

Reimagining English language pedagogy in the post-COVID Era: Toward sustainable teaching practices

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Abstract: This qualitative study reimagines English Language Teaching (ELT) in the aftermath of the pandemic by examining how teachers responded to crisis-driven disruptions and by identifying sustainable practices that may inform and strengthen pedagogy in the years ahead. Four (4) informants from both public and private institutions participated in this research. Results show that the difficulties faced by teachers depended on their respective contexts, which were sub-coded into four (4) categories. Remediation strategies, along with the unlocking of new skills, were formulated and helped them thrive amidst the educational crisis they faced. Their circumstances also led them to suggest and realize the need to utilize appropriate strategies, methodologies, and tools in teaching English, such as exposure to ICT training, capacity-building, management support, revisiting pedagogy and mastery of content, enhancement of skills, and emotional support to learners. Ultimately, the teacher-informants expressed their visions and profound desires to move forward and accept the challenges with a positive goal in mind by forging new guidelines in English Language Teaching that may serve as sustainable practices in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: Competencies, English language teachers, New paradigms, Post-COVID, Remediation strategies.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted education systems worldwide, forcing rapid transitions from traditional classroom instruction to various forms of remote learning. For English language teachers, this disruption extended beyond logistics; it demanded deep pedagogical, emotional, and technological adaptation. In a prior study, De Asis-Ricamora [1] conceptualized this shift as the “covidization” of English Language Teaching (ELT), highlighting how Filipino teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) navigated the crisis through contextualized remediation strategies and emergent competencies. That study documented rich narratives of teacher resilience, detailing instructional shifts alongside the emotional toll, infrastructural challenges, and coping mechanisms that surfaced in both public and private institutions.

In the Philippine context, the abrupt transition to remote modalities exposed entrenched inequities in access to technology, professional development, and institutional support. Public school teachers, in particular, struggled with scarce resources, insufficient training, and the absence of pedagogical frameworks suitable for online instruction. Consequently, educators were compelled to innovate and adapt their strategies to sustain student engagement and learning outcomes amid widespread disruption.

Comparative evidence from other contexts underscores the global scope of these challenges. Yi and Jang [2] examined how South Korean teachers reshaped their practices during the pandemic, while Sayer and Braun [3] identified disproportionate difficulties faced by English learners in the United States. Similarly, Thomas et al. [4] documented the resilience of English as an Additional Language

(EAL) pupils in the United Kingdom. Cox et al. [5] investigated access barriers encountered by adult ESOL learners, and McIntosh et al. [6] emphasized the importance of strengthening connections between teachers and families to support multilingual students. Together, these studies highlight the global scale of disruption and provide a comparative lens through which this Philippine case study can be understood.

This study reimagines ELT in the post-pandemic era by examining how teachers adapted to crisis-driven disruptions and identifying sustainable practices that can guide pedagogy moving forward. Specifically, it explores the obstacles teachers encountered, the remediation strategies they employed, and the competencies necessary for effective instruction in the “new normal.” While prior research has broadly documented teachers’ pandemic experiences, there remains a critical gap in understanding the competencies, frameworks, and policy reforms required to optimize English teaching under these conditions.

Employing a qualitative case study design, this research sought to bridge this gap and contribute to the global discourse on post-pandemic educational reform. Ultimately, it proposes empirically grounded pedagogical guidelines for ELT that are responsive to immediate challenges yet sustainable and inclusive in the long term.

1.1. Language Teaching and Technology

Technology in language education has been identified as a critical driver of learning. Nunan [7] classified technology as a tool for content delivery, practice, classroom management, and communication. However, its success depends on enthusiastic support from school leadership, parental involvement, student engagement, and sustained professional development for teachers [8]. The year 2020 marked the most extensive educational disruption in history, with over 148 million learners affected across 33 nationwide school closures [9]. Digital technologies have emerged as indispensable for instructional continuity, with online learning gaining unprecedented popularity [10]. The digital education market was projected to grow to between \$18.66 billion and \$350 billion by 2025, driven by applications, tutoring platforms, conferencing tools, and software investments [11].

