



Language Teaching in the New Normal: A Comparative Study between Malaysia and Iraq

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Abstract: COVID-19 has a severe impact on the way we teach and learn today. As the global pandemic has severely impacted our education sector, adaptation is much needed in the way we teach and learn as we adapt to the new normal. This comparative study involves four sets of data involving two teachers from Malaysia and two teachers from Iraq. The researchers interviewed the respondents and sorted their feedbacks according to the themes of this study. The study reveals the differences and similarities in how teachers adapt to the new way of teaching English and teaching methods for receptive and productive English skills to high school students in both countries. It also reveals teachers' opinions on using first language materials in their English teaching. The study highlights the teaching theories and principles applied by teachers in both countries in teaching in the new normal. The study also reveals that the respondents managed to adapt authentic teaching and learning materials for online teaching and revamped their lesson plans and timetables. The respondents also used the Telegram application to share teaching and learning materials and connect with their students. All respondents agree with the use of first language materials in teaching English and the role of teachers to motivate students in learning English in the new normal. Finally, the study reveals that all respondents from both countries manage to adapt to the new teaching method in the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, e-Learning, Online Learning, Online Teaching, English Language Teaching, English Language Learning, Teaching Adaptation

1. Introduction

The way we teach and learn now is no longer similar compared to the practices before the pandemic. Therefore, most countries have to choose a new approach to overcome the difficulties in teaching and learning, including Malaysia and Iraq. Today, online learning has been implemented in our education sector to keep education going in the new normal. Such an approach requires us to fully utilise the technology we have to mediate communication, allowing face-to-face learning even though we are far from each other (Alfiras et al., 2020).

The use of online learning or e-learning may is not new in Malaysia. The Malaysian Ministry of Education has developed a digital platform for digital education named the Digital Educational Learning Initiative Malaysia (DELIMA) after implementing Frog VLE. This system was created with three strategic partners: Google, Microsoft, and Apple Education, as a part of their corporate social responsibility program. They support the DELIMA platform by providing systematic learning management and resource systems for teachers and students online. Teachers and students in Malaysia are provided with official accounts to fully utilise the services that DELIMA offers: Google Suite for Education, Microsoft 365 applications, and Apple Education Package for free. However, according to Rashid (2020), Malaysia is still facing some limitations with the online learning and e-learning

approaches. Furthermore, Rashid (2020) also stresses that e-learning is not fully inclusive in Malaysia due to the fragile foundation of the current education system caused by poor planning and implementation.

Most regions in Malaysia have access to the Internet, and most Malaysian citizens are technology literate. IGI Global (2020) defines technological literacy as the ability to handle and use electronic gadgets such as laptops, smartphones, tablets and more. Malaysia is also considered a technology-literate country. CNA (2020) reported that 90.1% of Malaysians are technology literate, and Malaysia is the second-best in terms of Internet penetration in south-east Asia. However, the access to the Internet is not similar in certain states in Malaysia, such as in Sabah, Sarawak, Pahang, and Kelantan. These are among the developing states in Malaysia, and they need adequate Internet access. The challenge in connectivity has also become one of the major setbacks for students and teachers in adapting to the online learning environment. Malaysia has good systems such as DELIMa and other relevant platforms to be utilised in teaching and learning during the pandemic. However, it is undeniable that such systems could not be fully utilised due to connectivity issues as such systems rely on the Internet to function. The lack of connectivity affects teacher and student communication and the sharing of materials. Thus, affecting the overall experience in online teaching and learning of the English language itself.

In Iraq, the implementation of e-learning is still behind compared to Malaysia. According to Al-Azawei, Parslow, and Lundqvist (2016), their study reveals that one of the factors that affect the implementation of e-learning in Iraq is inadequate training programs and low Internet bandwidth. Furthermore, their study also revealed that the lack of awareness, interest, and motivation had become the most significant challenge that affects the implementation of e-learning in Iraq. Al-Azawei et al. (2016) also highlighted that frequent electricity shortage also happens in Iraq, affecting e-learning if used in the country as the shortage affects the country's ICT infrastructure. Sabr and Neamah (2017) also revealed that unwillingness, lack of engagement, and demotivation of the teachers and students also affect the execution of e-learning in Iraq. The implementation of e-learning in Iraq is deemed as a new experience in the Iraqi education sector. The country is still adapting to fully implement e-learning today as an effort for them to take part in the new way of learning during the pandemic.

