, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Post-Recording Lectures

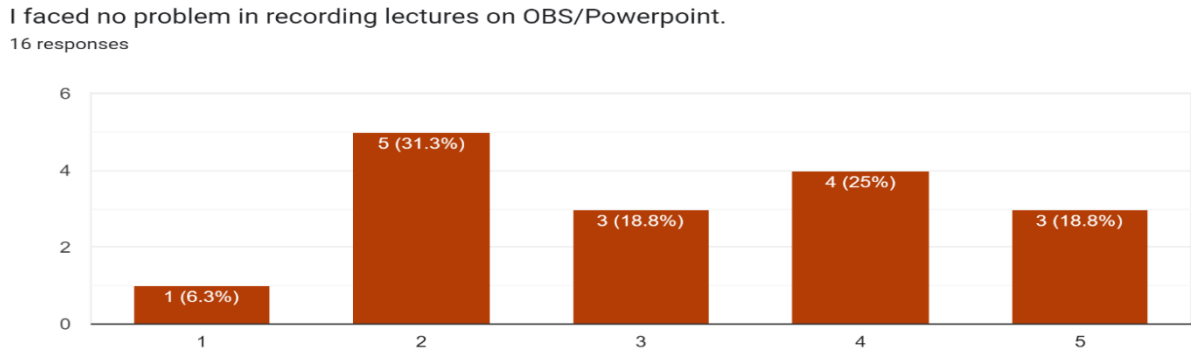


Table 2
Technological Tools

Name of Tools	Percentage
Zoom/Meet	25%
PowerPoint presentations	18.75%
Google Forms	12.5%
Padlet	12.5%%
Bamboozle	6.25%
Kahoot	6.25%
Quizizz	6.25%
Edmodo	6.25%
Canva	6.25%

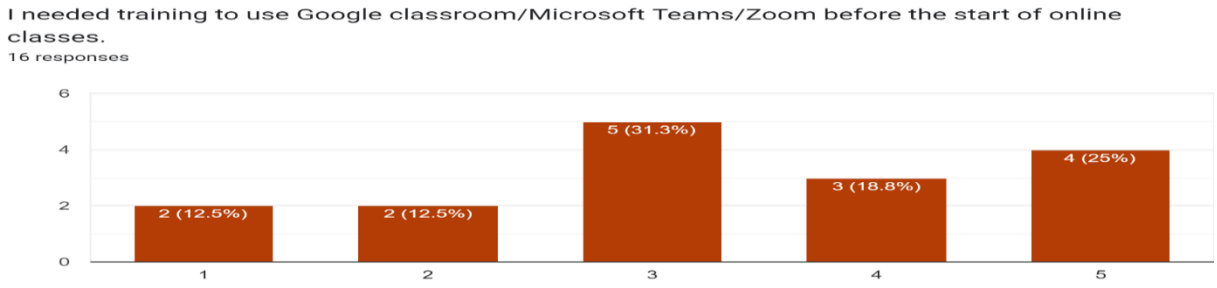
In the same manner, an open-ended question was also inquired in the Google form to know about the information of digital platforms and tools. Table 2 shows the different technological tools and applications used by the teachers. 37.5% used Zoom and Google Meet for online classes with their integrated options for the management of online classes. Microsoft PowerPoint was used to prepare, design, and record lectures. Similarly, 12.5% of the participants used Google Forms, while Padlet (6.25%), Bamboozle (6.25%), Kahoot (6.255%), Quizizz (6.252%), Edmodo (6.25%) and Canva (6.25%)

The frequency analysis, as shown in Table 1 reflected that the participants considered Zoom and Google Meet as technological tools. However, these are platforms to conduct and deliver online lectures. Similarly, Microsoft PowerPoint is an application for designing and drafting content for online lectures. In comparison, Google Forms are used for baseline tests and quizzes. The responses of the participants reflected that they had little knowledge about online technological tools, as few of the participants reported using Padlet, Bamboozle, Kahoot, Quizizz, Edmodo and Canva. These platforms are the different technological platforms used widely in online classes for engagement, Learning, teaching, and assessment. The participants in this study reported using Zoom, Meet, and PowerPoint presentations more as compared to the digital platforms. Hence, the teachers content delivers focused on synchronous teaching.

