Exploring Teachers' Capacity to Engage with Remote English Language Teaching Environments: The Interface Between Theory and Practice

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Abstract This chapter takes a snapshot of the current situation in terms of secondary school English teachers' capacity to engage in teaching remotely, as has been necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic, in three distinct locations within Asia – India, Malaysia, and Taiwan. In addition, taking account of the potential effects of COVID-19, it seeks to uncover any mismatch between teachers' theoretical understandings of what remote teaching of English language classes involves and what has been happening in practice. It is based upon a small-scale qualitative study that used questionnaire data from English teachers working in secondary schools in different locations and interview data from academics working in the field of English language teacher education in each location. Through the data, the study revisits how teachers' capacity to teach remotely is modelled as well as making recommendations in terms of supporting and training teachers to deliver classes remotely and the need to pay attention to both teacher and student wellbeing in order to make remote teaching sustainable.

Keywords English language teaching · emergency remote teaching · TPACK · teacher support and training · staff and student wellbeing

1 Introduction

The present study explores how English language teachers engage with remote online teaching, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In undertaking this exploration, a distinction needs to be made between planned online teaching, where the teaching is intended to take place online, and emergency remote teaching (ERT),

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M.-M. Suárez, W. M. El-Henawy (eds.), *Optimizing Online English Language Learning and Teaching*, English Language Education 31,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27825-9_3

where, as has been the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have been forced to move from face-to-face to remote online teaching at short notice, often with little or no prior knowledge of what remote teaching might involve. Although a small number of the participants had some experience of teaching English remotely before the pandemic, the remote teaching they refer to in this study is best described as ERT as it came about through face-to-face classes being transferred to a remote online environment with very little warning or planning.

This study connects with previous studies by Balchin and Wild (2015, 2016, 2018, 2020), which investigated technology use in English language classrooms in secondary schools in Malaysia. Those studies focused on the factors that may act as barriers or enablers in introducing different technologies into language classes, whereas this study, while remaining focused on technology use, focuses on ERT and broadens the geographical range to include both India and Taiwan as well as Malaysia.

The study is underpinned by the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Mishra, 2019). At the same time, it recognizes that the TPACK model, designed with technology use within face-to-face teaching and blended scenarios in mind, may not be sufficient to allow full consideration of ERT or the impact of the period of ERT during COVID-19 on technology use in the future.

This chapter also makes recommendations concerning the knowledge, support, and training teachers need to teach remotely, and argues for greater consideration to be given to teacher and student wellbeing in remote teaching environments.

2 Literature Review

The section sets out to capture pre-pandemic writing relevant to the debates around technology and pedagogy, define key terms, and identify themes and threads as they emerge. The chapter covers three geographical locations: India, Malaysia, and Taiwan, and this has also influenced the type or range of literature included.

The first part focuses on barriers to technology use pre-COVID-19 pandemic, much of which has remained relevant during the pandemic. The second part explores the ERT situation necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The final two parts discuss the TPACK model for incorporating technology into teaching and learning, and how this model might be refined, particularly in the light of the pandemic.

2.1 Barriers to Technology Use Pre-pandemic

There have been many studies and discussions around the barriers to integrating technology into teaching (e.g., Cárdenas-Claros & Oyanedel, 2016; Ertmer et al., 2012; Walker & White, 2013), with some specifically focusing on integrating

technology into English language classes (e.g., Balchin & Wild, 2015, 2016, 2018). Though these studies tend to focus on integrating technology into classroom teaching, the issues they raise with technology use remain pertinent to online as well as face-to-face instruction, and to learning beyond the classroom more broadly.

In terms of barriers to technology use in teaching, a distinction can be made between internal barriers such as teachers' confidence and external barriers such as the availability of resources, and, as Ahmad (2014) notes, internal 'teacher factors tend to outweigh [external] school factors in hampering teachers' uptake of technology' (p.1).

At the same time, it is acknowledged that there is more potential for internal factors to be overcome than external barriers (Balchin & Wild, 2015, 2018; Chen, 2010; Ertmer et al., 2006). Balchin and Wild (2015) therefore suggest a primary focus within English language teacher training programs on:

> internal factors in order to promote positive changes to beliefs in relation to technology. This focus should involve building teacher trainees' knowledge, competence and confidence in using technology in the language classroom … (so that) fears and anxieties related to technology use can be lowered and a 'can-do' mentality is nurtured with trainees encouraged to push the boundaries of their knowledge and experiment with new tools.' (p. 54–55)

External barriers, however, appear more resistant to change in the short term. Within one of the locations for this study, Malaysia, both Ghavifekr et al. (2016) and Cheok et al. (2017) note that integrating technology into teaching and learning beyond the confines of the school environment remains challenging, as many families, particularly in rural areas, do not have access to the internet at home. These challenges resonate beyond the Malaysian context, with connectivity and access to technological tools being major considerations that have continued to influence learning and teaching in different settings throughout the pandemic.