International experiences varied. Finland transitioned smoothly due to years of teacher training in digital pedagogy [12] while Scotland adopted cloud-based platforms such as Office 365, G-Suite, and WordPress [13]. In Russia, students studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) maintained positive attitudes toward online learning despite connectivity issues [14]. Curriculum support, including seminars, training, partnerships, and projects, was instrumental in ensuring meaningful online learning [13]. Still, disparities in effectiveness, accessibility, and quality were evident across contexts [15].

Governments responded with diverse capacity-building initiatives. In India, interventions included teacher training, study centers, television broadcasts, and the donation of devices such as tablets and TVs. Subarno et al. [16] highlighted three pillars of digital education: an integrated digital ecosystem, an integrated student learning cycle, and integrated technology solutions. High-impact practices also proved essential for maintaining learning rigor and engagement [17]. In South Korea, synchronous instruction was delivered via Zoom, complemented by English content on the national EBS platform, though resources were not always suitable for diverse student backgrounds [2]. A joint survey by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank reported that 90% of countries extended teacher support, with particular emphasis on feedback mechanisms, caregiver communication, and local reporting systems.

1.2. Teaching Competencies of Language Teachers

Teacher competency is generally understood as the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to fulfill professional responsibilities effectively. Guerriero and Revai, as cited in Jones [18], defined professional competence as “the ability to meet complex demands in a given context by mobilizing various psychosocial (cognitive, functional, personal, and ethical) resources.” Richards [19] outlined ten qualities of exemplary language teachers, including language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching

skills, contextual awareness, learner-centered instruction, theoretical orientation, pedagogical reasoning, and professional identity. In the 21st century, instructional skills such as creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and cultural competence are increasingly emphasized [20].

Self-access facilities and learner training are also integral to promoting autonomy. Teachers must design resources and materials that empower learners to extend their engagement beyond the classroom while motivating them to maximize opportunities for independent study [21].

Recent studies underscore the importance of digital competency for teaching in the “new normal.” Choi et al. [22] and Sánchez Prieto et al. [23] stressed that teachers’ ability to use technology effectively is fundamental for quality online education. UNESCO [24] also introduced the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, outlining how digital skills contribute to professional learning [25, 26].

1.3. Research Questions

1. What language remediation strategies were most useful in mitigating obstacles encountered during the pandemic?
2. What teaching competencies are essential for English language instruction in the new normal?
3. How should language teaching adapt in the new normal in terms of policy, curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
4. What pedagogical guidelines for English language teaching can be proposed to support educational institutions in the new normal?

1.4. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the lived experiences of English language teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Four teachers from both public and private institutions in the Philippines were interviewed. Thematic analysis was applied to code and analyze the data, capturing their strategies, competencies, and insights. This design allowed the researcher to examine complex issues within a bounded system, thereby generating context-specific and in-depth understandings [27]. A non-probability sampling technique was used in alignment with the research design. Specifically, purposeful maximal sampling was employed to capture diverse perspectives on the challenges and processes encountered during the pandemic [28]. Potential informants were recruited based on a set of predetermined criteria.

1.4.1. Category A – ELT Practitioners

1. Active English language teachers since the onset of the pandemic
2. Teaching in either public or private schools (secondary or tertiary)
3. Varying in age and length of teaching experience
4. Department chairpersons of Languages with vertically aligned specialization

1.4.2. Category B – Language Experts

1. Former or current chairpersons of the Languages Department
2. Vertically aligned academic expertise
3. At least 20 years of experience in ELT
4. Developers or writers of ELT modules
5. Active contributors to language development through research

