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Distance English Language Learning: The Experiences and Perceptions of Jordanian Students from Rural Areas

Baderaddin Yassin, Omar Al-Smadi, Radzuwan Ab Rashid, Raed Al-Ramahi

Research Article

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Author for correspondence:
Omar Al-Smadi
o.smadi@usm.my
School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstract

Background/purpose. The growth of distance education in English learning has raised special problems, as rural students are accorded fewer opportunities to be effectively exposed to the language. This paper set out to discuss how a group of Jordanian students in rural settings who participated in a web-based English learning experience received it, their impressions, and the outcomes, with particular attention to the advantages and disadvantages.

Materials/methods. A qualitative research design was adopted, with a purposive sample of 60 participants. Semi-structured online interviews were conducted to get in-depth information about learners. Thematic analysis was used to identify the most common patterns and to develop key themes regarding distance learning, technological tools, and learning outcomes.

Results. Four dominant themes were identified: (1) enhanced accessibility and flexibility, (2) communication challenges, (3) technological challenges and (4) loss of motivation because of less interaction. Flexibility, autonomy, and access to various forms of online resources, including VR and gamified applications, were valued by students and supported their reading, writing, and independent learning. Barriers included a lack of speaking time, a lack of a live connection, technical difficulties, and a lack of motivation. These results are consistent with self-regulated learning, social constructivism, and/or experiential learning.

Conclusion. Distance education offers fairness and self-autonomy, but there are weaknesses in interaction and technology that should be addressed through targeted interventions. Complementing and enhancing the synchronous part by offering technical scaffolding, combining the use of immersive technologies, or engaging in further gamified approaches can enhance motivation and improve learners' outcomes. This contributes to the theoretical underdevelopment of distance learning research by considering rural contexts and informing practice for more effective and inclusive online English education.

1. Introduction

There has been a significant shift in education that has propelled distance learning into widespread use (Al Lily et al., 2020). The English language is at the forefront of online education because it is widely spoken worldwide. English does more than enable communication; it brings cultures together and makes it easier to join the global community (Al-Smadi et al., 2020). Thus, being good at English is usually thought to be vital for success and progress in life. More than ever, English language education is in high demand and growing in popularity, particularly among people living in countries where English is not widely spoken. Thanks to distance education, it is now possible to handle the demand for more educational opportunities than ever before (Yikici et al., 2022). Thanks to online platforms, students from remote or neglected regions can now receive the same quality English instruction as others. It is particularly significant in regions where there are few English teachers or where traditional teaching methods cannot be used due to practical or economic constraints. Since many non-native English learners rely on active, practical tasks, distance learning posed unique obstacles for them. Also, remote instruction offered new opportunities for language learning in innovative ways.

If distance education is to be successful, understanding what students want is very important, since they are the primary learners. Their responses offer helpful insights into what they liked and what disappointed them. When students are involved in planning and reviewing programs, teachers can make learning more powerful (Johnson, 2021). Students can point out issues in motivation, how much they enjoy their studies and how simple the platforms are to use that teachers may not notice. They make it possible to understand how well teaching and technology are working and find ways to do things better. This research explores what it is like for Jordanian students in rural areas to learn English solely through distance education. The study aims to provide useful information about online learning, including its benefits, challenges, and its effectiveness for all students. The objective is to help develop a better understanding of how distance education can adapt to the diverse needs of English language learners in a world that is constantly evolving. Accordingly, the following questions guide this research: (1) What do Jordanian rural learners think and experience in terms of online English language education? What challenges and possibilities do they find in this type of learning? What can such insights contribute to the design of more equitable and achieving distance education practices? The proposed study is relevant because it can guide policymakers and practitioners on best practices for creating an inclusive, context-sensitive framework that meets the specific needs of marginalized learners, thereby improving the outcomes of distance English education programs in rural settings.

2. Literature Review

Researchers and educators have focused extensively on how distance education applies to English language learning (Rose et al., 2021). The literature review examines the history of distance education, the problems and advantages of learning English online, changes caused by new technology and the different experiences of various learners. The goal of this review is to examine current research, identify any gaps, and lay the groundwork for understanding this study's accomplishments.