Therefore, as the implementation of e-Learning is significantly different between both countries, this study hopes to reveal how language teachers adapt to online teaching in the new normal. This comparative study also intends to highlight language teachers' challenges in teaching in the new normal of the two countries. This study reveals the differences and similarities in how teachers adapt to the new teaching method to high school students in the new normal. This paper also discusses the methods in teaching receptive and productive English skills and reveals teachers' opinions on using first language materials in their English teaching. Lastly, this study will highlight teachers' teaching theories and principles in teaching in the new normal in both countries. Hence, the current research aims:

- a. To compare the teaching English between Malay and Iraqi contexts.

2. Methodology

This study employed the qualitative research design. Four respondents were selected for this study, two respondents from Malaysia and two respondents from Iraq. The respondents are experienced high school English teachers who teach in high schools of their respective countries. An interview was conducted with each respondent, and their data are categorised accordingly in the next chapter.

In terms of the validity and reliability of the data, the interviews were sent back to the respondents to check them before the analysis. Also, the analysis was carried out by one author, and the findings were revised by the other two authors to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings (Razak et al., 2020)

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Brief Introduction to the Case Studies

Case Study 1

The respondent for case study 1 is an English teacher, a TESL graduate from a local university in Malaysia. The respondent is in her 40s. She has been teaching in a government high school for almost 20 years to date. The respondent teaches Form 4 students at a high school located in an urban area in Miri, Sarawak. In this writing, the respondent for the first case study is named Respondent 1.

Case Study 2

The respondent for case study 2 is an English teacher, an English major graduate from a local university in Malaysia. The respondent is in her 50s. She has been teaching in a government high school for more than 20 years to date. The respondent teaches Form 4 students at a high school located in a suburban area in Limbang, Sarawak. In this writing, the respondent for the second case study is named Respondent 2.

Case Study 3 and 4

The respondents for case studies 3 and 4 are English teachers with an English major from a local university in Iraq. The respondents are in their 30s. They have been teaching in a government high school for 15 years to date. The respondents teach 4th-grade high school students at a high school located in a suburban area in Babylon and Baghdad, Iraq. In this writing, the respondents for the third and fourth case studies were named Respondents 3 and 4. The data is merged as both respondents have similar responses to the researcher's questions, along with a few differences discussed in this study.

All the respondents mentioned that teachers were told to create reconstructed lesson plans, and they were told to adapt the lessons to be used in the online setting. All of them were given a new set of timetables for the online lessons, and they have to prepare the necessary materials to be adapted in the online lessons. They also share a similar way to communicate and share teaching and learning materials with their students, as all of them would use the Telegram application. As for Respondents 1 and 2, they must implement relevant activities as suggested in the Pembelajaran Abad ke-21 (PAK-21) guideline in online teaching to make the teaching and learning process interactive when it is conducted online. The transition to online learning was easy for Respondent 1 as the school utilises the DELIMA platform fully, allowing a smooth transition to the online mode for teaching and learning. However, Respondent 2 is still adapting to the new way of teaching as the school is yet to utilise the DELIMA platform fully.

As for Respondents 3 and 4, they also have to create new materials and teaching videos to be used online. Both of them stated that schools in Iraq are still implementing traditional teaching and learning methods until today. Both respondents also stated that they do not use video conferencing platforms like Google Meet or Zoom to conduct synchronous online classes. They stated that most Iraqi teachers are still learning and adapting to teaching technologies during the new normal.

