

# Attitudes and Opinions of Kuwaiti EFL Instructors about Online Distance Learning

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## Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes and opinions of Kuwaiti instructors of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) on the shift from face-to-face classes to online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. A mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis was utilised. A total of 70 EFL instructors participated in this study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire that contained closed- and open-ended items. Quantitative data were descriptively analysed using Microsoft Excel Software, and thematic analysis was used for the responses to the open-ended questions. Results revealed participants' satisfaction with their online teaching experience, demonstrating positive attitudes towards online distance learning. Findings also revealed that several advantages characterised the shift to online distance learning. The unexpected transition also resulted in some drawbacks and difficulties. The study has pedagogical and practical implications for educational decision-makers and EFL instructors that must be considered. The findings contribute to the literature on EFL teachers' attitudes and opinions on online distance learning by providing data from the Kuwaiti educational context.

**Keywords:** attitudes, COVID-19 pandemic, EFL teachers, online distance learning, opinions

## 1. Introduction

The dramatic spread of COVID-19 forced the implementation of social distancing, resulting in many educational institutions emptying their classrooms and keeping students and lecturers away from their institutions. Nevertheless, for many educational institutions hoping to minimise the effects of the pandemic on education, providing ongoing education through alternative channels became a top priority. Therefore, many colleges and universities transitioned from traditional face-to-face classroom learning to online distance learning or adopted a combination of both.

The unexpected shift to online distance learning required educators and students to adapt rapidly to the new educational environment. The transition to online distance learning had various advantages. Still, there were many challenges and difficulties that instructors of English as a foreign language (EFL) faced. Many EFL instructors were accustomed to traditional face-to-face classes and had never delivered their classes through an online distance environment. Therefore, it was challenging for many of them to acquire new technological skills and adjust their teaching materials to fit the online distance environment. Recent research indicates that EFL instructors have different attitudes and opinions regarding their experience of online distance teaching (e.g., Alhaider, 2023; Housseine & Rabha, 2020; Saleh & Meccawy, 2021). Given the importance of teachers' views and opinions in prompting a successful education, studies have covered a wide range of EFL educational contexts. However, more research needs to be conducted, especially in the Kuwaiti EFL context. The views and opinions of Kuwaiti EFL instructors need to be considered for a thriving learning environment. This article, therefore, examines the advantages and disadvantages of online distance learning by exploring the attitudes and opinions of Kuwaiti EFL instructors.

### 1.1 Research Purpose & Questions

This study aims to explore the attitudes of Kuwaiti EFL instructors towards online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and their satisfaction with teaching via online platforms. It also aims to investigate their opinions about their online teaching experience during that period. In pursuit of the aims of the study, the researchers propose the following research questions:

- 1) What are the attitudes of Kuwaiti EFL instructors towards online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2) What are the opinions of Kuwaiti EFL instructors about online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

While several studies have explored the opinions of EFL instructors and their attitudes towards online distance learning during the pandemic (e.g., Civelek et al., 2021; Fitria, 2020; Housseine & Rabha, 2020; Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020), research still needs to be

conducted, especially in the Kuwaiti EFL context. After a disruption of six months, the Ministry of Education (MOE) announced that online distance learning would be implemented to continue education and keep the pandemic's impact to a minimum. Educational institutions in Kuwait had no choice but to resort to an online environment to compensate for the damage done to the education system. This abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face teaching to online distance learning put many teachers under pressure because of their unfamiliarity with technology. Many had never delivered their courses through an online environment. They, therefore, had to adapt to this sudden transition and face the challenge. During the pandemic, two online platforms were used in Kuwait to deliver distance learning: Microsoft Teams and Moodle. Educational institutions during the pandemic provided students and educators with online training to acquaint them with these digital platforms. Even after the crisis had ended, the MOE stressed the need to cope with technology in education and to continue utilising online distance learning at all educational levels during emergencies, as in the case of weather storms. Many Kuwaiti EFL teachers are familiar with using technology in their language labs. However, the challenge was shifting from face-to-face classes to online distance learning.

