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Evaluating the Long-Term Impacts of COVID-19 on Remote and Hybrid Learning in English Language Teaching: Identifying Effective Practices for a Post-Pandemic World

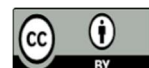
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Abstract

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many educational systems around the world, where rapidity in the onset of remote and hybrid learning models incepted. It was just the same for English Language Teaching (ELT). In this paper, it shall explore the long-term effects of remote and hybrid learning on ELT, best practices established, and follow-up implementation strategies recommended. The following study applies a mix of data from surveys, observations, and standardized test scores to compare performances and effectiveness in students between remote and hybrid ELT settings. The study unveiled the necessity for integrated technology-enhanced learning strategies and continuous professional development of teachers in a post-pandemic world.



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Abstract

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many educational systems around the world, where rapidity in the onset of remote and hybrid learning models incepted. It was just the same for English Language Teaching (ELT). In this paper, it shall explore the long-term effects of remote and hybrid learning on ELT, best practices established, and follow-up implementation strategies recommended. The following study applies a mix of data from surveys, observations, and standardized test scores to compare performances and effectiveness in students between remote and hybrid ELT settings. The study unveiled the necessity for integrated technology-enhanced learning strategies and continuous professional development of teachers in a post-pandemic world.

Keywords: Covid-19, remote learning, hybrid learning, English language teaching, ELT challenges, technology-enhanced learning

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally reshaped the education world, and in reaction to social-distancing interventions, institutions have had to quickly turn to distance and hybrid modalities to ensure 95 million of their students experience a continuum in learning (Chen et al., 2020; OECD, 2021). Several subjects and education levels have seen intervention with respect to the hybrid models of learning and remote areas; however, English Language Teaching (ELT) would be considered an unassailable area in the face of this new environment that comes with its unique constraints and opportunities (Huang et al., 2020; Hockly & Dudeney, 2021). English language teachers, students, and institutions of education have never been under such pressure to meet the demands of remote and hybrid learning through the adoption of new pedagogical models, leveraging technology-enhanced learning strategies, and changing their expectations (Lin et al., 2021; Sun & Hockly, 2022). The current study intends to look at the long-term effects of remote and hybrid learning in ELT, bringing out a clear understanding of their effect on student performance and teaching effectiveness. It also highlights the recommendations of best practices in their implementation in the future. This has, therefore, made English be universally recognised as one of the world languages; hence English education has a demand that is estimated to consist of 1.5 billion speakers from all parts of the world (Crystal, 2020). Effective mastery of English language communication is evidently considered key

to personal, academic, and professional successes in the diverse quarters (Graddol, 2006). This has resulted in the development of a multi-billion-dollar English language teaching industry, with every sort of educational institution, private language center, and even online platforms available at the service of the needs of a language student (Galloway et al., 2017). For example, the continuing shift toward remote and hybrid learning, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, may be considered to have highlighted the contrast with hitherto more traditionally based face-to-face classroom practices of language teaching and prompted a re-evaluation of said practices, including a rekindling of an interest in the potential gains and pitfalls offered by technology-enhanced language teaching and learning (Hockly & Dudeney, 2021; Sun & Hockly, 2022). Though one can say that the models of online and blended learning were very popular before the pandemic, particularly in connection with ELT, others even researched these approaches and concluded that they gave rise to positive learning outcomes and an increase in learner autonomy (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Klimova & Kacatl, 2019). The shift, therefore, towards remote and hybrid modes of learning, due to the massive outbreak of COVID-19 during 2020 and the beginning of 2021, further increased the focus on the effective strategies and best practices that might be put to use within such a changed context (OECD, 2021). Meanwhile, first-time and unprecedented success in running online teaching and learning platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams, and the willingness of learning by both the teachers and students are some challenges an English language teacher has to meet in the time of the pandemic. All of them were required to learn with the great investment of time, effort, and resources (Hockly and Dudeney, 2021; Huang et al., 2020). For example, new teaching skills have to be imparted to teachers, which should enable effective use of video conferencing tools, learning management systems, and other digital resources. The students have thus highly adapted to the presented rigors during asynchronous and synchronous online learning (Lin et al., 2021). This shift to remote and hybrid approaches of learning is likely to pave the way for several compromises, which are such an important constituent not only in language learning, but in fact, in education per se, particularly learner motivation, engagement, and social interaction (Dörnyei, 2020; Sun & Hockly, 2022; Al-Abidi et al., 2023).

