

# Teaching Translation Using E- Learning During The Time Of COVID-19 Pandemic: Yemeni Universities as A Case in Point

**Ahmed Mohammed Ahmed Moneus<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Sana'a, Sana'a, 0967, YEMEN

\*Corresponding Author Designation

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**Abstract** : This paper sheds light on using open learning or distance learning in teaching translation during the crisis in Yemen. The paper aims to identify the role of electronic learning in teaching translation in Yemen during crisis. This paper discusses several successful initiatives in using E- learning/ open learning in Yemen. Two of Yemen's most prestigious universities were nominated to be examined. The public University of Sana'a and the private University of Science and Technology are both located in Sana'a. Ten professors of translation volunteered to participate in the semi structure interview. The findings show that open learning provide a new way to teaching translation during crisis, student would be able to learn and study translation in easy way, despite the problems that teachers experience, such as the Yemeni network's instability and a lack of proper equipment for high-tech e-learning. Recommendation was presented towards more focusing on using open learning in teaching translation.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Virtual Classes, E- Learning, Open Learning, Translation Program, Education Process

## 1. Introduction

With the sudden closure of universities and institutes, the flame of burning science was almost extinguished considering a global event that swept the world and shook all parts and regions of the globe. Talukder, Nur, and Islam (2021) COVID-19 practically paralyzed the entire world, including political, social, and educational situations, with its spawning outbreak. What happened during the last period of accelerating repercussions and a sudden halt in the movement of education in universities, institutes and scientific forums has paralyzed the movement of formal education and led to the closure of more than 80% of its universities and educational institutions. The world has become helpless in the face of this disease pandemic that has ravaged all political, educational and economic circles. Therefore, it was necessary for educational and academic bodies to seek educational alternatives to fill these gaps and work on the continuation of the movement of education and the provision of incubators of science and knowledge. The world begins used this learning method at least 160 years old. As Schlosser &

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\*Corresponding author: [a.moneus@ust.edu](mailto:a.moneus@ust.edu)

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Simonson, (2006) mentioned that advertisement in a Swedish newspaper in 1833 touted the opportunity to study “ composition through the medium of the post.

From this point, most of the world’s universities and educational incubators have moved to the electronic education strategy, which was used in narrow ranges by teaching some programs in the so-called open education. According to the “Scientific American” website stated, quoting UNESCO, that approximately 500 million students around the world are threatened with suspension of study. And virtual education programs are a lifeline in the face of the COVID-19 wave (Zayed, 2020). The countries of the world are experienced hard times in the face of the Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic, which has left more than 443,000 deaths all over the world, It has caused severe damage to the global economy, as a result of the economic consequences accompanying the outbreak of this epidemic (Center for Communication and Financial Knowledge, 2020, p. 3).

The site also reported that just as the new epidemic of Corona "Covid 19" invaded the barriers of time and place, the calls for "distance learning" - which accompanied the spread of the virus - came to sweep the barriers of space and time. The pandemic has cast a shadow over a wide sector of formal education, which in turn has stopped completely, leaving a large space for virtual education to be the optimal and appropriate alternative considering.

Therefore, universities, institutes and educational incubators had to adopt this technology in teaching and educating students in order to complete the teaching courses. As well as to harmonize the academic climate and link the student with the teacher and the curriculum according to an atmosphere approaching regular education. Abdelsalam M. Maatuk et al.(2021) E-learning is playing an increasingly important part in today's educational environment, as it is transforming the entire educational system and becoming one of the most popular topics among academics. Therefore, it is find that there are several educational platforms, and let's take the Zoom platform, for example, which previously had 10 million subscribers, so the number of subscribers jumped to more than 200 million people in March 2002. With the escalation of the spread of the Corona virus (COVID-19), many educational institutions and companies directly adopted the “Working from Home” policy. Thus, the number of subscribers used the virtual communication system and video meetings were increased.

The Zoom platform and its counterparts from electronic platforms, video communication services and virtual halls represented a lifeline for these institutions and universities. It has facilitated the electronic communication service and quick access to students and trainees by downloading programs and lectures through virtual classes and through video applications. These platforms have made it easier for users to quickly access the sources of that information, either by obtaining it directly or by recording and referencing it later.

