

**LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF L2
SKILL ACQUISITION WITH ONLINE EDUCATIONAL
TECHNOLOGY DURING COVID 19**

مفاهيم مدرسي اللغة في إكتساب مهارات اللغة الثانية ل 2
باستخدام تكنولوجيا التعليم عبر الإنترنت خلال جائحة كوفيد-19

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This dissertation aims to dissect the perceptions of English instructors and their understanding of how the global pandemic and advancement of Educational Technology (EdTech) has impacted L2 acquisition. Theorists such as Skinner (1957), Chomsky (1959), Krashen (1988) and Vygotsky (1980) have critically examined effective strategies in which L2 acquisition can be applied. As a result, this dissertation draws upon these views and connects them with the perceptions of highly educated working professionals, who teach in the field of TESOL, thus providing valuable feedback on achievable, insightful and progressive strategies that can be implemented within the UAE Educational System.

The findings from this research may help in understanding the pedagogical methods that teachers apply in their teaching. It provides a cross analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data in order to assess the current changes taking place during Covid 19. This is significant, as teachers are the keys to learning. They are often overlooked, overworked and neglected when making important decisions within the field of education. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to capture their personal views at a time of much change, allowing for a deeper understanding of teaching methodology that transcends the four walls of the classroom. Adding to the already, well established frameworks of L2 acquisition, adding value where required, from experienced teachers, will undoubtedly be a means for students, and parents to learn from and essentially provide better ideas for overall school improvement (Knapp, 1997).

ملخص

تهدف هذه الأطروحة الى تفكيك وتبسيط تصورات مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية وفهمهم لأثر الوباء العالمي وتقدم تكنولوجيا التعليم على إكتساب اللغة الثانية (ل 2) . لقد قام منظرون من أمثال سكينر (1957) وتشومسكي (1959) وكراشن (1988) وفيجوتسكي (1980) بدراسة نقدية دقيقة وشاملة للاستراتيجيات الفعالة التي يمكن من خلالها تطبيق إكتساب مهارة L2. وعليه فقد إتمدت هذه الأطروحة على هذه الآراء وقامت بربطها بتصورات أولئك المهنيين العاملين المتعلمين تعليما عاليا الذين يُدرسون في مجال TESOL، وبالتالي قامت بتوفير ملاحظات قيمة حول الاستراتيجيات الثاقبة والتقدمية القابلة للتحقيق التي يمكن تنفيذها داخل النظام التعليمي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

ستساعد نتائج هذا البحث في فهم الأساليب التربوية التي يطبقها المعلمون في تدريسهم. وستوفر كما لا بأس به من البيانات المتقاطعة النوعية والكمية من أجل تقييم التغيرات الحالية التي حدثت خلال جائحة كوفيد-19. هذا أمر مهم لأن المعلمين هم مفاتيح التعلم. وغالبا ما يتم تجاهلهم وإرهاقهم عند اتخاذ قرارات مهمة في مجال التعليم. لذلك ، تحاول هذه الأطروحة الأخذ بوجهات نظرهم الشخصية وتجاربهم وفهمها في وقت يشهد العالم فيه الكثير من التغيير ، وهذا بدوره يسمح بفهم أعمق لمنهجية التدريس التي تتجاوز الجدران الأربعة للفصل الدراسي . بالإضافة إلى الأطر الراسخة الموجودة بالفعل لاكتساب مهارة اللغة الثانية L2 ، فإن توفير قيمة إضافية من المعلمين ذوي الخبرة أنفسهم إذا إقتضى الأمر، ستكون بلا شك وسيلة للطلاب وأولياء الأمور للتعلم منها وتقديم أفكار أفضل بشكل أساسي لتحسين بيئة المدرسة بشكل عام (ناب Knapp، 1997).

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1.0. Chapter One: Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation (2021), the phrase Covid 19 refers to the term Coronavirus Disease; it is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV 2 Virus. The virus spread uncontrollably through Asia, initially starting from a town in China called Wuhan in 2019. The disease spread across the world rapidly and ultimately sent 80% of the world population into a lockdown in 2020.

Covid 19 has changed the way teaching and learning is conducted and has paved the way for a deeper look into technology and its effects on teaching and learning. This research aims to investigate the affects the pandemic has had on second language students. With English considered to be the language of the future, referred to as the Lingua Franca, there is a growing interest and concern as to what effects technology will have on L2 acquisition students in the Middle East. This research will endeavour to dissect teachers' perceptions of the pandemic, identify new trends and pave a way for better teaching and learning through the use of new forms of technology, which ultimately can aid the teaching and learning language process.

1.1 Purpose & Significance of Study

This study addresses many concerns of parents, teachers and students. Are the techniques being used by teachers in the classroom effective? Are the students addressing their L2 acquisition needs using the correct tools? Throughout the last decade there has been a slow but steady shift from in classroom learning to online learning. The Covid 19 Pandemic has multiplied the speed at which this transition has taken place.

Language teachers are the most important part of the teaching learning process. A teacher's cognition plays a vital role in the way that they teach. As a result, it is essential to understand how teachers think and feel about EdTech, Covid 19 and its effects on L2 acquisition. The significance of the data received will be useful for several different reasons. Firstly, it will enable educational institutions to identify weaknesses in the way L2 acquisition is implemented in schools, colleges, and universities. Secondly, it will help other teachers identify new techniques and approaches to teach L2 acquisition effectively. Finally, it will allow teachers to comfortably share their personal opinions on the problems they face in the classroom. This is a common issue, as many teachers do not get the chance to express the concerns they have in the classroom. Many educational institutions prefer conformity with teaching approaches and as a result, only one method is applied within educational institutions.

Ferguson (2011), emphasises the importance of teacher feedback for the improvement of teaching and learning in educational institutions. He states that feedback is extremely important for the development of education within an institution. He states that many of the institutions consider it as a "difficult issue", however it should be acknowledged as an essential part of the institutions Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). He goes on to mention that feedback from teachers is considered a fundamental component to enhancing students' development as independent learners, helps with the process of monitoring, evaluating and regulating their progress over time. It is important to understand that part of the process of L2 acquisition, is knowing how students experience language over time. This research will help to discover that a variation of different techniques, based on teacher feedback, can drastically change the way students pick up their second language.

1.2 Scope & Context of Study

Covid 19 has paved the way for a deeper look into technology and its effects on teaching and learning. This research aims to investigate the effects of the pandemic on L2 learners of the English Language. With English considered as such an important language, there is a growing interest and concern as to what effects technology will have on student L2 acquisition within Middle East and what areas require improvement.

The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) recognized the necessity for English proficiency and launched a school reform program known as the New School Model in 2010. This was part of a growing government initiative called Vision 2030, which aims to prepare the UAE to compete globally in commerce, science, technology and education by the year 2030. ADEC introduced a bilingual model for the public school curriculum. English, Science and Math are now taught through the medium of English and the region is very focused on the role technology can play in enhancing L2 Skill Acquisition of the English Language.

This research endeavours to dissect English instructors' perceptions of the pandemic, identify new trends and pave a way for better teaching and learning through the use of technology. As Covid emerged in 2020, there was a rapid and unplanned transition to online learning that many educational institutions were not prepared for. This led to a lack of readiness and a lack of training on how to teach language students correctly.

Through investigating these specified areas, schools, colleges and universities will be able to better cater for L2 learners' educational needs. These educational needs consist of obtaining information, practising, implementing and producing English in different settings. The results of this research will also help educational institutions to prepare for the future of online learning. As many institutions equip their staff for blended learning. The teaching methods must be supported by evidence that allows students to learn and teach effectively. A good example of this can be identified in the positive response to blended learning within the school environment.

1.3 Organisation of Chapters

The organisation of this dissertation will encompass five main chapters, enabling a clear flow and organisation of writing, structured comprehensive arguments, display of data charts and a detailed explanation. It will introduce the concept of Language acquisition, Educational Technology and Covid 19.

Chapter 1 – This chapter will focus on the importance of teaching and learning. It will introduce the key theories that support this approach and it will also highlight the significance as to why this study is being carried out.

Chapter 2 – This chapter will present some of the key theories behind L2 acquisition in education. It will explore the range of scientific theories and techniques applied to L2 acquisition and identify the best theory for the industry standards. This chapter will also look at key concepts related to EdTech and Covid 19 which have ultimately changed the way the world looks at language teaching.

Chapter 3: The methodology will focus on the research design and the methods taken to acquire the data. This will include the research instruments, participant involvement and the reasoning behind the structure and design.

Chapter 4: The results section will focus on the analysis of the data collected; highlighting trends, differentiation and important research findings. This will help justify the conclusion of the research and highlight the requirement for further in-depth research on the application of L2 acquisition in the future.

Chapter 5: Discussion – This chapter will present the data clearly and concisely and discuss the findings and interpret the meaning behind the findings.

2.0 Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The definition of L2 acquisition, often referred to as (SLA or L2 Acquisition) is often a term that is misunderstood by many and often times explained by many. The first definition was published in 1999 by Bill VanPatten. He was the former chairman of the Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education Program (SLATE), in his definition he wrote, “*SLA is concerned with how people learn a language other than their first. This can be any language in any context...*”

VanPatten (1992, p36).

Second Language Acquisition is the process of learning other languages in addition to the native language. A fine example of this would be a child who speaks English as their mother tongue before learning the Arabic language when they start attending their school. The study of L2 acquisition has evolved throughout the years and there has been a significant amount of literature that has been collected, looking at the best methods and approaches to acquire a second language.

Larsen-Freeman (1991), states that there have been “at least forty” theories of L2 acquisition and argues that none of these attempts present an accurate definition for the term. He goes on to state that most theories only focus on the acquisition of syntactic structures, and do not focus on other important factors that affect a person’s ability to acquire a second language.

