Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language: The Impact of COVID-19

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Abstract
Purpose: The purpose of this study was to discover the primary changes that the higher education systems–especially at the department level–brought in their teaching systems as a result of COVID-19. Considering COVID-19, this study also explored the challenges and opportunities EFL learners experienced in their learning contexts.
Research Methodology: A qualitative research design was employed in the present study where semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the study population who were 3 teachers and 7 students sampled through the purposive sampling technique from the English Department at Badghis Institute of Higher Education in Badghis, Afghanistan. The collected data from the participants were transcribed and read several times and the emerged codes and themes were analyzed accordingly.
Results: The findings of this study indicated that there were some major changes in the teaching instructions where the learners faced some barriers when trying to adapt themselves to new changes. On the other hand, the paper revealed some opportunities EFL learners experienced in dealing with the changes in the teaching and learning system.
Limitations: The limited sample size and the non-random selection method could be listed as limitations of this study.
Contributions: The current paper provides the readers with suggestive approaches and opportunities university teachers and students could consider during any future pandemic.
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1. Introduction

Covid-19 outbreaks have taken the entire world by surprise. In December 2019, Wuhan city in China was the first to diagnose the coronavirus disease (World Health Organization (WHO), as cited in Uddin and Uddin, 2021). Then it spread throughout the world and brought enormous changes in almost all human life systems. One of the significant changes it brought was to the education system throughout the world. In order to stop the COVID-19 epidemic from spreading, nearly all educational institutions worldwide have either closed or modified how they provide education (UNESCO, 2021). In most cases, teaching online has become the standard delivery method.

Like many other countries, the education system in Afghanistan was also severely affected by the COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdown. Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) closed all educational institutions on March 14, 2020 (Naidoo& Arian, as cited in Khuram, 2021) to stop the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, and consequently decided to use an online teaching system to continue the teaching and learning process. Therefore, The Higher Education Learning Management System (HELMS) was developed as an online platform by the MoHE of Afghanistan to conduct online teaching and learning (Hashemi, 2021). Thus, online teaching and learning alternated face-to-face

teaching across the country where thousands of teachers and learners began to use the HELMS system in addition to other online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Google Classrooms, etc.

There have been some research projects generally exploring the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown on Afghanistan's education system; however, its impact on English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning has not been paid into enough consideration, especially in the remote provinces, particularly Badghis Province. EFL teaching and learning refer to a procedure where English is taught as a foreign language for the learners. In the context of Afghanistan, English is taught as a foreign language where it is nightery their first language nor their second language but a foreign language. EFL teaching requires specific tasks, activities, and teaching techniques to facilitate learning; however, COVID-19 brought a sudden change in the system of EFL teaching and learning where neither the EFL teachers nor the students were ready for this unexpected change in the education system. As a result, the present study aims to revolve around the following objectives.

1.1 Purpose (Objectives) of the Study
1.1.1 The objectives of this study are:
1. To investigate the changes being brought to the education system, especial at the department level as a result of COVID-19.
2. To explore the challenges EFL students Faced due to the changes in the education system.
3. To find out the opportunities these changes offered for the EFL learners.

1.2 Research questions
This study was guided by the following research questions:
1. What changes were made in the teaching and learning process for the EFL students at Badghis Institute of Higher Education as a result of Covid-19?
2. What challenges have EFL learners faced as a result of these changes?
3. What opportunities have the COVID-19 outbreak offered the students as a result of the changes?

2. Literature Review
Online learning, which is also referred to as e-learning, is a kind of direct teaching and learning method that does not require a teacher to be present in the classroom; it is a type of distance education that entails using technology as the mediator of the learning and teaching process through the internet (Siemens, Gasevic, & Dawson, 2015). However, regarding e-learning, Moore, Dickson-Deane, and Galyen (2011) discussed that any technological computer-supported learning either online, offline, or a mixture of both can be considered e-learning.

Kinds of Online Learning
There are various kinds of online learning. In the following, some of the more popular ones such as synchronous, asynchronous, blended learning, linear, and interactive online learning would be briefly explained.