3.2 Theories and Practices Applied by Teachers in Malaysia and Iraq

The respondents use two prominent theories to teach English in the new normal based on the responses obtained. The first prominent theory used by the respondents is Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition. Their responses reveal that the respondents applied the input hypothesis (i+1) and the affective filter hypothesis as they teach their students. The second theory is Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) by Harasim (2012). This theory focuses on using the Internet and technology to provide learning environments for the students to collaborate and build their knowledge. The respondents believe that students have prior knowledge, and they would use prior knowledge and relate it to the lesson they teach, along with the students' experiences, to create meaningful learning. Therefore, teachers have to trigger students' knowledge to relate to the new input given to them.

Furthermore, all the respondents also use Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) theory by Harasim (2012). According to the responses given by Respondents 1 and 2, they encourage their students to work in pairs and encourage peer discussions in the online classroom. It allows their students to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions in English about a topic given by the teachers as they have their collaborative discussions among their peers. This theory is also in line with the think-pair-share activity applied by Respondent 1 and the Rally-Robin activity applied by Respondent 2, as stated in the PAK-21 teaching method. Even though the activities were initially designed for in-class activity as proposed in the PAK-21 teaching method, we can see that both activities can be adapted and used in the online classroom today. This theory is also used by Respondent 3 and 4, even though most of their classes is done asynchronously online. However, it is not as prominent as Respondents 1 and 2, as students in Iraq are allowed to come to school once a month during the pandemic.

3.3 Prominent Principles Applied by Teachers in Malaysia and Iraq in Online Teaching

According to the responses obtained, all respondents agree that motivation plays a huge role to ensure students' success in learning and acquiring the English language. They believe that teachers must encourage and motivate the students to learn the English language. As highlighted by Respondents 1 and 2, they stress that teachers must play their part to spark the students' interest in learning the language itself. For instance, teachers could motivate them by giving them encouragement, rewards, praises, and making an example from them if they did well. In comparison to Respondents 3 and 4, they mentioned that when teachers provide choices of students' interests in English teaching, it makes them more motivated in learning the language as they are working on the topics they like. Like Respondent 1 and 2, Respondent 3 and 4 also encourage teachers to reward students' successes publicly, give praises as they do well, and share exemplary work to boost their confidence and motivation in learning the English language itself.

Furthermore, the respondents also applied the Principles of Effective Online Pedagogy by Pelz (2009). There are three principles suggested by Pelz (2009) which are:

1. Let students do most of the work.
2. Encourage interactivity for effective online learning.
3. Strive for three kinds of presence (social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence).

These principles were applied by Respondents 1 and 2 as they would give their students a task during the online lessons so they would be engaged with the lesson's content by encouraging them to work collaboratively. It is also seen in how they teach by encouraging them to interact with their teachers and peers as they take part in the lesson. Both respondents also mention that they would

encourage the student to be present by encouraging their students to turn on their cameras or at least the microphone to allow interaction and show their presence in class. However, the application of these principles is not prominently seen in Respondents 3 and 4. As aforementioned, students in Iraq are allowed to come to school once a month during the pandemic. The online classes in Iraq are also conducted asynchronously compared to Malaysia.

3.4 Activities and Evaluation Method for Receptive and Productive Performance in the Teaching of English Language

Case Study 1

Respondent 1 mentioned the use of Kahoot, which is an interactive quiz platform in her online teaching. The respondent mentions that the use of Kahoot enables her to see the students' understanding of grammar, reading and literature. Furthermore, Respondent 1 also found out that the use of Kahoot helps in students' engagement in the online class, and the students are competitive as they engage in the Kahoot quizzes. As for teaching listening and speaking skills, Respondent 1 teaches her student by encouraging discussions among students. The respondent encourages them to work in pairs, giving them a topic or questions to be discussed, and let them share their thoughts in class. This method is also in line with the 'think-pair-share' activity, as suggested in the PAK-21 teaching method.