2.1. Historical Development of Distance Education

At the start, distance education was conducted before the internet era. Before, distance education consisted of correspondence courses, where people studied from a distance by receiving materials and assignments by mail. They showed that education could take place anywhere, not only in a classroom and led to the rise of online education (Betts et al., 2021). In the late 20th century, distance education changed dramatically because of the internet and digital technologies. New platforms on the internet made remote learning easier to follow and more engaging. In their study,

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Dhurve et al. (2023) state that interest in online courses has increased significantly over the last 20 years due to the growing acceptance that distance education is genuine and effective. The view of rural Jordanian learners' integration into present-day online English education is placed in the context of this historical development.

2.2. Problems and Benefits of Taking English Courses Through Distance Learning

Studying English virtually creates unique challenges for those learning it. The absence of face-to-face contact is one of the main problems since speaking and listening skills rely on it. Since these characteristics are hard to incorporate into online lessons, classroom-based classes provide students with opportunities for immediate responses, casual conversation, and gestures (Tratnik et al., 2019). Also, online learning could make students feel more alone, as they are removed from in-person classes. Being away from both the classroom and students can make some feel isolated, reducing their motivation to take part in learning (Li, 2022). Being kept isolated is a challenge for language students, as getting used to a new language involves interacting with others.

Problems with technology have a major impact on the success of online learning. Before taking online courses, people need a steady internet connection and suitable devices. Yet, some students lack sufficient resources at home or live in rural areas, which disadvantages their learning (Van Dijk, 2020). Though there are obstacles, distance education still offers students unique opportunities to learn English. The main advantage is the system's flexibility. Students benefit from e-learning by being able to study whenever it's convenient for them and in line with their obligations (Bi et al., 2023). This flexibility is very helpful for adults, people working and those with family duties. Otherwise, these platforms give learners access to numerous resources that help with understanding. Videos, podcasts, and interactive exercises are examples of multimedia that help many types of learners and enhance learning engagement (Bi et al., 2023). Also, because the internet is worldwide, students can interact with foreign students who can teach the language and share their cultures.

Overall, the challenges and advantages described in this section are directly related to the present study, as they provide a glimpse of the most important barriers and opportunities that rural Jordanian learners might face when attending online English classes, which forms the basis for the thematic analysis of their experience.

2.3. Technological Advancements in Online Language Learning

Distance education has changed significantly due to technological advancements. Virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) are emerging technologies showing promise for improving online English language learning (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). Virtual reality enables students to learn languages while interacting in environments that mimic real life. For example, learners can be placed in a restaurant via VR and practice ordering, or they can explore a virtual city and ask for directions (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). Through these realistic exercises, learners practice using the language and build greater confidence in speaking English daily. However, AI can provide students with a personalized learning experience by responding to their individual needs. AI in learning apps can immediately correct students' mistakes in speaking, grammar, and vocabulary (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). AI also keeps an eye on learners' progress and tailors lessons to their main weaknesses, helping them learn more effectively and efficiently.

These technological advances are noteworthy in the context of this research, given their potential to address some of the barriers that learners in rural areas of Jordan face when participating in online English courses, and the directions that can be taken to overcome these barriers using new tools.

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2.4. Pedagogical Approaches in Online English Language Learning

How distance education works for English learners depends on the teaching methods used. Research has shown that engaging and cooperative approaches improve students' interest and academic outcomes (Galoyan et al., 2021). To illustrate, a flipped classroom approach, where students study the lesson outside of class and engage in activities during the class session, is considered successful in online courses by researchers (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017). Using video games-like elements in other subjects is another trend in online language learning that many people use. When gamification is used with points, badges, and leaderboards, it encourages learners and improves their experience and understanding (Galoyan et al., 2021). It has been demonstrated that gamified methods can improve vocabulary, reading comprehension, and overall language skills (Yassin & Abugohar, 2022).

The importance of these pedagogical approaches for addressing motivation-related issues among rural Jordanian learners in online English training is high, as they provide concrete guidance on how an innovative teaching approach can be used to facilitate engagement and mitigate the impact of motivational factors, particularly the lack of intrinsic motivation to study.