The study employed a two-stage data collection process. First, participants completed an online questionnaire designed to gather demographic information, remediation strategies, and key competencies in teaching during the pandemic. Open-ended sections allowed participants to elaborate on their responses. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted via Google Meet. The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to ask probing questions while allowing the conversation to develop organically [29]. This approach ensured the capture of meaningful and nuanced perspectives. To

structure the inquiry, Lincoln and Guba's [30] case study framework was followed, which includes identifying the problem, examining the context, analyzing the issues, and drawing lessons learned. Interview data were transcribed, cleaned, exported, coded, and sub-coded into nodes using NVivo version 10.0. The software facilitated organization, classification, and visualization of qualitative data [28]. Its functions, such as node classification, queries, and visualization, enabled richer insights from unstructured text, interviews, and related materials.

1.5. Data Analysis

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The study adopted Saldaña's [31] analytical method, comprising seven systematic steps:

1. Manually grouping and transcribing participant responses
2. Removing irrelevant or redundant information
3. Categorizing data into clusters and themes
4. Validating emerging themes
5. Constructing textual descriptions based on participants' experiences
6. Developing structural explanations through analysis of these descriptions
7. Establishing final themes reflective of participants' actual experiences

Through this iterative process, meaningful categories and themes emerged, forming the basis for the study's findings and subsequent pedagogical implications.

2. Results and Discussion

Findings revealed four thematic categories: contextual challenges, remediation strategies, essential teaching competencies, and emerging ELT paradigms. Teachers emphasized the importance of digital literacy, adaptability, content mastery, and socio-emotional support. These competencies are essential for sustaining learner engagement and language proficiency during crisis conditions.

Table 1.
Informants' Background.

Informant	Age	Highest Educational Attainment	Major	Years of ELT Experience	Type of School /Organization	Active Teacher During the Pandemic? Y/N?
Informant 1	48	Doctoral	English	25	Private	Yes
Informant 2	40	Masters	English	20	Public/Private	Yes
Informant 3	49	Masters	English	22	Public/Private	Yes
Informant 4	27	Masters	English	4	Public/Private	Yes

Table 1 presents the background of the participants. All four respondents (100%) are postgraduate degree holders with specializations in English. They are currently teaching in either public or private schools located on the island of Luzon, Philippines. In terms of teaching experience, three informants reported 20 to 25 years of service in ELT, while one informant has four years of teaching experience.

2.1. Context: Condition of the School During the Onset of COVID-19

The first few months of the COVID-19 debacle (1:42 ¶ 51) were consumed by endless meetings, announcements, outreach efforts to students and parents, preparation of learning tasks, conferences, module writing, training, and repeated requests for provisions. Exhaustive planning for an academic crisis with an uncertain end date brought the academic community to an unprecedented and inevitable transformation. As informants expressed, they felt confused, tired, exhausted, and unprepared.

To address this lack of preparedness, teachers were compelled to attend webinars, trainings, and meetings even during weekends and supposed rest days. Alongside these demands, dilemmas regarding limited budgets and inadequate tools persisted. One expert informant questioned the prioritization of government funds, pointing out that allocations were sometimes made for materials that were [32] unnecessary, leading to oversupply and wastage.

At the onset, the greatest concern among teachers was how to reach out to students, given the abruptness of the transition. The pandemic, in reality, spared no one, regardless of school type. Both public and private institutions faced parallel challenges and difficulties. Consequently, some teachers were forced to spend their own money or solicit donations from non-governmental agencies to overcome resource gaps.

I sponsored two kids. I would send the globe promo that would provide for their online classes. I think one of the challenges of being in the Department of Education is that we cannot spend something that we personally give. No, we could not spend on something that an individual student could actually get. That's against the regulations on spending the MOOE (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses). (3:31 ¶ 34)

There was Victory Christian Fellowship providing an additional fifty-peso load allowance for some of our fewer than twenty students. There was also the Zonta Club of Central Tuguegarao City, which provided gadgets, specifically mobile phones (3:34 ¶ 36)

For the internet, it's our personal fund, but for the SIM card, it's actually provided by DEPED. (4:24 ¶ 113)

2.2. Context: Relentless Pursuit

"With just that 5 months of joining, I would say that there are really challenges and struggles in terms of the ELT (1:17 ¶ 23–24. It was a difficult shift at first, with all the technologies that were lacking (3:12 ¶ 15). You are always tired. I don't know. I felt that. I don't know. I had that feeling. 1:45 ¶ 55.