Institutional Training and Support

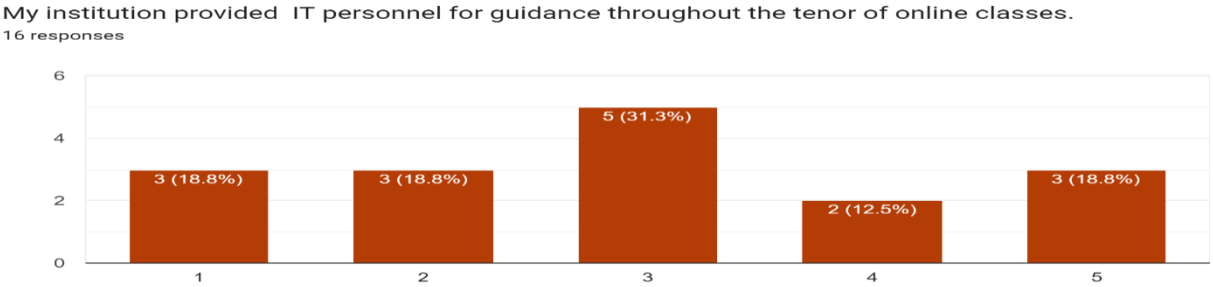
Section II of the form inquired about the institutional support, training, and guidance for conducting the online classes. Figure 4 shows that 43.8% participants reported that they needed training to use Google Classroom, Microsoft Team and Zoom before the start of the online classes. Comparatively, 25% disagreed that they do not need any training while thirty-one. % remained neutral. In the same manner, the participants were asked whether they received any training after the start of the online classes. 43.7% reported that they did not attend any training, while 56.3% reported that they attended online training for conducting virtual classes.

Figure 4
Digital Training
Support



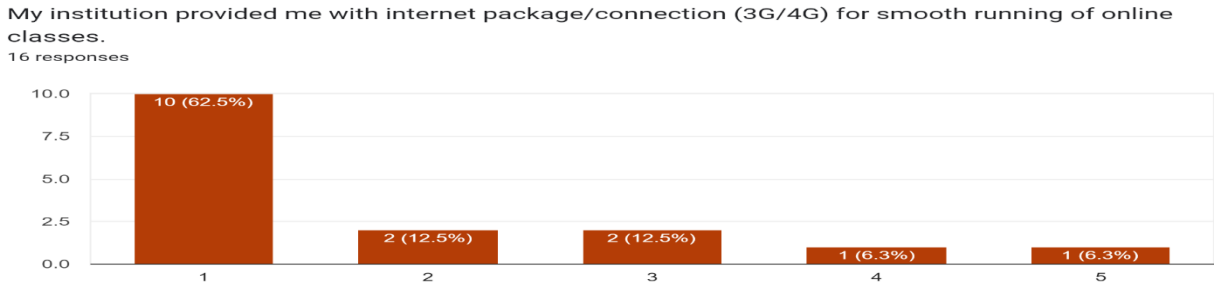
Institutional training, support and guidance was the foremost principle of online classes, as they were being conducted for the first time in Pakistani institutes. The participants responded that institute provided resources for online classes, 25% strongly agreed, 18.8% agreed, 18.8% remained neutral while 37.6% disagreed that the institution provided resources for the online classes. Similarly, Figure 5 shows that 18.8% strongly agreed, 12.5% agreed and 37.6% disagreed that the institute provide IT personnel for support and guidance throughout the online classes.