3. Methodology

Even though distance education can reach more students, it is necessary to consider the diverse needs and backgrounds of the student population. Adult learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students often face unique problems that call for special solutions (Eden et al., 2024). For example, having flexible hours and using language learned in practical life are valuable to encourage adult learners. Some students with disabilities will need special support, for example the use of screen readers or videos with captions, to join in with online classes. People with fewer financial resources could be helped by initiatives that supply cheap internet and essential devices (Moorefield-Lang, 2019). Additionally, cultural backgrounds can shape students' experiences and approaches to working online. Studies show that how teachers deliver lessons, provide feedback, and communicate with students from various cultural backgrounds may differ (Eden et al., 2024). Being aware of different cultures helps produce welcoming and effective learning in the online world. It points out that including student views can help make online learning more effective and accessible for everybody. While there is a lot of research on distance education, we still have gaps because studies of rural students, low-income students and those with disabilities who have unique difficulties are relatively lacking (Athens, 2018; Dubois et al., 2021). Studying what distant learners go through and how emerging technology shapes their education can guide distance education in meeting all learners' needs worldwide.

3.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design, which is particularly helpful. Qualitative methods provide a detailed view of participants' experiences, beliefs, and thoughts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The method was applied to enable the highly detailed and rich experiences of the participants to be studied and understood. Semi-structured interviews were preferred as the primary data collection method because the study is exploring new ideas. Employing this method allows further analysis of each respondent and flexibility in conversation.

3.2. Participants

The research involved 60 students, selected according to the data-saturation rule. When no new ideas from participants are found, it is taken as a sign that the sample size used in the research is large enough to analyze the topic, a phenomenon called data saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participants in the study were selected using purposive sampling. Participants were to be university students enrolled in online English courses. Speaking of the second requirement, participants had to

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live in rural communities. Such requirements tried to highlight the various needs and expectations of rural students as they learned English. Recruiting students from rural areas enrolled in online English courses was done so we could understand a wide variety of experiences relevant to the study.

3.3. Data Collection

From 10/05/2024 to 13/1/2025, data were gathered for the study. Example interviews were semi-structured to allow the researchers to delve deeper into participants' experiences and obtain specific details. The interviews were held over Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet, based on each person's availability and location. All interviews lasted about 45 to 60 minutes, and each participant agreed to have them recorded. Doing it this way ensured that all collected data could be examined.

3.4. Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis was used to look through the transcripts. Here, the data were coded to identify what happened repeatedly for participants regarding their involvement in distance education. Applying the method of thematic analysis helped examine the data step-by-step and ensure the findings reflected the participants' views.

3.5. Ethical Consideration

Participants agreed to take part after receiving an explanation of the study, its objectives, process, and possible risks and benefits, and they also signed a written consent form before any data was collected.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis showed several significant themes, including the advantages of distance learning, the difficulties and hurdles, the use of technology, and its effects on students' results.

4.1. Perceived Benefits of Distance Education

Most respondents saw many benefits to distance learning. They pointed to several benefits of learning online, such as flexibility, accessibility, and access to many resources. Many people agreed that flexibility was a major advantage of online education. People found it useful to study whenever they could, making it easier to handle other tasks, such as working and caring for their families. For instance, Participant Three points out that: "What matters most to me is that online classes are very flexible. I can choose any time, such as early in the morning or later at night, to study. So, I don't need to give up anything extra at work or at home to get better at English. It is necessary that school is flexible because in rural areas, we may have to take care of responsibilities at home or at the farm". Online classes allow students to study as easily as fitting learning into their lives. Being flexible made things easier for adults and working professionals who usually had a lot going on. Rural communities in Jordan, where access to classes in local schools is less common, find convenience to be very beneficial. It aligns with the underlying idea of education that everyone, regardless of where they live or work, should have equal access to learning (Bi et al., 2023). In addition, it aligns with Zimmerman's (2002) findings on self-regulated learning, which allow students to manage their own learning and take responsibility for their achievements. Online platforms offered more opportunities for people to learn English by removing the barriers posed by traditional classes. Some participants from areas far from the conference stressed how useful it is to learn anywhere. For instance, Participant Thirteen said that, "being located in a remote place, finding English classes was difficult for me. I do not have to go far or relocate for education because of online courses. My earlier career path would have taken me to cities, and it was not something my family could support. I can complete my studies at home without being present at school". This is important for learners who are unable to attend classes due to physical obstacles as well. When barriers to distance learning are removed, it promotes equality in education, which is at the heart of UNESCO's inclusive education in 2021. Besides, having