Therefore, given the increasing significance of online distance learning in Kuwait, there is a need for more research to investigate the advantages of such experience and the difficulties EFL teachers faced during that period by exploring their attitudes and opinions. Exploring and reflecting on this experience is essential to understand its advantages and drawbacks and prepare for possible future requirements. The significance of this study lies in the insights it offers into the attitudes and views of EFL teachers in Kuwait, a country witnessing a significant shift in education and EFL teaching. Teachers' views and opinions are paramount for a thriving learning environment (Rajab et al., 2016). They are the most crucial agents in the educational system, and their views and opinions should not be overlooked (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010). The study also provides insights into Kuwaiti EFL teachers' difficulties while delivering their online classes and sheds light on the drawbacks of online distance learning. Thus, this research aims to explore the attitudes and opinions of EFL instructors in Kuwait regarding online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study has pedagogical and practical implications for educational decision-makers and EFL instructors that must be considered. Additionally, this paper presents some solutions and recommendations to improve the process of online distance learning for future purposes. The study thereby contributes to the body of studies investigating online distance learning in the field of EFL.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Distance Learning

Online learning has long been an essential component of EFL teaching because of the rapid development of technology (Bećirović et al., 2021; El-Henawy & Suárez, 2023; Pikhart et al., 2023). Many EFL instructors employ technological tools in their classes. They have used online learning to support the learning process at all educational levels for the last 30 years (Chen, 2018). Therefore, as Civelek et al. (2021) state, almost every EFL teacher has some knowledge of implementing technology in their traditional face-to-face classes. However, distance learning created a different, novel situation. It differed from face-to-face classes regarding interactional patterns, materials, methodologies, and techniques to be employed (Civelek et al., 2021); all had to be dealt with from a distance. EFL instructors had to take the challenge and adapt to this novel situation.

The shift to online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had various advantages. It also had many disadvantages and difficulties that EFL instructors faced. A common advantage of online distance learning is that learners can be educated anywhere, anytime, and on any platform using their computers or smartphones. Singh and Thurman (2019) indicate that online distance learning is learning practised over the Internet in synchronous classrooms where students interact with each other and their teachers and where the physical location is not required for participating in such a learning experience. Similarly, Hazaymeh (2021) argues that online distance learning can have many advantages for EFL instructors and students. She states that it facilitates interaction, collaboration, communication, and knowledge-building. Advantages also include easy accessibility, flexibility, increased convenience, and a comparably more affordable form of education due to the lower cost of transportation and accommodation.

However, other researchers observe that the shift to online distance learning was associated with several drawbacks. Alhaider (2023), for example, indicates that online distance learning reduces social communication and interaction and lacks traditional classroom socialisation. Similarly, Lockee (2021) notes that online distance learning is associated with some difficulties, including the lack of internet connectivity in some locations and the insufficient digital knowledge of instructors and learners. Research by Nashruddin et al. (2020) confirms that some Indonesian students live in remote areas not covered by the Internet. The students, therefore, had problems accessing the subject matter provided by the teachers during online distance learning. Some students were also new to using email and frequently forgot their passwords. A study by Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) also revealed that Iranian EFL teachers lacked sufficient technical knowledge. Some teachers reported that taking some training courses could improve their technology skills.

Academic integrity was a significant concern during online distance learning. Several studies have reported teachers' difficulties controlling online cheating (e.g., Rahayu & Wirza, 2020; Saleh & Meccawy, 2021). In a study of the prevalence of cheating behaviour among Turkish university students before and during the pandemic, Yazici et al. (2022) demonstrated an increase in cheating incidents in online distance learning. The faculty reported that 90% of students' grades were based on cheating. In a study investigating the cheating behaviour of Pakistani college and university students, Malik et al. (2023) also demonstrated the prevalence of cheating during online distance learning. The researchers reported that 90% of the students cheated during online exams. The study also found that the students obtained higher grades in online exams compared to face-to-face exams. The professors indicated that students' higher grades are due to

cheating being easier in online distance learning. Given the impact of online cheating on the quality of education, many educational institutions, during online distance learning, adopted alternative assessment techniques and online proctoring software programs to safeguard exam security (Yazici et al., 2023).