Case Study 2

Respondent 2 mentions the use of Google Forms for tasks and evaluations. Google Forms are mainly used to give tasks and exercises related to the lessons, allowing the respondent to see the students' understanding during evaluation. Furthermore, Respondent 2 also encourages class participation, stating that it is vital to get students to participate in the teaching of grammar, comprehension and reading. Respondent 2 will usually put the students in pairs and randomly select them to answer the respondent's questions during the online class to encourage participation. This activity is also in line with the Rally-Robin activity, as suggested in the PAK-21 teaching method, where students take turns to respond.

Respondent 2 prefers to use the prepared slides for writing skills and give essay questions to be done by the students. The writing tasks are expected to be submitted later via Telegram, and the respondent would let her students take their time doing it at their own pace. As for listening and speaking, Respondent 2 prefers the class to be student-based, allowing her to focus more on the students' interactions as they use the English language. The students are given topics to discuss with their peers to encourage collaborative discussions. Thus, allowing them to share their thoughts and opinions while using the English language itself in the online classroom setting.

Case Study 3 and 4

The respondents mentioned that English teachers and students could go to school once a month for face-to-face lessons in Iraq. During that day, the teachers would focus on the teaching of speaking skills. Both respondents would encourage the students to work in pairs, and the students would be given a topic or questions to be discussed with their peers. This activity would allow the students to share their ideas and speak using English in the classroom, which allows them to put their language skills into practice. Respondent 3 also stated that the students would use the language in class with their peers regardless of their correctness, and they can participate well in the classroom.

Furthermore, Respondent 4 also believes that the best way for students to acquire the English language is by letting the students use the language itself. The students must put the language into practice so that they can communicate using the language itself. Thus, allowing them to acquire and practice the English language through their interactions.

Both respondents share a similar method to teach listening and reading skills. They would share their materials in the form of audio clips along with their transcriptions in the class Telegram group. They would ask students to play the audio clips first to listen to the pronunciation and intonation. The students will then have to record an audio clip with them repeating what has been said in the audio clip. Both respondents believe that students would be able to read and pronounce correctly with much practice by repetition. As for the teaching of writing skills, they would give the students simple topics for them to write, and they are told to submit their writing on Telegram at a given time for evaluations.

3.5 Opinions on the Use of First Language Materials in the Teaching of English

Most respondents support the use of first language materials in the teaching of English. For instance, Respondent 1 believes that it helps to gain the students' interests as they relate to it. For instance, the respondent would bring in the Malaysian context in her teaching using materials such as books, stories, exercises, newspapers, examples in the Malaysian context, and even simple, local Malaysian names. Respondent 2 also stated that the use of first language material in English teaching helps the students as it allows them to understand the language in their context. As for Respondents 3 and 4, they stated that the use of first language material in English teaching helps them gain better language knowledge in English and Arabic. The use of first language materials in English teaching is deemed necessary as students would grasp the language knowledge better and enhance their understanding of the language itself.

The respondents also stated that such use of first language materials helps create a sense of familiarity with the students. Thus, allowing them to understand the English language better as they relate it with their experiences. From Respondent 2's experience, she sees such a pattern in the way students write their essays. She found out that students can write in English when they are given something to relate to themselves. Respondent 1 also stated that most of the materials she used today are already in the local context compared to before. Respondent 1 supports it by mentioning a few local works of literature, such as the novel entitled "The Curse" and the short story entitled "Of Bunga Telur and Bally Shoes," which are the previously used local literature in teaching the English language. Moreover, Respondent 2 also find out that it is easier to teach English in the Malaysian context today, and it is even easier to implement it in the online classroom. Despite the need for Respondent 2 to prepare the materials for online classes, it was easier for her to do so because the materials were already available for teachers and students. Therefore, she has to make some adaptations so that the materials could be used online.

Respondents 3 and 4 also stated that they would also use code-switching to help them understand the language better and help students grasp English's grammatical knowledge. For instance, Respondent 4 stated that when he wants to teach simple present tense to students, he would first explain the English root words in the Arabic language before he proceeds to teach grammatical rules. Both respondents agree that code-switching helps them clarify and show the differences between Arabic and English in terms of sentence structures, such as subject and verb placements in both languages.