When asked to describe their language teaching experiences during the pandemic, all four informants (100%) used the words *"difficult, hard, and challenging."* The difficulties they identified revolved around online and modular distance learning, limited technological expertise, lesson delivery, reduced opportunities for interactive activities, difficulties in assessing language skills, low student participation during virtual classes, and reliance on self-learning modules. While one informant

described her experience in more measured terms, three (75%) openly expressed outright skepticism about the effectiveness of flexible learning modalities: “*We were not ready for this flexible learning* (2:36 ¶ 48); *I think the natural part, we weren’t successful with that* (3:244 ¶ 45–46); *It is different from face-to-face* (4:26 ¶ 129).” These responses align with Sun’s [33] assertion that no form of online activity can fully replicate the dynamics of a physical classroom.

A recurring challenge was student motivation. Informants noted that many learners refused to turn on their cameras during online classes, hesitated to participate in discussions, and displayed anxiety when speaking in English (1:30 ¶ 39; 3:56 ¶ 52). Modular distance learning posed further challenges, such as ensuring academic integrity in submitted outputs, persuading parents to collect modules, monitoring student progress, and communicating with those who had no stable internet access (4:26 ¶ 129).

To capture the overall sentiment of teacher narratives, a sentiment analysis was conducted across 176 coded statements. Results showed 88 negative, 32 positive, and 56 neutral sentiments. The predominance of negative expressions underscored the “*covidization*” of English Language Teaching, with the AI model confirming teachers’ strong emphasis on the adverse implications of pandemic-related disruptions.

In terms of tools and modalities, informants from public schools (1, 3, and 4) reported that the Department of Education adopted modular distance learning, initially combining online, printed, and digitized modules (4:6 ¶ 37; 3:43 ¶ 42). State universities offered modules supplemented with optional synchronous sessions, depending on whether students preferred modular, asynchronous, or synchronous modes (2:43 ¶ 60–61; 2:47 ¶ 64). Meanwhile, teachers in private institutions and select well-resourced public schools (1 and 2) implemented online systems and free applications ahead of nationwide schedules. Adjustments included platforms such as Edmodo for quizzes, enabling paperless assessments that could later be adapted to face-to-face settings (3:65 ¶ 58).

Teachers also restructured their instructional practices through group chats, distribution of soft-copy modules, and alternative feedback systems (4:12 ¶ 65). Informants emphasized the urgent need for new instructional designs, ICT training, capacity building, and clearer institutional guidelines. These findings reflect Nunan’s [7] perspective that technology serves multiple roles in education: content delivery, practice, management, and communication, and that its effectiveness depends on school leadership, parental support, student engagement, and teacher training [8]. The global picture further contextualizes these experiences: UNESCO [9] reported that 148,424,599 learners across 33 countries were affected by school closures, making 2020 the largest educational disruption in history. Consequently, digital technology became central to lesson delivery. Online learning surged in popularity [10] with global investment in digital platforms projected to reach between \$18.66 billion and \$350 billion by 2025, covering applications, tutoring, conferencing, and online instructional software [11].

2.2.1. Theme 1: Finding Ways

Remediation strategies are defined as the ways, methods, and approaches devised by the informants in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies reflect their adaptation to the new normal and were shaped by their lived experiences during remote instruction. The code “*remediation strategies*” was further sub-categorized into Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, Tools, Values and Attitude, and Revisiting Ways. These categories align with the view that English Language Teaching (ELT) necessitates the enhancement of macro-skills to improve student proficiency.