### *2.2 EFL Teachers' Attitudes and Opinions of Online Distance Learning*

While there is a growing recognition of the importance of online distance learning, especially with the rapid technological development, research findings show no consensus among EFL instructors regarding their satisfaction with delivering their English courses via online platforms. For example, in a study conducted to investigate the attitudes of EFL instructors towards online distance learning during the pandemic in Morocco, Housseine and Rabha (2020) reported that while the teachers held positive attitudes towards the implementation of technology, they were unsatisfied due to the lack of students' interaction, and teachers' failure to respond to all students' questions, especially in reading, language functions, and grammar. Similarly, in a study conducted to explore the attitudes and opinions of EFL instructors in English language institutes in Iran, Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) found that while teachers were aware of the significance of online distance learning showing positive attitudes towards the implementation of technology, they, however, faced some difficulties such as the lack of appropriate teaching materials and support for language institutions, and learners' lack of attention and demotivation towards online classes.

Investigating the views and opinions of Indonesian EFL teachers about their online teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, Nugroho and Mutiaraningrum (2020) found that the teachers were aware of the importance of online education. However, their findings revealed that the teachers viewed their online teaching experience negatively. The teachers reported that digital training and online resources were inadequate, which affected their efficacy in teaching English through online platforms. The researchers suggested that teachers' professional development and training are needed to enhance the quality of online distance education. Likewise, Hakim (2020) investigated the impact of online distance learning on EFL classes during the pandemic in Saudi Arabia and the challenges language instructors faced. The findings revealed that EFL teachers had a positive attitude towards this new experience, emphasising the importance of educational continuity for learners. The teachers, however, revealed their dissatisfaction due to the lack of suitable assessment tools. As such, Hakim proposed that institutional management and curriculum designers cooperate with the teachers to develop assessment tools that suit the context of online distance learning. Another study in Saudi Arabia by Alhaider (2023) investigated the effect of online distance teaching on EFL students' four English skills development. The findings revealed teachers' satisfaction with their online experience, indicating the positive effect of using multimedia in online classes. Specifically, the online environment benefited the teaching and learning of the four English skills. The teachers reported that the online environment provided the best context to teach English. However, they indicated that better outcomes for speaking skills could be achieved if students' active participation is ensured through encouragement in online class activities.

Other empirical studies (e.g., Civelek et al., 2021; Efriana, 2021; Fitria, 2020; Hazaymeh, 2021; Korkmaz & Karatepe, 2021) have also demonstrated EFL teachers' satisfaction with the online environment as it helped them during the pandemic substitute their traditional teaching materials with more innovative ones that contributed to their students' language skills by motivating them and bringing fun to the learning process. However, it was also pointed out that online distance learning puts too much pressure on the teachers, affecting their instructional practices.

## **3. Methodology**

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore the attitudes of Kuwaiti EFL teachers and their opinions about online distance learning and to arrive at answers to the proposed research questions. Quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis support and inform each other, strengthening the study design (Schrauf, 2016). In this study, a quantitative approach helped measure the degree of satisfaction of the EFL teachers with online distance learning and derived findings from statistics. A qualitative approach, on the other hand, clarified these statistics and provided the reasons underlying the participants' attitudes. It also offered a greater understanding of their attitudes by documenting their opinions in their own words. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire that contained closed- and open-ended items.

### *3.1 Participants*

The participants in this study consisted of 70 language instructors (males and females) who teach EFL at Kuwait University (KU). All participants have a minimum qualification of a Master of Arts degree in Applied Linguistics or TESOL. Their teaching experience ranges from 15 to 25 years.

### *3.2 Data Collection Method & Procedure*

This study adopted Civelek et al.'s (2021) questionnaire to collect the required data. The researchers, however, made some modifications to the questionnaire items to serve the purpose of the study. The questionnaire aimed to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the EFL instructors regarding their attitudes and opinions of online distance learning during the pandemic. It consisted of three parts. The first part, the introductory part, included a paragraph that informed the participants about the scope of the study, the confidentiality of their answers, and their right to withdraw from the study. It also sought to collect demographic information (e.g., qualification, teaching experience, and gender). The second part of the questionnaire answered research question 1. It pertained to exploring the participants' attitudes towards online learning by collecting quantitative data. It consisted of 11 closed-ended items. The participants were required to

indicate their degree of agreement with each item. A 5-point Likert scale was used to score the participants' responses: 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree. The third part of the questionnaire answered research question 2. It consisted of two open-ended questions intended to be exploratory to obtain qualitative data and allow the participants to freely express their opinions and points of view regarding the advantages of online distance learning and the difficulties they faced. The open-ended questions were as follows:

- What were the advantages of switching to online distance learning?
- What were the difficulties that you encountered during online distance classes?