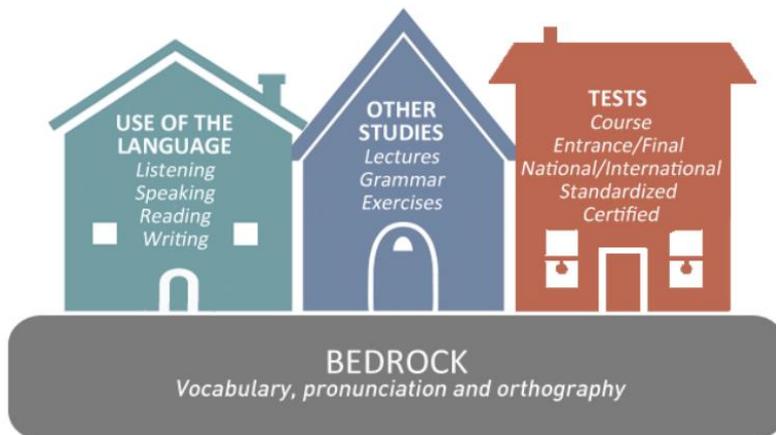
Drawing on the analysis and theory of Larsen-Freeman (1991), this dissertation will attempt to fill in the external factors such as time, current affairs and technology; and their overall effects on L2 acquisition through the eyes of language teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The first step will be to understand the main theories that have developed over the years. This will act as a foundation in developing the approaches, identified within the current education system today.

2.1.1 Importance of Vocabulary

Before looking at the scientific theories, it is important to take into consideration the role of vocabulary in L2 acquisition. It is argued that vocabulary plays a very significant role in L2 acquisition, as pointed out in figure 1.1 below. Nation (1990), an Emeritus Professor in Applied Linguistics argues that general vocabulary helps L2 acquisition, but a rich vocabulary in the target language can make the skills of listening, reading and writing easier to perform. He goes on to argue that when a working memory is not preoccupied with hesitation about correct spelling, pronunciation and contextual use of words, a person is able to focus on higher level aspects of language such as sentence structure and correct expression. Figure 1.1, shows that vocabulary alongside pronunciation and orthography acts as the foundation for how the language is used, the setting of where it is spoken and the success of passing an assessment.

Figure 1.1 – The role of vocabulary in L2 acquisition



2.2. Second Language Theories and Approaches

2.2.2. Behaviouristic Approach

The psychologists such as Skinner (1957), developed these theories through a series of experiments on animals. They found that birds and rats, could be taught how to carry out various tasks through encouraging habit. The researchers would encourage desirable behaviour and punish negative behaviour. Skinner then introduced the process for learning as a behaviour as appose to mental ability as shown in Figure 1.2 below.

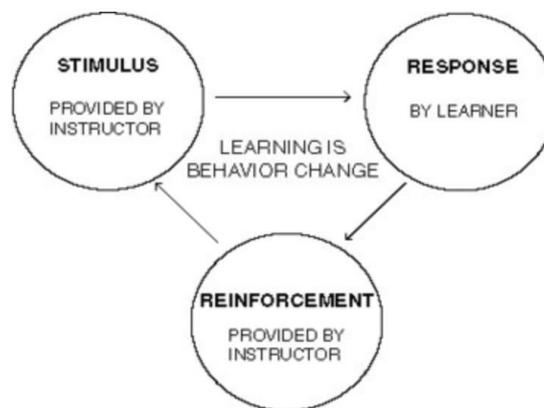


Figure 1.2 – Behaviourism Theory Diagram

In his works “Verbal Behaviour” (1957), he states "The basic processes and relations which give verbal behaviour its special characteristics are now fairly well understood. Much of the experimental work responsible for this advance has been carried out on other species, but the results have proved to be surprisingly free of species restrictions. Recent work has shown that the methods can be extended to human behaviour without serious modifications" (cited in Lowe and Graham, 1998, p68).

Hoque (2017) also describes the Behaviouristic Approach as a formation of habits. He concurs that students learn based on stimulus and response mechanisms, through repetitive reinforcement. The Behaviourist Theory believes that “infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant’s environment provide the stimuli and rewards,” (Cooter & Reutzel, 2004)

Johnson (2004) is very critical of this approach in his works *A Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition* where he states “that Behaviourism neglects the role that mental processes play in absorbing information. He goes on to argue that learning is a series of patterns discovered by the learner, through examples provided by the teacher within the learning environment” (p. 266).

Many critics, including the likes of Chomsky (1959), argued that behaviourism was irrelevant in the field of L2 acquisition, as the concept did not take into consideration the innate disposition of human beings to develop the grammatical foundation of the language they already speak. He also stated that the research findings presented by Skinner, had only been tested on animals. He argued that children did not learn languages through merely repetition of a large sets of sentence but that they could create new sentences that they had learned before.

2.2.3. The Innatist Approach

Chomsky (1959) in his famous response to Skinner's Behaviourist Approach believed that children were equipped with a natural foundation for language. In his works, *Verbal Behaviour Language* (1959), he referred to this as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which justifies the quick acquisition of language among children; regardless of the language difficulty. Chomsky argues that children do not start from scratch when it comes to learning a language; but rather they can acquire grammatical constructs without any particular help beyond the first language. (P 26-58)

Furthermore, Chomsky introduces the concept of Universal Grammar (UG); whereby every human is naturally equipped to acquire another language using LAD; which he argues is the initial stages of language development in children. In contrast to Skinner's Behaviourist Theory, he states that learning from surroundings and experiences is not sufficient to determine the acquisition of a second language.

In 1975, Chomsky acknowledged in his works titled, "Reflections on language", that the concept of LAD really applies to that of children who have the ability to acquire the mental capacity for different grammatical constructs; as opposed to adults, who have less of an ability to acquire grammatical constructs as their age advances. This highlighted an appreciation for age and ability to acquire a second language, as opposed to Chomsky's previous arguments that the LAD was sufficient.

2.2.4. Krashen's Theory

Throughout the 1970's and 80's, Krashen's model became very popular among linguists and educationalists, due to its ability to address the concerns of many second language teachers in the United States.

The five central hypotheses which constitute Krashen's theory are as follows:

1. **The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis**
2. **The Monitor Hypothesis**
3. **The Natural Order Hypothesis**
4. **The Input Hypothesis**
5. **The Affective Filter Hypothesis**

The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Krashen's Monitor Approach states that adults have two main ways of developing L2 Acquisition Proficiency: acquisition and learning tools. Krashen (1988), details this in his work, "*The Natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*", where he mentions that L2 acquisition revolves around a "feel" for the correctness of speech in a subconscious way, similar to that of a child's L1 acquisition, due to the concept of LAD. Therefore, in terms of the language learning, it is more of a conscious attempt to acquire the language; which requires knowing and studying more about the language. He goes on to mention that learning cannot be confused within language acquisition and vice versa, because the learning process includes an array of other factors such as motivation, ability, environment and intellect (Krashen and Terrel, 1988).

The Monitor Hypothesis

The Monitor Hypothesis is constructed as part of the acquired system referring to speech initiation and the learned system of acquiring a second language. Krashen (1988), goes on to mention that to activate this form of learning, there are three conditions that should be met; Time, focus and knowledge of the rules. As Krashen (1988) states, the Monitor could be applied in case of "simple" rules only but as "difficult rules" dealing with complex semantic properties are to be considered, the Monitor is of little or no use (Krashen and Terrell, 1988).

The Natural Order Hypothesis

The Natural Order Hypothesis refers to Krashen's notion that when children acquire their first language, they acquire grammatical structures in a pre-determined natural order and these structures are acquired earlier than others. This notion has been applied to L2 acquisition likewise. An example according to the hypothesis is learners acquiring the grammatical morpheme -ing before the morpheme third person -s.

One criticism of the Krashen theory is that the natural order as proposed by the hypothesis does not take into account the influence of the first language on the acquisition of a second language. Similarly, not all second language students adopt the same way of learning. However, not all L2 learners adopt the same route to attain Target Language (TL) proficiency; In fact, the opposite is quite often proven true (McLaughlin, 1987).

The Input Hypothesis

Krashen's Input Hypothesis states that a student will obtain the most benefit from receiving linguistic input that is just beyond their current grammatical understanding. He refers to this input as "Comprehensible Input". He mentions that comprehensible input is most likely to be gained from interacting with another speaker of the language. (Krashen, 1980). The Input hypothesis, like that of the acquisition-learning and the Natural Order, emphasises acquisition instead of learning. Krashen maintains that the L2 learner's production ability has little to do with the learned system.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen's theory of Affective Filter Hypothesis (1986) cites anxiety, self-confidence and motivation as the three variables that effect the acquisition of a second language. He mentions that when a person learning a second language feels anxiety, fear or embarrassment during the learning process; then it becomes difficult to acquire the language. The Affective Filter has commonly been referred to as an imaginary wall that prevents a student from connecting with the language, thus preventing any cognitive function of the brain. However, in contract to the aforementioned factors mentioned, then it is possible that the complete opposite takes place; and students are able to acquire the second language at a much faster pace (Krashen, 1982).

2.2.5 Constructivism

The theory of constructivism argues that all human beings formalise and construct their own version of reality; and thus create many alternative ways to acquire a language. Constructivism is a concept put forward by Vygotsky (1980) and Piaget (1980), who both had similar beliefs of cognitive development. Piaget was more focused on the cognitive development of children's growth. He believed that cognitive development in children was not only focused on knowledge; but the child had to construct a mental understanding of the world. Vygotsky, focused more on social constructivism, where students would work together in a more collaborative form of learning in order to identify purpose, ideas and derive the details of any given task.

In relation to L2 acquisition, Vygotsky claims that learning a language occurs through dialogue. The meaning of dialogue in his statement is referring to the communication between teacher and student or between the text and the reader (Wilson, 1999). The students, when learning a language, must be interactive in social settings where the language is spoken. Vygotsky goes on to mention that it is important L2 learners play a major role in constructing ideas within social settings and developing a sense of purpose and motivation in acquiring the second language; in order to develop and grow in confidence. This can also be supported by Lantolf (2000), who referred to motivation and confidence as the "activity theory", in his work titled, "*Sociocultural theory and second language learning*" (p. 12). Having a sense of purpose and drive helps to motivate a learner in possessing a language, while also having the correct environment to flourish in. Lantolf, goes on to mention that having a focus within a learning environment; also depends heavily on how the students perceive the activity; does it cater to their learning style or is it a hinderance to their style of learning (Vygotsky, 1987).