In remote teaching environments, the use of technological tools, applications, and devices was indispensable. ELT practitioners and experts reported employing diverse tools, including recorded lectures, digital prints, online games, video recordings, videoconferencing, phone calls, printed modules, and digitized modules (1:69; 3:65; 3:106; 3:165). From the perspective of the expert informant, a fully online modality was considered convenient (3:80 ¶ 68). Nevertheless, caution was advised, as teachers should not be overwhelmed by the abundance of available resources on the internet. Gamification was

also recommended as an effective strategy for engaging online learners, a practice that has gained increasing popularity in ELT classrooms. Yet, as Informant 3 pointedly observed, *"There's no such thing as obsolete technology. We could go back to print, and we could still be equally effective when compared to making use of all these technologies"* (3:109).

Listening and speaking skills are essential components of language development and are often central to remediation efforts. Informant 1 emphasized the importance of establishing boundaries in oral interaction: *"Students must know when to listen, know when to talk, and not to talk"* (1:73). However, listening comprehension was generally perceived to be weak in the new normal. As Informant 2 noted, *"the level of the listening comprehension of students is really low"* (2:161). This observation was reinforced by Informant 3, who remarked that *"whenever I make them (students) do a listening task, they are anxious about speaking"* (3:247). In contrast, Informant 4 suggested that innovative methods must continue to be developed to address these challenges, noting, *"we could think of other ways on how to develop speaking and listening skills"* (4:52). These insights highlight the importance of integrating listening and speaking tasks as a means of fostering communicative competence among learners.

"With the online modality, I only record myself for five minutes, and the lecture, surprisingly, is finished in five minutes. I divide them into chunks because that's how students learn more, according to educational technology strategy" (3:134).

In addition, to ensure that students were attentive during virtual classes, some teachers required them to open their cameras (Informant 1:81). However, this practice was complicated by policies from the National Data Privacy Commission, which empowered students to refuse camera use, a challenge acknowledged by all four informants. Collectively, they agreed that listening and speaking were the most neglected skills due to the abrupt shift from face-to-face instruction to online or modular distance learning (1:84; 4:48).

To address these gaps, informants recommended varied activities such as impromptu speech tasks, interpretation of visual or non-prose data, production of self-recorded videos, viewing activities using YouTube links, and oral quizzes to validate submitted assignments (1:84; 2:91; 2:245; 2:95). These approaches align with communicative language teaching principles, which emphasize collaboration, active listening, role play, and peer/group activities [32, 34]. In this framework, teachers act as facilitators and monitors, while curricula are redesigned to be more skills-based, functional, and purposeful for specific contexts or disciplines. Activities such as information-gap tasks, jigsaw reading, task completion, opinion sharing, information transfer, reasoning-gap exercises, and role-plays remain central to this approach [19].

In like manner, Yeng further recommended that:

"Since I could not let them talk in a bigger class, what I did was to divide them into smaller groups, give them their tasks, and they recorded themselves in videos which would be shown in class, without any disruptions. I felt like that was even a more successful strategy because there are no longer emotional factors that would come in, like shyness, hesitancy in speaking, when things are already rewarded."

Lie et al. [35] emphasize that teachers' ability to select and adapt technologies such as video conferencing, online chat, and collaborative platforms was crucial in maintaining meaningful learner engagement during the pandemic. On the other hand, significant disparities in the delivery of English language instruction remain evident. As one public school ELT practitioner lamented: *"Unfortunately, in a recorded video or when they're presenting to develop their speaking skills, it's limited. Students who do not have internet connection and gadgets, paano nila ito gagawin (How are they going to do this)? How are they going to perform in class?"* This testimony underscores the urgent need for systemic changes, as underprivileged students are disproportionately affected and deprived of alternative ways to access learning.