Five EFL teachers who were not among the participants were asked to pilot-test the questionnaire to establish content validity. Modifications were made in response to their feedback. The final version of the questionnaire was created using Google Forms. A link to the questionnaire was sent to the participants via WhatsApp.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The closed-ended items resulted in quantitative data descriptively analysed using Microsoft Excel Software to calculate an overall satisfaction score and generate the percentages, means, and standard deviations for each item. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data that resulted from the open-ended questions. Recurring topics and prominent patterns in the participants' responses were identified. The analysis was inductive; the participants' responses generated and determined the identified themes. Thematic analysis followed the six-step process developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework is arguably the most influential approach in the social sciences because it provides a simple and usable framework for conducting thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Teachers' Attitudes Towards Online Learning

This section deals with the closed-ended questionnaire items intended to investigate the participants' attitudes towards online distance learning in response to research question 1. Table 1 presents the teachers' attitudes towards online distance learning.

Table 1. Kuwaiti EFL Instructors' Attitudes Towards Online Distance Learning

Scale	Scale (%)					Mean	SD
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree		
1. The switch to online distance learning was fully clarified to me.	-	10	11.4	50	28.6	3.97	0.89
2. The platforms used in online distance learning were efficient.	-	7.1	10	21.5	61.4	4.37	0.92
3. The college provided me with sufficient technical support during online distance learning.	-	14.3	12.8	58.6	14.3	3.72	0.87
4. Course materials and information were easy to access and share through online platforms.	-	11.4	12.8	50	25.7	3.9	0.91
5. Online discussions with other EFL teachers were helpful and contributed to my online teaching experience.	-	11.4	11.4	41.4	35.7	4.01	0.96
6. Online learning facilitated the use of multimedia in my online EFL classes.	-	1.4	7.1	28.6	62.9	4.52	0.69
7. Online distance learning provided equal learning opportunities for my EFL students.	-	61.4	18.6	20.0	-	2.	0.99
8. Online distance learning allowed interaction and collaboration, for example, group tasks, among students.	-	55.7	28.6	15.7	-	2.6	0.74
9. Sufficient feedback could be provided to EFL students during online distance classes.	-	11.4	12.8	35.7	40.0	4.04	0.99
10. Online distance classes were more interactive than traditional face-to-face classes.	-	58.6	18.6	22.8	-	2.64	0.82
11. I was generally satisfied with my online distance teaching experience.	-	11.4	20.0	42.8	25.7	3.82	0.94
Overall Mean (Score of satisfaction)						3.59	

As shown in Table 1, the teachers' attitudes towards online distance learning can best be described as positive, with an overall mean satisfaction score of 3.59. 78.6% of the participants agreed with item 1 that the shift to online learning was clarified to them (M=3.97, SD=0.89), 82.9% approved of item 2 regarding the efficiency of the platforms (M=4.37, SD=0.92), and 72.9% agreed with item 3 that they were provided with technical support during online distance learning (M=3.72, SD=0.87). In addition, 75.7% of the participants agreed with item 4 that course materials were easy to access and share online (M=3.9, SD=0.91), 77.1% approved of item 5 regarding the usefulness of online discussions with EFL colleagues (M=4.01, SD=0.96), and 91.5% agreed with item 6 that online distance learning facilitated the use of multimedia in their online EFL classes (M=4.52, SD=0.69). Furthermore, 75.7% of the participants agreed with item 9 that they could provide their EFL students with sufficient feedback during their online distance classes (M=4.04, SD=0.99), and 68.5% agreed with item 11 that they were satisfied with their online teaching experience (M=3.82, SD=0.94). These high agreement scores

show that most participants were satisfied with most aspects of online distance learning, with multimedia receiving the highest score in the questionnaire.

The participants, however, showed negative attitudes towards some other aspects of online distance learning. 61.4% of the participants disagreed with item 7 that online distance learning provided equal learning opportunities for their EFL students ( $M=2$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ), 55.7% disagreed with item 8 that online distance learning allowed interaction and collaboration among students ( $M=2.6$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ), and 58.6% disagreed with item 10 that online distance classes were more interactive than face-to-face classes ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ). The open-ended questions clarified the participants' negative attitudes and provided reasons for their dissatisfaction with these aspects of online distance learning. These are discussed in the following section.