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access to many types of materials and learning tools, as noted by Bi et al. (2023), helps build the cognitive and social skills needed for effective online learning. Participants mentioned having access to many useful resources. Numerous online tools include videos, podcasts, and interactive exercises to match any learner's needs. As an illustration, Participant Seven explains that, "accessing different types of resources on the internet makes me happy. I enjoy learning because there are videos, quizzes and VR tools to help me. It allows me to learn things more fully and remember them. Some traditional textbooks are hard to find exciting, but I appreciate these online materials a lot because they relate to what I do every day".

Many online resources help learners strengthen their learning in several different ways. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning with diverse, meaningful resources leads to deeper understanding and knowledge development. Besides, a range of resources supports students by taking into account their individual ways of understanding new information, according to Gardner's (1993) theory. These results indicate that distance learning may offer flexible, accessible, and resource-rich learning, in line with principles of self-regulated learning and inclusive education, particularly where physical or geographical access is limited for rural learners.

4.2. Challenges and Barriers

Even with the benefits, distance education posed several difficulties for the participants. These consisted of not being able to meet socially, experiencing technical issues, and struggling with motivation. A main problem pointed out was that students had fewer opportunities to interact verbally with others, which helps them practice their skills. Learners did not have the same instant feedback and casual chats that they usually experience in a traditional classroom. In particular, Participant Eight points out, "Attending class in person helped me get feedback from the teacher quickly and let me talk with other students. Online, things are not as good as they are in person. It is not the same as being able to practice and interact as much. I struggle to tell how far I've improved in pronunciation and intonation sometimes, since I can't inspect it in person or hear it from someone else". A low level of interaction may stop people from developing the ability to use a language in real-life situations. Many studies show that students need opportunities to interact with others to develop their language skills (Gass & Mackey, 2006), so not having interaction in online classes limits the chance to practice and check whether students are correct. It also relates to what Long (1996) stated in his Interaction Hypothesis, which emphasizes the role of interaction in learning a new language. Technology challenges also greatly affected participants during the study. If the network is down, devices are unavailable, or there are technical glitches online, students may lose track of their studies. In particular, Participant Fifteen said, "There have been occasions when my internet connection was so slow that I missed lessons and failed to finish my work on time. It isn't easy because the thing that's bothering me is not up to me, but it keeps getting in the way of my education. Occasionally, I have to visit a friend or a café with stronger internet, and that doesn't always work out well for me either".

Such challenges are experienced most by students with limited access to modern technology. Van Dijk (2020) notes that educational access gaps are largely due to the digital divide. This situation can be solved with the combined efforts of the government, schools, and private companies to improve internet services. It is also necessary to have reliable technical support in place to ensure that students can easily access educational resources, as analyzed by Van Dijk (2020). Staying motivated and disciplined was difficult for most participants. The ability to set your own schedule in online learning requires a lot of self-control, which some found difficult after a while. Participant Two mentioned the challenges they went through. "Having a comfortable place at home can easily cause distractions. Many things around us might keep us from studying, and since classes are not mandatory, it can be hard to stay motivated. From time to time, I notice that I'm not putting enough time and energy into my studies". Because of this challenge, developing students' study habits and

motivation becomes important and requires special support. According to Zimmerman (2002), setting goals, using time wisely, and checking your progress help you remain motivated and succeed in self-directed learning. Moreover, according to Ryan and Deci (2000) and their Self-Determination Theory, motivating people to do well in their studies requires providing them with autonomy, competence and a sense of relatedness. The challenges highlight the importance of systematic communication, stable technical support, and methods for keeping students motivated in accordance with theories of self-regulated learning and Self-Determination Theory.