In terms of reading instruction, one informant stressed: *"In DEPED's most essential learning competencies, there was not much emphasis on reading, but since I am an advocate of reading in the classroom. Be it a guided or self-reading approach, I still went back to print modality. But when I say print, that means the hard copies and the digital copies"* (3:68). This highlights how, despite digital shifts, traditional modalities

remain vital in sustaining literacy development. Informant 1 further agreed on the necessity to recalibrate and reconceptualize learning outcomes by placing greater focus on reading and writing (2:144). According to the informants, English language teachers are thus encouraged to read beyond prescribed syllabi to remain steps ahead of students in terms of content knowledge and literacy guidance.

"My students were actually asking me... a student should be able to memorize his/her lessons prior to the class and then, "Ma'am, we read something that Oxford is now accepting, "their." And I said, "globally, it's not yet accepted, so, for now, we are going to make use of the rule of using the individual his/her." On the other hand, it's not embarrassing to say, "Really? I'm going to read more about that." I really do appreciate all of those participative students because it's only through them that I feel like I'm still in a classroom (3:175)."

It was observed that many students spent their time reading Wattpad novels throughout the day. However, as one informant pointed out, *"they are not reading academically because we are not giving them the appropriate stimulus or appropriate materials."* This remark highlights the need for teachers to curate authentic and meaningful reading resources. Academic reading, unlike recreational reading, must challenge learners to process ideas critically and develop higher-order comprehension skills.

For example, in a Grade 10 lesson, students were asked to read and discuss the security threats posed by TikTok as part of an activity on identifying main ideas. At this point, the value of situating lessons in real-world contexts becomes evident. Such integration not only fosters critical reading but also bridges learners' everyday interests with academic objectives, making instruction more engaging and purposeful.

"A 12-page reading on King Arthur won't work; it really won't. I put it in a more real-world context. I was able to curate some materials from different sources. It should be synchronous so I would be assured that everybody is going to read because that's one of my problems last year. Like, how am I assured that everybody's reading because I don't have an app for that anyway, in monitoring my students if they read or not. Just a gut feeling, if I'm going to let them react to something, if their reaction is based on what they read. So instead of Seven Ages of Man, I am going to start with Sonnet 18 with my students. I think it's just a substitution of my materials; then I'm going to guide them in class, a sort of monitoring. What I did in between I place polls, and I placed videos. When I'm finished with that, I'm willing to share it as an innovation. (3:184)"

Thus, English Language Teaching (ELT) in the new normal compels teachers to revisit established theories, strategies, and methods of instruction. One participant explained that *"there was also a revisiting of all the instructional design theories. So, she needed to lean towards connectivism and constructivism."* Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was emphasized as the central focus for language development, while task-based and outcomes-based approaches were also utilized (Informant 2:61).

For teachers employing online modalities, technological proficiency has become a prerequisite. Various digital tools can be integrated into instruction; however, participants emphasized the importance of careful selection. Teachers must discern which applications genuinely support language learning, rather than indiscriminately adopting every available platform. As one informant remarked, *"If PowerPoint still works, why not use it? For as long as we know how to appropriately use PowerPoint presentations."*

2.2.2. Theme 2: Re-tooling of Skills in English Language Teaching

It is evident that experts remain most concerned with the delivery of content and the efficacy of techniques, methods, and strategies to ensure language proficiency. While they acknowledged the importance of technology skills in the current context, they emphasized that *"strengthening the English proficiency of the students"* must remain the central priority. Accordingly, educators are urged to *"champion performance-based and task-based teaching-learning strategies."* Given that language is an evolving discipline, mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical competence remains indispensable.

At the same time, informants were unanimous about the necessity of developing technological skills, regardless of modality. English Language Teaching (ELT) during the pandemic was described as a *"life-changing experience,"* with adaptability to educational technologies emerging as a critical requirement. One participant reflected, *"I ask my co-teachers to teach me how to do this and that. Actually, it's my first time creating a Facebook group."* This illustrates how teachers acquired new digital literacies that they later integrated into their face-to-face teaching. Another participant added, *"I was telling myself because I don't have to collect papers anymore,"* highlighting how technological practices improved efficiency.

