

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS LEARNING EAP COURSES DURING EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING: INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

INNA SMIRNOV-OKANIN

Kaye Academic College, Israel
aoknin@gmail.com

ROMAN MICHAELAN

Shamoon College of Engineering, Israel
romanmi@sce.ac.il

SONIA MUNTEANU

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania
soniacarmenmunteanu@gmail.com

SANDA PĂDURETU

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania
sandapaduretu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of the spring 2020 semester, many high education institutions were forced to move from face-to-face (FTF) teaching to remote instruction. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' attitudes and perceptions towards their learning of English for academic purposes mandatory courses and their engagement in learning these courses in comparison to FTF learning. The subjects of the research consisted of 712 students from two engineering higher education institutions (one from Romania and one from Israel) and one general higher education institution from Israel. Data were collected using a 5-point Likert-type survey. The results indicated that students had a positive attitude towards the remote learning of English and perceived it as having a positive effect on their learning experience and engagement. The results of the research can help educators in terms of adopting appropriate decisions regarding online teaching as a routine mode of learning (not in the emergency) and to make appropriate modifications and adaptations to the EAP courses. Thus, a better understanding of how this transition impacts students' attitudes toward learning could have important implications for instructional design, curriculum development, and teacher training.

Key words: emergency remote teaching (ERT), attitudes, engagement

1. Introduction

There has been a substantial worldwide change in the role of the English language in a wide variety of fields that are intertwined with the fabric of modern society over the previous decade. The language has become entrenched in various terrains of the society and is deemed as a global lingua franca owing to globalization, which has been the main driving force behind the shift in its status (Qin and Neimann 2017). Amidst the most vivid demonstrations of the consistent, accelerating shift is the hegemony of English in the arena of higher education of non-English speaking countries (NESC). Its predominance across varied academic landscapes manifests itself, *inter alia*, in it being a primary language of academic publications, technology and science (Abello-Contesse et al. 2013). Among other things, these winds of change have made an indelible imprint on English itself and have created a strong incentive for the emergence of different fields related to teaching of the language, such, as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which by itself is considered to be a part of a greater field of applied linguistics, i.e. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Charles and Pecorari 2015).

Given the scope of the present research revolving around some aspects pertaining to EAP courses delivered within a number of higher education institutions (HEI) in Israel and Romania, it is of importance to provide some insights into the term EAP. One of the definitions of the term is the one of Hyland (2006:1), who views it as teaching the language with the view of "assisting learners' study or research in that language". Basturkmen (2021) has recently added another noteworthy explanation of the term to the scholarly endeavor to define and contextualize EAP by proposing a definition which takes into account viewpoints of various stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, researchers and education providers:

EAP is a theoretically and empirically based field of inquiry that aims to identify the linguistic features of academic English and the forms and patterning of English academic texts and talk, to understand how academic English can be taught and how it is acquired, in both instructed and naturalistic, disciplinary contexts, including English medium instruction. (p.14).

The author's broader definition acknowledges the complex theoretical and practical aspects of EAP that have evolved and been researched over the past decades when the teaching of English for specific purposes, included as EAP here, has grown under the influence of social and economic pressure factors such as globalization and internationalization of higher education. One such factor, the COVID-19 pandemic, has in recent times changed the traditional EAP paradigm, from teaching and learning modes to learner needs and research interests.

2. Literature Review

Deeply rooted as they are, the aforementioned aspects and issues fade into the background in light of the recent, discernible, rapidly growing trend from traditional face-to-face to online teaching and learning that has emerged as a result of COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions. The imposition of the restrictions on varied educational landscapes can never be overemphasized as it has provided a fresh impetus for the massive proliferation of diverse digital platforms utilized by the stakeholders with a view to identifying the most effective mechanisms for acquiring and conveying various educational material. That being said, the across-the-board shift towards virtual learning reality has served as a major catalyst for a range of essential challenges requiring durable and practical solutions on the part of decision-making bodies. The dire need for the solutions emanates from the fact that the new reality has become the backbone of the technology-enhanced, learning environment.

In this respect, it is worthy of note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many colleges and universities moved from FTF classroom instruction to remote instruction. Having no time for preparation, teachers had to rapidly modify their courses, move them online, and deliver them synchronously. The global spread of COVID-19 has presented numerous challenges to educational institutions throughout the world. It is vital to seize this moment to learn as much as possible about the effects that this crisis has had on teaching, learning, and other aspects of education in order to be prepared for the future. The current study has endeavored to take one small step in that direction and aims to evaluate the experience, attitudes and engagement of undergraduate students studying mandatory English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses during the pandemic.