2.3. The Opposing Theories of L2 Acquisition

Johnson (2014), offers a valuable insight into the potential flaws of Behaviourism. He argues that Behaviourism undermines the role of mental processes when acquiring a language. Skinner (1957) argues that L2 acquisition is dependent upon habits, interaction and feedback from the instructor in an educational environment. Johnson, disagrees and feels that a lack of cognitive understanding in Skinner's approach means that students are not able to formulate their own skills of language acquisition. He argues that the only attention giving to cognition is pronunciation and rote memorisation, thus leaving behind many gaps for further cognitive methods of learning a language.

Even when looking through the lenses of the cognitive approach to L2 acquisition, some theorists believe that Krashen's Monitor Model is very linear in its understanding of L2 acquisition. Cook (1993), points out that Krashen's approach makes sense in its own terms, but is not verifiable, therefore Krashen's theory does not go beyond, the acquisition of grammatical structures and lacks research evidence.

White (2003) argues that Chomsky's theory of innatism is only interested in the nature of language and only sees language as a "mirror of the mind." Even though Chomsky's focus is not on aspects of L2 acquisition directly, his work has contributed to previous studies in the field of L2 acquisition. According to the theory of Chomsky as previously mentioned in the literature review, humans have an innate biological capacity for language, based on their mother tongue, which he calls the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) as previously mentioned. This according to Chomsky is responsible for language development. However, White (2003), argues that the principles of LAD prevent and constrain interlanguage grammars to only that of which is present in the L1 acquisition (p.22).

2.4. L2 Acquisition in the UAE

Over the last 20 years, L2 acquisition within the UAE revolves around two main languages, English and Arabic. The United Arab Emirates has made huge progress in introducing educational reforms to cater for the growing economic demands of the country. The federal government have introduced new world class standards that fall in line with the need for swift L2 acquisition of the English Language among locals. (Al Abed et al, 2008). In helping to provide this vision, the UAE has recruited a significant number of expatriate workers with the skills required to help students within education reach their goals in English Language fluency (Davidson, 2005).

2.5. Students & Their Learning Environment In The UAE

Students within the UAE have an option to take either English First Language or English as a Second Language at tertiary level of the education system. It is widely acknowledged that students need to improve their English in order to be competitive and meet the challenges of the UAE economy. According to Vine (2009), understanding teachers perceptions of effective ways of enhancing pedagogical methods of teaching L2 acquisition can lead to a classroom environment where second languages are celebrated and promoted with success. Dornyei & Ushioda (2009) and Zhang (2009) argue that students tend to be more introspective, assimilating difficult tasks with their own ability to be able to solve it. Therefore, understanding the perception of teachers, will help to identify weaknesses in the learning environments, inside and outside of the classroom.

2.6. Teachers' Perceptions on L2 Acquisition in UAE

Osullivan (2007) in her research titled "*Second Language Acquisition in the UAE*" discusses the perception of teachers in the United Arab Emirates. She identifies that many teachers have the similar concerns revolving around student motivation stemming from a mismatch between the Language curriculum, what teachers are expected to teach and current students literacy skills. Furthermore, she states that reform policies and national curriculums are deep rooted in cultural preservation. As a result, local Emirati students may feel a natural resistance to learning other languages.

Additionally, L2 acquisition is heavily dependent upon motivation and attitudes within the United Arab Emirates according to Gardner & Lambert (1972) and Lennon (1993). They argue that language is considered a means to achieving educational and professional goals. Being part of a progressive society that speaks English should be a motivator for acquiring a second language. However, issues continue to arise among teachers who feel they are inadequately trained to meet the needs of the students. A fine example of this is Maths & Science teachers in schools who do not have the English proficiency required to teach English at the level required. As a result, Professional Development has become a growing concern among teachers who feel pressured into meeting standards that are not attainable without the proper training. Ahmed, (2010) Salama (2010), support this idea and cite professional development as being imperative for teachers who teach English related subjects; while also questioning the effects of identity and culture also playing a role in the prevention of L2 acquisition.

2.7. Defining Online Learning and its effects throughout The Covid 19 Pandemic

Online learning can be defined as a tool that enhances the teaching and learning experience, providing a more student centred, innovative and flexible method of learning for educationalists. In addition to that, other educationalists in the field of Online Learning define it as synchronous or asynchronous environments using different technological devices, such as laptops, mobile phones and personal computers.

Online learning has played a significant role in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Within these environments, students can be located anywhere in the world independently with the intention of learning and interacting with teachers and other students (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

When looking at Online Learning and the potential effects on L2 acquisition, it becomes even more important to understand the perspective of teachers who were able to transition and adapt to teaching on online platforms within the space of weeks, if not days. When understanding and assessing the many theories related to L2 acquisition, it is clear that there has been a significant impact on both students and teachers within the field of education.

Before understanding the potential effects of Online Learning on L2 acquisition, it is important to understand the context in which online learning environment takes place. Due to the rapid spread of the Covid Pandemic, at 20.00 (local time) on Saturday, April 4 2020, a two week lockdown came into effect in Dubai and across the Emirates in order to curb the spread of the virus. Before the aforementioned national lockdown, schools had already closed their doors from the 4th of March.

As a result of this, teaching and learning transitioned online until the end of the academic year. The effects of this have played a significant role on the learning process and on L2 acquisition of the English language across the world. Baytiyeh (2018) argues that disruption of education due to natural disasters and global crisis's can have very damaging effects on education. She states, "disruption of education can leave children at risk of child labour, early marriage, exploitation, and recruitment into armed forces (Baytiyeh, 2018). As a result of such difficult circumstances, is

important to expect variation of responses related to L2 acquisition through educational technology.

Motivation has been cited as one of the biggest barriers to effective L2 acquisition when teaching online. The reason cited for this is that educators only tend to focus on the student cognition, while ignoring the socio-emotional aspects of learning that they may receive within the classroom walls (Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2003). This can be further supported by Richards (1985), who states that motivation is a very important factor of second language acquisition. He goes on to mention that motivation is a factor that can ultimately determine a person's desire to learn Richards (1985).

The factor of motivation links directly to Vygotsky's (1980) theory on social constructs within language. If not fulfilled correctly, can cause lack of motivation and poor performance of L2 acquisition. Socio-emotional aspects of learning a language play a significant role in building student confidence and enabling real life face to face practice. Mullen and Tallent-Runnels (2006), in their study of student perception found that students in face to face and online educational settings saw the educational environment different to one another. The difference in understand was related to their motivation levels; he states in his conclusion that "instructors should be careful not to assume that teaching the same in both environments will create similar results" (p. 264)

Based on the theoretical analysis put forth by Chomsky and Skinner, it is important to understand that cognitive recognition of language is only part of the puzzle that solves the equation of studying a language online during a global pandemic. The biggest factors, affecting the majority of students, is their inability to learn and interact socially; with face to face interaction and personal experiences among their peers in a physical classroom. Research carried out by David and Grosu-Rădulescu (2016), found that students motivation to acquire a second language within the classroom and online revolved around a feeling of personal accomplishment and being part of a community.

Alternatively, in spite of their findings, a year later, David and Grosu-Rădulescu found that students' attitudes were changing as the landscape of online learning was developing. They found that students were able to adapt to an online learning environment with their teachers, provided the grading structure and reward system remained the same. Navarro and Shoemaker (2000) also found that student learning outcomes for online learners were as good, if not better than the

traditional form of teaching; regardless of learners' background and characteristic, where students were greatly satisfied with the online learning environment. As a result, it is very important to understand the perceptions of teachers in the field of second language education. Understanding how they adapt to cater for the needs of the students and whether or not, it is conducive to students' acquisition of a second language.

2.8. Types of Educational Technology Used During The Covid 19 Pandemic

Educational Technology (EdTech) is defined as the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources (Richey, 2008). Since the development of Covid 19, there has been a surge in the use of EdTech. The introduction of EdTech has opened up many alternative ways of providing teaching and learning in educational institutions across the country. The emergence of new tools and software, specifically online has played a significant role in allowing students to continue learning and developing their second languages.

In the UAE and increasingly across the world, schools, colleges and universities have now incorporated Blended Learning as a new way of conducting teaching and learning within their institutions. This is further supported by Hawkins (1996), who argues there has been a drastic shift from traditional teaching methods to more educational tools and educational software being used and integrated into school curricula. This is in part due to the positive effect on student achievement and the teaching and learning process overall (Bialo et al., 1995).

2.8.1. Synchronous and Asynchronous

There are three main types of EdTech; which includes Synchronous and Synchronous, Linear Learning and Collaborative Learning. Synchronous and Asynchronous are the first and most common forms of online learning. Synchronous learning is an interactive, distance learning or two-way live communication that takes place between the teacher and the student. Synchronous learning has proven extremely popular for schools, colleges and universities during the pandemic. It has been proven to support L2 acquisition and help students development their Target Language (Kern, 1995; Schwienhorst, 2004; Warschauer, 1996). Additionally, due to the socio-emotional aspects of learning as argued by Vygotsky (1980), students are able to continue communicating and motivating themselves to learn; during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Asynchronous learning occurs when the virtual learning environment takes place without the presence of a real time teacher. Synchronous and Asynchronous is the most common form of EdTech, used during the Covid 19 Pandemic within schools and colleges. Platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom and Zoom have enabled students to participate in live and offline class sessions, where teachers are present to carry out effective teaching and learning, check assessment and offer constructive feedback all online.