The first kind of online learning is synchronous online learning where instructing and learning take place simultaneously across a network connection (Perveen, 2016). In synchronous online learning or teaching, students perform a learning activity together at the same time from different places in the world; the tools used in this kind of learning are often online chats and video conferencing where students and instructors can communicate with each other instantly (Jabar Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

Another kind of online learning is asynchronous where an instructor and students engage with the course material at various times and locations; the instructor gives students a sequence of units, each of which may include required readings or uploaded media, online tests, discussion forums, and other activities that they complete on their schedule (Learning, 2021). In asynchronous environments, students are given readily available materials such as audio/video lectures, handouts, articles, and PowerPoint presentations; these materials are available 24/7 via an internet program (Perveen, 2016). In the asynchronous type of online learning, there is more flexibility for learners as they can have access to

the materials at any time, and based on this they can make their timeframe for learning; for example, students who do not have flexible schedules prefer asynchronous online learning to synchronous one (Jabar Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

Blended learning is another kind of online learning. According to Siemens et al. (2015), blended learning refers to methods where traditional face-to-face classroom instruction is combined with online learning. In the same regard, Su (2019) highlighted that in a blended learning environment, teaching and learning are carried out by combining in-person instruction in the classroom with technologically based online learning methods. Su pointed out that the purpose of blended learning is to improve and expand the learning opportunities for students beyond classroom learning. He also noted that the actual online lessons themselves can be either synchronous, asynchronous, or both.

The next kind of online learning is linear online learning where information is sent from sender to receiver without exception; it is like a monologue where a teacher explains everything and students are just listeners where no communication takes place like watching the lesson on TV or listening to the lesson from the radio (Jabar Al-Atabi & Al-Noori, 2020).

As opposed to the linear online learning method, the interactive method is introduced by Jabar Al-Atabi and Al-Noori (2020) who pointed out that in this method there is a two-way communication where instructor and students can interact and exchange ideas with each other on a topic. Due to the dialogue characteristic that interactive online learning possesses and since the learners are actively engaged in the lessons in the interactive online learning, Atabi and Al-Noori highlighted that this method is more effective than the linear one.

Common Platforms for Online Learning

There are several online platforms available for online teaching and learning. Some of the most well-known interactive online tools include DingTalk (the interactive platform from Alibaba Group), Hangouts Meet (a tool for video calls), Teams (chat, interactive meetings, video, and audio calls), Skype (video and audio calls), WeChat Work (video sharing and calls for Chinese), WhatsApp (video and audio calls, chat, and content sharing), and Zoom (video and audio calls, chat, and content sharing)(UNESCO, 2020). These platforms are designed to make it easier to coordinate class activities and exchange knowledge (Martín-Blas & Serrano-Fernández, 2009).

Challenges of Online Learning

Change usually comes gradually; but during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was rapidly. There were a considerable amount of changes in the education systems around the world including schools, colleges, and universities (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Change has occurred in a variety of ways. For example, online instruction has completely replaced face-to-face instruction to assist students in continuing their education while their schools were closed (Subedi, Nayaju, Subedi, Shah, & Shah, 2020). But continuing teaching and learning through online learning was not an easy task especially in the Afghanistan context as it was a new experience for most Afghan students. As a result, they faced various challenges. For example, Hashemi (2021) conducted a study in Afghanistan to look into how COVID-19 affected Afghan students' academic performance and how satisfied they were with online instruction. The data were collected from 1231 respondents from Afghan public and private universities. The study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact on Afghan students' academic performance and that at this crucial time, the students expressed extreme dissatisfaction with online instruction. Sarwari, Kakar, Golzar, and Miri (2022) also conducted a study at the English Department at Herat University, Afghanistan investigating how English majors dealt with the problems and opportunities of online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic. The research revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, students had a range of problems with their online classes including high internet service fees, sluggish internet connection, and technical difficulties. It is worth mentioning that the cost of the internet in Afghanistan is a challenge compared to other countries which see the low cost of the internet fees as an opportunity for students. For example, according to Almahasees, Mohsen, and Amin (2021), the cost of the internet in Jordan was one of the advantages of online learning classes. Rahim and Chandran (2021) also conducted a study at the university level in the Afghan EFL context to explore

the Afghan EFL learners' perceptions regarding the implementation of online learning during COVID-19. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from 21 male and female students in Afghanistan. The findings of the study indicated that the participants considered the online learning approach as a well alternative to traditional face-to-face classes. However, the participants experienced some serious challenges with e-learning. The issues included unreliable electricity, slow internet connection, expensive information, and communication technology (ICT) equipment, a lack of infrastructure, and students' and teachers' lack of ICT proficiency.