In spite of those, the remote and hybrid learning models made room for innovation and growth in ELT. For instance, digital means may provide more possibilities in the way authentic language materials are accessed; they may offer more individualization to learning experiences and are most likely to increase collaboration and interaction among learners (Hockly and Dudeney, 2021; Sun and Hockly, 2022). In addition to the above, such an approach allows differentiated instruction to take place, where teachers can modify their way of instructing in accordance with the need and pace of every single learner (Cavanaugh et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2021). Last, COVID-19, with the broad impetus it had into remote and hybrid learning, fast-tracked the digital tools and resources even deeper into the ELT integration, an incorporation that may live long beyond the short time of the pandemic (Huang et al., 2020; OECD, 2021). After having critically analysed the transformational role brought about in education and ELT by the COVID-19 pandemic, the following sections are going to critically analyse the future impact that remote and hybrid learning will bring to English teaching and learning. Most of the research work that has been done in the past focuses on the general education outcome of remote and hybrid learning. Very few studies have been in a position to assess the impact that the remote and hybrid learning models have caused in ELT. Further, the world is slowly moving ahead with a post-pandemic reality, and it is high time now that it brings out the best practices which ELT can follow to make sure its learners are impacted less and they are prepared for such disruptions in the future.

This paper, therefore, intends to fill that literature gap by explicit examination of the long-term effects of remote and hybrid learning on ELT. Drawing on data from surveys, observational data, and standardized test scores, this study will assess student performance and teacher effectiveness in both remote and hybrid

ELT settings. This study tries to reach an understanding of the mid- and long-term effects of remote and hybrid learning on ELT through analysing many institutions and participants—from public and private schools to language centres and online platforms, which are considered as possible best practices in a post-pandemic world. The pandemic of COVID-19 determined deep and extremely long-lasting changes for world education, requiring a fast and immediate implementation of remote and hybrid learning. In this light, teaching the English language at this level assumes a new turn with conditions and opportunities that are very different. This necessitates the teachers to respond freshly in their approaches and requires the students to adapt to new pedagogical approaches, learning technologies, and expectations. In many ways, this study attempts to shed light on those possible long-term influences that remote and hybrid learning might have on ELT. In part, might offer some valuable insights and practical recommendations for such possibilities of implementation when similar unprecedented times are faced.

Literature Review

In this section, some of the literature that takes a central position is reviewed in this area of teaching, among them strategies in the teaching, challenges faced, benefits derived, and professional development and how it aids the teachers in transitioning from the face-to-face mode of teaching to remote/hybrid teaching. This review attempts to put the findings of the current study into perspective with the wider field of English language teaching and learning.

Remote and Hybrid Teaching Strategy

While many teachers have tried different ways to deliver English language instructions effectively within these novel learning ecologies (Bao, 2020), it is hybrid and remote pedagogies that are now supposed to be the 'new normal' in place of fully and traditionally conducted face-to-face. This is therefore the biggest concern with remote and hybrid teaching: as Hodges et al. (2020) avers, the involvement of the students—that is, the weakness associated with face-to-face teaching—can be more challenging for teachers to keep the students motivated. Thus, accordingly, several plans have been proposed by the researchers using interactive multimedia resources, gamification, and community-building collaborative learning activities (Wang et al., 2020; Hrastinski, 2019).

The serious turn toward remote and hybrid teaching has, in turn, further highlighted the increasing need for English language instruction that enables opportunities of both asynchronous and synchronous learning for the learners (Bozkurt et al., 2020). The students study asynchronously; therefore, at any given time, it depends on individual agreement with the best time they may be able to review the learning materials and fulfill their assigned tasks (Hrastinski, 2019). Synchronous learning offers instant interaction and, in computing, is equates to language skills and the classroom sense of community.

Challenges of Remote and Hybrid Teaching

"They never said how much," said Long, a retired federal employee who also worked for the Internal Revenue Service. First among such challenges is that educators had to transition from traditional modes of teaching to new learning environments, which involved new skills and competencies. Further, this transition presents some challenges teachers may face with student behaviour and how to maintain student interest in the hybrid or distance-controlled setting (Reich et al., 2020). Therefore, this adds to the pedagogical challenges in relation to available literature pointing out a number of technology-related issues, such as low access to devices and the internet, technical problems, and fears related to cyber insecurities as the main barriers that hinder the successful implementation of remote and hybrid teaching

(Bozkurt et al., 2020). Such barriers can differentially affect low-income students and be compounded under remote learning circumstances.