The social distancing measures imposed by the pandemic and implemented by some governments in the context of combating the Covid-19 pandemic have imposed a fundamental shift in the processes of communication between individuals, institutions and sectors. Many global institutions choose the e-platforms as an alternative system such as, the Security Council held its meeting via video conference, as well as most meetings of the United Nations, the European Union and international organizations in various countries of the world.

Therefore, Eric Yuan, founder and CEO of the Zoom platform, says in a statement about the company’s success, ongoing global coronavirus pandemic crisis “led to a greater demand for communication and collaboration visually, with the participation of several people.” He added, “Different uses increased rapidly with the inclusion of Zoom in individuals’ work, education and personal lives.

According to the Al-Jazeera news website, "The use of the Internet in the educational process is not born today, but dates to before 2000. Most universities today use the so-called "Learning Management Systems" (Al-Khatib, 2020). In light of the "Corona crisis" "The majority of educational institutions have turned to e-learning as a more appropriate alternative to ensure the continuity of the educational process. The use of online video chat applications such as Zoom, Google, Meeting, WebXMate and others has increased significantly. According to techcrunch, the downloads of these programs reached 62 million times during the period between 14-21 March 2020, that is, with the start of movement bans in many countries. The use of many applications and educational programs has doubled, Such as Google's educational portfolio, "Office 365", "Apple" applications, assessment service sites, and interactive activities ("Distance education: the problem and the solution," 2020).

As well, Downloads of iOS and Google educational programs increased by 45% in a week, and the World Bank reported in a related context that approximately 1.6 billion children and young people have dropped out of education because of the Corona pandemic in approximately 161 countries around the world, meaning that approximately 80% of students enrolled in schools. They have completely stopped coming to school. A UNESCO report also stated that most countries of the world have worked to close many universities and educational institutions to mitigate the effects of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, which in turn led to depriving approximately 60% of students of their right to education, especially in vulnerable countries with infrastructure. Weak infrastructure that cannot meet the needs of e-learning, which requires modern technological devices, equipment, and software.

Distance education represented a new window that greatly contributed to alleviating the suffering of students, teachers, and trainees. It also facilitated the possibility of communication and learning through virtual meetings equivalent to the number of regular hours in universities and training institutions. Rather, it provided the opportunity for many professors, specialists, and experts to meet with students, discuss their educational assignments, review lessons and homework. On the other hand, it also provided the opportunity for students to meet many experts and specialists, which were difficult to reach through virtual education. Also, some Arab and foreign universities have worked to provide free lectures open to all students around the world, which in turn enabled many students of science and knowledge and researchers to participate and benefit from the huge amount of available e-learning.

As a result, during the Covid-19 period, this study provided light on the use of e-learning in teaching translation courses. This subject has grabbed the researcher's attention as a new trend in teaching translation.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This research employs qualitative methods in the form of a semistructured interview with ten Yemeni translation academics.

### **2.1 Methods**

This paper presents a preview of previous experiments that used by Yemeni Universities during corona virus covid (19) plight in 2019 – 2020 academic years. An online interview was used to collect data from Translation Departments. The paper selected One Public University "University of Sana'a" and One Privat University "University of Science and Technology."

### **2.2 Instrments**

The easiest technique to elicit information was through an interview. Several Translation professors were selected randomly and asking to participate in interview online to answer the questions "Could you please tell us about experience of the translation department in using e-learning in teaching translation courses during the Corona pandemic? Therefore, 10 Translation Professors voluntarily asked to take part in the interview.

### 3. Literature Review

Almahasees, Z. and Qassem, M. (2021) address using online platforms in teaching translation. The paper aimed to identify the perception of translation instructors in teaching translation courses online during Covid-19. A questionnaire used to explore the strategies and challenges of teaching and assessing students' performance. The analysis revealed instructors' reliance on Zoom and Microsoft Teams in offering virtual classes and WhatsApp in communication with students outside the class. The findings shows that online learning has relative effectiveness, but it is not much as formal education, also students uncomfortable with using technology and they encounter difficulties in adopting on the network.

Al-Absi et al., (2017) probed the e-learning used in Yemeni universities. The article presents the results of questionnaire research of the student's readiness for e-learning in Yemeni universities. A survey conducted with 230 students at Sana University and at the Technology and Science University of Yemen. The paper questions were What is the students' evaluation of the infrastructure (computer labs - the Internet - the library) in the faculties of Yemeni universities? and does the student have the necessary capacities for the use of information technology. The findings indicated that the application of Information technology in higher education in Arab countries, and especially in Yemen, should not be based on technical decision but on strategic planning as a national choice to improve higher education so it can meet the economic and social development needs.