2.8.2. Linear Learning

Linear learning is the process of Computer Based Training (CBT). This type of learning draws on learning activities that are sent to a technological device, such as a phone, pad or computer device. The learning is functional through the use of a CD-ROM or software applications, and is presented in the form of a manual book or script. The Linear Learning Process (LLP) was not commonly used during the Covid 19 Pandemic, except in higher educational institutions, where students were encouraged to work independently. The majority of UAE Schools and Colleges still required virtual interaction with teachers and students and school hours continued as normal.

2.8.3. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning refers to the students learning through participation in groups or in pairs. This type of learning revolves around problem solving, learning new concepts, brainstorming and language learning for practice. Collaborative learning differs from traditional learning approaches, where teachers are the sole focus in the learning environment. Rather, new e-learning concepts play a vital role in transmitting knowledge from one student to another, such as Cloud Based Learning Platforms such as Google Docs, Adobe and Dropbox. With the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies, the sharing of information between multiple people in a network has become easier and more accessible (Crane, 2009).

2.9. Perceptions of L2 Acquisition & Educational Technology

The Investigation carried out by Chigona and Chigona in 2010, looking at factors affecting the use of ICT for teaching in Western Cape Town found that EdTech created opportunities for learners to develop their cognitive, critical thinking, information reasoning and communication (Chigona and Chigona, 2010). The perceptions of EdTech within the language industry is one that has been welcomed over the years. With the current Covid-19 Pandemic, these benefits have been able to enhance Online Learning in a time of anxiety, fear and uncertainty. Understanding the perceptions of EdTech and its effects on L2 acquisition will allow the educational industry to find new ways to evolve language teaching and enhance the student experience, in order for more robust systems of facilitating education for students in times of crisis are available.

Lucia-Mihaela Grosu-Radulescu & Veronica-Maria Stan (2018) carried out research in Romania, within the field of Online Learning and EdTech. They found that the majority of Language Teaching was still mostly carried out through face-to-face teaching as appose to Online Learning. However, they stated that Language Instructors were starting to take Online Learning more seriously, taking advantage of the richness of ICT tools and Internet-based applications; highlighting a slow but steady inclusion of technology in the language classes of Romania.

Moreover, in recent studies carried out by Toth and Davin (2016), they found a more balanced approach was suitable for both student and teacher, when using EdTech. They believe that highly effective pedagogy within Second Language Teaching requires understanding language and language learning as both a Cognitive and Social Phenomena. They further go on to argue that teachers who truly understand their responsibilities within the classroom, do not have the option to choose one perspective over the other. As a result this approach provides a more balanced approach between traditional pedagogical methods of teaching language and new, modern technological methods of teaching language.

2.10. Summary

Teachers' perceptions are one of the single most important factors that must be taken into consideration when looking at L2 acquisition. Within the UAE, teacher concerns revolve around motivation, culture, student literacy skills and a mismatch of the curriculum and student ability. As a result, it is important to understand the effects that the Covid Pandemic played on students' ability to continue learning online effectively. The data collated from this research, will continue to shed light on the direction in which L2 acquisition has taken through the eyes of the teachers. O'Sullivan (2007), outlines the importance of choosing the right teaching staff along with the appropriate teaching and learning materials to help improve L2 acquisition in educational institutions across the UAE. In addition, she highlights the role that parents play in assessing their children's language proficiency, while also assisting in students' homework and communicating with teachers on a regular basis.

3.0. Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

When considering the best method of data collection, four factors were taken into consideration; namely, (a) the effects of technology on L2 acquisition, (b) looking at the areas that need improvement within online teaching; (c) dissecting teachers' perceptions of online teaching and (c) identifying new trends that will pave the way for further improvement in teaching and learning. In order to investigate these fundamental themes, a mixed-method research approach was selected.

Greene et al. (1989) explains the rationale behind the use of the mixed methods approach. He mentions that development of data is a strong reason to use the mixed methods approach. This means that one form of data can help the researcher to develop the research instrument for the next form of data collection. Greene's rationale helped structure the methodology for this research where the data collected from the quantitative method, helped structure the questions and themes of the qualitative data collection. In line with this rationale, both data methods complimented each other, helping to produce stronger findings and themes throughout the research. Additionally, any contradictions or anomalies that were identified in either method, the alternate method would clarify the anomaly through reinforcing it or rejecting it.

Mixed-methods according to Johnson (2007) is a type of research where a researcher joins two elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches, in order to deepen the understanding of the data collected. Creswell and Clark (2007) also state, "a mixed method approach is a procedure for collecting, analysing and mixing both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study to understand a research problem" (p5). This is clearly exemplified in figure 1.3.

Furthermore, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) go into further detail where they state that a mixed methods research should involve the analysis, collection and interpretation of both elements of the data in a single research or in a series of research that investigates the same underlying phenomenon. Mixed-methods research offers a straight path to more substantial reflection on L2 acquisition through the use of EdTech during Covid 19.

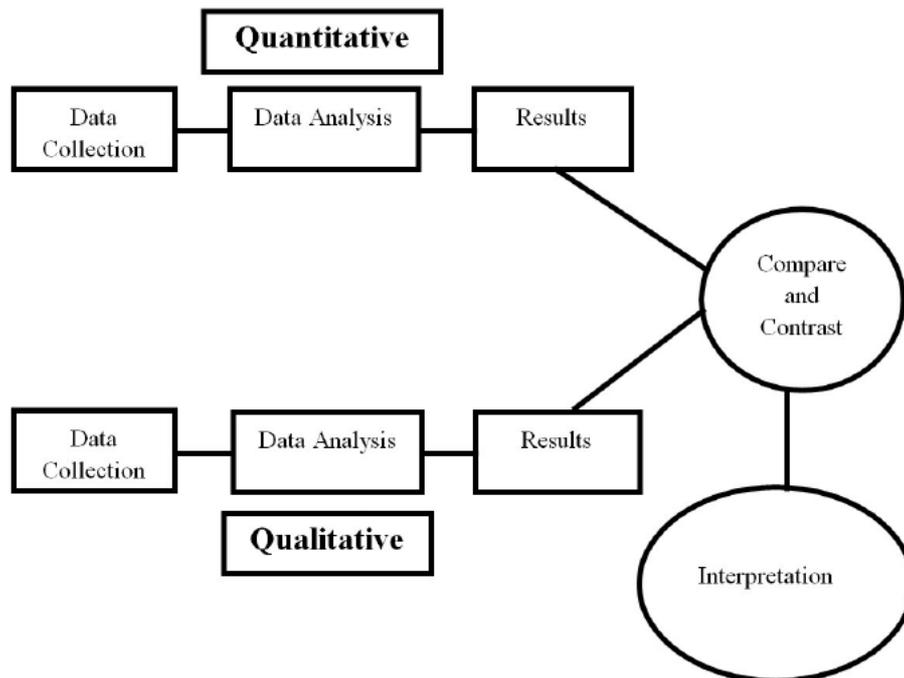


Figure 1.3 – Mixed Method Research Design Approach (Adopted from Creswell 2007)

The results from the mixed method approach will further help to identify ways in which L2 acquisition can be improved through Online Learning; identifying issues with motivation and offering solutions to enhance L2 acquisition learning in schools, colleges and universities across the UAE. Once all data has been collated, it will then feedback into a reflection, which will be provided in the discussion section of this research paper. Once the key trends have been identified and an in-depth summary of the findings have been explained; further change, improvement and enhancement of L2 acquisition through online learning, if implemented correctly can begin to see overall improvement.

3.2. Participants

The quantitative data consisted of 7 males and 18 females. This was mainly due to ratio of males to females enrolled at The British University of Dubai are majority on the Masters in Education programme. Due to Covid restrictions in place at the time, no face to face meetings were undertaken. Participants attended online and completed the questionnaire and focus groups on the university platform called Blackboard. The qualitative data consisted of 100% women, all highly educated with degrees, while only two participants held teaching licenses.

When selecting the participants for the research paper, participants were selected through convenience sampling. Cohen (2007) describes convenience sampling (*sometimes referred to as opportunity sampling*) as a particular audience who are easily accessible. This includes captive audiences such as students and teachers who often serve as respondents based on their willingness and availability, while also working within an education research-based setting. The sampling method could also include elements of purposive sampling. Ball (1990) addresses this, where he states that in many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people. He then follows with an example of those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience (Ball 1990).

3.3. Data Collection Method

The method of data collection used a mixed method approach, consisting of both quantitative and qualitative data pools. The quantitative data consisted of an online questionnaire consisting of 25 questions; which was carried out first. The qualitative data was collected through a focus group, which was carried out second, both carried out on the same day. A mixed method data collection approach is particularly useful because it enables the researcher to understand the data from different perspectives, while enabling participants to express their responses in different ways. Creswell and Clark, (2003) argue that a mixed method approach could be adopted when using more than one method of research. The framework helps to obtain different variations of the same data in order to understand the real feedback.

3.3.1. Survey Questions

Online surveys were conducted using Google Forms and consisted of only closed questions. The online questionnaires consisted of 25 questions, which followed the Likert Scale format (Cohen et al., 2000) This format was chosen for the purpose of ease; allowing participants to easily select the option that best suited their preference. Additionally, the Likert Scale format was also chosen to help easily transfer the responses into data that could be analysed. (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2000; Punch, 1998). The closed question format was also used to avoid any confusion among participants who were not accustomed to completing online surveys (Witte *et al.* 1999).

The questionnaire welcomed participants with a welcome page which explained in detail the format and style of the questions. Dillman and Bowker (2000: 10–11), argues that this helps motivate participants to complete the questionnaire fully; as they are being guided; making it clear and easy to proceed. The web-based questionnaires, are advantageous to both participants and researcher, as it provides ease of accessibility to the participants and ease of transferability for further data analysis for the researcher. Additionally, it reduces costs, of travel, preparation, premises and organisation fees, while saving paper consumption and saving time on the distribution of research instruments (Watt 1997; Dillman *et al.* 1999; Dillman and Bowker, 2000; Roztocki and Lahri, 2002).