The outbreak of COVID-19 coronavirus forced educational institutions to suspend in-person teaching and learning and instead adopt emergency remote teaching (ERT), defined as "a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances" (Hodges et al. 2020). The effectiveness of remote/online and distance learning in general has been investigated by a host of researchers. Online instruction differs in fundamental ways from ERT, mostly with respect to what ERT lacks. The granular level planning and multiple, time-proven, design options which online instruction displays in most educational settings (Means, Bakia and Murphy 2014), whether in secondary or higher education, were impossible to implement when institutions had to move all teaching and learning online due to the COVID-19 related health crisis. The ERT scenario had neither the time nor the means to compete in quality and effectiveness with established online education; therefore, "its objective was not necessarily to recreate the established educational eco-system as articulated in the curricula and syllabi of different programs, but rather to provide temporary access to instruction" (Munteanu 2021:210).

Studies done on the perceptions towards remote learning in general are numerous, especially those conducted on teacher and student perceptions towards technology in learning. Smith (2013), for example, asserts the importance of using technology in the educational process by making education more enjoyable and attractive, and, as a result, students become more motivated to take advantage of all the utilities of virtual classes and their level of confidence starts to increase. What is noticeable, however, is that studies done on student views and engagement in EFL remote classes were limited in number. Additionally, it is worth emphasizing that while the importance of perceptions and motivation to language learning is well documented, little is known about student views and engagement regarding remote language learning during times of crisis.

Since the current research focuses on student perceptions towards learning English and their engagement in remote learning, it is crucial to define what we mean by "perceptions / views" and "engagement". Kim, Chun and Song (2009) define attitude towards a certain behavior as "an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior" Kim et al. (2009:64). In other words, they relate to the students' judgment of whether learning English is good or bad and, as a result, a student behaves in a certain way towards English lessons held online. Affizal and Sahak (2009) define the term attitude "as a subjective or mental preparation for action. It defines outward and visible postures and human beliefs. Attitudes determine what each individual will see, hear, think and do" (Affizal and Sahak 2009:59). This definition involves the qualities that motivate students to react favorably or unfavorably towards online English lessons. Student attitudes during the implementation of online learning have an impact on student activeness during the learning process (Nurani and Widiati, 2021).

As to engagement, it is deemed as a multifaceted concept that was examined under different dimensions in the literature. A noticeable number of studies have been dedicated to student engagement in online learning environments. This type of engagement is linked to several important issues in higher education, such as participation in educational activities, learning outcomes, and student achievement. In this regard, Marks (2000), Finn and Zimmer (2013), Skinner and Pitzer (2013), Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003), for instance, discuss the academic engagement of students in terms of behavioral engagement (i.e., effort, persistence, instrumental help-seeking), cognitive engagement (i.e., strategy use, metacognition), and motivational engagement (i.e., interest, value, affect). Bearing this in mind, due attention needs also to be paid to other definitions of the concept. Chakraborty (2014), for example, defines the concept of online engagement with behavioral, collaborative, emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions. An additional definition of student engagement revolves around assigning a high weight to "students' willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process" (Bomia et al. 1997: 294).

Coming from this angle, for language learning, collaboration, interaction and active participation are expected behaviors from any learner-centered and

engagement-fostering approach. Consequently, learning activities and strategies need to be interactive, placing an emphasis on participation and collaboration, regardless of the mode of learning environment. Also of importance is that the activities and strategies need to avoid triggering attitudes and behaviors that would transform students into passive observers of the teaching process. Engaged learning would thus mean that students interact with the content and activities presented to them, interact with each other during the learning process, collaborate to solve tasks and seek means and resources to achieve their learning goals. In this latter aspect, we adopt Conrad and Donaldson (2004) view that engaged learning is also a strategic approach which includes interaction and collaboration, as well as "exploring appropriate resources to answer meaningful questions" (Conrad and Donaldson 2004 : 8).

The remote emergency online learning mode in which EAP had to operate during the pandemic in the HEI involved in the present research, raised the question of whether these features of engagement or engaged learning were actually still present in the learning process. The statements in the questionnaire designed for the research reflect the behavioral, attitudinal and cognitive dimensions of engagement as described in the literature relevant for language learning. They probe students' willingness to collaborate with peers for online tasks, and to engage in a variety of tasks (e.g., reading, speaking, presenting). The statements are intended to reveal whether students made use of a variety of resources (such as online apps and tools) to tackle learning tasks and whether students self-evaluated their success in using them. The questions also enquired about attitudes and emotional perception of the learning process, and thus, commitment to continuing learning EAP in an online mode.

In the light of the above, it is worth mentioning studies describing student self-reported learning gains, improved social skills, and greater engagement in the learning process (Hu and Kuh 2001; Kuh and Hu 2001; Kuh and Vesper 2001), as well as research conducted by Chen, Lambert, and Guidy (2010) that further explored the effects of student engagement based upon the items on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) instrument (2008). As students are expected to work more collaboratively with classmates, student perception of their engagement in their learning and participation in courses increases (Duderstadt, Atkins, and Houweling 2002; Thurmond and Wambach 2004). In general, teachers want students to engage deeply in study activities because students' dedication and effort have a positive effect on learning success and achievement (Linnenbrink and Pintrich 2003; Christenson et al., 2013; Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Prince (2004) summarizes research on student engagement and describes near consensus that student engagement is associated with positive learning outcomes. The author further cites several meta-studies to show that collaborative learning activities, compared to individual assignments, improved academic performance. In their research, Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006) refer to the general agreement that student engagement is associated with improved learning. Harper

and Quaye (2009) suggest a connection between student engagement and academic success, explaining that students who are actively engaged in educationally purposeful activities inside and outside the classroom show higher retention and higher graduation rates.