3.6 The Impacts of Teaching in the New Normal Towards the Students

Case Study 1 and 2

Respondents 1 and 2 found out that most students enjoy the online class, and the students want to participate in the online classroom, including silent students. The students are participative, and they are not afraid to make mistakes when using English in the online setting. Both of them agree that an online classroom setting in teaching English creates a safe space for the students to learn and practice the language regardless of their mistakes. It allows the students to use the English language without judgement, and they feel safe in using the language itself as the environment is less punishing for them. Such an environment lowers the students' language anxiety and lowers the students' affective filter as they use English in their interactions. Both respondents also mention that it is a must for teachers to motivate their students to learn the language by sparking their interest in learning through motivation. Moreover, they also stated that teachers also have to encourage students to participate in the lesson and make the lesson enjoyable by using interactive elements that allow participation among the students, such as the use of Kahoot. Based on Respondents 1 and 2, we can imply that the students have low anxiety levels when they are learning in the online classroom.

Case Study 3 and 4

Based on the responses given by Respondents 3 and 4, the use of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis plays an essential role in their way of teaching English. Both respondents strongly believe that it would be easier for students to acquire the language if they are well motivated, confident, and safe to practice the language. Respondent 3 insists that teachers have to provide students with engaging experiences that tap into their passions to increase their motivation. For instance, giving the students some topics of interest and let them work with their peers to encourage student-based learning. Like the other respondents, they would also reward the students' success by praising them for a job well done and sharing their exemplary works to boost their confidence and motivation to learn English.

3.7 Major Challenges Faced by Teachers and Students in Teaching in the New Normal

Case Study 1 and 2

Even though Respondent 1 and 2 seems to adapt to the new normal teaching method, some setbacks affected their teaching and learning process. Some students were unable to attend the online classes due to a connectivity issue. There are also times where both respondents also faced similar issues, which disrupts the teaching and learning process. Reliable connectivity to the Internet is a must as they rely on Google Meet to conduct the online classes. Furthermore, there are also issues on the reachability of teaching and learning materials for the students. Some of the students taught by them not living in Sarawak's urban and suburban areas, and the students face connectivity issues in the areas where they live. Not only are they unable to participate in class due to connectivity issues, but they are also unable to get the materials on the spot. However, to ensure this group of students are not left behind, they will share the materials on the Telegram groups of the class they teach. Thus, allowing the students to download the materials when they are connected to the Internet and initiate self-learning at their own pace. This group of students will also communicate with them via Telegram when needed.

Case Study 3 and 4

Due to connectivity and electricity issues in some regions in Iraq, teachers and students cannot have synchronous online classes. However, similar to Respondent 1 and 2, Respondent 3 and 4 also use

Telegram to send learning materials and contact their students. Thus, allowing students to get their materials once they are connected to the Internet. Furthermore, both respondents also mentioned that they are unfamiliar with video conferencing platforms. It is a massive challenge for teachers in Iraq to shift their teaching into the online mode. As aforementioned, both respondents and most teachers in Iraq are still adapting to the new way of teaching. They are yet to use video conferencing platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom for synchronous online learning and implement e-learning in their education sectors.

4. Overall Remarks

From the overall experience of Respondent 1, we can see that Respondent 1 seems to adapt and manage well in teaching in the new normal. The readiness could also be seen in how the school itself is proactive to ensure Respondent 1 and other teachers are ready to teach in the new normal. The full utilisation of the DELIMa platform also contributes to the smooth planning and transition to online learning. Respondent 1 is also familiar with Google Meet, as it is a part of the service offered by DELIMa that the school utilises to teach in the new normal. Furthermore, the creation of Telegram groups is also beneficial for the students. It allows the students who cannot attend their class due to connectivity and reachability issues to get their learning materials once they are connected to the Internet.