#### 4.2 Teachers' Opinions about Online Distance Learning

This section deals with the open-ended questionnaire items intended to explore the participants' opinions regarding online distance learning in response to research question 2. The open-ended questions examined the participants' views regarding the advantages of online distance learning and the difficulties they faced. Thematic analysis of the data obtained from the two open-ended questions resulted in different themes. Themes related to the advantages of online distance learning are referred to first, followed by those related to the difficulties of online distance teaching.

##### 4.2.1 Advantages of Online Distance Learning

Thematic analysis of the advantages of online distance learning yielded two themes, as follows:

###### 4.2.1.1 Comfortability

The participants indicated that the shift to distance learning added the value of flexibility to work in the comfort of their homes. This allowed them to perform their family duties and stay close to their children, who also attended their online classes at home. One female participant indicated she could prepare snacks for her children between online classes. Online distance learning also saved the participants' time. Some participants indicated they usually get stuck in traffic for hours on their way to the college. Working from home, however, meant that they 'have all the time in the world.'

###### 4.2.1.2 Efficiency

The participants agreed that the platforms they used during online distance teaching facilitated various technological tools and online resources, which benefited their students and their language learning process. The teachers, for example, could share websites, multimedia, online games, and short films with their students to teach vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. The online platforms turned out to be efficient in making such resources accessible and, accordingly, provided a shift from traditional teaching materials to more innovative ones, bringing motivation, excitement, and entertainment to EFL classes and enhancing the students' language learning experiences. The ability to integrate technology and online resources also allowed the teachers to develop their teaching skills.

The participants also referred to the efficiency of the online platforms in uploading materials easily, sharing tasks and assignments with students quickly, and providing an auto-grading feature, which saved the teachers time and energy and provided students with immediate feedback. This was more convenient for the teachers than traditional face-to-face classes, where they spent much time correcting exams and photocopying assignments and materials for their students.

##### 4.2.2 Difficulties Encountered during Online Distance Teaching

Thematic analysis of the difficulties of online distance teaching yielded four themes, as follows:

###### 4.2.2.1 Technical Issues and Knowledge

The participants stated that they faced technical issues and frequent internet disconnection, which affected the time allocated to their classes. They also pointed out that some students lacked technical skills and had inadequate preparation for online learning. Students' lack of technical skills and preparation prevented them from completing some of their online tasks and assignments and properly following their online classes. As indicated by the participants, the students needed more training on using the online platforms.

###### 4.2.2.2 Lack of Interaction

Teaching English through online distance learning, as pointed out by the participants, was very challenging because of the absence of interaction between the teachers and their students. The participants indicated that implementing technology in teaching English during the pandemic was a good idea. The problem, however, was with 'distance' teaching, which lacked 'real' interaction between the teachers and students. When teachers, for example, explained grammar, they had no clue if their students were following and comprehending the lesson. Most of the time, they did not receive any response from their students. Most students did not respond or participate even when asked if they understood. This, as described by the participants, was extremely frustrating. According to one of the participants, teacher-student interaction is an essential aspect of language learning development.

The participants also referred to students' fake attendance. Many students joined the online class, and the system listed them as attending, but they were not. The only way to discover students' fake attendance was to call out the students' names to check if they responded and they were there. Fake attendance was another reason for the lack of participation and interaction in online distance learning.

###### 4.2.2.3 Class Size

The shift to an online environment meant many students could be registered in online classes, with around 70 to 80 students enrolled in each EFL online class. This, however, differed from face-to-face classes, which were limited to 25 students in each class. Online classes, on the other hand, were usually 'packed' with students. Large online classes meant that the teachers could not provide an equal learning opportunity for all students to participate in class, such as reading or answering the teacher's questions. Large online classes also made it difficult for the teachers to manage students' activities and arrange, for example, group work. As the participants indicated, group work is essential to language learning as it allows students to collaborate and work with each other to practice the language and share ideas.

#### 4.2.2.4 Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty was one of the most significant difficulties of online distance learning. This included cheating on exams and quizzes. The participants stated that some students, during online exams, obtained inappropriate assistance from other students through WhatsApp or with the help of their friends and relatives. Some students also copied the correct answers from their textbooks and the Internet. In face-to-face exams, the situation was completely different; the teachers usually checked students' identities, invigilated the exams, and distributed more than one form of the exam. Cheating in online distance learning, on the other hand, was difficult to control.