4.3. Technological Tools and Resources

The participants discussed the technological resources and tools they used during their online English lessons. These pieces of equipment were very helpful for learning and keeping students engaged. Most synchronous classes relied on tools such as Zoom, Blackboard, Webex, and Skype. People liked that they could watch and talk with their teachers and classmates in real time, making everything feel more immediate. In this case, Notice says that Participant Eleven spoke up.

> *"Being involved in live Zoom sessions allows me to relate better with my teacher and classmates. Being with someone online isn't the same as being with them in person, but it is the next best option. I get answers right after asking a question, and the community's presence makes it more interesting".*

Despite the limitations, these tools still worked well at bridging the divide between online and classroom learning. Using these tools allows students to interact simultaneously, which is necessary to maintain the social aspect of online learning (Almufarreh & Arshad, 2023). According to Kreijns et al. (2022), having a social presence increases students' involvement and learning. Many participants liked Duolingo, Lingokids, Rosetta Stone, Mondly, and Babbel as interactive learning platforms. On these platforms, you will find lots of interactive quizzes, exercises and games to enhance learning. For instance, Participant Twenty says that:

> *"I use Duolingo every day, and it's a great way to practice my English. I find the exercises enjoyable, and the app provides incentives and shows my achievements as I go. It doesn't seem like work; rather, it feels like I'm playing a game, so I stick with it easily. They apply game-like techniques to help learners stay interested and motivated, which can be very efficient for learning languages".*

According to Galoyan et al. (2021), adding game features to regular activities encourages users, so gamification is useful in teaching. This is based on Gee's (2003) beliefs, which emphasize the role of games in providing students with experiences to learn from and practice. Some people enrolled in the course were able to practice languages with VR tools. Good VR can make it feel like students are talking to someone in real life, which helps them practice language skills. For example, Participant Seventeen discussed their time in VR.

> *"Training in English with VR is really enjoyable. It feels like I'm in a foreign country, connecting with locals face-to-face. It is very helpful since it allows me to use what I have learned in a real situation. You experience the world's knowledge from the comfort of your own home".*

Tools for virtual reality (VR) help students learn language by placing them in realistic situations and environments. This approach is consistent with Dewey's (1938) view of learning, which holds that we should learn by doing and reflecting on what we do. Using VR, learners can learn how to use language in a real-world setting and gain knowledge about different cultures.

4.4. Impact on Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes from distance education varied among participants. Even though some students made significant progress in select disciplines, others struggled due to the difficulties of learning online. Many students observed that reading and writing had improved significantly as a result of the written tasks in their online courses. For Instance, Participant One said that,

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"My skills in reading and writing have gotten better. Reading and writing a lot through online courses have helped me improve my writing. Additionally, I read both articles and different works of literature, which helps my thinking and vocabulary".

Since reading and writing are key parts of online education, people can practice both skills regularly and get exposure to different types of content. This matches Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1992) which maintains that access to material that is not too difficult is vital for learning a new language. Working with different texts allows students to grow in their reading and writing skills, broaden their language, and become more proficient in using it. Compared to a regular classroom, some people felt their speaking and listening skills did not improve as quickly. Many people pointed out that real interaction and instant results were the biggest issues. As an example, Participant Nine explained,

"While my literacy skills have improved, I am not noticing much progress in speaking and listening. I am missing the practice in speaking and getting instant responses from my teacher".

Because online interactions can feel more formal, they undermine the relaxed, conversational aspect of dialogue. Things like this point out that online language-learning programs should offer more opportunities for communication so that speaking and listening skills can develop in line with the communicative approach to language teaching. Online learning should add more live speaking sessions and instant feedback to address this issue. It also aligns with Swain (2005), who argues that producing language in speech and writing greatly supports language learning. Several participants noted that distance education helped them become more independent and better at learning independently. Learning online asks students to manage their studies independently, which may help them become more independent. For instance, I asked Participant Five, and he explained that,

"Because of studying online, I have learned to handle my time more effectively. I have mastered the skill of setting my own goals and gathering the information I need to achieve them. I did not have self-discipline before, and it will help me in ways other than English".

Being self-driven in this way provides people with a useful tool for learning and personal growth. Learning on one's own is a valuable part of lifelong education because it allows individuals to adapt to different challenges and continually improve their abilities (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023).