Respondent 2 is still in the process of adapting to teaching in the new normal. The readiness could also be seen in how the school itself is still trying to implement the full use of the DELIMa platform to adapt to the new way of teaching and learning today. As stated by respondent 2, teachers have to create the materials they want to use, and they do not have the materials that are ready to be used for online teaching. Respondent 2 and her colleagues are also yet to fully utilise and familiarise themselves with Google Meet and other services offered by DELIMa. However, similar to Respondent 1, even though students cannot attend the online classes due to connectivity issues, the respondent manages to resolve this issue using the Telegram groups. The Telegram group's creation was made compulsory by the school to ensure that students could reach the learning materials needed when they manage to get connected to the Internet. Thus, ensuring all students are not left behind in their education during the pandemic.

However, from the responses given by Respondents 3 and 4, we can see that both respondents are yet to adapt and manage well in teaching in the new normal. Furthermore, as mentioned by them, most teachers are still practising the traditional way of teaching. Therefore, they have to create their teaching materials and contents to be used in their online classes. They also highlighted that most teachers do not have teaching materials that are ready to be used online. Both respondents are also yet to utilise and familiarise themselves with video conferencing platforms and use them in the online classroom. However, both respondents somehow managed to resolve these issues using Telegram groups to ensure that students could get their learning materials once they are connected. Thus, allowing the students to continue their English learning online asynchronously.

Based on the Venn diagram, we can see that all respondents share some commonalities in adapting to teaching in the new normal. According to the data, all respondents create or adapt their teaching and learning materials for online teaching. The respondents also came out with new lesson plans for online teaching and were given new class timetables. Furthermore, all respondents also utilise Telegram to share their teaching and learning materials and connect with students who cannot attend online classes due to connectivity and reachability issues. Moreover, all respondents agree with using the first language in teaching English, be it online or in the traditional classroom, to better understand the

English language. The respondents also highlighted teachers' role in motivating students to learn and acquire the English language.

There are also a few differences that can be seen among the respondents. For instance, Respondents 1 and 2 mentioned that they utilise the DELIMa platform, and they also use online video conferencing systems such as Google Meet for synchronous online teaching and learning. Compared to Respondent 3 and 4, they are yet to use such services or any other video conferencing platforms in their online teaching. Moreover, Respondent 1 and 2 also uses Kahoot and Google Forms for students' in-class activities and evaluations. In contrast, Respondents 3 and 4 do not utilise both services and solely rely on Telegram for evaluation purposes.

To further illustrate how the respondents adapt to the challenges in teaching in the new normal, a Venn diagram is created to find the commonalities and differences in how the respondents adapt to the new normal of teaching. The diagram is shown as follow.

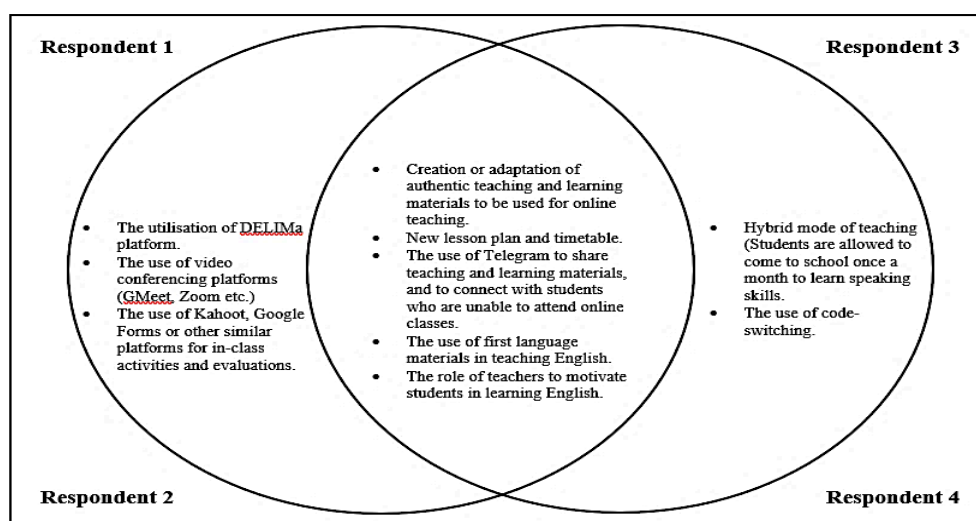


Figure 1. The Venn diagram of commonalities and differences in how respondents adapt to the new normal of teaching