Teachers also noted the pedagogical shift from teacher-dominated instruction to more student-centered approaches facilitated by technology. For example, a recorded five-minute lecture via teleconferencing was recognized as an efficient strategy that could be repurposed for group activities, such as dividing students into smaller clusters for collaborative learning. Such adaptations reflect how technology can support communicative and interactive approaches in ELT.

As one teacher summarized, *"As a language teacher this time, we have already become an IT (Information Technology) teacher too."* This recognition aligns with global trends, as educational institutions increasingly turn to digital platforms, fueling a projected market expansion from \$18.66 billion to \$350 billion by 2025 for language applications, online tutoring, conferencing, and software tools [11]. Hence, building teachers' confidence through ICT training and sustained capacity-building is crucial for ensuring the success of online and hybrid classes [36].

Empathy, compassion, adaptability, flexibility, creativity, and strong decision-making summarized the soft skills of an ELT teacher at this time of the pandemic. Amidst all the hurdles, a teacher must effect change by infusing a learning environment that is focused and well-prepared, sensitive, encouraging, and supportive, by making their students feel that language learning is not an ordeal that they have to overcome. TESOL practitioners in the United States similarly emphasized their concerns about students' well-being, family, social and mental health, transition to online classes, employment and finances, physical health, and schoolwork during the onset of the pandemic [37].

2.2.3. Theme 3: Envisioning New Directions in English Language Teaching

The final question posed to informants, "How should we move forward?" sought reflections on conventional pedagogies and proposals for innovative plans in English language teaching. Informants emphasized infrastructure requirements, teaching tools, skill development, policies, and curricular revisions drawn from their pandemic experiences. Common responses included enhancing technical skills and technological literacy, supported by professional development programs (e.g., module-making, synchronous facilitation, and academic writing), policies for ICT integration, and development of online materials. As Gao and Zhang [38] noted, EFL teachers in China cannot "go back in time" but must continuously advance in technological literacy. Curriculum support through seminars, training, partnerships, and national projects is also vital [13] alongside sharing best practices (1:126).

Public school informants stressed addressing technological inequality, citing internet connectivity, facilities, and adequate devices as prerequisites for effective online learning (2:298, 3:153). Devices should meet minimum specifications, while premium applications and video-based instruction can enhance delivery. An expert informant recommended diverting funds to actual school needs. Most agreed that blended or online modalities are essential to move forward [37].

Cheating in online exams has become a significant challenge. Recommended measures include plagiarism checkers such as Turnitin, lock-in browsers, and other digital tools (2:132). However, some admit that cheating is inevitable: "There's nothing we can do. It's up to them" (3:126). Alternatives proposed include discipline, encouragement, and authentic outputs (writing, reading, recorded videos), as well as parallel tests, task completeness, oral validation exams, and camera-on policies to strengthen assessment integrity.

Online synchronous classes are considered the most effective modality. As noted, *"it would be like face-to-face, but it's online (2:110; 2:113). In fact, it was coined as the modality closest to face-to-face classes. Expert and practitioner informants agreed with this statement, with some conditions such as the provision of*

guidelines on netiquette (1:248), opening of cameras (1:93; 2:121), and adoption of policies on online assessments. Therefore, if it is synchronous, it must be conducted consistently. One comment indicated that synchronous classes can effectively address all macro skills. In contrast, in an asynchronous class, “there would be a need to recalibrate or to reconceptualize the learning outcomes, wherein the learning objectives should focus more on reading and writing and less on speaking and listening.” Consequently, participants argue that the only way to standardize English learning across all levels, from basic to higher education, is to establish a uniform learning modality.