Figure 5
Institutional Resources



Digital gadgets and accessories are highly required for conducting online classes. Therefore, the participants were inquired whether they possessed technological tools or not for conducting the online classes. 68.8% strongly agreed that they had all the digital gadgets like mic, headphone, camera, and laptop to conduct the online classes smoothly. 18.8% reported that they did not have some of the accessories to conduct online classes. Similarly, flexible internet connection and data packages are required to conduct the online classes. Almost 62.5% of the participants disagreed that the constitution provided any internet package or connection for smooth delivery of online classes as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6
Internet Connectivity

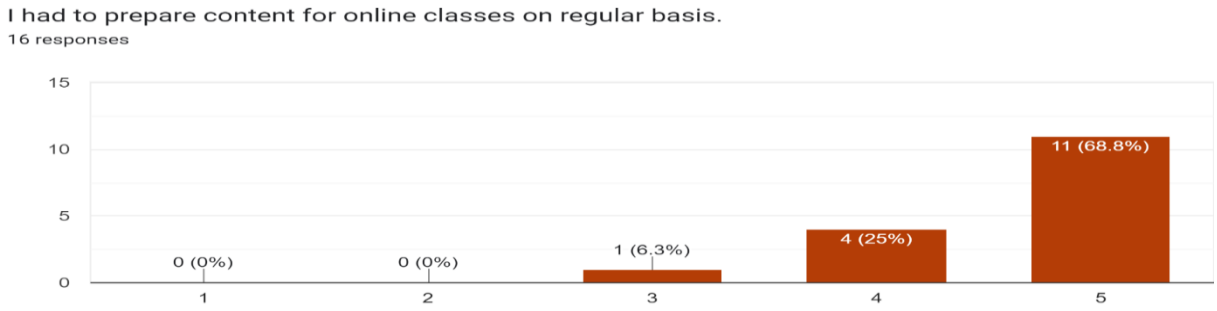


Academic Needs

Section III of the form inquired about access to online content, its designing and drafting and familiarity with online assessment. The first statement in this section shows the responses of teachers' readiness for delivery the content in online classes.25% of the participants reported that they had enough material prior to teaching in online classes while 62.5% reported that they did not have enough material for online classes. Similarly, when inquired about the preparation for drafting the content for online classes. 68.8% strongly agreed and 25% of the participants agreed that they had to prepare the content for online classes on a regular basis as shown in figure 7.

Figure 7

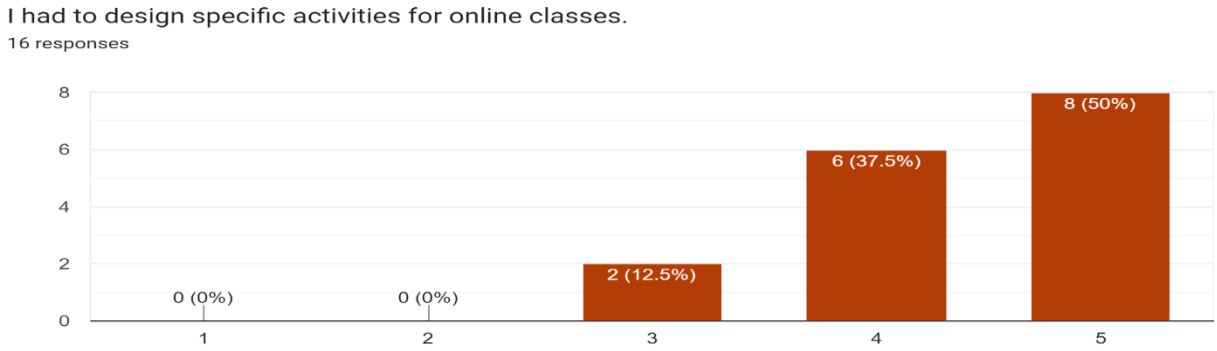
Content Development



In the same manner, participants reported that they had to design specific activities to meet the needs of learners in online classes. Fifty percent of participants strongly agreed and thirty-seven. % of the participants agreed that they had to design specific activities for online classes as shown in figure 8. While none disagreed that they did not have to design activities for the online lectures.