3.3.2. Focus Group Questions

The focus group consisted of 9 open ended questions, lasting 44.36 minutes. Open-ended questions were used in order to create an open and fluid dialogue between the researcher and the participants. Cohen (2007) mentions numerous advantages of using open ended questions, where he states that they are flexible and allow the researcher to probe the participants in order to obtain rich data in which to analyse. He also states that open ended questions allow the researcher to identify the depth of knowledge that participants hold. It also allowed for greater interaction and discussion around subject knowledge. As a result, participants were able to express their feelings and elaborate where necessary. The focus group questions were structured in a similar fashion to the online questionnaire, being separated into three parts A, B and C. This allowed for fluidity in the data collection process, thus allowing participants to have familiarity and assurity in their discussion.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey consisted of 25 questions and was sectioned into three parts. Part A was titled “*Theoretical Approach to L2 Acquisition*”. This section focused on the theoretical approach of teachers in the field of L2 acquisition. This section consisted of a total of six questions, aimed at understanding teachers preference when teaching a second language. These questions were extracted from the theories of linguists such as Chomsky, Skinner (1957), Vygotsky (1980), Piaget (1980) and Krashen (1981), thus helping to identify theories that are most popular among teachers in their beliefs, teaching philosophy and teaching values.

Part B, focused on Educational Technology, consisting of seven questions looking at what educational software best caters for L2 acquisition. Teachers were asked to identify what elements of EdTech help assist and enhance the learning environment for second language students.

Part C, focused on the effects of The Covid 19 Pandemic from a socio- emotional perspective of both the student and the teacher. This section consisted of five questions and ended with a conclusive question revolving around their overall perspective of all three independent variable.

3.4.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data was collected through an online focus group using the online educational platform Blackboard. The focus group lasted for an hour and there were 15 participants involved. The questions were open ended with a very informal and friendly tone. Silverman (1993) affirms the importance of open-ended interviews, as it enables respondents to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world and their definition of the situation. Therefore in order to get a truthful and expressive response on L2 acquisition, the interview was conducted in an open style. Qualitative data collection is very necessary because the collection correlates with the sampling strategy of convenience sampling, where participants are very familiar with the research instruments and the type of questions presented. Allowing for ease and depth of insight into the perspectives of educationalists and more open and loose interpretation of the verbal data.

3.5. Trustworthiness and Authenticity

The mixed method approach was selected for the purpose of reducing any bias, false findings and lack of trustworthiness in the data results. It was used in order to not distort the reality of what is being conveyed in the data. Through a mixed method approach, both methods will either contribute each other or differ in the findings, allowing the researcher to identify reliable trends. Lin (1976), supports the use of a mixed method approach, where she describes it as a secure and trustworthy method of data analysis. Reliance on only one method, may cause bias or distort the researchers picture of the investigation. She further goes on to mention that the researcher needs to be sure that the results conveyed are not the result of one specific method of collection.

In addition, participants were selected fairly and not selected based on their level of English, ethnic background or personal affiliation with the researcher. Through the convenience sampling, participants were invited openly and evenly and all proceedings required consent before taking part. No third-party intervention, bias or outside discussion concerning the hypothesis of the research was discussed prior to the research and all research instruments were obtained from authentic sources. All activity was overseen and monitored by the dissertation supervisor; without any interference.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The first main ethical consideration that was addressed was the issue of obtaining the consent and cooperation of participants. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) reaffirm the importance of consent as it helps to remove any ground for legal action, if the research happens to cause severe stress, pain and invasion of privacy.

The second main ethical consideration was access and acceptance. This area is important because it allows the best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as an investigator and establish their own ethical code of practice. The researcher must formally introduce himself, explain elements of his background and explain the purpose of the research. All participants were well informed and signed a virtual consent form to confirm they are happy to take part.

The third ethical consideration that was addressed was Privacy and Data Protection. When referring to personal data, it is important to understand that data such as names, employment details and location of working premises, were kept private. Participants chose to give up their right to privacy either by allowing the researcher access to sensitive topics or agreeing before the research was conducted.

3.7. Confidentiality of Data Collection

Participants were required to share their age, working background and personal opinions regarding L2 acquisition. Again, all participants were required to sign a confidentiality form to affirm that all data would be kept confidential. The researcher was required to make sure that the data collected would be stored and recorded in a confidential and safe manner.

In relation to privacy and intellectual property, there was no financial support from any organisation, nor was it sold on to any third parties for financial gains. The disposal of records and data would be used at the discretion of the participants. Privacy of data is stored on Google Forms and will be secured with a username and password that only the researcher would have access to.

To further assure the confidentiality of data, further safeguards were put into place:

- 1) The location of the interviews were conducted on Blackboard. The online meetings required a username and password in which to access the meeting room.
- 2) The research only consisted of one researcher and one dissertation supervisor.
- 3) Research design safeguarding included anonymising information and transcribing raw data that had been collected. This was the responsibility of the researcher in making sure that all measures were taken to protect the participants.

1.0. Chapter 4: Results

1.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 includes graphs, charts and a series of Infographics; in order to clearly convey the data received.

1.2. Quantative Data Analysis

1.2.1. Quantative Data Analysis – Part A

Question 2 as shown in figure 1.4, identifies the perspective of teachers who believe that imitation is an effective way to teach a second language. This supports Skinner’s (1957) notion of behaviourism, where infants learn oral language from other human role models through a process involving imitation, rewards and practice. The findings showed that 57.7%

I believe Vocabulary should be taught through imitation. (*Imitation is the ability to learn behaviours by observing other people's actions)
26 responses

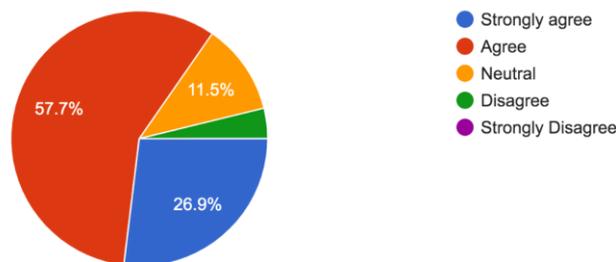


Figure 1.4 – Online Questionnaire (Q2)

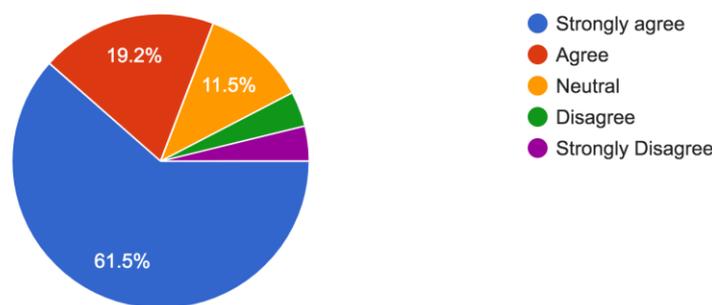
of teachers agreed with Skinner's approach; alongside 26.9% of teachers who strongly agreed. This shows that 84.6% of teachers who completed the survey responded positively to Skinner’s notion of imitation.

Question 12, as shown in figure 1.5 indicates that teachers believe students develop their language skills and knowledge through their own personal experiences. With 61.5% of teachers strongly agreeing with this statement, it shows that the strongest opinions fall in line with the notion of constructivism; put forth by Vygotsky (1980) and Piaget (1980), who argue that human beings formalise and construct their own versions of reality; through which they acquire languages. It also highlights that teachers agree with the notion of learning a language outside of the classroom, in and among society. 11.5% of teachers were neutral on this question, 3.8% disagree and strongly disagreed.

Figure 1.5 - Online Questionnaire (Q12)

I believe that people develop their language skills and construct overall knowledge based on their own personal experiences and environments.

26 responses

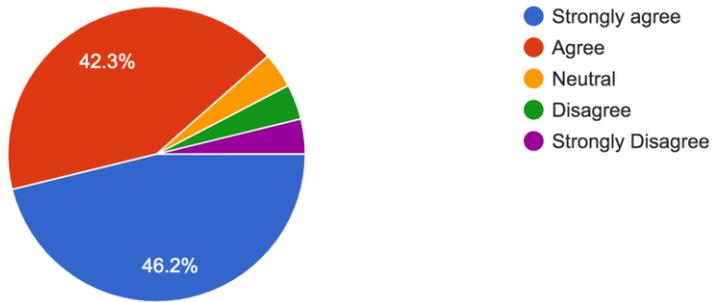


In Question 10, 42.3% of teachers agreed that L2 acquisition is a combination of observation, imitation, repetition, errors, rewards and punishments. 46.2% strongly agreed. While only 3.8% selected neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed. This completes Part A data analysis.

Figure 1.6 - Online Questionnaire (Q10)

I believe that developing student L2 Acquisition is a combination of observation, imitation, repetition, errors, rewards, and punishments.

26 responses



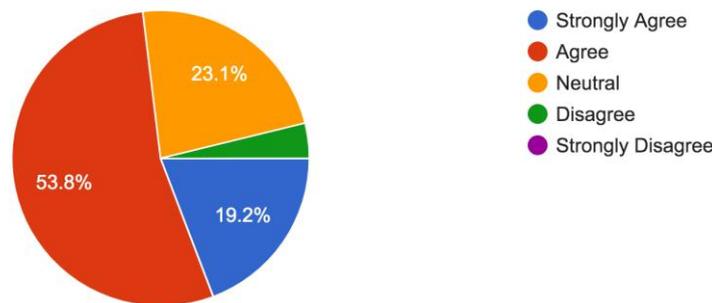
1.2.2. Quantative Data Analysis – Part B

Part B of the questionnaire focuses on the independent variable, Educational Technology and its effects on L2 acquisition. The results indicate a clear agreement towards the use of EdTech for the purpose of enhancing L2 acquisition.

Question 17 shows the highest response in Part B, for agreement in EdTech playing a pivotal role in allowing students to remember vocabulary quickly. With 53.8% of teachers selecting agree and 19.2% of teachers selecting strongly agree, it shows that EdTech is perceived by teachers to play an instrumental role in helping students remember new vocabulary words.