Furthermore, Respondents 3 and 4 implement the hybrid teaching mode, as both respondents stated that English teachers and students are allowed to return to school once a month to teach and learn speaking skills. In comparison to Respondent 1 and 2, their classes are conducted synchronously and asynchronously online. Lastly, Respondents 3 and 4 mentioned that they practice code-switching to help students understand the English language. But, such use of code-switching was not mentioned by Respondents 1 and 2.

However, according to Case Study 1, Respondent 1 mentioned that she took a different approach to teach and evaluate writing in her online classes. She mentioned that she encourages the student to write their essay instead of typing it as she does not want her students to rely on corrective functions such as predictions and auto-correct as they type. Respondent 1 highlighted her concern with the consequences of the over-reliance of corrective functions itself towards their writing. Such concern was also highlighted by Melor, Hadi and Chenzi (2012). Their study revealed that students' over-reliance on automated corrective functions might affect students' ability to spell certain words correctly or even mislead students' language acquisition. Therefore, further studies are recommended to investigate the impact of automatic corrective functions on the students' writing skills and English language acquisition.

5. Conclusion

It is undeniable that our education sector has been significantly affected due to the pandemic. Based on this study's findings, it is seen that Malaysian and Iraqi language teachers shared some commonalities in teaching in the new normal. Both countries are still trying their best to ensure that the teaching and learning in the new normal are executed smoothly and all-inclusive to ensure that no students are left behind in getting the quality education they deserve. Despite the number of challenges teachers and students encounter, the shift to the new way of teaching is needed to adapt to the new normal today. It is a must for teachers and students to adapt to the new teaching methods during this pandemic. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agree that motivation plays a significant role in learning and acquiring the English language. Therefore, we have to motivate our students to learn the language by giving them the encouragement and support they need. Thus, ensuring that the students are keen and motivated to learn English even during this challenging time.

Some schools in Malaysia are yet to fully utilise the systems offered by DELIMa platform in their school management, teaching, and learning processes. We have plenty of services that DELIMa platform offers. However, we are yet to fully utilise the services until it is needed now due as our education sector is severely affected by the pandemic. The full utilisation of this platform's services provides a smooth transition towards online learning, as seen in case study 1. Furthermore, we also need to familiarise ourselves with the new way of teaching now. We must be familiar with video conferencing systems and other relevant services and utilise them for the teaching and learning process. Therefore, we have to take the initiative to venture and learn to utilise such services to adapt to the new teaching method.

Lastly, all of the respondents also mentioned that connectivity and reachability become the significant hurdles that hinder teachers from conducting the online classes well and for students to attend the online classes. Therefore, actions have to be taken by governmental bodies and telecommunication companies to resolve this issue. Such actions could be done through relevant initiatives to widen their networks in areas that need better connectivity and Internet service. The government should also play its part to ensure connectivity to be a priority. Today, the Internet has become a need, and it is no longer considered a luxury. Therefore, relevant actions must be taken to ensure that we can stay connected regardless of where we are. Thus, helping our students participate in their online learning and not being left behind in their education.

6. Recommendations

This study only comprises two countries in comparison, which are Malaysia and Iraq. Therefore, this study could also be expanded further by adding other countries such as Indonesia and Brunei. These countries are also adapting to the new ways of teaching during the pandemic. Furthermore, the study can also focus on those teaching in one particular area in their respective countries, as some teachers teach in urban, suburban, or rural areas. Lastly, the study can also be expanded further in the scope of teachers' IT skills as they adapt to teach in the new normal.

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