2.2 Emergency Remote Teaching

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, both skilled language teachers and those with lesser competences in the field were obliged to relinquish their face-to-face classrooms and engage in new ways of communicating through technology, taking their practice online and teaching remotely from their students. This is now widely agreed to be termed as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020). It is important to distinguish between ERT and 'planned online learning', which Hodges et al. (2020) describe in terms of:

> effective online learning [that] results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development. The design process and the careful consideration of different design decisions have an impact on the quality of the instruction. And it is this careful design process that will be absent in most cases in these emergency shifts (para. 8).

By contrast, they view ERT as:

> a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances, … (with the main aim) not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis (para. 14).

It is evident that teaching and learning under such difficult circumstances is challenging and requires creative thinking and a problem-solving mindset. This contrasts with planned online education courses, which are carefully and methodically designed by groups of professionals.

The necessary response to the pandemic has, in other words, been to continue to deliver classes remotely through whatever means possible and to offer a sense of continuity with little time for consistent planning, the challenges of which should not be underestimated.

Meanwhile, Seabra et al. (2021) conclude that one of the main difficulties teachers have experienced during the pandemic is the increased workload because of the additional time it takes to plan remote classes. Similarly, MacDonald and Hill (2021) note the struggle to balance work and family life, especially for teachers with their children to look after.

Furthermore, Magee (2020) reports difficulties in adapting behavior to remote environments, which lack the non-verbal social cues that face-to-face situations offer. Indeed, computer-mediated communication (CMC) has resulted in mental and physical exhaustion with 'Zoom fatigue' being reported to be a common negative experience (Nadler, 2020). Notably, 'Zoom fatigue' is a newly emerged phenomenon widely understood as anxiety, tiredness, or even burnout from the overuse of virtual communication platforms. It is evident that substantial extra undertakings such as having to learn how to use new technology, select appropriate online platforms, include additional technological tools, and constantly be present in front of a computer screen for teaching and learning purposes, meetings, and tutorials can lead to teachers feeling tired. The situation can become increasingly challenging and often accompanied by feelings of frustration at times of poor internet connection or limited access for teachers and students to adequate technical equipment.

Clearly, ERT can be more stressful than face-to-face teaching and lead to feelings of uncertainty and trepidation among teachers, but it is also an opportunity for teachers and students to explore new horizons and grow collectively through learning new knowledge and skills and applying these in trying to achieve their goals. Ohashi's (2020) investigation of affect in relation to ERT reveals feelings of happiness and thankfulness as teachers discover advantages of teaching remotely using technology, such as through online quizzes and other technological tools for practising language skills and through being able to work from home. Indeed, technology has undoubtedly been a key factor in terms of enabling teaching and learning to continue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also important to highlight the importance of social development for students in any class. Students come to class, face-to-face or online, not simply for learning, but also to socialize and to support one another, as well as to exchange ideas. This point is emphasized by Murphey and Kelly (2020) who believe that the role of online classes is more than just for teaching or delivering information, but

rather they should provide a space for social, mental, and moral development. Thus, the importance of allowing the time and space for this to happen is crucial for both their cognitive development and their wellbeing, particularly during the isolation experienced globally by so many children and their families during periods of lockdown.

2.3 Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK)

The study is underpinned by the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). As Mishra (2019, p.76) notes, TPACK 'describes the kinds of knowledge required by teachers for successful integration of technology in teaching and it has been widely used in educational research'. It focuses on the interplay between technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge in achieving technological integration. In relation to this chapter, the interface of two areas, technological and pedagogical knowledge is particularly pertinent.

Mishra (2019) adds flexibility to the framework by including the variable of context. This places emphasis on teachers' knowledge and experience of working within the constraints of a particular structure, organization, ethos, or cultural setting, and recognizes the dynamic role played by teachers in relation to local curriculum design and professional development. This addition is also helpful in terms of incorporating allowance for the realignment of teaching imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has varied depending on the setting. Indeed, although the framework implies a more structured approach than ERT during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed, as a framework for the implementation of technology into classes, it remains relevant in relation to the ERT.

2.4 Moving Forward with TPACK

Balchin and Wild (2020) identify a need to foreground the element of 'community' either within or in addition to the TPACK framework, highlighting that 'teachers learn through collaborating within a supportive professional community'. Collaboration within professional settings is also emphasised by Saudelli and Ciampa (2016, p. 241), who point out that that interaction within their professional community is something that teachers welcome. It could also be argued that this is a natural part of informal as well as formal discourse within the school environment. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and of teachers' roles during ERT, the inclusion of community alongside TPACK seems apposite, particularly given the

importance of community in facilitating professional development, which often takes places within and with the assistance of the broader teaching community.