Figure 1.7 - Online Questionnaire (Q17)

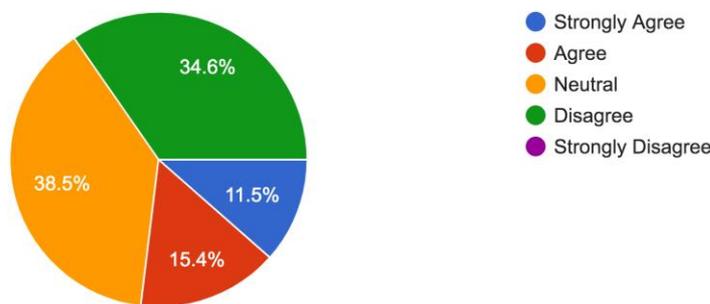
I believe Educational Technology allows learners to remember vocabulary quickly.
26 responses



Question 16 shows the largest majority of neutral responses in part C. It shows that 38.5% of teachers were impartial to the difficulty of using EdTech online. With only 11.5% being the smallest minority of teachers strongly agreeing that EdTech is difficult to use and 15.4% of teachers selecting just agree. Overall, the data shows that 34.6% of teachers feel that technology is not difficult to use.

Figure 1.8 - Online Questionnaire (Q16)

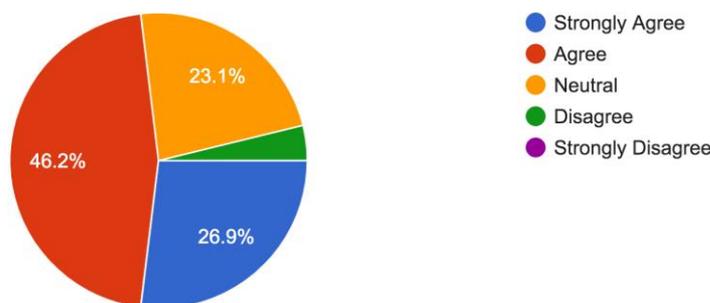
I have found it difficult to use Educational Technology online.
26 responses



Question 14 shows an agreement of 73.1% of teachers preferring to use EdTech over more traditional methods of teaching. More than 25% of all responses; have shown total agreement with this statement. Just under 25% of teachers, are impartial to preference of using EdTech over more traditional methods of teaching.

Figure 1.9 - Online Questionnaire (Q14)

I prefer to use Educational Technology over more traditional methods of teaching.
26 responses



1.2.3. Quantative Data Analysis – Part C

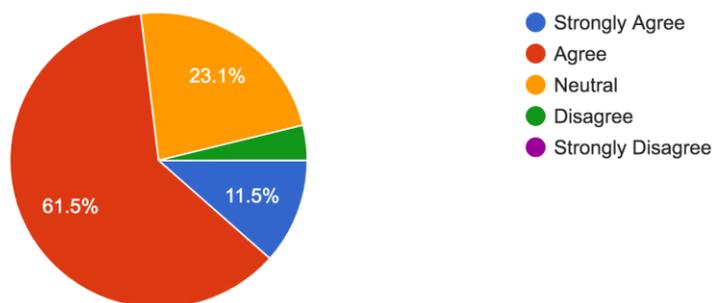
Part C of the questionnaire focuses on the independent variable of Covid 19 and its effects on L2 acquisition. The results showed a clear disruption on L2 acquisition during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

In Question 18, 84.6% of teachers agreed that students were performing better Pre-Covid 19 as appose to Post Covid 19. With 61.5% of teachers agreeing with this statement and 11.5% strongly agreeing. 23.1% of teachers were neutral on this topic, with a minority of 3.8% of teachers disagreeing with the statement.

Figure 2.0 - Online Questionnaire (Q18)

Before Covid 19, students were reaching their academic goals in L2 Acquisition in comparison to Post Covid 19.

26 responses

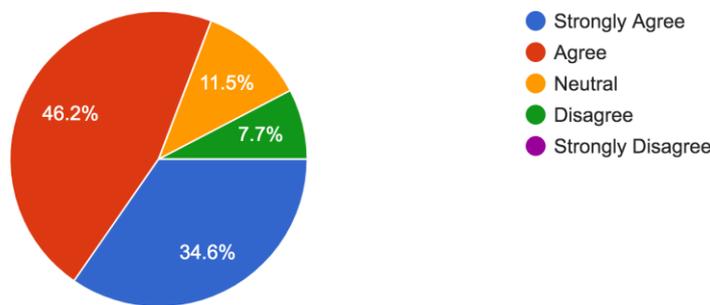


Similar results from Question 18, can also be reflected in Question 20, where 80.8% of teachers agreed that The Covid 19 Lockdown had negatively affected student performance in L2 acquisition. 7.7% of teachers disagreeing and 11.5% remaining neutral on this statement.

Figure 2.1 Online Questionnaire (Q20)

During The Covid Lockdown (isolation), students' performance in L2 Acquisition dropped, due to lack of Face to Face teaching.

26 responses

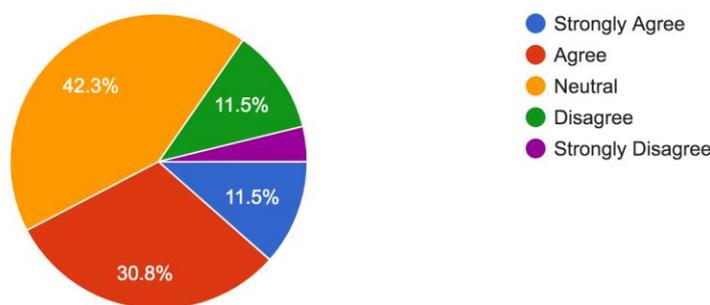


Question 21, received the highest number of respondents selecting neutral for the question on Blended Learning. With 42.3% of teachers selecting neutral on whether Blended Learning should be a continued method of teaching L2 acquisition in the future. A fairly large majority of 30.8% agreed and 11.5% strongly agreed and 11.5% disagreed and 3.8% of teachers strongly disagreed with this statement.

Figure 2.2 Online Questionnaire (Q21)

Blended Learning is an effective way to teach L2 Acquisition moving forward.

26 responses

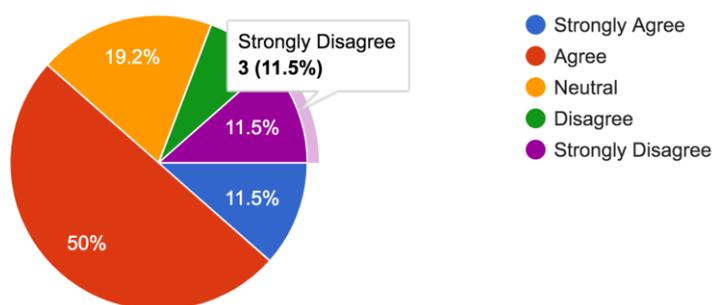


In Question 23, teachers saw an overall positive effect on L2 acquisition throughout The Covid 19 Pandemic. With 50% of teachers agreeing with this statement, 11.5% strongly agreeing. However, an equal number of teachers strongly disagreed with a response of 11.5%. This highlights the largest majority to disagree on a statement in Part C. A fairly high response of 19.2% of teachers selected the neutral option; showing that all views were relatively equal in number.

Figure 2.3 Online Questionnaire (Q23)

I believe that The Covid 19 Pandemic has had an overall positive effect on the way that L2 Acquisition is taught within the field of Education.

26 responses



1.3. Summary & Discussion

Overall, the quantitative data, shows a very positive perception of Educational Technology and its effect on teaching and learning during the Covid 19 Pandemic period. Part A, represents a very shared opinion across all theories of L2 acquisition. The data indicates that teachers are open to trying and experimenting with a variety of different teaching methods, depending upon the student they have in front of them.

Part B, highlights the importance that EdTech plays in enhancing L2 acquisition throughout the pandemic. It also help identify teacher preference with 73.1% of teachers preferring to use EdTech over more traditional methods of teaching. Furthermore, the importance of new pedagogical approaches to teaching vocabulary stands out with 53.8% of teachers selecting agree and 19.2% of teachers selecting strongly agreeing that EdTech helps language students remember vocabulary

quicker than more traditional methods. Very little of the data shows a strong disagreement towards general statements that revolve around the two main independent variables.

Part C shows that overall, teachers believe the Covid 19 Pandemic has had a positive effect on teaching and learning. With 50% of teachers agreeing with this statement and 11.5% strongly agreeing; that means over 60% of teachers viewed the pandemic as positive for L2 acquisition and the overall education sector as a whole.

5.0. Qualitative Data Analysis

The Qualitative Data provided an array of teacher perspectives and insights into the dependent and independent variables of L2 Acquisition, Educational Technology and The Covid 19 Pandemic.

The data will be displayed in the form of a thematic analysis, that will pinpoint the main themes of the focus group and discuss the identified responses and trends. The format and layout of the focus group follows the same three part used for the quantitative data collection process.

5.1. Thematic Analysis

The first question that was posed to the focus group revolved around their personal preference of teaching L2 acquisition.

Part A - Question 1. What do you believe is the best way to teach L2 Acquisition?

5.1.1 Practice Makes Perfect

The first theme identified from the responses of Question 1 was the importance of practice. Teachers were keen to express the importance of allowing students to practice the target language inside and outside of the classroom. The respondents used themselves as an example as many were English as a Second Language (ESL) students. It was deemed essential to be expressive and practice the language among other speakers of English to allow them to improve and acquire the language a lot more effectively. This falls in line with Vygotsky's (1980) notion of Constructivism, where students, when learning a language must be interactive in social settings where the language is spoken. The well know phrase “ Practice Makes Perfect”, is one that is often used for physical education and taught skills.