As can be seen from the literature review provided above, student academic engagement depends on a variety of factors that are related to personal learner characteristics, the teacher, the teaching methodology, peers, and other features in the learning environment. As HEI moved online in response to COVID-19, student engagement has been identified as a challenge (Farooq et al. 2020; Nickerson and Shea 2020).

Over the past few months in particular, researchers have started investigating online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Adnan and Anwar, 2020; Agarwal and Kaushik, 2020; Basilaia et al. 2020; Bao 2020; Demuyakor 2020; Murphy 2020; Naciri, Baba, Achbani and Kharbach 2020; Toquero 2020). Few studies, however, have explored the role of transitioning to ERT and its impact on future EAP provision. This study expanded upon the existing literature about online learning and the variables that influence student satisfaction and perceived learning. More specifically, we set out to investigate the students' attitudes and perceptions to the new teaching and learning paradigm by looking into some aspects of engagement and interaction in the online classroom.

3. Research Approach and Methodology

3.1 Research context

In view of the aforementioned issues pertinent to the process of embracing distance learning and teaching, the main thrust of the present research is geared towards identifying students' perceptions and attitudes on key challenges associated with online teaching and learning of EAP in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 pandemic. Another valuable facet of the paper centers upon ascertaining the impact of this new reality, namely its degree and nature, on learner perception with regard to this rapidly evolving field. In addition, the research revolves around various aspects linked to a host of hurdles hindering the acquisition of knowledge in online learning. Finally, one of the main drivers of the research is to discern meaningful techniques used by the stakeholders with a view to bypassing potential obstacles on the path leading to effective delivery and absorption of a range of academic EAP contents. Seeking to find convergence points, the research investigated these aspects in three different educational and institutional contexts from Israel and Romania. A short description of how English for (specific) Academic Purposes is approached in the target institutions is given below.

3.1.1. EAP Courses at Shmoon College of Engineering (SCE)

SCE is deemed as the largest engineering college in Israel that consists of the following departments offering various undergraduate programs of study: Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Architecture, Visual Communication, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Software Engineering, Industrial Engineering and Management, Chemical Engineering. In addition, the last three departments also offer master's degree programs. As regards EAP courses, there are four different levels (Pre-Basic, Basic, Advanced A, Advanced B) that are mandatory for students of Israeli HEI to pass to be eligible for exemption. It is worth mentioning, however, that prior to embarking upon the courses, the learners are supposed to take the English proficiency test called Amiram, in order to be sorted into one of the levels. The levels vary, inter alia, in the number prescribed for learners' weekly class hours over the course of a semester. Those who are assigned to higher levels are required to study fewer hours in comparison with the learners who registered for lower levels. With respect to the content and skills of EAP courses taught at SCE, these differ according to the level and consist of a variety of assignments designed to enhance students' academic English language proficiency within a wide range of scientific and technical domains.

3.1.2. EAP Courses at Sapir Academic College

Sapir Academic College is the largest public college in Israel. Over 8000 students are currently enrolled in a wide variety of departments (Software Systems & Computer Science, Technological Marketing, Industrial Management and Control, Logistics and Operations, Law, Economics & Accountancy, Human Resources Management, Administration and Public Policy, Humanities and Social Sciences, Social Work, Cinema and TV art, Communications, Cultural students, etc.) in undergraduate and graduate programs. EAP courses are aimed at providing the tools and knowledge for students to manage their academic studies in the field of their specialization and to communicate effectively in English. There are four levels of EAP courses (Pre-Basic, Basic, Advanced A, Advanced B). After successfully passing the last level (Advanced B), students are qualified for an exemption. The levels differ in the number of hours for each level (lower levels are provided with more hours, while higher levels- with fewer hours) and the level of learning materials and student learning outcomes. All the levels cover all the language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Assessment is a combination of in-class quizzes and tests, homework assignments and in-class presentations. All the EAP courses were usually taught in a face-to-face manner on Campus, with some blended learning components in the lower-level courses mostly.