Referring to the other countries, they have also encountered various challenges with the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreaks and lockdown. For example, Mahyoob (2020) conducted a study at Taibah University, Saudi Arabia on the challenges of e-learning that EFL learners experienced during the COVID-19 epidemic time. The purpose of this research was to explore the obstacles EFL learners confronted with the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey-based questionnaire was used to collect data from 184 participants. The results revealed that most of the EFL learners were not satisfied with the ongoing online learning; this was because the technical, academic, and communicative challenges prevented them from achieving the expected improvements in language learning performance. On the other hand, Afroz, Islam, Rahman, and Anny (2021) conducted a study at Bangladeshi Government Colleges to look at how students and teachers felt about online learning at the time of COVID-19. Data were gathered using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. The study identified several difficulties, including a lack of educational resources, low learner attendance, rebellious pupils, concentration problems, a lot of work to accomplish, problems with technology and the internet, a lack of ICT knowledge and weak network infrastructure, and an insufficient amount of support from teachers and peers. Likewise, Almahasees et al. (2021) conducted a study in Jordan to find out how instructors and students felt about distant learning during COVID-19. The data were collected from 50 faculty members and 280 students via two surveys. The challenges identified in this study were adjusting to online learning, lack of engagement and motivation, technological challenges with the internet, privacy, and security concerns.

In the same vein, Heng and Sol (2021) conducted a review of the published sources to explore the challenges related to online teaching and learning. The challenges included a lack of technological infrastructure and competence, socioeconomic issues, a lack of expertise with online evaluation and supervision, increasing workloads for teachers, and incompatibility with certain subject areas or cultures; some other drawbacks were found as well by Heng and Sol including learner isolation, annoyance, pressure, increased costs, health problems, and greater exposure to cyber-bullying and online violence. In the same regard, Murgatrotd (2020) noted issues of e-learning including accessibility, affordability, adaptability, instructional methodology, lifelong learning, and educational policy. Gautam (2020) also reported that technical problems, isolated learning, and lack of knowledge of teachers and learners in dealing with online platforms are the problems of online learning. Furthermore, Khaneghahi et al. (2020) found that there was a strong and significant correlation between the learners' academic disability and online learning during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Possible Solutions
The aforementioned challenges of online learning during Covid-19caused researchers to look for possible solutions and provide some recommendations to develop successful e-learning. For example, Heng and Sol (2021) recommended that universities should create and enhance digital learning platforms, make sure there is always an internet connection, help students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who might not have access to digital devices, and raise both student and lecturer digital literacy levels.

However, empowering learners with digital literacy and ensuring their full access to online classes may not be enough. It means educators should have learners actively engage in the online lessons. In this regard, Kim and Bonk (2006) have emphasized that institutions must concentrate on pedagogical concerns and prioritize online instructions that promote collaborative learning, case learning, and project-based learning. Similarly, Keeton (2005) highlighted that teachers must invest a lot of time in developing efficient methods for providing online instructions. Keeton added that Effective online

instructions encourage input from students, encourage them to ask questions, and extend their perspective on the course material. Dhawan (2020) also underlined the need for students to receive individualized attention so that they can quickly adjust to this new learning environment. In addition, Nasir and Neger (2022) have emphasized that there should be interactions between teachers and students and that students' determination toward online classes should be taken into account.

Finally, the online classes developed during COVID-19 must be kept sustainable as an achievement. This is because it not only serves as a reliable fallback if a circumstance similar to Covid-19 arises, but it can also be used to improve learning chances. To do so, Partlow and Gibbs (2003) as cited in Kim and Bonk (2006) recommended that institutional leaders should establish blended learning and take advantage of this potential.

Online Learning Opportunities
Despite the challenges associated with the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, these classes have facilitated more learning opportunities in some contexts. Findings of a study by Hossainand Khan (2021) in Bangladesh presented that students learned new online learning systems and experienced new technologies during Covid-19. Digital learning, as a new opportunity, has been introduced into the education systems (Dhawan, 2020). For instance, the usage of social media and other group forums like Telegram Messenger, WhatsApp, and WeChat as well as online tools like Google Classroom and Zoom are investigated and tested for education (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021)

These platforms could be used to bring up more resources and instruction to learners even during face-to-face teaching. Doucet, Netolicky, Timmers, and Tuscano (2020) found that the online platforms enhanced collaboration opportunities, creative solutions, and interest in learning from teachers, learners, and parents. It was also found that online classes were safe, convenient, and time-saving during the COVID-19 pandemic (Afroz et al., 2021). Similarly, findings from Almahasees et al. (2021) revealed that online learning was inexpensive, convenient, and improves self-learning and flexibility.