The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a catalyst for encouraging expertise and creativity among both experienced and newly qualified teachers. These teachers have been forced by circumstances into a sudden transition from a face-to-face to an ERT environment, regardless of their experience or competence in using technology and regardless of any external barriers that may exist, such as issues with connectivity. This transition has necessitated a certain amount of co-dependency, sharing ideas among colleagues and the wider teaching community online. This has by default created an accelerated move within many teaching contexts in the direction of what Bax (2003, p. 27) refers to as the 'normalization' of technology use, where technology is used seamlessly within the teaching and learning process. At the same time, it could be argued that, in order to continue to move forward in the future, there is a need for reflection and critical assessment of the various platforms and online tools being used in particular settings with regard to their pedagogical benefits.

In terms of recalibrating professional development for language and other teachers, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the post-pandemic world, there seems to be a case for refining the TPACK framework to ensure that it is robust and flexible enough to incorporate issues highlighted by the pandemic.

3 Methodology

The study informing this chapter was built around the discussions above. More specifically, guided by the theoretical framework provided by Mishra and Koehler (2006), it assesses the current situation in terms of the capacity of secondary school English teachers to engage with remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study was qualitative in nature, based on open-ended questionnaires and interviews with teachers and teacher trainers in the three geographical locations for the study: Taiwan, Malaysia, and India.[1] These locations were deliberately chosen for their varying degrees of access to technology and technological resources outside the classroom, allowing the study to place more emphasis on context, as emphasized by Mishra (2019).

The study explored English language teachers' perceptions about and attitudes towards teaching remotely, and in doing so attempted to uncover their underlying concerns as well as what they viewed as the more positive outcomes of the shift to teaching English remotely. To guide the study the following research questions were formulated:

[1] The participants from India were all based in the state of Kerala. This was chosen as a third geographical location, though the authors note that they are not seeking to suggest Kerala is necessarily representative of such a large and diverse country.

- What impact has ERT had on everyday professional practice in English language teaching?
- To what extent are English language teachers equipped to deliver ERT?
- To what extent should English language teacher training adapt to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on practice?

3.1 Participants

The participants in the study were drawn from the three geographical locations, with fourteen participants completing open-ended questionnaires and three participants being interviewed.

The English language teacher participants were identified to complete the questionnaire via snowball sampling. They were working in secondary schools, including both resource-rich and resource-scarce working environments, and included teachers who considered themselves both more and less proficient in using different technologies for teaching purposes. The teaching experience of these participants varied from 5 to 22 years.

The English language academic participants who were interviewed, one in each location, were selected based on their professional standing within their remote online teaching community as well as for their experience in remote online teaching and teacher development.

The participants' backgrounds, in terms of their geographical location, age, and years of teaching experience, are summarised in Table 1 below.

In each of the settings, some of the participants were already engaging in teaching classes remotely in the period pre-COVID-19 pandemic, though the vast majority of their colleagues were not. However, even though these participants were at an advantage when the pandemic began, having more experience in creating materials for as well as delivering classes remotely, the teaching described in this study fits comfortably with the bounds of ERT. Even those with experience in teaching remotely, and who had more familiarity with using technology for teaching were faced, with very little advance warning, with a completely new situation and the associated need to get to grips with new platforms and their functionality.

3.2 Instruments and Procedures

The study took a qualitative approach with data collected via open-ended questionnaires and interviews, both carried out online.

The open-ended questionnaire aimed to provide a snapshot of teachers' perceptions about attitudes towards teaching remotely in different geographical locations. Guidelines suggested by Coombe and Davidson (2015) and Hewson et al. (2016) were followed in the creation and administration of the questionnaire, noting that

Table 1 Participants' backgrounds

Participant	*Geographical location*	*Age*	*Years of teaching experience*
P1	India	38	14
P2	India	45	20
P3	India	29	5
P4	India	35	12
P5	India	32	9
P6	Malaysia	30	6
P7	Malaysia	40	15
P8	Malaysia	38	14
P9	Malaysia	29	5
P10	Malaysia	34	10
P11	Taiwan	38	15
P12	Taiwan	41	17
P13	Taiwan	37	14
P14	Taiwan	47	22
P-A	India	54	30
P-B	Malaysia	32	8
P-C	Taiwan	43	17

'the use of online surveys is now well established' in academic research (Lee et al., 2017, p. 6). The questionnaire itself is given in Appendix A.