3.1.3. EAP Courses at the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca (TUCN), Romania

The TUCN is an engineering and sciences university providing courses on the Bologna three cycles: Bachelor (four-year programs and some three-year programs), Master (two-year programs) and PhD (three-year programs). Language courses are mandatory in the undergraduate and Master's degree programs and last between one and six semesters, depending on school and specialization. The approach is one that focuses on Languages for Specific Purposes, with mixed-abilities classes. English is the main foreign language taught and English for (General) Academic Purposes (Hyland, 2016) is usually included in the syllabus of courses for the second year of studies (semesters three and/or four and above) in Bachelor's degree programs and for the first year of studies (semester one or two) for Master degree programs. With respect to content taught, there is variation among programs and courses. Some syllabuses only partially map on what is generally considered language for academic purposes (e.g., formal vs informal, disciplinary genres, etc.), others are fully focused on providing English for study and research. Classes vary in the number of students and mode of teaching. Before the pandemic, TUCN provided only face-to-face education for undergraduate and postgraduate studies, with little or no blended learning components. Some of the classes are called 'seminars' and are for a variable number of between 25 and 35 mixed-abilities students in one class. Interactive activities, learner-centered teaching and group/pair tasks are mostly employed. Assessment is a combination of class-work assessment, homework assessment and end-of-semester tests. All main skills are targeted: reading, writing, speaking and listening, each perhaps with a different weight in a given semester. Other classes are called 'lectures' but are different from the seminars, mostly in the number of students they accommodate at a time, anywhere between 50 and over 100 students. Due to this large number of students, activities are often teacher-led, students interact less in class but have extended autonomy in their choice of pace or time for studying the content.

The reason for choosing the research population from two Israeli academic institutions as opposed to one academic institution from Romania is based on the number of participants the researchers wanted to reach. Since both Israeli colleges are smaller with regard to the number of students, it was decided to choose two colleges in Israel to reach more or less the same number of participants in both groups: 338 participants from Romania, and 373 participants from Israel. Therefore, the sample consisted of a total of 712 students: 373 students from Israel (250 students from Sapir Academic College and 123 students from Shamoon College of Engineering) and 338 students from Romania studying in Technical University of Cluj-Napoca university. All the students who were involved in the research took the mandatory EAP course during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 when all the academic institutions were forced to move

from face- to- face mode of teaching to remote teaching due to COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2. Research Questions

Considering this complex and diverse educational and institutional context of the research, the objective of the present study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the students' attitudes and perceptions to learning EAP online after experiencing ERT due to the COVID-19 crisis?

RQ2: What are the students' perceptions of their own engagement and interaction while learning EAP online?

3.3. Data collection

As surveys tend to be among the most popular research tools in language research (Dornyei and Csiker 2012), the investigators resorted to a form of survey as a data collection instrument, namely an online anonymous questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of statement-like items, employing 5-point Likert scale type questions, with levels of agreement ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), and a neutral point (neither agree nor disagree). The questionnaire was translated into Hebrew for the Israeli respondents, while the Romanian students responded to its English version. The data obtained were used for a statistical summary interpretation, highlighting common points and indicative trends in the perceptions and attitudes of the respondents. The participants were selected by dint of the random sampling technique. No personal information was collected from the participants through the questionnaire, and measures were taken to ensure anonymity of responses. The questionnaire contained an introductory section with questions on the context of learning (school of engineering the respondents belonged to, year of study, platform used for online learning) and the respondents' mother (L1) tongue. This was followed by nine statement-like items that probed perceptions and attitudes to learning online and aspects of active/passive engagement in online classes, on the 5-point Likert scale. Responses in the *agree* and *strongly agree* side of the scale show the respondents' positive attitude and active engagement, while responses in the *disagree* and *strongly disagree* side of the scale show the respondents' negative attitude and lack of engagement. The closing question was an open-ended one where students were invited to give their thoughts or suggestions on the topic (optional question). For easy and clarity of reference, the items pertaining to our two research questions were numbered 1 to 9 and are listed below.

- Q1. It is interesting for me to give presentations in online classes.
Q2. It is interesting for me to do reading in online classes.
Q3. It is exciting to use a variety of apps and tools for online learning of English.
Q4. I am good at using online apps and tools for learning English.
Q5. I had a lot of positive experiences while learning English online.
Q6. Working in pairs or groups with my peers is helpful for me when learning in online classes.
Q7. I share my answers or solution to a task with the class in a live online session.
Q8. I ask for clarification if I don't understand something during online classes.
Q9. I would like to continue learning English online in the future.

4. Results

4. 1. Israeli HEI

The questionnaire collected a total of 373 responses from Shmoon College of Engineering (123 participants) and from Sapir Academic College (250 participants). The results of the questionnaire directly relate to the questions identical to both groups of participants from Romania and from Israel - altogether nine questions. Therefore, responses in the *agree* and *strongly agree* side of the scale show the respondents' positive attitude and active engagement, while responses in the *disagree* and *strongly disagree* side of the scale show the respondents' negative attitude and lack of engagement. Results are summarized below, where *agree* and *strongly agree* have been aggregated under *agreement* section (Figure 1). *Disagree* and *strongly disagree* are aggregated in a *disagreement* section (Figure 2). The overwhelming majority of students (82%) would prefer to continue studying English for academic purposes courses online in the future, regardless of COVID-19 pandemics. Despite the positive perceptions of students towards online English learning in general (82.9%), their positive experiences while learning online (76.7%), using apps and online tools (80.7%), reading comprehension, presentation skills, working collaboratively with others during online classes and reporting answers to the class were less favored by the students (58.8%, 32.2%, 57.1%, 30.8% accordingly). Student responses to the *disagree* and *strongly disagree* side of the scale are in clear correlation with the responses to *agree* and *strongly agree* side. The highest percentages of disagreement refer to giving presentations in online classes (49.9%), sharing answers with the class (45.6%), working collaboratively in pairs/groups (22.5%) and doing reading comprehension (19.9%). Not surprisingly, the lowest percentage of disagreement is in correlation with the highest percentage of the agreement scale: proficiency in computer skills (6.7%), the preference to continue learning English online in

the future (9.4%), and positive experience while learning online English courses (10.5%).