## 5. Discussion

This study investigated the attitudes of Kuwaiti EFL teachers and their opinions about online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data analysis revealed that the teachers in this study held a positive attitude towards many aspects of online distance learning. The efficiency of the online platforms, technical support, accessibility of course materials, and multimedia use all contributed to participants' satisfaction and positive attitudes towards online distance learning.

Online distance learning had several advantages that further influenced the participants' satisfaction with their online teaching experience. The convenience of staying home and the time they saved, which was wasted in traffic, allowed the participants to fulfil their family commitments. Furthermore, the efficiency of online platforms in facilitating technological tools and online resources helped create innovative teaching materials, enhancing the online experience. The employment of such tools and resources in the teaching environment, as established in the literature (e.g., Hazaymeh, 2021; Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Shadiev & Huang, 2020; Shadiev & Yang, 2020), allows EFL learners to improve and develop their English language skills. In this study, not only did the employment of such resources and tools enhance students' language learning process, but it also enriched the teachers' online experience. Thus, online distance learning was an innovative language teaching tool that contributed to learners' language skills and added to the teachers' teaching experience.

Moreover, online distance learning offered the participants the advantage of auto-grading and sharing documents with their students via online platforms. Thus, the shift to an online environment saved the teachers time and energy and seemed more convenient than traditional face-to-face teaching. Such advantages increased the efficiency of online distance teaching. The advantages of online distance learning reported in this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g., Civelek et al., 2021; Hazaymeh, 2021; Korkmaz & Karatepe, 2021) highlighting the efficiency of online platforms and the flexibility of online distance teaching.

While the participants believed online distance learning was necessary to guarantee educational continuity for learners, demonstrating an overall satisfaction with such teaching experience, they expressed concern about its quality and academic integrity compared to face-to-face learning. Large online classes, students' fake attendance, cheating, and lack of interaction and collaboration were among the disadvantages of online distance learning that could negatively affect the quality of students' education. The large online classes made it difficult for teachers to manage and control their classes. Face-to-face classes, however, were limited to a small number of students, whereby teachers could distribute the class time among all the students, allowing them to participate and arrange group work where they interact and collaborate. Furthermore, with the small number of students in face-to-face classes, it was easier for the teachers to control their classes during exams and check students' attendance and identities. However, the EFL teachers expected their students to act honestly and be responsible for their learning during online distance learning. Contrary to teachers' expectations, the students took advantage of distance learning to fake their attendance and cheat in online exams. With the large number of students in online classes, it was difficult for the teachers to control this form of academic misbehaviour by, for example, checking the identity of each student and asking them to turn on their video cameras.

Accordingly, it can be argued that the large online classes resulted in the other obstacles referred to by the participants. However, a possible solution to overcome such difficulties requires educational decision-makers at KU to assist and support EFL teachers in performing their teaching responsibilities by limiting the number of students in online classes. Increasing EFL class size was an issue of concern in Kuwait during the pandemic, whereby decision-makers attempted to control education budgets. Indisputably, however, maintaining smaller sizes in EFL classes, as indicated by Filges et al. (2018), positively affects the learners' academic achievement. Smaller EFL classes allow for frequent opportunities for learners to interact, collaborate, and participate in class activities, which is essential for language learning. According to Yuyun (2023), student-teacher and student-student interactions improve motivation and promote learning expectations. Furthermore, with smaller EFL classes, teachers can easily manage and control their online classes. Therefore, decision-makers must cooperate with language instructors to reduce class sizes to enhance the quality of online education. Moreover, EFL teachers need to improve their teaching techniques, teaching practices, and classroom management skills to suit the online environment and students' needs. Teachers' planning, design, and delivery of online material widely affect the quality and success of online education (Aghabarari & Rahimi, 2020; Alhaider, 2023). If teachers do not use their teaching resources appropriately, students become demotivated and bored during their classes. This would ultimately cause students to be inactive during class activities. Teacher

training programs and professional development also help equip EFL teachers with pedagogical competence and knowledge in teaching online classes and provide them with the necessary skills in class management (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020).