The online interviews aimed to provide broader insights into the developments and issues around teaching remotely in different locations. In conducting these interviews, guidelines suggested by Hewson et al. (2016) and O'Connor and Madge (2017) were followed. Hewson et al. (2016) observed that 'researchers using asynchronous IMR [Internet-mediated research] approaches often report obtaining rich reflective qualitative data' (p. 49), and noting that 'Online interviews, conducted in non-real time or asynchronously, are now a fairly common data collection strategy' (O'Connor & Madge, 2017, p. 417).

The interviews were conducted over Zoom and took between 45 and 60 minutes. They were semi-structured, with two of the researchers involved in all the interviews. The following broad initial prompts were used by the interviewers to structure the discussion:

- The current situation with teaching English language remotely
- The benefits and challenges with teaching English language remotely
- Teacher training and development for remote English language teaching

Interviewees were encouraged to elaborate and give specific examples of their working practices and those of their colleagues within these broad areas.

The questionnaires were completed and the interviews were carried out in English. This was not seen as problematic as all participants were English language teachers or English language teacher educators. Additionally, the asynchronous

nature of the online questionnaires provided time for respondents to construct their responses.

3.3 Data analysis

In analyzing data from the open-ended questionnaires and interviews, the approach taken was in line with that suggested by Richards and Morse (2012), who made a distinction between three types of code –descriptive, topic, and analytic– used when analyzing data. Descriptive coding relates to the storage of basic factual data, for example, allocating a number to each respondent to the questionnaire and each participant interviewed. Topic coding of the text in both the questionnaire and interview data was carried out, labeling 'passages within the text which express a particular idea or refer to an event' (Murray, 2009, p. 51). At this point, different parts of the data were coded independently by the three researchers, and following discussion three broad themes were agreed upon: 'moving forward with TPACK', 'teacher support and training', and 'teacher and student wellbeing'. Through further analysis of the data, moving into what Richards and Morse (2012) refer to as analytic coding, the broad themes were divided into subthemes. For example, under 'moving forward with TPACK', subthemes of 'technological pedagogical knowledge required by English language teachers in ERT situations' and 'the role of context in developing TPACK for English language teachers' were generated.

Having completed the coding process, interviewees and a selection of respondents to the questionnaires were asked to comment on whether these subthemes effectively represented their situation and lived experiences. The comments received were then fed back into the presentation and discussion of the findings of the study outlined below.

In terms of the presentation of the data in the next section: questionnaire participants are coded as 'P1' for questionnaire participant 1, then 'P2', 'P3' and so on; the three interview participants are coded as 'P-A' for the first interview participant, 'P-B' for the second and 'P-C' for the third.

4 Findings

This section is divided into three key areas: moving forward with TPACK, teacher support and training, and teacher and student wellbeing.

4.1 Moving Forward with TPACK

During the period of ERT, two English language teachers tried to replicate classroom teaching using a variety of online platforms. Interestingly, they made effective use of non-English language teaching-specific technologies such as YouTube, Telegram, Facebook and TikTok. However, these were often used in combination with classroom or language-based applications such as: Classroomscreen, an application designed to offer teachers a student-friendly space in which to present instructions, visuals, and texts appropriately; Grammarly, used for identifying grammatical errors in English, but also as a dictionary for checking definitions and sounds of words; and Google Docs, used to promote collaborative writing in English.

An example of how these were integrated into an online English language classroom was given by P7, who sent a copy of a unit from a textbook to her students through Telegram, conducted skills-based lessons based on the unit via Classroomscreen, and made use of the Grammarly application for vocabulary enrichment and extension. She also used thematically linked extracts from TikTok and YouTube to supplement the materials in the textbook. In essence, a combination of traditional materials projected through and with the addition of new media.

Another participant, P-B, made use of Canva, an app designed to create graphics and presentations, as a means for students to create English language presentations online. P-B also made an instructional video on how to use Canva, which she put on YouTube for her students.

Overwhelmingly, however, questionnaire responses pointed to technical difficulties as being a major barrier to successful remote English Language teaching with technology, with these difficulties generally relating to external factors beyond the control of the teacher, such as connectivity problems, as opposed to lack of technological knowledge, in the TPACK sense, on the part of the teacher. Ten of the fourteen English language teachers who completed the questionnaire referred to technical difficulties of this type. The response from P1, based in India, was typical: ‘A large number of students did not have mobile phones and those that had, experienced connectivity issues’. Similarly, P12, based in Taiwan, commented that ‘some students lack the hardware to participate effectively – mic/camera’. Student access to technology is clearly a crucial factor in ensuring the continuation of learning and teaching. Added to this, a number of the participants indicated that teachers’ attitudes towards technology for English language teaching are not always positive and that not all participants are ‘enthusiastic’ or ‘fond of’ using it (P-A, P-B, and P-C).