4.2. Technical University of Cluj-Napoca

The majority of Romanian students found it interesting to give presentations in online classes (41.3%) and reading activities (59.8%). They found the use of digital tools exciting for these activities (74.9%), the vast majority being good at using them (84.9%). In terms of class engagement and interaction, Romanian respondents found it useful to work in pairs or groups in the online environment (48.6%), 37% of them were willing to share answers and solutions to tasks with their peers, and over half of the respondents asked for clarifications and help during classes (55.6%). Overall, 64.8% of the Romanian students rated their experiences of learning English online as positive, and half of the respondents (50.3%) would like to continue learning English online (Figure 1). Although these percentages would suggest a (near) parity, they actually reflect a majority of responses in agreement with the given statements, as the large share of neutral positionings (Figure 3) renders disagreement as a low share (between 23.3% and 2.1%). The closest margin can be found in the statement 'I share my answers or solution to a task with the class in a live online session', where the agreement was 37% while the disagreement stand was 22.8% of responses (Figure 2). Of the 338 respondents from the Romanian university, only 34 answered the open-ended question at the end of the survey. Most of these answers reinforced the perceptions outlined by the previous questions, adding a personal angle to them, commenting on particular situations (e.g. the class was scheduled too early in the morning, suggestions for content to be included, use of different technologies, etc.) or introducing additional topics such as anxiety and isolation in online learning contexts.

Figure 1: Comparative results of agreement with questionnaire statements

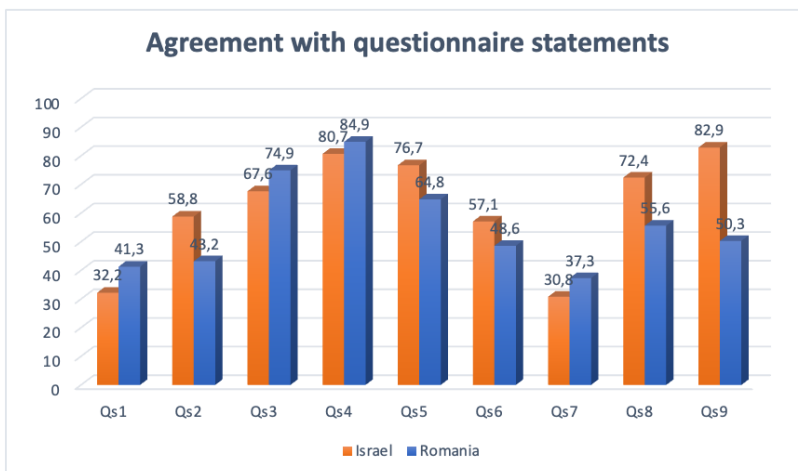
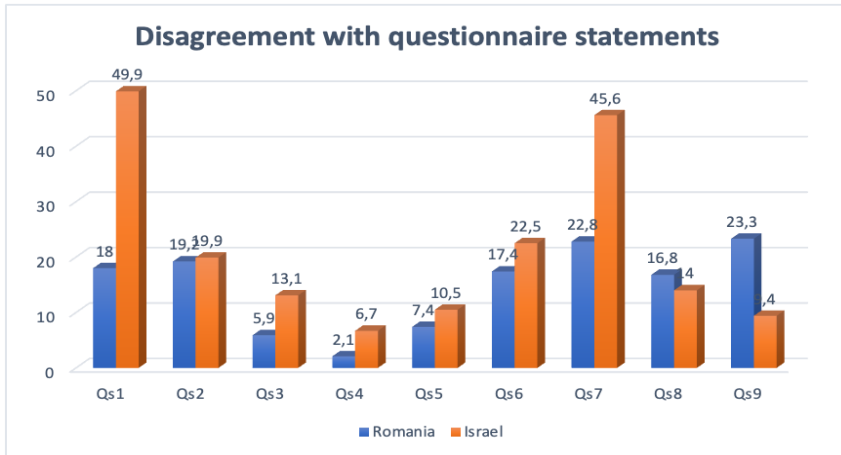
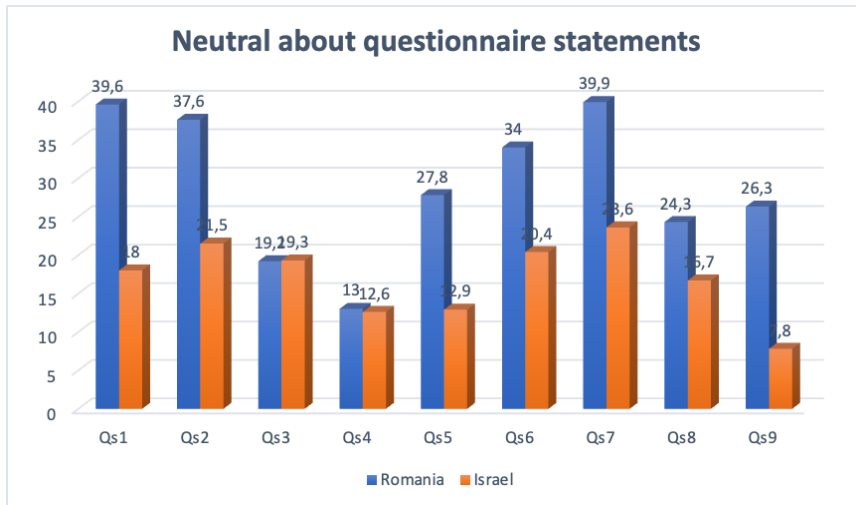