The standardization of the curriculum could address the current issue of low comprehension skills among Filipino learners. While many students show positive reactions toward gamification and the extensive use of technology, some teachers forget their original intention. It must be noted that:

“Content is still the key. So, whatever technology you use, it doesn’t really matter. Kahit nga mag-print ka lang, eh. (Even if you just print something), For as long as you know how to facilitate your classroom. No matter how you teach it, as long as it’s appropriate according to your content and your students, technologies don’t really matter. Good content is good education; bad content, no matter what technology you use, is still bad education.” (3:253; 3:74)

In the content areas, putting more emphasis on reading skills is recommended. Dividing classes according to the level of reading proficiency is one way to go.

One interviewee emphasized that language teaching is inherently social rather than individualistic. Informant 1 highlighted the necessity of coping with technology, while the COVID-19 pandemic has demanded creativity, new strategies, guidelines, capacity-building, and material preparation to meet emergency needs. “It’s very important not to fossilize your knowledge” (3:187). Teachers’ cognition of education and language teaching has shifted dramatically, with worries and anxiety linked to unfamiliar modalities and limited preparation time [38]. Pedagogical adaptation from face-to-face to remote learning and the recalibration of instructional management to address teaching, engagement, and administrative tasks were key challenges.

Beyond curricular adjustments, the new paradigm underscored independent learning and the teacher’s expanded role in emotional care. As one informant stated, “teachers do not only practice the language, but they also end up taking care of their students emotionally” (3:187). Language teaching during the pandemic required empathy, patience, flexibility, and constant availability to ensure students did not view learning as an ordeal. TESOL practitioners in the United States similarly reported concerns about student well-being, family and social issues, mental health, and the transition to online classes [37]. In a related study, Thomas et al. [4] underscored that while EAL pupils’ basic psychological needs for competence and autonomy were relatively well supported during emergency remote teaching, peer-relatedness remained weak, suggesting that social dimensions of learning still require deliberate attention.

3. Conclusion

Upon careful exploration of the selected cases, teachers shared their stories of struggling to communicate and deliver learning at the very least. A great technological disparity surfaced along with the challenges of protecting themselves against the virus. Teachers were anxious, exhausted, and overwhelmed with the responsibilities passed to them. Teaching and learning at home posed quandaries, especially in language classes. Slow internet connectivity, lack of support and resources, declining student interest, and the incapacity of parents hindered the purpose of language learning. However, the current situation should not topple the purpose of education. Over time, teachers learned to develop new skills, strategies, and methods, while agencies spearheaded initiatives for capacity-building, technological support, and budgets for devices and tools. Empirically-based recommendations focusing on English Language Teaching are pertinent to ensure uninterrupted proficiency and continuous building of macro skills.

English Language Teaching in the new normal compels teachers to revisit theories, strategies, and methods. Communicative language teaching skills are central, alongside task-based and outcomes-based

approaches. Technology serves as a conduit, but content and efficacy of techniques remain key to proficiency. Above all, English teachers must infuse a learning environment that is focused, supportive, and empathetic, while also building soft skills such as adaptability, creativity, productivity, and communication skills. Student participation depends on teacher strategies, authentic materials, and dynamic activities such as oral tasks, debates, and breakout sessions.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused pedagogical changes in English teaching in the Philippines. Deficiencies in online skills and a lack of technological support were the most challenging problems; hence, government and institutional support are vital. Teachers acclimatized and adapted new methods and skills, welcomed technology, and evaluated previous practices. Strengthening English proficiency remains the central focus, supported by performance-based and task-based strategies and differentiated reading instruction. Given these circumstances, teachers are expected to be creative, flexible, sensitive, and sympathetic to students' needs, while still ensuring content and skills in the development of English language proficiency.

Institutional Review Board Statement:

The study was conducted and approved by the Graduate School-Emilio Aguinaldo College Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent Statement:

Prior to participation, all informants received an information sheet and provided written informed consent for interviews, audio recording, and the use of anonymized quotations in publications.

Data Privacy and Confidentiality:

All personally identifying information was removed at transcription. De-identified data are stored on a secure institutional drive accessible only to the research team for a minimum of five years.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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