Anthony Pym (2001) examined using E- learning in the training of translators. It suggested strategies were discussed in the light of input from an online symposium on this topic, and on the basis of experience with e-learning programs at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Spain to the many practical problems associated with e-learning include student distress, declining motivation, heterogeneous learning needs, and high resource investment.

Hubscher-Davidson & Devaux, (2021) probed online teaching and learning during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Research in the field of online and distance, discussing the learning resources and presenting some fruitful research areas that could provide new directions for T&I pedagogy and improve students' remote learning experiences in the future. They reached out that online learning could cover teaching translation and interpreting and teaching in virtual environments is a valid and important area of research which has been neglected for far too long.

Noting that the above studies have dealt with the teaching of translation using e-learning and distance education in several countries from other dimensions and did not address the Yemeni context. The current paper will address the use of technology, electronic platforms, and virtual classrooms by Yemeni universities in enhancing students' understanding of translation courses.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of interview questions, the following results and discussion are presented.

#### 3.1 Results

The findings of the paper based upon the information gathered of online interview that open learning in Yemen represented a new window that provides a great contribution to alleviating the suffering of students, teachers, and trainees, and facilitated the possibility of communication and learning via virtual meetings and classes during the pandemic. Most of Yemeni University is restored to open learning as a good choice instead of teachers and university premises. Usually, this kind of learning saves most of universities, also open the wide door for a name of students to have a great opportunity to communicate across the world. These experiments could be succeed If Yemeni Universities development high speed network and held many courses in using technology in teaching translation, then students could manage weakness in using technology and could rise their performance.

### 3.2 Discussions

#### Translation Departments' Experience with E-Learning:

Department of translation, University of Science and Technology, they reported that they forced to turn into e-learning, since approximately 85% of the courses had not yet been taken when the Ministry issued the closure resolution, so they had to complete the actual number of hours for each subject. Therefore, the students' emails were collected, and they were introduced to the new electronic system and how to use it. After that, the meetings were held via Google Meeting and Zoom. Several virtual lectures were carried out in electronic translation and scientific research skills. Students received assignments and homework's via Google Meeting. It faced some difficulties and obstacles that some students did not have technology skills and lack of experience in dealing with electronic platforms, as well as technical issues as poorness of the Internet. There was a tendency from the university to adopt e-learning to educate teachers and hold a course on how to use e-learning in teaching curricula. In this regard, the Ministry of Higher Education And scientific research has visited the Department of translation, they are praised our methods in using e- learning in teaching translation courses.

Department of Translation, University of Sana'a, stated that pandemic forced them to quickly take procedures and turning from the formal learning to electronic learning to avoid the shortcomings in providing lectures to students and based on the directives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, urgent need to use e-learning as a temporary alternative by using Google Meeting application. The Translation Department held a meeting that included all department members and take the necessary steps about the possibility of using e-learning in teaching students remotely. Accordingly, each lecturer is committed to communicating with his students via the Google meeting platform, holding virtual lectures, and discussing lessons and homework during the academic year 2020-2021. Not just that, Department of Translation, Faculty of Languages, University of Sana'a, Yemen in association with, Department of Linguistics, University of Kerala, Kerala, India and The School of Language and Literature, Farook College (Autonomous), Kerala, India held Three-Day International Conference on 5Ts "Translation Theory, Tools, Techniques, and Tactics." They hosting many senior translation professors around the world. A conference book was issued with an international number that includes all the research presented at the conference.

#### Benefits of Using E-Learning in Translation Teaching:

The department's experience was enjoyable, appropriate and successful, and that experiment can be applied if the university adopts it.

One professor reported

*I use e- learning with MA students because I think they are more aware of e-learning benefits and had experience I know that not all students cope with high technology but most of them could have. I used zoom application I found it useful, user-friendly and easy to use by students. In general, I think It was good and students in general enjoyed zoom teaching.*

#### Smooth learning with Good quality:

Another professor added

*I think it is good to use e – learning under some conditions that ensure quality and smooth learning with competent equipment's and strong networks. I recommend to use e – learning with small groups that all students could participate and share their information.*

Another added

*It was a new and hard way of teaching translation but it ensure good output quality . We used Google classroom to post and upload lessons whether audio , video and pdf. Assignments were given to students in pdf form. Teachers had to record lessons by using various programs such as PowerPoint and Mobizin etc.*

Because the resources are accessible from anywhere and at any time, this is an efficient method of offering translation lessons. Students can participate in group conversations and personal communications with peers from all over the world, and the study materials can be viewed an endless number of times. One of the most attractive aspects of e-learning is its time and location flexibility. Short modules are typically used to deliver learning content. It is well known that e-learning saves time and money.