Figure 2: Comparative results of disagreement with questionnaire statement**Figure 3:** Comparative results of neutral responses to the questionnaire statements

The five-point Likert scale used for collecting responses contained a neutral point. The comparative results of neutral responses to the questionnaire statements are shown in Figure 3. Overall, Romanian respondents tended to avoid more committing to one side of the scale or another. The most significant difference was in responses to the first statement, where 39.6% of Romanian participants chose the neutral response as compared to only 18% of Israelis. The correlation with the agreement percent for the same question may indicate the fact that Romanian students tend to find giving presentations online interesting or less challenging than the Israeli students, who seem to have a strong disagreement preference (49.9%) on this point.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Before the pandemic, the three educational contexts investigated in the present research varied with respect to teaching EAP. The learning objectives were differently distributed across the student population in terms of number of teaching hours, level of proficiency, methodology and assessment. The pandemic crisis brought many of these variables to the table of a common denominator, the ERT context, and surfaced the same challenges everywhere: how to achieve the learning outcomes, keep the students at the center of the learning process and make them actively engage in it.

Our study shows that students' perceptions on learning in the ERT context were overall positive, and that they were able to engage in the learning process by exploring the meaningful resources available (Conrad et al 2004) to achieve engagement. Both the Romanian and the Israeli students found it exciting to use a variety of apps and tools for online learning of English, and the vast majority were satisfied with their performance in using online apps and tools for learning English. These results are in line with many of the findings of research on the role of attitude in learning (Nurani and Widiati 2021).

The overall positive attitude reported by our students positively impacted on their engagement in the learning process at the level of the above-mentioned meaningful resources, but also at the level of interactivity and collaboration. These confirm the results reported in Duderstadt, Atkins and Hoeweling (2002) and Thurmond and Wambach (2004), among others, who showed that class collaboration and interaction (teacher-students and students-students) increase the students' perception of active involvement in driving their own learning process.

These results differ from findings reported by Male, Murniarti, Simatupang, Siregar, Sihotang, and Gunawan (2020) regarding student views towards online learning. Male et al. (2020) reveal that students tend to dislike online learning and want to return to conventional learning on campus. The contradiction mostly arises from some of the limitations of our study which focused on the experience of learning EAP online as opposed to a full face-to-face learning mode (the learning context of all three investigated institutions). Other relevant variables such as academic achievements, and possibly negative consequences of learning in an ERT context were not explicitly present in the statements of our survey. However, students were fully aware of the impact of the abrupt transition to online learning, and some of the Romanian respondents added relevant comments at the end of the survey:

I don't mind learning English using online platforms. Overall, it has been a positive experience, but I still miss going to onsite courses and seminars.

Using the internet for any class should only be complementary to the other traditional ways of teaching.

I just want to go to university.

Promoting student engagement can lead to students' increased perceptions of learning and satisfaction (Gray & DiLoreto 2016; Eom, Kim, Sherman and Ishii 2016), and this was confirmed in our study as well. However, our findings need to be put into a wider and more complex perspective which takes into consideration aspects such as course design and careful planning, intentional use of technology, opportunities for various types of interaction, instructor presence and communication, many of which are absent in ERT. Studies by Eom et al. (2016), Male et al. (2020) and Gray and DiLoreto (2016) mapped all these components of the learning process to confirm student satisfaction with online learning, while our study will have to be extended and developed to provide a more comprehensive picture of factors leading to the attitudes and perceptions our respondents had towards learning EAP in an emergency remote teaching and learning context. Future research may consider inviting a larger number of students to participate or employing different research methods (e.g., quantitative, observational, or mixed-method studies) to yield more robust results.