There were also several concerns raised around technological pedagogical knowledge. Several participants found it difficult to engage students and encourage participation online, with P4 mentioning ‘inattentive children’, P5 suggesting that there was ‘not a chance to face to face interaction’, P12 highlighting that she had difficulty in ‘encouraging participation from all students … (and) synchronous teaching makes it harder to have small groups’ and P13 stating that she is ‘not able to know how many students are actively participating’. P3 further noted: ‘teaching

online synchronously has caused me to fall back to teacher-centered teaching'. In a similar vein, P13 also commented that what differs when she teaches English remotely compared to face-to-face is that there is a lack of 'interaction between student-student and teacher-student'.

However, it is also clear that ERT experience has not only pushed English language teachers to evolve their practice and achieve a better understanding of technology, but also to question how they teach. P1, for example, has become 'more high tech', P3 is pushing herself to be 'more flexible and creative', and P4 has become 'an even more active teacher', while P-A reports that his students welcome his 'slower' pace teaching style.

These comments suggest that the use of technology in English language teaching is having a direct influence on pedagogy in terms of student participation, classroom interaction, and the role of the teacher. It is also clear that there is a direct impact on communication between teacher and student. This is not to say that it is impossible to engage students and encourage participation in a remote teaching environment, rather that it is an area of concern, and one where teachers may need more help or where recognition needs to be made that there are aspects of face-to-face teaching which may be compromised when teaching remotely.

Connected to this, break-out rooms, which can potentially provide opportunities for the group work considered essential in English language classes for enhancing speaking skills through communicative activities, were mentioned in each of the interviews, and while they in theory offer a solution to engagement and participation issues, they did not in practice seem either to be used extensively or to work effectively when they were used. From the interview data, it appears that some students 'did not like working in small groups' to learn English online and even complained about the ineffectiveness of such interactions, with one participant describing her attempts to use break-out rooms as a 'disaster' (P-C). Several teachers circumvented the use of breakout groups simply by asking the students to show their faces and be prepared to switch their microphones on when nominated to respond to questions. Some teachers also alerted the students to the chat feature for communication purposes as well as for specific writing tasks such as giving advice.

It seems evident that the impact of technology on English language teaching during ERT has been significant, but that the TPACK interface between Technological Knowledge (TK) and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) is one where teachers could benefit from further professional development in order to inform and improve their remote teaching practice.

There were also some concerns around attendance. P3, P6, and P-C have experienced problems with students attending classes remotely. This could indicate that some students struggled with their own motivation to study English online or to engage with the remote learning process.

In terms of the materials selected for use during this period. P-A reported making use of YouTube clips for both synchronous and asynchronous activities. He spoke of an English class which was recorded, complete with tasks and links embedded into the materials, which the students would watch, completing the tasks as they went

through the clips. Interestingly, P-A focused on using authentic online materials rather than material specifically designed for the English language classroom.

4.2 Teacher Support and Training

Participants actively sought resources and support from a wide range of sources for teaching English languages classes online. Resources including webinars, in some cases these being compulsory (P-C), and the broader online English language teaching community were considered as being helpful by seven participants (P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P12, and P13). Friends and colleagues were cited as providing support by three participants (P1, P5, and P8). A further three participants (P9, P10, P11) cited themselves as being the major source of support. As P9 noted: 'No more support from anywhere. Knowledge development only through experience.' A small number of workshops and similar professional development events were also reported as being offered by regional or national educational bodies (P-A, P-B, and P-C).

A point to note here, however, is that the sources of support were relatively unplanned and the levels of support available, beyond going on to the internet and trying to find a solution independently, variable.

In terms of English language teacher training programs, participants in all three geographical locations suggested that using technology for teaching English in traditional classroom situations was included to some extent. However, given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties about the future, almost all participants noted a need for more emphasis to be placed on blended and online teaching within training programs. As P11 commented, her training was 'mostly based on the assumption that face-to-face learning was ongoing while technology and blended learning were supplements to it. Also, it was a relatively small part of the teacher training program'. Meanwhile, P6 believed that 'more exposure and emphasis could also be placed on different methods of blended learning'. Introducing a small number of 'user-friendly' apps to new teachers was suggested by P-B as a way of helping practitioners to overcome some of the challenges of teaching English remotely.

Two implications of these comments are that the use of technology in English teaching, in face-to-face and remote online scenarios, needs to be integral to English teacher training programs, rather than being seen as a 'supplement', and particularly given the ongoing COVID-19 situation, more attention should be paid to blended and remote teaching and learning within training programs.