3. Methodology
3.1 Design of the Study
A qualitative research design was employed in the current study. According to Creswell (2000), a qualitative research design gives a holistic picture and detailed views of the informants. Therefore, this design was found the most appropriate one to gain deep and comprehensive data for the current study.

3.2 Participants
There were 10 Afghan English majored participants in this study, 3 females and 7 males, who were sampled through the purposive sampling technique from the teachers (n=3) and students (n=7) in the English Department at BIHE. The reason why the participants were sampled through the purposive sampling was to include participants who were information-rich cases, making this technique effective when having limited sources (Patton, 2002). The participants were chosen both from the urban and rural areas as the ones who lived in the city had more access to the internet than those who lived in the villages. This inclusion was to get more inclusive data. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 28 years old. (Table 1 has more details).

Table 1. *The participants' demographic data*

No	Participants (pseudonym)	Gender	Position/cohort
1	Fatema	*Female*	Assistant professor
2	Sara	*Female*	Sophomore
3	Maryam	Female	Sophomore
4	Farhad	*Male*	Assistant professor
5	Khalid	*Male*	Assistant professor
6	Jamshid	Male	Sophomore
7	Ghadir	Male	Junior

8	Tamim	Male	Junior
9	Nasem	Male	Senior
10	Fahim	*Male*	Senior

3.3 Context

BIHE is located in Badghis Province, one of the remote provinces in the western part of Afghanistan. It is one of the affiliated institutes of Herat University, one of Afghanistan's top five public universities. BIHE has four Faculties including the Faculty of Education, Economics, Agriculture, and Environment. Each Faculty has different departments. This study was conducted at the English Department of Education Faculty. This research was immediately implemented once the conventional face-to-face classes started. The aim was to explore the changes, challenges, and opportunities students, particularly the English majors experienced in their learning during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

First of all, the participants' consent was obtained. They were informed about the research process and its purposes. Additionally, they were informed that their participation was optional and that they could stop the research at any time. Then semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants regarding the primary changes that higher education brought to the education systems in the EFL teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 outbreaks and the opportunities and challenges the participants faced due to these changes. All the interviews were conducted in the local language and were recorded for analysis. After that, the data were transcribed and translated into the English language in the data analysis process. Finally, the collected data/ transcripts were read several times for coding and were combined into some categories and themes.

4. Results and discussions

This section covers the results and discussions of the three topics that emerged from that data.
1. changes in the higher education system
2. challenges in the teaching and learning process opportunities

The Changes in the Higher Education System

The results show that e-learning was predominantly used as an alternative to face-to-face instruction in the BIHE. Google Classroom (GC) platform was used for online teaching and learning. Farhad, one of the assistant professors, asserted, "At the very beginning of the shift to online teaching, we used Google Classroom in our online teaching." Teachers stated that they uploaded their materials (including their pre-recorded lessons, PowerPoint slides, and other supporting materials) on GC based on the courses' weekly schedule. The teachers would ask the students to download the materials and upload their homework on the GC. There were some challenges for the learners –which will be discussed in the next section.

In addition, the participants highlighted that later, the MoHE administered HELMS as an online platform to continue online teaching. Maryam, one of the assistant professors, said, "…once the HELMS system was administered by MoHE for online teaching, it replaced Google Classroom." HELMS stands for Higher Education Learning Management System. It is an online platform where all the higher education teachers and learners at public universities from across Afghanistan had their accounts. The accounts were made by the MoHE. Both the teachers and learners were provided with their accounts' names and passwords by the ITC of each respective university. Once the teachers and learners were given their account information, they could activate their accounts, sign in and continue their teaching and learning via HELMS. Farhad said that their institute made it mandatory for all teachers and learners to use this system in their teaching and learning; however, neither the teachers nor the students were familiar with this system. The English Department teachers mentioned that they used Telegram groups as a scaffolding mechanism with which most of the students were more familiar. This shows teachers' agency in using other approaches in the provision of learning opportunities for the students.