Disadvantages of e-learning in translation teaching:

Instability of internet network.

Yemen's network has one of the worst internet speeds in the world. One professor stated it was not effective.

*The students didn't take it seriously, and it was almost difficult and sometimes impossible due to poor network.*

Another added

*some students didn't have access to the internet because they went to stay in the countryside. However, the only possible thing that I could do was to identify some pages or topics for them to read. Then I gave them several questions to answer. I also asked them to translate some texts. Therefore, they had to submit their assignments via WhatsApp or email to be marked.*

Another reported,

*we held a session on Zoom with 4th level students to discuss the progress they made in writing their graduation research. Yet not all the students were able to join it for the reasons mentioned above. Also, there were a lot of network interruptions.*

He added

*there is some challenges and problems I think this also frequent with other teachers I mean the internet connection, some students could not access to network where they live, some don't have the suitable devices, the internet cut off while we are practicing, personally I could not use internet in my home so I have to look for the better place where the wireless is strong signals it is tough and hard to catch.*

Another Senior professor pointed out some disadvantages of using e- learning based on his experience in teaching translation during the pandemic;

*students don't have opportunity to be engaged in actual translation/ interpretation interaction. Poor connection of internet gets things worse especially those who live in the suburbs. Also, translation lab is not utilized and thus teachers and students are using their own techniques. Students may delay their assignments due to several reasons communication between students and their teachers is limited. Most of students' feedback is done via cut and paste process. Lack of motivation. E-learning on teaching translation focuses on knowledge rather than practice.*

Another stated that

*we did not used a lot with undergraduate students, because I taught interpretation courses that seem quite difficult to use e- learning with interpreting practice and students really do not ready for this. So, I just sent them some practice materials and they request to record interpreting performance and send it to me mostly whats up the best choice for that. If we call this way e – learning that could be a part of it.*

Another added

*It is really annoying to have different cuts in one session the same happen for many teachers and students. I think the technical problems is the most hindrances that face both teachers and students. Also, some of students do not able to attend all the online sessions, so the reflection for whom that could attend all session are good.*

Teachers encountered some challenges when employing e-learning in teaching. First, it depends on the internet and students can't get access to the internet easily, therefore, many students were not able to get the recorded classes. Also, in Yemen, Internet cost money and some students can't afford to use the internet. Not many students could utilize electronic programs that are used for study. They had not any knowledge or background for example, Google classroom; they even couldn't download the lessons. Moreover, some teachers couldn't utilize electronic programs such as zoom and Google classroom. There was no interaction between the teacher and students. Teaching translation courses are preferably to be taught in class which need labs, authentic materials and training sessions. Thus, students had difficulties to understand and comprehend some audios and videos because the sound was not always clear, especially the language of teaching is English, and some students can't comprehend if the teacher is speaking fast.

From the discussion above, noting that E- learning filled partially the gap in teaching translation during the pandemic and many subjects were covered and completed but noting also that most of students have not a capacity to cope with technology and also the network in some areas is so poor and cost high money that cause a lot of problems in communicating with students and limited access to internet services.

## **5. Conclusion**

To sum up, the pandemic has allowed e-learning or the so-called open or virtual education to jump to the forefront of events and impose its presence as an important, decisive, and necessary factor in the process of integrating it with formal education. I believe that the time has come to allow distance education to be an internationally recognized education and a basic system that works with its regular counterpart in laying the foundations of modern education. Rather, it is time to take advantage of technology and its programs in adapting and facilitating the education process and saving a lot of effort and money in order to develop the education movement, which is witnessing a steady and remarkable acceleration in recent times. The previous days during the pandemic have proven that there is an urgent need for a sophisticated modern education that is stable in the face of circumstances and storms. Finally, the Corona crisis has forced many educational and training sectors to adopt virtual education, which combined the spatial and temporal dimension and was the best option and alternative to communicate with millions of students around the world. This paper recommends English and translation departments to use open learning in teaching translation in line with formal education to enrich and develop students' learning strategies.

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