Academic integrity has long been a matter of concern to the academic community. However, due to the increasing significance of online distance learning in Kuwait, some strategies could be considered in distance learning to prevent students' academic misconduct. Educational decision-makers and EFL instructors could raise students' ethical awareness by articulating the University's rules and regulations regarding cheating and attendance, elaborating on the consequences students may face for academic misconduct (Aljurf et al., 2020). Moreover, EFL instructors could follow an alternative evaluation assessment whereby more grades in online classes could be assigned to class participation rather than exams. They could also decrease the number of multiple-choice questions in online exams and increase the number of short-answer and essay questions in, for example, reading comprehension (Saleh & Meccawy, 2021).

In addition to the quality of online distance learning and its academic integrity, the participants pinpointed other difficulties, including technical issues, internet disconnection, and students' poor technical skills, which negatively affected the online learning experience. Such difficulties and drawbacks were also demonstrated in previous studies (e.g., Hazaymeh, 2021; Housseine & Rabha, 2020), whereby EFL teachers reported similar negative experiences during their online distance teaching. However, while such problems, as indicated by the participants, were manageable, it is essential to find practical solutions to clear any obstacles that would result in future interruptions to online distance learning. Solutions could include providing students and faculty members with high-speed internet and arranging extensive training workshops for students to improve their technical skills.

## 6. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the attitudes and opinions of Kuwaiti EFL instructors on the shift to online distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. A closed- and open-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The results indicated that the participants were satisfied with their online teaching experience, demonstrating positive attitudes towards many aspects of online distance learning. Several advantages characterised the shift to the online distance environment. Despite these advantages, the participants highlighted some drawbacks and difficulties during their online distance experience.

This study has contributed to a growing body of research investigating online distance learning in the field of EFL, exploring its advantages and disadvantages by providing data from the Kuwaiti educational context whereby the attitudes and opinions of Kuwaiti EFL teachers are investigated. Additionally, the study has shed light on the drawbacks of online distance learning in Kuwait and the obstacles the participants in this study faced during their online teaching experience. It has also presented some solutions to overcome these obstacles for a successful future implementation of online distance learning during pandemics and emergencies.

This study has pedagogical and practical implications for educational decision-makers and language instructors. The findings demonstrated that large online classes resulted in some obstacles that hindered the EFL teachers from adequately managing and controlling their online classes. Therefore, a key recommendation of this study is that educational decision-makers attend to teachers' problems and be aware of the detrimental effect of large classes on the quality of student's education by limiting the number of EFL students in online classes. This should assist language instructors in performing their teaching responsibilities. It is also suggested that educational decision-makers raise students' ethical commitment and sense of responsibility towards their education. Furthermore, it is essential to articulate the rules and regulations of educational institutions regarding academic misconduct and the consequences students may face for their academic misbehaviour. Moreover, it is within the responsibility of educational institutions to provide a fast internet connection for students and educators and arrange extensive training workshops for students to improve their technical skills to secure a flexible online learning and teaching environment that could take place in the future.

At the curriculum and material design level, the EFL instructors in this study reported that the online platforms enabled them to use technological tools and online resources while delivering their English classes. This, however, seemed not encouraging enough for some students to participate and interact. Therefore, language instructors should adjust their teaching approach and carefully select and present their online materials and resources in a way that appeals to their students and suits the online context. That should help students engage in the online environment and make online classes more interactive. Moreover, given the difficulties in managing and controlling online classes, this study recommends that EFL teachers be competent in managing online classes. Teacher professional development and training in online classroom management is required to enhance the quality of online distance learning.

The findings of this study also have implications for future research. Building on the body of studies conducted in the field of EFL, several areas of future research can be pursued to further our understanding of online distance learning. First, being part and parcel of the education system, future research could investigate the attitudes and opinions of Kuwaiti EFL students regarding their experience of online distance learning. Such investigation could reveal other obstacles and drawbacks of online education and provide solutions that could help use online distance learning to its fullest potential. Second, given the negative impact of cheating on the quality of education and for any educational program to bear fruit, this study emphasises the need for future studies that could build upon the findings of this study by investigating the reasons that cause students to cheat in exams and whether this academic misbehaviour is restricted to English language courses or other courses as well. Based on the findings, practical solutions could be identified to help prevent such academic misconduct.

This study has a few limitations. The study was based on a relatively small number of Kuwaiti EFL teachers who teach undergraduates at Kuwait University. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited by the sample selection and the context in which the study was

conducted. A larger sample of EFL teachers from different educational levels would allow for a broader picture of EFL teaching in online distance learning in the Kuwaiti educational context. This, however, could be an area for further investigation.

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