Besides the online platforms, some teachers met senior (final year) students individually during office hour to provide them with feedback and comments on their monographs. Farhad said, "...observing the health care precautions, sometimes I met some of my learners, in the university campus, who [students] had to be provided with feedback on their monographs." These changes lead to challenges that altered the learning process during the pandemic.

The Challenges in the Teaching and Learning Process

Since using an online platform as a means of teaching and learning was a new approach for most of the teachers and learners in Afghanistan, the participants of this study reported some challenges they faced in this process. Results showed that the speed of internet connection was one of the extremely challenging issues that constrained the process of learning in online classes. All the participants claimed that the internet connectivity in Badghis Province was so weak. For example, Tamim, one of the students, said, "the internet connectivity in Badghis is extremely low. For example, once when I wanted to send my assignments to my teacher; it took 5 hours till it was sent."

Ghadir, one of the students, found a strategy to be able to upload his files with low-speed internet. He said, "… due to the low speed of the internet, I had to stay up till late at night when the internet got a little fast and then I downloaded the lessons from the online class." Some students used the internet clubs to upload their files; however, this was difficult for female students. For example, Maryam, one of the students, said, " As the internet speed was extremely low, I could not upload my assignments in the class, therefore, I gave my smartphone to one of my brothers to go to an internet club and upload my assignments to the class."

Jamshid, a senior student, lives in a rural area. It was even harder for him to find a decent internet connection. He said, "I need to climb up to high maintains so that my internet gets faster and I could download the lessons." Furthermore, Tamim, another student participant from the rural area, said, "I had to come to the city for downloading the lessons or uploading my assignments because, in the village, the internet connectivity was zero." Although the low internet connection was an obstacle for the learners, they each found their strategy to overcome this challenge depending on their context. The challenges of low internet speed are in line with findings from Sarwari et al. (2022)in Afghanistan. Their findings also revealed that low-speed internet constrained the process of distance learning at universities.

The next challenge learners encountered with the online classes was affordability. All the participants claimed that the cost of the internet services is so expensive, and most of them were not able to afford to activate the internet packages. For instance, Tamim said, "The internet packages are highly expensive. We could not afford it. For example, we needed to pay 450 Afghanis (5 USD) for 5 GB internet and it did not last more than 10 days."The cost of the internet is a considerable challenge for Afghan learners, especially those living in Badghis Province. On the one hand, the price of internet packages in Afghanistan is much more expensive compared with the neighboring countries. On the other hand, mostly, the people in this country, especially, in Badghis Province live under the poverty line. For example, in research from BBC Farsi News (2019), 85% of residents in Badghis province live under the poverty line. Due to the affordability challenge, some of the learners even miss a semester or so. For example, Jamshid stated, "Some of our classmates ignored online learning and preferred to retake the courses as they were not able to afford to activate the internet." This is especially getting harder for the people in Afghanistan since the economic situation is getting worse as a result of the regime change. Even if they have a good internet connection, for some, the challenge stays prevalent because not all can afford to buy smartphones or laptops. Fatema, one of the sophomore students, in this regard, said, "Regardless of the cost of the internet, some of the students even did not have smartphones. On the other hand, they could not afford to buy a smartphone." The problem of affordability with online classes is in line with findings from (Murgatrotd, 2020).

Digital competence was another challenge for both teachers and students while having online classes during the pandemic. The teachers and students were not familiar with the online courses. Both GC and HELMS were new for some teachers. Sara One of the sophomore students, said, "Google Classroom

was one of the most ineffective platforms for us as it needed fast internet and we could not open it; and once it was opened after loading for a while, we did not know where and how to download our lessons." It shows that regardless of the low internet speed, the learners had no familiarity with using GC. On the other hand, it seems that there had not been any training for the students before the online classes. Therefore, using GC had become a big challenge for the learners as they did not know how to access the lesson materials uploaded by their teachers in the GC. Later, however, the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan managed the HELMS system, which was even more challenging. In some universities, using HELMS became a mandate for online classes, therefore, it faced both the teachers and learners with bigger challenges as they were not free to quit this system and continue their lessons via other online platforms if HELMS was ineffective. So Farhad felt more challenged using HELMS: "using HELMS system was even more difficult and complicated than the Google Classroom." In the same regard, Maryam, said, " ..for weeks we missed our classes as no one knew how to sign up for the HELMS system." The challenge of digital competence aligns with findings from other contexts (Mahyoob, 2020) in Saudi Arabia and (Almahasees et al., 2021) in Jordan.