According to the study, some factors can be enhanced in distance education for learning English. Improving interaction, providing effective technical support, adding engaging and meaningful activities, supporting students from diverse backgrounds, and addressing motivation are ways to enhance online education. Experts noticed that not interacting face-to-face affected students' ability to learn effective speaking and listening which are important skills. To solve this, teachers can add more live discussions, debates and team projects to their courses. In live sessions, learners get a classroom-like experience, with the option to have quick talks and responses. Meeting in Zoom breakout rooms allows students to work together, encouraging them to feel more involved with one another. Things like virtual study groups and group assignments allow learners to work well together and improve their sense of belonging. You can also conduct virtual office hours to help your students get one-on-one attention and assistance which can improve your relationship with each student. Many participants faced technical difficulties, underscoring the need for robust technical support. Institutions can partner with internet service providers to provide students with cheaper or free internet access, especially in areas where accessing the internet is difficult. Providing laptops or tablets supports equal access to online learning. Teaching students on how to use online platforms with confidence can help them learn more easily. Introducing a special phone line or chat for technical issues makes it easy and fast for students to get support and keeps technical issues from stopping their work.

Educators should add activities that give students hands-on experiences to reflect real-world examples. By using virtual and augmented reality tools, learners can experience the same forms of

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interaction and environment seen in real life for practice. Role-playing games, for instance mock interviews, teach students how to use their language more realistically. If students practice language while completing real-life projects, their language skills can improve significantly. If students are involved and reflect on learning activities, it can help them apply the knowledge they have gained in real, useful ways. Since online learners come from different backgrounds, it is necessary to use inclusive and equitable techniques. With flexible timeframes, students with other commitments have a better chance of succeeding. It is very important that all students, whether they have a disability or not, are given access to learning materials. It means adding subtitles to videos, using accessible audio and visual formats and offering translation for them as well. Building an online community that honors diverse cultures can make learning more enjoyable for everyone, helping students share their lives with one another. Offering counseling or tutorial help to non-traditional students can handle the particular needs they might have.

A good way to address these problems is to build an interactive, helpful online learning environment. If gamification, such as quizzes, leaderboards, and badges, is used, learning becomes more enjoyable and motivating. Giving individual, helpful feedback helps students follow their learning journey and stay motivated. Having clear, regular communication about what is expected, by when, and where to find needed resources can keep students organized and prevent confusion. Multimedia learning, with the help of videos, animations, and interactive exercises, can make lessons more engaging and easier for students to grasp. Properly implementing these recommendations will improve distance learning for those learning English. As a result of these improvements, the online environment supports and includes everyone, which improves their learning experience.

In conclusion, distance education facilitates reading, writing, and self-directed learning, though extra measures are needed to enhance speaking and listening skills. The integration of real-time conversations, collaborative assignments, VR/AR tasks, gamified training, and diverse materials can further enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of online English studies for rural learners.

5. Conclusion

In this study, in-depth knowledge of the experiences of rural Jordanian students who engaged in distance learning in English is derived. The research, conducted using semi-structured interviews, identified major perceptions on the usefulness of technology, the challenges experienced, available technical resources, and the impacts on learning outcomes, which can also be used to develop the literature on the possibilities for rural learners in online studies. The results are consistent with prior studies on the advantages of time-to-work in distance education (Bi et al., 2023; Zimmerman, 2002). Flexibility enabled students to engage in other activities whilst studying, which aligned with the tenets of self-regulated learning, where autonomy and self-guided study were found to increase motivation and performance (Zimmerman, 2002). As captured in the reported posed challenges, such as decreased interactions and technical difficulties, there is nothing new about the importance of social interaction in language acquisition, as expressed by Gass and Mackey (2006) and Long (1996). Moreover, the application of technologies, including VR and AI-facilitated platforms and gamified apps, can be linked to social-constructivist and experiential learning theories (Gege, 2003; Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) and demonstrate that immersive and interactive resources open the door to the cultivation of cognitive and social skills.