4.3 Teacher and Student Wellbeing

In the harsh reality of transitioning to ERT, mental health and general wellbeing have been largely overlooked. However, participants in the study expressed various concerns for both teachers and students in this area.

Teachers' workload and preparation time were identified as key factors when trying to assess the impact of ERT on their wellbeing. All interviewees communicated the greatly increased amount of preparation time needed for their classes, with P-A and P-B regularly working until 'late at night' and P-C recalling initially having to spend '20 hours to design and prepare a two-hour lesson', which she described as 'exhausting'.

Considering student wellbeing during remote classes, as P10 put it, there is 'no online emotion transfer. But face to face, we see faces, we understand them'. Similarly, P4 commented that 'there is no proper teacher-student relationship being developed. Teachers cannot contribute to the overall development of a student', and P14 noted that it is 'very difficult to have a proper rapport with the children' when teaching remotely. From the interview data, however, it transpired that some lower-level English language learners enjoy interacting online as they are 'comfortable', 'feel more confident', and engage more effectively through the chat function (P-B, P-C). Both P-B and P-C also reported that they enquired about the way their students felt in order to ensure 'emotional wellbeing'.

A specific issue that combines wellbeing and pedagogy was over how to help students struggling to learn English when teaching remotely, with P12 noting that it was difficult to have 'individual conferences targeted at students who need more help' and P12 expressing concern that 'weak students' responses are low'. P-B also noted that she 'had to do a lot of scaffolding' with her students as a means of providing support and guidance, both to the whole group and to those students who needed one-to-one support.

These comments would suggest that paying attention to teacher and student wellbeing is paramount, as teaching and learning in difficult circumstances for extended periods could lead to frustration, burnout, or health problems.

5 Discussion

This discussion section builds upon the findings section above, focusing on the same three broad areas: moving forward with TPACK, teacher support and training, and teacher and student wellbeing.

5.1 Moving Forward with TPACK

In addition to the components of the TPACK model put forward by Mishra and Koehler (2006) and the additional component of 'context' suggested by Mishra (2019), the current study, in line with the findings of Balchin and Wild (2020), emphasizes the need for a community of practitioners to be involved in implementing and developing remote teaching, and in supporting each other in terms of professional development. In comparing the three settings for this study, this common

need for community and support among English language teachers within the settings was far more prevalent than any differences between individual settings.

One aspect of TPACK that has been foregrounded by this study is technological pedagogical knowledge. In particular, the participants frequently raised concern over the lack of or difficulties with facilitating student-student interaction online as well as with ensuring student engagement more broadly.

In terms of student-student interaction, break-out rooms are a possibility, particularly for the enhancement of the students' communication skills in English, though both teachers and students seem to have reservations about these. For teachers, they represent an extra layer of complexity in terms of remote classroom management and for students, there seems to be more reticence to interact in a second language in online groups. The issue with group work in face-to-face situations where stronger students dominate and do most of the work seems to be more problematic with remote teaching in that the teacher cannot simultaneously keep the groups in sight. This is not to say that working in break-out rooms in online English language classes is impossible, and certainly, teachers can help to encourage and enable communication in English through the careful grouping of students, but the study does strongly suggest that group work in a second language in a remote online environment is more challenging than in a face-to-face situation. Several possible reasons for this came up in the data, including the teaching approach when teaching English online being more teacher-centered than when teaching face-to-face classes, the preference of some students to keep their cameras off, and connectivity or sound quality issues. The issue of sound quality was highlighted as particularly important for English language classes since students need to develop listening and speaking skills, appropriate pronunciation and communicative competence in English.

Related to this, there can be challenges regarding student engagement in remote English language classes. Many students work with cameras turned off and teachers do not always feel that they can insist on cameras being on, in part due to potential technical issues that this can cause. Even with cameras on, it can be difficult for teachers to ascertain the level of engagement among students as, unlike with face-to-face teaching, the teacher cannot walk around the room and establish eye contact, and so gain awareness about how focused the students are on their learning. However, some teachers did make conscious use of the chat box in order to check student engagement and to allow students with connectivity issues, particularly those related to sound, an alternative means of online classroom participation.

It may also be that, over time, protocols for online engagement as well as the technology itself will develop in ways that encourage more sustained student engagement. This study suggests that the addition of context to the TPACK model is an important one. In examining English language teachers' experiences of ERT, it is vital to consider context-specific aspects of their teaching environments. For example, the large classes of 50 or more students in some classes in India may encourage a more teacher-centred approach in a face-to-face environment, which is arguably easier to replicate when teaching remotely, and which, as P-A noted, can potentially be enhanced online with the additional use of video clips and the plethora of different online tools. However, where classes are smaller and where the

emphasis is on a more communicative student-centered approach when teaching face-to-face, an expectation to reproduce this when teaching remotely can add to the challenge for the teacher.