Benefits of Remote and Hybrid Teaching

Other potential benefits of the hard-won remote and hybrid teaching approaches to English language instruction come to light. The approach exposes benefits of improved flexibility and access by learners, who can access learning materials from any location upon the availability of an internet connection and study at their own time (Crawford et al., 2020). Apart from that, the opportunity of individualized instruction is also ensured from the application of remote and hybrid learning environments, where it is rather easy for the teachers to keep the record of achievement and feedback on the same (Hrastinski, 2019). Both hybrid and remote instructions may lay down an access-linked foundation to a great number of digital resources, like multimedia content, online forums for discussion, and language learning applications, which can have a huge impact on improved quality in the English language education process, also serving as the diversity so much required by this process (Wang et al., 2020). This increased, access-related resource and instruction flexibility have the potential to further increased student outcomes and satisfaction (Bao, 2020).

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Professional Development for Remote and Hybrid Teaching

That pushed, therefore, by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced institutions and organizations to all of a sudden not only shift all teaching and learning to remote delivery but also in some cases to hybrid delivery, it became even more imperative that targeted professional development opportunities and resources were supporting English language educators in their efforts. Research is going to show what this study reveals: that effective teacher training and support is essential in improving remote and hybrid instruction quality. Equally, the following will also be looked at under professional development programs: the use of technology in language learning, pedagogical strategies in remote and hybrid teaching modes, and ways of increasingly engaging students with motivation (Hodges et al., 2020). Moreover, an environment of constant professional growth and interaction between teachers of the English language can develop a community of practice that helps in sharing their experiences and ideas on how to develop them, hence building effective strategies in teaching remotely or via a hybrid mode of learning (Richards, 2015). Refinement of this particular practice shall assist each educator in being supported by colleagues and enables the improvement of service delivery to students in a remote or hybrid environment (Bao, 2020).

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review presented an outline of what is known from the current research with respect to remote and hybrid English language teaching, bringing out strategies, challenges, benefits, and professional development on how it would support educators in the transition to the two new modes of instruction. The present research adds to this mounting literature with a review—or, better yet, data—from English language teachers about their experiences, best practices, and perceptions with regards to teaching in the hybrid or remote mode. The implications this present study might have for future research and practice in remote and hybrid English Language Teaching would be the identification of areas that might need more support, resources, or professional development. As remote and hybrid learning continues to evolve, it will remain critically important for educators, researchers, and policymakers to collaborate in an effort to ensure that English learners are receiving the highest quality of instruction possible, given their classroom context.

The review of the literature, therefore, placed this current study within the ambit of the wider field of English language teaching and learning. The purpose of this review shall be to identify the strategies, challenges, benefits, and role of professional development in remote and hybrid instruction that could provide a platform for further investigation and inquiry into the changing landscape of English language education post-pandemic.

Methodology

Participants and Sampling

The particular study involved 130 English language teachers with experience in remote and hybrid teaching. The study engaged the English language teachers through purposive sampling, whereby the selection of participants is made based on already defined criteria. The research targeted maximum representation in teachers under different groups: experienced and not-so-experienced, from both large and small educational institutions.

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Research Instrument

The design of the survey to be used is the Likert scale, aimed at capturing the perceptions of English teachers with respect to their experiences and what they think of remote and hybrid teaching. The questions in the survey sought information on online teaching experience, familiarization with remote and hybrid approaches to teaching, and application of preferred approaches to teaching. They also sought information about the challenges faced, perceived benefits, and satisfaction with student performance and engagement levels. Respondents were to rate from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" using a five-point scale for each statement.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was widely dispersed to potential respondents through different channels: professional networks, social media groups, and email lists, to tap into a wide variety of English language teachers. Data were collected over a period of four weeks, ensuring that participants had enough time to respond to the survey at their convenience.

Data Analysis

After conducting the survey, data collected from 130 respondents was analysed quantitatively. The analysis was carried out to determine the frequency and percentage of responses to each survey item to come up with key findings related to the research objectives. The data were then analysed to identify trends and patterns in the experiences and opinions reflected by the participants, showing areas of agreement and disagreement among the respondents.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical conduct of the research was applied throughout the study in a way that guaranteed the privacy and confidentiality of all respondents. Informed consent for the survey was sought from all respondents. Collected information was cleansed, and individual information that could identify the participants was removed to protect their privacy. The results from the study are presented in good faith and at face value, with no intention of trying to mislead or appear to be presenting the results in any way other than truthful and accurate.