By directly connecting rural learners' experiences to these theoretical constructs, the study can serve as evidence of the application of distance learning to context-specific needs and contribute to knowledge of technology-enhanced pedagogy in under-resourced environments. The research results show that distance education can offer inclusive learning, aligning with international learning goals. Results from improvements in reading and writing indicate that online study is an effective means of improving some language skills. Given reduced live interaction and technological

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limitations, it is necessary to implement specific interventions. Such recommendations include introducing more synchronous sessions, collaborating with internet service providers to improve connectivity, adopting VR and AR technology, and gamifying learning activities to make learning more engaging and motivating. Flexible learning modes, readily available materials, and culturally accommodating strategies are key to enabling diverse learners to acquire the target language in a timely manner. Theoretically, this paper shows how four frameworks — self-regulated learning, social-constructivist theory, experiential learning, and the principles of gamification — can be combined in rural online language learning. It foregrounds the dynamics of learner autonomy, technological mediation, and social presence, extending current models of distance education to identify specific challenges and opportunities faced by marginalized learners.

It is suggested that longitudinal research in various contexts (rural and urban settings) is required to judge the long-term effect of English learning online on various language skills. Another line of future research is how emerging technologies and inclusive pedagogical practices can be further integrated to promote accessibility and engagement and drive better learning outcomes. Based on these findings, the design of inclusive, flexible, and contextually oriented distance education programs can be informed to ensure that all enrolled students, including those in rural areas, can achieve their language learning goals without feeling disadvantaged in accessing technological and pedagogical resources.

6. Recommendation and Limitation

Based on the results, it is possible to recommend changes and improvements to enhance online English language learning among rural students. To enhance student-teacher interaction and the social presence component, educational institutions are advised to increase synchronous presence, collaborating with internet providers to address potential instability and low cost in underserved locations. Incorporating emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI)- powered personalized learning tools can provide students with an immersive, customized learning curriculum. Moreover, by adding gamification, adaptive learning content, and culturally responsive deployment, the needs of diverse students can be met and even served as motivators. There should also be timely technical support to address any difficulties students encounter.

Nevertheless, the study suffers from some limitations that cannot be ignored. The study sample comprised a small number of rural Jordanian students, which could limit generalizability. The presented qualitative interview-based design offers in-depth context and could be supplemented by quantitative or mixed-methods research in the future. The effects of certain technology tools on learning outcomes were not systematically measured, and the cross-sectional design captures change at a single point in time rather than over several months. Follow-up research across various settings is advised to understand the long-term impact of online distance learning on language proficiency.

Declarations

Author Contributions. B.Y.: Conceptualization, literature review, and research design, O.S.: Methodology, data collection, and data analysis, R.R.: Writing – original draft preparation and editing, R.A.: Supervision, review, Methods, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Conflict of Interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest

Ethical Approval. The study was carried out in accordance with the principles of research ethics involving human participants. The Jordan University approved this study of with reference number

[66-5024]. All participants consented to participate in the study with full awareness, and their responses were protected by privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Data Availability Statement. The information that contributed to the results of the present study can be obtained by the corresponding author when a fair request is made.

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About the Contributor(s)

Baderaddin Yaasin, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction/English as a Second Language at Yarmouk University, Jordan. His main research interests include Curriculum and Instruction, English as a second language, Applied linguistics, Teaching with technology and Translation. He has published extensively in leading international journals and also authored chapters on education, English as a second language and Applied linguistics.
Email: bader.yassin@yu.edu.jo
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7235-3014

Omar Al-Smadi, PhD, is a faculty member at Universiti Sains Malaysia. His research focuses on English for Specific Purposes, teacher talk, and applied linguistics. He has published extensively in leading international journals and also authored chapters on education, and Applied linguistics.
Email: o.smadi@usm.my

Radzuwan Ab Rashid, PhD, is a faculty member at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia. His research interests include educational technology, online learning, applied linguistics, and instructional design. He has published extensively in leading international journals and also authored books and chapters on education, English as a second language and Applied linguistics.
Email: radzuwanrashid@unisza.edu.my

Raed Al-Ramahi, PhD, is a faculty member at The University of Jordan. His research focuses on English language teaching, curriculum development, and distance education.
Email: r.ramahi@ju.edu.jo