Another factor in terms of enhancing learning within a particular setting is the availability of mobile phones, laptops, and computers, the technological knowledge in TPACK. Access to devices can be better at students' homes than in schools, and the move towards an acceptance that these devices are necessary for a child in terms of their education, in this case in their English classes, may represent a further step towards 'normalization' of technology in the teaching process, though there are clearly concerns here around economically disadvantaged students. Further, whether delivery is synchronous or asynchronous also has an impact on students' access to technology at home, as in many cases there is only one device per family and more than one family member may need to use it for study or work. This will clearly have an impact on students' performance in learning English language, whether in relation to anxiety about keeping up with their classes or the absence of peer support via texting or group chats.

5.2 Teacher Support and Training

A distinction needs to be made between immediate needs in terms of the support for English language teachers to develop their ERT and the medium to long-term need to develop confident and capable online English language teachers.

In terms of their short-term needs, all participants in the study had engaged in some form of professional development to support their ERT, though there were different approaches taken and varied levels of involvement. This development could perhaps be classified as emergency remote teacher development.

In the three geographical locations, as an indirect positive outcome of the pandemic, there seems to be a critical mass of teachers involved in enabling and embedding remote teaching. With the enforced move into ERT across many teaching communities, this has also created support networks for teachers. This contrasts with the pre-COVID-19 period, where there were pockets of teachers involved in remote teaching, including some of the participants in this study. Although these participants managed at the time through a combination of being enthusiastic to try to incorporate technology into their English language classes, having a reasonable level of technological knowledge in the TPACK sense, and tailoring their classes to the practical realities of their students in terms of access to appropriate technological resources, teaching remotely was nevertheless sporadic and located around the edges of 'mainstream' face-to-face teaching, often with limited resources and a lack of colleagues to call on for support. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became clear that teaching remotely was going to be necessary, and some teachers quickly engaged in this. Over time, as the pandemic continued, more teachers seemed to realize the need to fully commit to teaching remotely, for example through attending professional development webinars online or researching tools

and platforms online for themselves. This seems to have created a critical mass of teachers committed to developing their capacity to teach remotely. However, professional development did vary between settings as indicated below.

For English language teachers in India, professional development seemed to be undertaken voluntarily, though as P-A noted, referring to attendance at webinars, 'the inspired ones do it … about 20% of teachers', suggesting that the more motivated teachers are more actively seeking to develop their knowledge and skills in technology use.

For English language teachers in Malaysia, professional development again appeared voluntary, but there did seem to be an expectation, for some an obligation, that, as teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, they should familiarise themselves with different platforms and technologies. Connecting with the findings of Balchin and Wild (2020) from their study which was also located in Malaysia, participants here seemed to view themselves as part of the community of teachers, collaboratively developing their remote teaching.

For English language teachers in Taiwan, there was more overt governmental support in terms of resources for teachers. At the same time, webinars were often compulsory. Mandating teachers to attend webinars seems to be a way of reaching those teachers who might be less willing to seek out development opportunities, though, at the same time, the focus needs to be on offering webinars that provide useful support as opposed to obliging teachers to attend them.

It seems likely that, where a higher proportion of teachers undertake, through obligation or voluntarily, professional development related to technology use in English language classes, the overall quality of the classes should on average be higher.

Because of the speed at which teachers needed to move to remote online English language teaching, the support given, whilst being important in helping teachers maintain contact with and instruct their students remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, was often put together quickly, without necessarily making allowances for the different contexts in which teachers worked or recognizing the need to realign established pedagogic principles for the remote environment.

In terms of medium and longer-term teacher development for remote online English language teaching, technology use needs to reflect, enhance and enable good practice, rather than simply enable the delivery of lessons. To facilitate this, there needs to be a move from emergency remote teacher development to a more structured approach to integrating blended and remote teaching pedagogy into teacher education. Within English language teacher training programs, there is a need for a more overt focus on teaching remotely, blended learning, and more broadly on the use of different technologies in a face-to-face classroom environment.

Pre-COVID-19, initial English language teacher training programs tended to view blended and remote teaching scenarios as peripheral aspects of teaching. Going forward, both because technology continues to develop rapidly and because of the need for blended and remote teaching to be a more central part of a teacher's knowledge and skills base, these training programs need to adapt to include these modes of teaching. From this, it follows that there is also a need to develop critical

thinking and emphasize innovation in technology use with teacher education programs, encouraging teachers to question how and for what purpose they are using particular technological tools and online platforms, and to deliver classes in engaging ways with creative use of online platforms.