The results of our research can help educators account for adopting appropriate decisions regarding online teaching that falls outside the emergency scope and to make appropriate modifications and adaptations to the EAP courses. By evaluating the level of student engagement and considering attitudinal aspects, instructors can more effectively plan lessons and activities that will encourage students to be more active participants in their learning and coursework (Jennings and Angelo 2006; Mandernach, Donnelly-Sallee and Dailey-Hebert 2011). The global spread of COVID-19 has presented numerous challenges to educational institutions throughout the world. It is vital to seize this moment to learn as much as possible about the effects that this crisis has on teaching, learning, and other aspects of education in order to be prepared for the future.

References

- Abello-Contesse, C., Chandler, P. M., López-Jiménez, M. D., & Chacón-Beltrán, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Bilingual and multilingual education in the 21st century: Building on experience* (Vol. 94). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090716>
- Adnan, M., & Anwar, K. (2020). Online learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Students' perspectives. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology*, 2(1), 45-51. <https://doi.org/10.33902/JPSP.2020261309>
- Affizal, A., & Rafidah, S. (2009) Teacher-Student Attachment And Teachers' Attitudes Towards Work. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education* (formerly known as Journal of Educators and Education), 24 (1). pp. 1-18. ISSN 2289-9057
- Agarwal, S., Kaushik, J.S. Student's Perception of Online Learning during COVID Pandemic. *Indian J Pediatr* 87, 554 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12098-020-03327-7>
- Bao W. COVID-19 and online teaching in higher education: A case study of Peking University. *Hum Behav & Emerg Tech*. 2020;2:113-115. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.191>
- Basilaiia, G., Dgebuadze, M., Kantaria, M., & Chokhonelidze, G. (2020). Replacing the classic learning form at universities as an immediate response to the COVID-19 virus infection in

- Georgia. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology*, 8(III). <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2020.3021>
- Basturkmen, H. (2021). *Linguistic Description in English for Academic Purposes*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351183185>
- Bomia, L., Beluzo, L., Demeester, D., Elander, K., Johnson, M., & Sheldon, B. (1997). The impact of teaching strategies on intrinsic motivation. Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 418925)
- Carini, R.M., Kuh, G.D. & Klein, S.P. Student Engagement and Student Learning: Testing the Linkages*. *Research in Higher Education*, 47, 1–32 (2006). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-005-8150-9>
- Chakraborty, M., & Nafukho, F. M. (2014). Strengthening student engagement: what do students want in online courses? *European Journal of Training and Development*, 38(9), 782-802. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-11-2013-0123>
- Charles, M., & Pecorari, D. (2015). *Introducing English for Academic Purposes*. London & New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315682129>
- Chen P. S. D., Lambert A. D. & Guidry K. R. (2010) Engaging online learners: the impact of web-based learning technology on college student engagement. *Computers & Education*, 54, 1222–1232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2009.11.008>
- Christenson S. L., Reschly A. L., Wylie C. (eds) (2013). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. New York, NY: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7>
- Conrad, R. M., & Donaldson, J. A. (2004). Engaging the online learner: Activities and resources for creative instruction. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Demuyakor, J. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Online Learning in Higher Institutions of Education: A Survey of the Perceptions of Ghanaian International Students in China. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(3), e202018. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/8286>
- Dornyei, Z., & Csiker, K. (2012). “How to Design and Analyze Surveys in Second Language Acquisition Research”, in Mackey, A., Gass, S.M (eds). *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition*. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444347340.ch5>
- Duderstadt, J., Atkins, D., & Houweling, D. (2002). *Higher education in the digital age: Technology issues and strategies for American colleges and universities*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Eom, K., Kim, H. S., Sherman, D. K., & Ishii, K. (2016). Cultural Variability in the Link Between Environmental Concern and Support for Environmental Action. *Psychological Science*, 27(10), 1331–1339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976166660078>
- Farooq, A., Laato, S., & Islam, A. N. (2020). Impact of online information on self-isolation intention during the COVID-19 pandemic: cross-sectional study. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 22(5), e19128. <https://doi.org/10.2196/19128>
- Finn J. D., & Zimmer K. S. (2013). “Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter?,” in *Handbook of research on student engagement*, eds Christenson S. L., Reschly A. L., Wylie C. (New York, NY: Springer;), 97–131. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_5
- Gray, J.A. & Diloreto, M. (2016). The Effects of Student Engagement, Student Satisfaction, and Perceived Learning in Online Learning Environments. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1103654>
- Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (2009). *Beyond sameness, with engagement and outcomes for all*. In S. R. Harper, & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student Engagement in Higher Education* (pp. 1-15). New York and London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203894125>
- Hodges, C. B., Moore, S., Lockee, B. B., Trust, T., & Bond, M. A. (2020). *The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning*. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>