Figure 8

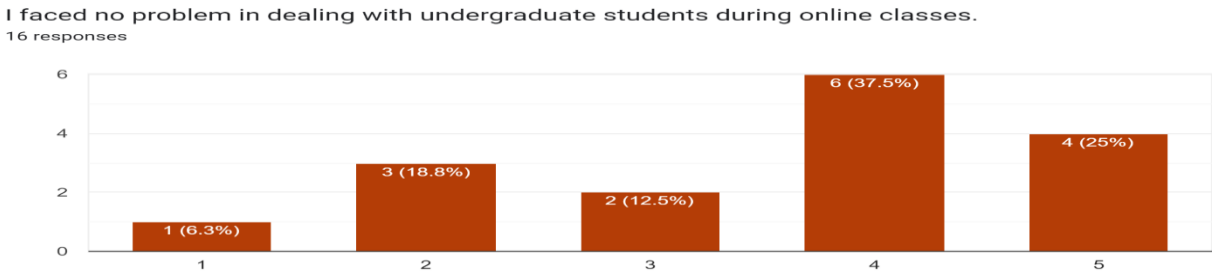
Designing Online Activities

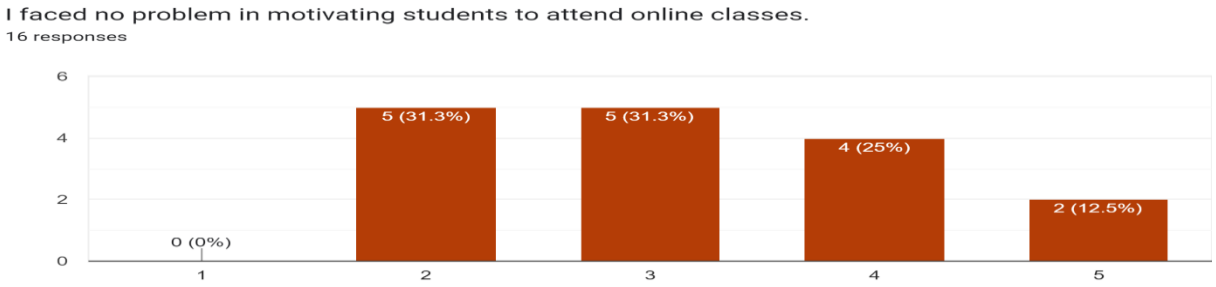


In the same manner, online classroom management was essential as well for interaction and motivation of learners during online classes. Figure 9 shows the responses of the participants during the delivery of online lectures. Twenty-five percent strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed and 22.1% of the participants disagreed that they faced no problems in online lectures. Similarly, 31.3% disagreed while 37.5% agreed that they faced problems in motivating the students to attend online classes, while 31.3% remained neutral.