Results

The present study found that online and hybrid teaching had led to some remarkable changes in ELT—from an increase in technology use to changes in teaching methodologies and ongoing faculty professional development. Students' performance remained unchanged from that of a traditional setting, but in cases when best practices were established—such as using interactive and entertaining digital tools, and developing collaboration among students—only then was change seen. Based on the above data, the

responses provided by the respondents to each statement in the Likert scale rating systems are distributed as percentages in table 1.

Table 1
Likert-scale rating

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Online teaching experience was better than in-person	55%	10%	30%	15%	20%
2. I was familiar with remote and hybrid teaching methods	24%	53%	12%	11%	30%
3. I employed my preferred teaching strategies in remote and hybrid settings	35%	33%	22%	33%	7%
4. The perceived challenges and benefits of remote and hybrid teaching were more than in-person	32%	20%	26%	36%	16%
5. I am satisfied with student performance and engagement in remote and hybrid settings	42%	24%	22%	30%	12%

Table 1 below summarises the responses given by English language teachers in relation to their experiences and opinions derived from the implementation of remote and hybrid teaching modalities, as answered in the Likert-scale survey. It contained five statements, and respondents were supposed to respond on a five-point scale to show to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The results were indeed a mixed reaction, indicating that while some teachers benefited from remote and hybrid teaching, others struggled to adapt to these new teaching approaches. Key findings include a general preference for traditional classroom settings; unfamiliarity with remote or hybrid teaching methods; mixed results when employing preferred teaching strategies; and perceived challenges and benefits that outweigh those of in-person teaching for some respondents. Overall, there was dissatisfaction with student performance in remote and hybrid settings. The results, therefore, highlight the necessity for more support, resource provisioning, and professional development activities that can enable teachers to navigate the challenges and opportunities of effective remote or hybrid teaching in the field of English Language Education.

Results

The results section presents quantitative findings obtained from the Likert-scale data by English language teachers based on their experiences and perceptions of remote and hybrid methodologies.

Online Teaching Experience

Specifically, 55% of the respondents strongly disagreed, and another 23% disagreed with the statement that online learning compares favourably to the classroom experience, indicating a preference for the traditional classroom setting. Thirty-five percent of respondents (15% agreed and 20% strongly agreed) felt that online teaching was better, showing that there was a segment that recognized the benefits of online or remote learning.

Familiarity with Remote and Hybrid Teaching Methods

The majority of respondents (53%) disagreed with the statement that they were familiar with remote and hybrid teaching methods, suggesting a lack of training or support for teachers to implement these new approaches. Only 11% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed that they were familiar with these methods, highlighting a need for improvement in providing resources and professional development opportunities to help teachers deliver successful remote and hybrid instruction.

Employing Preferred Teaching Strategies

Responses were mixed regarding employing preferred teaching strategies in remote and hybrid settings. Some teachers (33% agree and 7% strongly agree) were able to adapt their preferred teaching strategies to the new learning environment, while a significant portion (35% strongly disagree and 33% disagree) struggled with this transition. This suggests that additional resources and training are essential to help teachers develop effective strategies for remote and hybrid learning environments. A significant proportion of respondents (36% agree and 16% strongly agree) felt that the challenges of remote and hybrid teaching far outweigh the benefits compared to traditional face-to-face teaching. However, 32% strongly disagreed, and 20% disagreed, indicating that many educators still perceive significant challenges, including student engagement and technology issues, in remote and hybrid settings.

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Satisfaction with Student Performance and Engagement

Satisfaction with student performance and engagement in remote and hybrid environments was rated relatively low, with 42% strongly disagreeing and 24% disagreeing, expressing dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, 30% agreed and 12% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with student performance and engagement. This underlines the importance of identifying and implementing best practices to foster active involvement and performance in remote and hybrid learning modalities.

The findings illustrate that English language teachers have mixed opinions and experiences regarding remote and hybrid teaching methods. The study reiterates the need for focused support, resources, and professional development opportunities to assist teachers in overcoming the challenges and maximizing the potential benefits of remote and hybrid English language education.