- Hu, S., & Kuh, G. D. (2001). Computing experience and good practices in undergraduate education: Does the degree of campus “wiredness” matter? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 9(49), Retrieved from <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n49.html> <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v9n49.2001>
- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203006603>
- Hyland, K. (2016). *General and specific EAP*. In K. Hyland, & P. Shaw (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 17-29). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315657455>
- Jennings, J. M., & Angelo, T. (Eds.) (2006). *Student engagement: Measuring and enhancing engagement with learning*. Proceedings of the Universities Academic Audit Unit, New Zealand.
- Kim, Y. J., Chun, J. U., & Song, J. (2009). Investigating the Role of Attitude in Technology Acceptance from an Attitude Strength Perspective. *International Journal of Information Management*, 29, 67-77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2008.01.011>
- Kuh, G. D., & Hu, S. (2001). The relationships between computer and information technology use, student learning, and other college experiences. *Journal of College Student Development*, 42, 217–232.
- Kuh, G. D., & Vesper, N. (2001). Do computers enhance or detract from student learning? *Research in Higher Education*, 42, 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018768612002>
- Linnenbrink E. A., & Pintrich P. R. (2003). The role of self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement and learning in the classroom. *Reading Writing Quart.* 19, 119–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105735603082223>
- Male, H., Murniarti, E., Simatupang, M., Siregar, J., Sihotang, H., & Gunawan, R. (2020). Attitude of undergraduate students towards online learning during COVID-19 pandemic. *Palarch's Journal of Archeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(4), 1628-1637.
- Mandernach, B. J., Donnelly-Sallee, E., & Dailey-Hebert, A. (2011). *Assessing course student engagement*. In R. Miller, E. Amsel, B. M. Kowalewski, B.B. Beins, K. D. Keith, & B. F. Peden (Eds.), *Promoting Student Engagement: Techniques and Opportunities* (pp. 277- 281). Society for the Teaching of Psychology, Division 2, American Psychological Association.
- Marks H. M. (2000). Student engagement in instructional activity: Patterns in the elementary, middle and high school years. *American. Education. Research*, 37 153–184. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312037001153>
- Means, B., Bakia, M. and Murphy, R. (2014) *Learning Online: What Research Tells Us about Whether, When and How*. Routledge Taylor & Frances, New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203095959>
- Mercer S., & Dörnyei Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009024563>
- Munteanu, S. C. (2021). “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Emergency Online Language Teaching at University“. In *INTERTEXT*, Nr. 1/2 (57/58), pp. 208-217. ISSN 1857-3711 / e-ISSN 2345-1750. <https://doi.org/10.54481/intertext.2021.1.24>
- Murphy, M. P. A. 2020. “COVID-19 and Emergency eLearning: Consequences of the Securitization of Higher Education for Post-pandemic Pedagogy.” *Contemporary Security Policy* 41 (3), 492–505. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2020.1761749>
- Naciri, A., Baba, M. A., Achbani, A., & Kharbach, A. (2020). Mobile Learning in Higher Education: Unavoidable Alternative during COVID-19. *Aquademia*, 4(1), ep20016. <https://doi.org/10.29333/aquademia/8227>
- Nickerson, L. A., & Shea, K. M. (2020). First-semester organic chemistry during COVID-19: prioritizing group work, flexibility, and student engagement. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 97(9), 3201-3205. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jchemed.0c00674>
- Nurani, S. G., & Widiati, U. (2021). STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ONLINE LISTENING COURSES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. *Celtic: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching, Literature and Linguistics*, 8(1), 126-139.

- Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93, 223-231. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x>
- Qin, L., & Neimann, T. D. (2017). Fostering English Learners' Intercultural Competence and Multicultural Awareness in a Foreign Language University in Northeastern China. In *Encyclopedia of Strategic Leadership and Management* (pp. 890-913). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-1049-9.ch062>
- Skinner E. A., & Pitzer J. R. (2013). "Developmental dynamics of student engagement, coping, and everyday resilience," in Handbook of research on student engagement, eds Christenson S. L., Reschly A. L., Wylie C. (New York, NY: Springer;), 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_2
- Smith, A. (2013). Smartphone ownership-2013 update (Vol. 12, p. 2013). Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Tendhar, C., Culver, S. M., & Burge, P. L. (2013). Validating the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at a Research-Intensive University. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 1(1), 182-193. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v1i1.70>
- Thurmond, V., & Wambach, K. (2004). Understanding interactions in distance education: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Instructional Technology & Distance Learning*, 1, 9–33. http://www.itdl.org/journal/Jan_04/article02.htm.
- Toquero, C. M. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context. *Pedagogical Research*, 5, Article No. em0063. <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7947>

Inna Smirnov-Okanin, PhD, is a full-time lecturer in the English in Kaye Academic College of Education and Sapir Academic College, Israel. Among her fields of expertise are project/problem-based learning, internationalization of the curriculum, teaching English as an international language, methodology of teaching English and inclusive education.

Roman Michaelan holds a PhD in the field of English Medium of Instruction (EMI) from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania. He is a lecturer at Shamoon College of Engineering (SCE). His main research interests are EMI and language teaching.

Sonia C. Munteanu, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where she teaches English for specific purposes, intercultural communication, and Romanian as a foreign language. Her main research interests are language teaching and learning, applied linguistics, English Medium Education, intercultural communication, and internationalization of higher education.