5.2.2. Personalisation in the Target Language

Another participant identified Personalisation of the Target Language as a way to enhance L2 acquisition among their students. Personalisation is a strategy that is used to enable students to connect to the language in a very personal manner. The connection is based on their personal background, personal experience and personal surroundings. By connecting with the emotional side of a student, it creates a passion, love and desire to want to learn and engage more; due to the personal connection they have with the content provided by the teacher. The Department for Education and Skills UK (2007), in their published work, *Pedagogy and Personalisation (2007)* state,

“Developing a shared understanding and developing a common language to talk about pedagogy are crucial steps towards transforming teaching and learning to ensure that there is continuity and progression at all stages of the learning journey. This will lead to children and young people meeting their full potential.” (P8)

Part A - Question 3. What are your views on the opinion that Language acquisition is a matter of trial and error and is acquired through experiences and error correction?

5.3.3. Direct Error Correction is Disliked

In response to Question 3, teachers responded very negatively to immediate correction. They argued that immediate error correction specifically in language learning can hinder the learning process of the student. They also argued that it can reduce confidence and doesn't allow for students to feel comfortable in the learning environment.

A respondent states at 08.09 minutes into the focus group,

*“ I don't correct their mistakes at the time that they are speaking....
So let me them speak, and then maybe in a different activity, you can emphasise on the error that most of the students are having when they speak or they write....”*

Part B - Question 4. How has Educational Technology changed the way that you teach? And why?

5.3.4. Better Awareness

In response to question 4, teachers professed an overall better awareness of EdTech within the classroom. They stressed that the new technology available online and in the classroom had helped them to improve as a teacher and also to improve the students level.

One participant states at 12.31 minutes into the focus group ,

“ It’s been really interesting and it made me more aware of the technological tools that I can use in my classroom. I think it enhanced my capabilities as a teacher when we talk about integrating learning or teaching with technology....”

They also stressed that after The Covid 19 Pandemic, the new technology that has been used inside the classroom; students have found it really interesting, engaging and fun.

Part B – Question 5. What role does vocabulary play in Language Acquisition for you & is this made easier or harder when teaching online? If so, why?

5.3.5. How You Teach Vocabulary is Key

In answer to Question 5, teachers agreed very strongly with Vocabulary playing a major role in assisting with L2 acquisition. However, some of the respondents elaborated on this by pointing out that the way vocabulary is introduced to the students must be done properly. One respondent gave the example of an Italian student in her class, who didn’t understand a word of English. However, after close interaction with classmates and background subject knowledge of topics that were discussed in previous lessons, he was able to overcome the boundaries of learning.

Teachers argued that teaching online is very effective if the teacher is well prepared, for example providing visuals and descriptions. However, they also stressed that one of the key challenges to teaching online is the inability to show gestures through body language or facial expressions when highlighting areas of pronunciation of the mouth, a task which would be made easier in a face to face teaching environment.

Part B - Question 6. What would be your main concerns with the current Educational Online Platforms being used today? And what ways would you seek to improve them?

5.3.6. Problems with Microsoft Teams Software

Teachers complained that assigning students to individual groups within Microsoft Teams had been an ongoing problem throughout their time using the platform. If a teacher would like to enter students into a group for collaborative learning purposes they have to assign the names to the group in advance, as opposed to being able to assign students into a group instantaneously. The reason why this is a concern for teachers is because it is very time consuming, especially when a teacher is in the middle of teaching a class. Additionally, groups may need to change throughout the course of the lesson. If this is the case, then it would be very difficult for teachers to change groups as they progress through the lesson. This is one of the complaints and concerns that teachers expressed during the focus group.

5.3.7. Increased Load on Teachers Due to Educational Technology

One respondent from the focus group raised concerns around the workload on teachers. She described EdTech as a “competing market” for who has the best features or best reviews. As a result this applies extra pressure on teachers to keep up with the technology. She further went on to describe that pressure and workload, alongside unrealistic expectations of high academic performance across the sector made it challenging to pursue a long term career. As a result, she had mentioned that she was leaving the teaching field to move to a different industry.

Part C - Question 9. What is your overall viewpoint on the Covid 19 Pandemic and its effects on Education as a whole? And why?

5.3.8. The Covid 19 Pandemic was a Catalyst for Education

Teachers agreed that the Covid 19 Pandemic acted as a catalyst for Online Learning in the field of Education. The pandemic has advanced EdTech and Online Learning ahead by 10-15 years and teachers have had to bear the full brunt of that shift. Teachers discussed positive affects inside and outside the classroom. Examples being more quality time spent at home, more flexible working options and more time for planning. Teachers also discussed the benefits of technology overall and the benefits that it has brought to parents and educators as a whole, allowing for greater communication between schools and parents. As a result, encouraging more transparency on student progression and overall academic development.

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Cross Analysis of Quantative & Qualitative Data Results

When looking at the results from the quantative data, it is clear to see that most teachers endorse the theories and approaches put forth by previous writers and scientists in their theories of L2 acquisition. Throughout Part A, the questions purposely were created with a clear intent to understand the perspectives of teachers in their agreement to previous theories. When looking at Part A, the results showed clearly that Skinner's theory on behaviourism, was a key component for language learning for teachers. In part A, every response showed more than 50% in favour of imitation, repetition, rewards and punishments. Alongside this, teachers also supported the ideas of constructivism and the idea of learning outside of the classroom walls, with a focus on practicing in a natural environment. Theories related to L2 acquisition, that showed the strongest response in Question 2 of the online questionnaire, was assimilation and imitation of behaviour. This was one of the strongest statements that the teachers agreed with. As a result, we can assume that teachers believed in a well-rounded combination of both behaviourism and constructivism; allowing students to practice regularly through concepts such as drilling, repetition and following the commands of the teacher, and then going out into the society where the language is spoken and practising naturally with fluent speakers of the language. This combination has proven extremely popular among teachers' perceptions.

When looking at the quantative and qualitative results, the effects of EdTech are clear to see. Teachers believe that there has been an overriding benefit of EdTech on Language acquisition. In the qualitative data themes, teachers concluded that EdTech had propelled education, and enhanced their ability to teach concepts such as Vocabulary in new ways, ultimately helping the students to remember the words quickly.

However, concerns were also raised about the level at which EdTech is developing, causing anxiety among teachers. The speed of advancement has caused teacher great concern at having to keep up with the constant demands of learning new technological trends, as pointed out in the responses on Question 6, Part B of the focus group.

The data suggests a clear balance between EdTech, face to face teaching, effective feedback for students and a natural learning environment, as highlighted in the responses in Part A, Question 1 of the focus group. Despite this, concerns pointed out by teachers included pressure on staff and issues with software updates.

The findings go in line with the argument that vocabulary is viewed as a critical tool for second language learners. In the focus group, a respondent, pointed out that vocabulary is the key to developing language and provided the example of her Italian student, as mentioned above. Huckin (1995) describes the same importance where he argues that second language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge and a lack of that knowledge is one of the biggest obstacles L2 acquisition learners face. Additionally, Schmitt (2000) states that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language” (p. 55)

Furthermore, Question 17 in the Questionnaire highlights that EdTech helps students to remember vocabulary online and in the classroom setting. With 73% of teachers in agreement to the statement that EdTech helps students remember vocabulary; the positive perceptions of teachers on the effects of EdTech on L2 acquisition are clear to see.

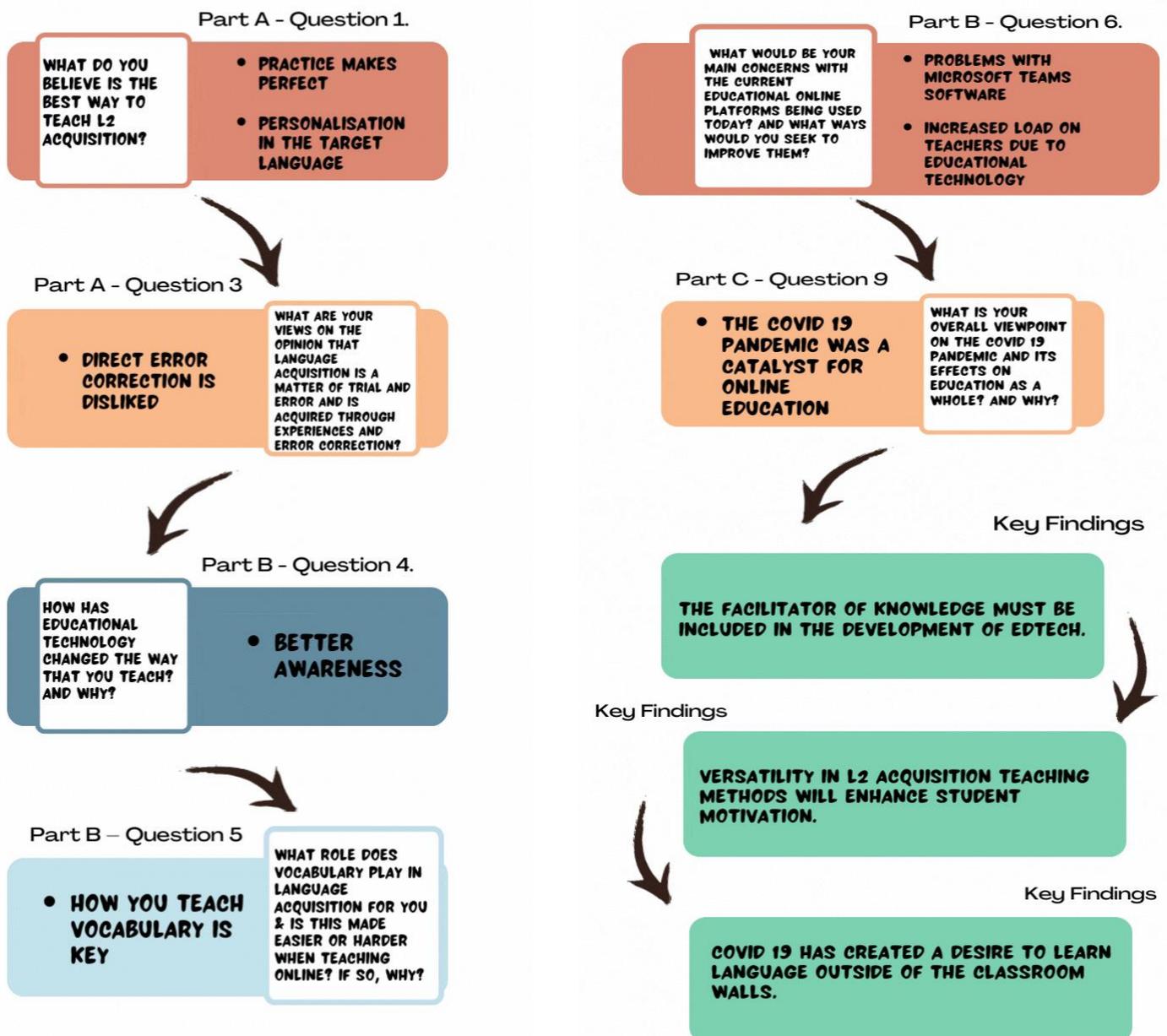
Despite the positive correlations between both streams of data collection, differences can be identified. When looking at question 16 of the questionnaire, the responses come across in a very neutral way, with 38% of teachers taking a neutral stance on the difficulties of operating EdTech. However, when looking at the responses in the focus group regarding the issues with EdTech, many teachers had serious concerns around use, compatibility and a growing demand to keep up with new technology. This shows a slight lack of consistency among the data pools, however, it highlights that a mixed method approach is always encouraged in order to make the data as clear and succinct as possible. The focus group has allowed the questionnaire responses to be explained in greater detail providing a more robust data collection process, where both pools of data compliment each other.