Figure 9

Classroom Management in Online Classes



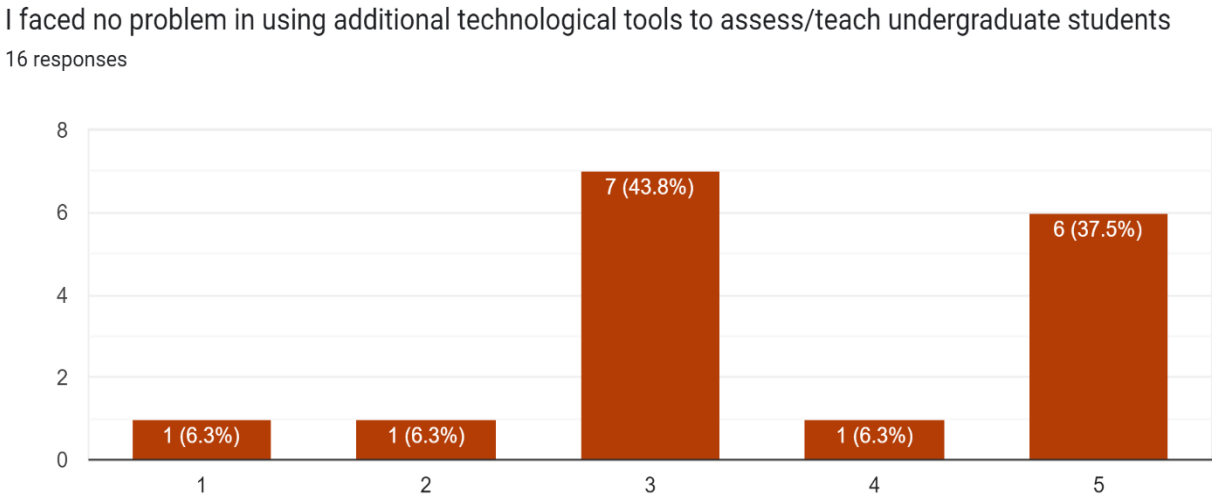


Online Assessment

Section III of the online form also inquired about the online assessment. Fifty percent of the participants reported that they faced problems in online assessment while 25% disagreed and 25% remained neutral. Online education requires the teachers to learn new ways of assessing and using digital tools to assess and assess the learners in online classes. Similarly, figure 10 shows that 43.8% of the participants remained neutral when inquired about whether they face problems in using additional tools to assess the learners. While 37.5% (SA) and 6.3% (agreed) that they did not face any problem while 12.6% of the participants disagreed.

Figure 10

Technological Tools for Assessment



Synchronous, Asynchronous or Blended Learning

Section IV of the online form inquired about the mode of teaching. The teachers conducted the online classes using synchronous (live), asynchronously (recorded) and blended (live vs recorded) teaching. Hence, the teachers were inquired about their preferred way of teaching based on their experience of online teaching. Table 3 shows the responses of participants about recorded, live and blended teaching. Teachers preferred live synchronous teaching as compared to asynchronous recording and blended Learning. As 18.8% agreed for teaching using recorded lectures, 80.3% preferred live teaching while 56.3% preferred blended teaching. Similarly, 62.5% disagreed with recording lectures, 6.3% disagreed with live mode of teaching while 25.1% disagreed with combination of both.

Table 3

Synchronous, Asynchronous & Blended Teaching

Mode	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Recorded	25%	37.5%	18.8%	12.5%	6.3%
Live	6.3%	-	12.5%	50%	31.3%
Combination Live vs Recorded	6.3%	18.8%	18.8%	12.5%	43.8%

Thematic Analysis

The online language form provided the responses of learners regarding ICT skills, technological and infrastructural support, designing online content, assessment, and preferred mode of teaching. However, in-depth insights of teachers about the learning and teaching experiences need to be explored as well to get an overview of the problems of ELT in online teaching. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted from five teachers (2 experiences and three novices) for detailed insights about their Learning and experiences of ELT in online classes.

Economic and Technological Problems

Teachers had positive and negative emotions attached to the transition from physical classrooms to virtual environment. Although all the teachers reported that they had the basic technological information, they faced problems in recording, delivering, and teaching during online classes. KLEPOF7 reported that "initially it sounded odd and funny as the teacher seemed to be the sole speaker". Similarly, KLEPOF5 said that "it took a lot of time to get familiar with online education". Moreover, KLEPOM1 reported that "the institute followed a complex teaching methodology with recorded and live lectures". KLEPOF13 said that "being the class advisor, the students reported that the lectures are boring and often the voice is not clear in the recording" In comparison KLEPOF9 reported that "we took online education as a challenge and the only available medium for teaching. The institute did not provide training to all the teachers in the initial days; therefore, we learnt through recorded videos by the IT department."

Similarly, the teachers faced problems related to the environment, technology, and internet connectivity. KLEPOF9 reported that "my voice used to echo in the recorded lecturer and the problem did not resolve despite purchasing the new headphones" KLEPOF5 said "I purchased new headphones and mic that reduces surrounding noise". KLEPOM1 said that "headphones were quite costly, I purchased twice and finally I was able to deliver good lectures". KLEPOF9 said that "my laptop started malfunctioning; as a result I was not able to record my lectures and conduct live sessions for the learners." KLEPOF13 said although "we did not find any issues with the mic, yet the students while listening to the recorded lectures complained that the voice is very low almost inaudible and facing difficulty in comprehending".