Discussion

This discussion section explains the findings and their relevance in reference to the relevant literature, all meant to enhance clear perceptions of what the impact of remote and hybrid teaching methods in the context of English Language Teaching is. The dominance in the sample was high, showing a tendency toward traditionalism in pedagogy, i.e., on-site, compared to instruction offered online by a margin of 55%. The finding has been echoed by previous research that found many educators had challenges adjusting to new teaching approaches that were either remote or hybrid (Hodges et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, with the abrupt imperative to shift to remote teaching, brought challenges such as the need to adapt to new technologies, keep student attention, and cope with the logistics of remote pedagogy (Bozkurt et al., 2020). A majority of the respondents (35% combined agree and strongly agree), however, did view online teaching in a positive light, in a manner that it was more flexible, accessible, and cost-efficient (Crawford et al., 2020), perhaps starting to shift the trend towards value recognition in remote learning opportunities.

Familiarity with Remote and Hybrid Teaching Methods

Slightly more than half (53%) felt that they had no idea about the existence of such teaching methods for remote and hybrid and, therefore, must have pointed out lack of proper training and support for adopting such innovations. Most educators also went through a very quick shift into online learning with very little time to prepare (Reich et al., 2020). The biggest limitation to effective application of remote and hybrid teaching and learning strategies: the faculty simply has not had time to learn this new concept (Hodges et al., 2020). In view of this, such professional development and resources are to be designed particularly for a successful transfer of these instructional modalities. The latest studies have displayed that professional development and the support of teachers bear a very strong strategy for building the capacity to provide high-quality remote or hybrid instruction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Employing Preferred Teaching Strategies

This study reported mixed results of teachers' ability in remote or hybrid teaching environments to apply the preferred method for teaching. This diversity of response may reflect more general differences both in the type of instructional practices and in teachers' and students' preferences for language learning (Richards, 2015). It will include material, training opportunities, and best practices for remotely and in a hybrid manner teaching and learning opportunities.

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Perceived Challenges and Benefits

The majority of the respondents in this same survey also felt that with its challenges and benefits, remote and hybrid teaching exceeded the traditional mode in value. This may be taken to indicate that an understanding existed whereby the remote and hybrid modes of learning carry benefits, but the adjustment was highly perturbing (Crawford et al., 2020). However, significant and continuing challenges present themselves to teachers, particularly in engaging the learners and technological issues (Hodges et al., 2020). Such transitions, therefore, will need ongoing support and professional learning for teachers and investment in technology infrastructure to be successful (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). As remote and hybrid learning continue to grow, it becomes even more indispensable to understand and solve the current issues facing these English language teachers. Purpose: The purpose is to streamline the educational fraternity towards the teaching and learning processes with maximum possible benefits accruing out of new approaches to instructions.

Satisfaction with Student Performance and Engagement

The performance and satisfaction of the levels of engagement with a remote or hybrid setting by students were at very low satisfactory grounds, where a big proportion of respondents were not satisfied. This is consistent with previous concerns that student isolation or hybridity in remote or hybrid modes of learning could affect his or her performance adversely (Reich et al., 2020). This kind of dissatisfaction points to difficulties in student motivation issues, particularly those that entail available technologies and the necessity for more support and resources (Hrastinski, 2019; Bao, 2020). That warrants the identification and operationalization of best practices to foster student motivation, offer personalized feedback, and offer digital equity solutions that arise in empowering student outcomes in distance and hybrid learning.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The implications of such results are pointed out in a further study and in the practice of remote and hybrid ELT. Such implications underscore the necessity for detailing the investigations on challenges and benefits that accrue, especially the students' performance and engagement behaviour, by applying the remote and hybrid learning/teaching methodologies. From longitudinal studies, at least an estimate of the longer-term effects of remote and hybrid learning could be assessed. This is one clear area where additional design and evaluation of specifically developed professional development programs for English language teachers could help bridge this gap in knowledge of these modes of instruction. Facilitate the exchange of best practices and collaboration between educators, researchers, and policymakers to raise the quality of instruction further and support continuous improvement within remote or hybrid learning environments.

Conclusion

In these regards, this study is quite valuable in explaining long-term implications pertaining to remote and hybrid learning for ELT. Spotting the challenges and opportunities that are present in the COVID-19 pandemic environment and would call for change in the middle of the changing landscape of education. This could be identified from the following point of view: The implications are that there is a need to find ways of effective communication and collaboration through assessment while in virtual settings, to be able to enhance the learning experience of languages. Certainly, with the changing dynamics in the field of education, it is pertinent to take note of the impact of remote and hybrid forms on learning, which shall be very important in quality instruction and keeping the student-learning environment alive. The insights from this research will further inform the educational strategies and ensure the resilience of the quality of education in ELT during global crises and advancement in technology.

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