7.0. Infographic of Data

Below shows a clear and simplified infographic of what the qualitative data looks like.

QUALITATIVE DATA RESULTS

Thematic Analysis Infographic
Online Focus Group Data



8.0. Research Questions Answered

At the beginning of this research the following questions and points were made:

- What are the effects of technology on L2 acquisition?
- What are the areas that need improving?
- Dissect teachers perceptions of the pandemic
- Identify news trends and pave a way for better teaching and learning

1. According to teachers perceptions, the effects of technology on L2 acquisition has been positive. Teachers have expressed an appreciation for the technology; especially when teaching vocabulary as discussed in the results section. Technology is able to assist and help students learn in ways that they never considered before, with blended learning options, students have the opportunity to experience both and identify what works best for them. Despite this, it is not all positive according to some teachers, who expressed concerns of pressure from the new technology just to keep up and likewise concerns around software capability issues found in applications such as Microsoft Teams; that prevents teachers from teaching effectively. A greater focus on teaching vocabulary through technology in more creative ways can reap outstanding results, if taught correctly. The research tells us that vocabulary is versatile when taught using EdTech. It is considered to be one of the most important components of L2 acquisition, as argued by Nation (2001), who describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language as “complimentary”.
2. In order to maximise the benefits of L2 acquisition there are clear areas which require further research. First of all improving expectations put on teachers by management and EdTech Companies need to be more realistic by setting achievable goals within the industry. Muller (2008), argues that teachers’ attitudes towards technology is very important. He explains that it is critical for teachers to be educated and prepared accordingly in order for effective integration of ICT into any given curriculum. He goes on to say that if teachers are not comfortable with the technology, then low expectations can be perceived. Naimova (2008), further supports this, where he argues that attitudes of management within educational institutions are one of the

factors that affect successful adoption of EdTech. He states that lack of support and improper implementation of the technology in the classroom, will lead to poor adoption of EdTech.

3. Teachers perceptions of the pandemic were described in the focus group as “scary”, “nerve racking” and “unpredictable”. When applied to L2 acquisition, teachers were aware of the damaging effects of no face to face teaching, but at the same time, were enlightened by the bumpy transition to online learning due to Covid 19. As such, teachers seemed to remain positive regarding the effects of the pandemic on L2 acquisition, mainly due to the external benefits of additional family time, more time for planning and less pressure working from home.
4. The new trends have already been set, according to the teachers. The pandemic has catapulted the technological advancement by 10-15 years and society is trying to catch up. The trends of new concepts such as blended learning, online collaboration platforms between schools and parents such as Class Dojo and Video Communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Google Meets all lead towards a more robust, more connected and more hassle free way of teaching, learning, monitoring and managing educational relationships.

9.0. Reflections on Theory & Practice

In order to understand and develop a second language, L2 acquisition is the core component of any strategy to achieve it. Through understanding the many theories and perspectives, explained in this dissertation; it can lead to barrage of confusion and doubt as to what path is the best path to take. The theory at the beginning of this dissertation revolved around personal preference and personal experiences ultimately solving the problems of L2 acquisition; especially in the country that the language is spoken. Likewise, a strong grasp of all the theories is essential, allowing teachers to “pick & choose” as they see fit, depending on the class and level of the students they are teaching.

Through reading the literature in great depth, alongside the different theories and perceptions of teachers. It has come to light that L2 acquisition is a tool and not the goal itself. Learning a second language is a process of self-actualisation and determination of one’s own ability to adapt and

grow in any given setting. Through the continuous research, it has shown that L2 acquisition can be a mix of natural ability, practice, cognitive strength, vocabulary and the right learning environment. With these components, a student can excel, as long as there is intent and personal motivation. What this research set out to do, is understand the effects that hinder effective teaching and learning. By developing my own theory of L2 acquisition throughout this dissertation based on the evidence; it has helped enrich my understanding of the processes required to reach the goal of acquiring a second language.

As a second language student of Arabic, the research has provided much insight into techniques, perceptions and methods of excelling, not usually found in the Middle Eastern region. This includes access to surroundings where second language Arab speakers can practice and learn naturally and not be side-tracked, by a desire for Arab speakers to learn English. Overall, accessibility to many different methods of L2 acquisition has proven a valuable addition to the learning process. Coupled with self-belief, self-determination and consistency within any given framework, effective learning can transform the overall results of any language student.

10.0. Conclusion

Language acquisition through the use of technology during The Covid 19 Pandemic has revolutionised the way the world views language learning. Governments, technological companies, educationalists, lecturers, parents, students all have benefitted from the wave of change that emerged as a by-product of the Covid 19 Pandemic. In understanding the perceptions of teachers, who convey and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge on a daily basis provides a microscopic lense into the future of effective L2 acquisition. The findings concluded in this dissertation have highlighted three main trends moving forward.

1. The facilitator of knowledge **must** be included in the development of EdTech.
2. Versatility in L2 Acquisition teaching methods will enhance student motivation.
3. Covid 19 has created a desire to learn language outside of the classroom walls.

Through these findings, it is possible to drive language learning in a direction that educationalists can feel comfortable that effective teaching and learning will equal the best results. There is no doubt, that language, requires face to face experiences, practice, cognitive strength and

motivational principles, but most importantly the industry requires an openness to adapt and understand news trends in the language field. The Covid 19 pandemic has forced countries to understand the direction the world is moving in and by taking heed of this trend; a better, more suitable and robust framework for effective learning of language can begin.

Areas for further research would include anxiety and mental health issues. Due to The Covid 19 Pandemic, many students of all ages suffered from continued isolation, lack of opportunity to learn and poor living conditions. As a result, further studies can help build upon the perceptions of teachers and educationalists on issues connected to mental health, anxiety and effective teaching and learning in order to build awareness and offer tangible solutions for the future generation.

11.0. Limitations & Hindsight of Study

In hindsight there are always factors that retrospectively could have been changed or improved. One of those factors is the sample demographic that participated in the focus group. The only participants that took part in the focus group were females. As previously noted in the research methodology, the majority of students specialising in the field of education consists mainly of females within the university. This would have most certainly had an effect on the data collated by teachers, as males may have a different expectation and view on the topic of L2 acquisition.

Additionally, the research questions could have included a greater focus on motivation and student morale. The questions focused more on teachers perspectives and opinions and less on student psyche and mental health. A recent study carried out by the Scottish Government in April 2021 showed that 39% of children and young people aged between 11-25 felt moderately or extremely concerned regarding their own mental wellbeing, while 61% were moderately or extremely concerned about the impact of Covid 19 on their futures, a cause for grave concern. (*Mental Health Foundation Scotland, 2021*)

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13.0. Appendix

Qualitative Data Question 1 / Part A – Focus Group



Part A - Theoretical Approach to L2 Acquisition



Question 1. What do you believe is the best way to teach L2 Acquisition?

Qualitative Data Question 2 / Part A – Focus Group



Part A - Theoretical Approach to L2 Acquisition



Question 2. Do you have a method or theory behind the way that you teach L2 Acquisition?

Qualitative Data Question 3 / Part A – Focus Group



Part A - Theoretical Approach to L2 Acquisition



Question 3. What are your views on the opinion that Language acquisition is a matter of trial and error and is acquired through experiences and error correction?

Qualitative Data Question 4 / Part B – Focus Group



Part B - Educational Technology & L2 Acquisition



Question 4. How has Educational Technology changed the way that you teach? And why?

Qualitative Data Question 5 / Part B – Focus Group

Part B - Educational Technology & L2 Acquisition



Question 5. What role does vocabulary play in Language Acquisition for you & is this made easier or harder when teaching online? If so, why?

Qualitative Data Question 6 / Part B – Focus Group

Part B - Educational Technology & L2 Acquisition



Question 6. What would be your main concerns with the current Educational Online Platforms being used today? And what ways would you seek to improve them?

Qualitative Data Question 7 / Part C – Focus Group


Part C - Covid 19 Pandemic and its effects on L2 Acquisition



Question 7. During The Covid 19 Pandemic did students fall behind or excel academically during this period? And why?

Qualitative Data Question 8 / Part C – Focus Group


Part C - Covid 19 Pandemic and its effects on L2 Acquisition



Question 8. What effects did the Lockdown have on your ability to teach L2 Acquisition effectively to your students?

Qualitative Data Question 9 / Part C – Focus Group



Part C - Covid 19 Pandemic and its effects on L2 Acquisition



Question 9. What is your overall viewpoint on the Covid 19 Pandemic and its effects on Education as a whole? And why?