Another major issue was the environment. As teachers reported that we use to record the lectures at night, early morning and within locked doors. However, sometimes it was not possible as we lived in joint families with few rooms. Even the neighbors distorted our recorded lectures. KLEPOF9 narrated that "in order to reduce noise distortion, I purchased headphones that reduce noise in the surroundings and used to record lectures with my camera being turned on." Comparatively, all the four other teachers reported that initially they did open their camera but later they turned-off as the internet connectivity was low and students face similar issues as well.

Reflecting upon the shift from physical to virtual teaching and Learning, the teachers reported that they must design added content with innovative ideas. KLEPOF13 said that "in order to make learning engaging and meaningful, I used different slides, color scheme, instructions, images and recorded videos within my lectures". KLEPOM1 said "engaging and interactive lectures were a possibility but when you have to record three lectures for four subjects

within one week, it seems an uphill task" KLEPOF9 said that "we did not have proper training for technological tools and different resources."

Interaction Problems

One of the primary goals of the online classes was to have effective communication with the students. Unfortunately, the teachers reported internet connectivity, environment issues and lack of effective material did not let the teachers have proper communication with the students. KLEPOF9 said "our institute adopted 3 recorded lectures and live session policy; the students found recorded lectures boring and relay mostly on live session where the teacher was mostly repeating the same content". KLEPOF7 said that "the students did not have effective communication with the learners due to unstable internet connectivity and environment" KLEPOF5 said "students inquire questions during the live sessions but failed to understand the answer and often I had to repeat the answer and relay on chat option or WhatsApp group" Similarly, KLEPOF13 said that "recorded and live sessions sounded unsuccessful as the students relied on WhatsApp communication." KLEPOF9 said "some students went back to their hometown where they had no internet connectivity, as a result they faced problems in listening to recorded lectures and attending live sessions and as a teacher it was difficult to communicate and resolve their genuine issues." KLEPOM1 said that "teachers and students had a communication barrier in the online classes."

Attention and Motivation of Learners

KLEPOM1 said that students "showed different behaviors during the classroom, some were eager to get their problems resolved, get their answers and it was difficult to answer all of them". Similarly, KLEPOF7 said that "some students used to ask verbally with all the background noise while answering their queries through the chat option in the online meeting; all of it was quite difficult to manage". KLEPOF9 said "sometimes we used to inquire questions from the students, and they did not used to answer and complained about the voice issue and then I used to think now I need to change the mic again." KLEPOF5 said "we had to tackle different kinds of learners in the classroom, and it was quite frustrating at time, some students remained silent, while others just typed. At the same time, some were too eager to respond, and some remained silent throughout the semester." KLEPOF13 said "initially I got puzzled how to respond through mic and chat both; but gradually I learnt to engage the students in activities, polls and short responses question, this enhance the motivation and attention of learners". Similarly, KLEPOM said "to grab the attention and motivation of learners different activities were planned; where students were instructed to collaborate with each other through breakout rooms and collaborative applications like padlet, flipgrid and Google Jamboard."

Mental Well-Being of Teachers

Teachers reported that they faced different issues like back spasm, stiff neck, headache, throat infection, flu, and allergy. KLEPOM1 said "continuous screen time affected my vision and caused back pain as well". Similarly, KLEPOF5 said "continuously recording the lectures affected my health and often causes headache." KLEPOF9 narrated that "recording 3 lectures for one course affected my throat and speaking capabilities." Similarly, KLEPOF13 said that "I was assigned two different courses by the department that increased the number of recorded lecture and cause stress as we had to upload all the lectures timely". Similarly, KLEPOM7 said "theoretical based irrelevant courses were assigned that were quite boring with large number of students". Also, KLEPOM1 said "unnecessary burdens like recording lecture downloading etc. that could have been done by staff but the teacher was engaged in all the work. Additionally, the teacher must improve the content keeping in view the comments of the review committee."