Opportunities
Despite the challenges associated with the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, these classes also offered some opportunities. All the participants pointed out digital learning as one of the primary opportunities of online classes. Hekmat said, "what I like about online learning was that it gets us familiar with the use of the internet."

In the same regard, Tamim said:
Before the online classes I personally, did not understand using online applications. The online classes challenged us to learn how to download something from the online platform or upload something. We got familiar with many applications and many sites. Digital learning via online classes is in line with the findings in (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). The participants acknowledged that during this process they have gotten familiar with using software and tools they were previously unfamiliar with.

The next opportunity of the online classes was convenience in learning. For example, Jamshid said, "We could download our lessons at any time and there was no limitation." Similarly, Tamim said, "Any time that we were free we could access the online classes and use the materials." Similarly, Ghadir said, " During the day, I worked and at night when I was free, I checked what lesson materials were uploaded in the Telegram group."

The other opportunity for online classes was Self-learning. the online classes encouraged autonomous learning. In this regard, Jamshid said, "the online classes pushed us to become self-learners." Likewise, Fatema pointed, out that during the online classes when learners were faced with any problems in their lessons, they typically had to solve the problems by themselves via searching through different sources." This way, the learners were more autonomous and self-directed in their learning process.

In addition, the online classes helped learners to save more time for their learning. All the participants pointed out that time-wise, they were not limited in learning. For example, Hekmat said, "it was very helpful for us in saving time; during face-to-face classrooms, we had to go to university four days a week from 1 PM to 5 PM, however, during the online classes, we had no time limitation." The above results are in line with Afroz et al. (2021) findings. They found that the online classes were safe, convenient, and time-saving during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almahasees et al. (2021) findings in Jordan also revealed that online learning was convenient, and improved, self-learning.

5. Conclusion
This study attempted to find out about the impact of COVID-19 outbreaks at the department level- on EFL teaching and learning. It aimed to explore the primary changes higher education brought to the education system in the EFL teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 outbreaks and the challenges and opportunities created for the participants due to these changes. The findings revealed that e-learning was predominantly used as a replacement for face-to-face learning where different online

platforms were tried in turns. As a result of this change, the EFL learners experienced both challenges and opportunities with the online learning system. The challenges EFL learners encountered were internet connectivity, affordability, and digital competence. The opportunities or advantages of e-learning included digital learning, convenience learning, improving self-learning, and saving time.

The findings of the study suggest that internet costs should be taken into serious consideration by policymakers. The cost of the internet should be decreased for the learners, or if possible, the MoHE of Afghanistan make a protocol with some telecommunication networks where free or low-cost internet is offered for the students as internet affordability was one of the biggest challenges participants encountered with the online learning during COVID-19 outbreaks. Next, it is necessary to create a computer lab with internet accessibility in the universities where students who cannot afford to buy a smartphone/computer or activate internet packages due to financial restrictions can access the online classes and further resources too. Furthermore, the learners should not be restricted with the use of a particular online platform without assessing their familiarity with the platform. Learners should be consulted regarding choosing any online platform and accordingly an online platform should be employed that students are more familiar with. In addition, learners should not be overloaded by the lessons and assignments during such times when they are struggling with various challenges. Teachers should understand the learners' problems and expect them based on their abilities and in the meantime try to motivate the learners when they cannot meet their expectations. Also, teachers should try their best to provide some short video clips presenting the lessons and not only depend on some slide presentation. Furthermore, now that it is the post-COVID-19 era, it is greatly effective to keep the online platforms along with the face-to-face learning and build a blended learning and teaching system where learners are facilitated with the learning both via online and classroom learning, which could be a great achievement in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the policymakers should not forget the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, they should use these challenges as opportunities for getting prepared for any possible pandemic or outbreak in the future.

5.1 Limitations of the Study
Some of the major drawbacks of this study include the limited sample size and the non-random selection of participants. In other words, the results' generalizability is constrained by the participants' non-random selection. To obtain more generalizable data, additional research must be done using a large and random sample size of people.

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