Discussion

The result of the study reflects how the English language practitioners are trying and putting their efforts in making most of the electronic resources and technological support to maximize the effectiveness of online language teaching and learning process. The results of the present study are strengthened and endorsed by the reviewed literature (the studies of Chapelle, 2001; Mathew and Iloanya, 2016; Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison, 2020) that have looked into the opportunities, potentials and challenges of employing technology and revealed the advantages of integrating technology into online instruction for content sharing, fostering interaction, stimulation, accessibility to the most recent information, and students' involvement.

As far as the challenges of online language teaching are concerned, the reviewed literature has strengthened the results of the current study. The present study has highlighted the challenges such as inadequate technological facilities, lack of ICT skills and digital resources, content development, assessment and using different online platforms for tasks and activities. The results indicate that teachers also faced the challenges related to multiple economic, technological, interaction, attention, and motivation of learners and mental-wellbeing issues during the online classes. Comparatively, some of the young teachers reflected the opposite trends and were motivated to explore this new education system. The findings are supported by the reviewed studies (Mccormick & Scrimshaw, 2001; Nova, 2017; Dumford and Miller, 2018; Nobre, 2021; Şevik and Yücedağ, 2021).

Besides, digital literacy is also highlighted as a great challenge to the integration of online resources. Hence, the present study also positively endorses the findings of Mccormick and Scrimshaw (2001). Numerous obstacles to online teaching and Learning have been brought to light by the participants. These obstacles fall into four categories: individual, institutional, learners, and economical aspects. This is in match with Sahito and Vaisanen's study (2017). In developing countries, the main obstacles to the adoption of online Learning were found to be connectivity problems, a lack of ICT knowledge, content delivery, and students' IT skills (Aung and Khaing, 2015). Similarly, Kanwal and Rehman (2017) identified three major obstacles to the digitization of the Pakistani education system: computer self-efficacy, system characteristics, and internet experience. In line to this reviewed literature, the present findings also reveal that teachers faced problems in ICT skills, digital resources, content development, assessment and using different online platforms for tasks and activities. The results indicate that teachers also faced multiple economic, technological, interaction, attention, motivation of learners and well-being issues during the online classes. Comparatively, some of the young teachers reflected the opposite trends and were motivated to explore this new education system.

In addition to these challenges, the current study also looks at how hard it is for teachers to engage inattentive students or inactive learners. Getting quiet students to communicate in online classes is one of the biggest challenges for teachers. By utilizing CLT as their main method of instruction, the instructors indicated that they support discovery-based learning. They had to overcome the challenge of engaging inactive students as a result. The study's conclusions state that ELT professionals are putting more effort into trying out different approaches through trial and error. They are picking up more effective ways to educate online very quickly. They become more adept at using the internet platforms once they become acquainted with their features and capabilities. They are overcoming the obstacles and adjusting to the change gradually. The efforts are indeed boosting the self-assurance needed for successful online language learning.

Conclusion

The Global Pandemic introduced new challenges in pedagogy, methodology and curriculum. However, it offered some innovative solutions for academia to rapidly shift from traditional teacher-centered classrooms to student-oriented interactive classrooms using online tools. Hence, this study has identified the technical, institutional, and academic problems English language teachers meet during online classes for undergraduate students at a public sector university in Karachi, Pakistan. For this purpose, the study utilized a qualitative case study method, and the target population included sixteen teachers teaching online. Data was collected in two stages using purposive sampling through an online teaching form from all the respondents and to know teachers' experiences while conducting the classes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. The study's findings reveal that teachers faced problems in ICT skills, digital resources, content development, assessment and using different online platforms for tasks and activities. The results indicate that teachers met multiple economic, technological, interaction, attention, motivation of learners and well-being issues during the online classes. Comparatively, some young teachers reflected the opposite trends and were motivated to explore this new education system. The findings have some recommendations for the higher education institutes in Pakistan to take immediate steps to develop new curricula in alignment with the technological needs; also, sufficient training for the ELT practitioners and teaching language skills must be provided for the betterment of future generations.

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