In order to better prepare our students for a world that seems increasingly unstable from future pandemics, wars, or the implications of climate change, it seems that technology continues to have a stabilizing role to play in English language teaching and education in general. However, this role is one that will require significant improvements in terms of creating supportive student-friendly environments within, for example, chat and breakout rooms, so that students are able to engage effectively with the target language and their learning more broadly. Alongside this, other key issues are ensuring economic accessibility to devices and connectivity for students of all backgrounds and addressing concerns over the safeguarding of children within an online environment.

5.3 Teacher and Student Wellbeing

As noted earlier, an issue that seems to have been downplayed if not overlooked in discussions around remote teaching is that of teacher and student wellbeing. In this study, it is highlighted in relation to English language teachers and students, though much of this discussion could be applied to the wider teaching and learning community.

There were a number of participants in this study who seemed to have adapted reasonably well to ERT in an online environment. These participants came across as highly motivated to spend considerable amounts of time preparing their classes and had often engaged in professional development, both via online events and through personal exploration. They seemed to possess the 'can do' attitude described in Balchin and Wild (2015) and to seek out ways to make things work, for example by creating YouTube videos to explain to students how to use particular technologies such as Canva as mentioned earlier.

However, even those with broadly positive dispositions towards remote English language teaching across the three geographical locations noted the considerable amount of extra preparation time required, compared to face-to-face teaching. There were examples given of participants spending several hours preparing a single remote class and there must be a question over whether this is sustainable. There is perhaps a heightened risk that teachers may feel burnt out because of the extra time commitment required, experience physical or mental health issues, or simply decide to leave the profession.

Equally, discussions of the relative merits of remote versus face-to-face English language teaching can lose sight of the pastoral aspects of a teacher's role. Teaching remotely inevitably makes it more difficult to offer students the kind of emotional support that is possible when engaging in face-to-face classroom teaching. The remote environment makes it more difficult for the teacher to identify students who

may be struggling with mental health or personal issues as well as with the learning element of the class. At the same time, the more limited amount of student-student interaction in classes, alongside enforced lack of interaction outside of classes in the COVID-19 period, can exacerbate issues with students' mental health. Further, some participants felt that their students were more reticent in informing the teacher of any wellbeing concerns they may have been having during or after remote classes. The potential with face-to-face classes for a focus on student wellbeing is perhaps a partially hidden aspect of these classes, which makes it easier to forget about when classes move to a remote environment, especially in an ERT situation where the emphasis is inevitably on the basics of getting the classes taught rather than taking a broader view which includes student wellbeing.

There is a connection here with the above discussions around TPACK. It might be suggested that awareness of teacher and student wellbeing issues is a part of the contextual knowledge included in the updated TPACK model (Mishra, 2019), or pedagogical knowledge. However, given the growing recognition and awareness of the importance of teacher and student wellbeing, and the difficulties highlighted with maintaining this in a remote teaching environment, there may also be a case for including it more explicitly, or at least including it under the label of 'community', an addition to the TPACK model suggested by Balchin and Wild (2020).

In schools, and places of further and higher education, the fallout from lockdowns due to COVID-19 and the resulting need for ERT on students is only gradually emerging. The resumption of face-to-face learning and teaching has by and large been greeted with relief, allowing as it does, the reintroduction of face-to-face classroom communication, multiple interactions, and the possibilities of building on social, emotional, and educational development. However, it is becoming clear that many students are suffering from heightened social anxiety levels and broader mental health issues that affect their education and general wellbeing.

'Zoom fatigue' awareness and recognizing the signs of CMC exhaustion, understanding the limitations of CMC and its impact on the behavior and attitude of online participants would help mitigate fatigue more effectively. Being armed with strategies to help teachers combat feelings of constant fatigue would allow them to live happier as well as healthier lives. Adaptations in teaching methodology, in terms of face-to-face, blended, and remote online delivery, seem inevitable and could have far-reaching consequences with lessons learned from the pandemic, such as the need to emphasize the importance of social communication and of creating a sense of wellbeing in the classroom, whether remote or face-to-face. Such changes could include time set aside before a remote online or face-to-face class begins to allow for social interaction in a less formal environment and the use of small talk to relax and catch up with friends, with a focus on student input and personalization. Suggestions include taking regular breaks as well as incorporating carefully crafted language-based tasks to encourage physical activity, both remotely and in face-to-face settings.

6 Concluding Remarks and Further Research

This chapter has highlighted three areas of focus: moving forward with TPACK, English language teacher support and training, and English language teacher and student wellbeing. The discussion above highlighted both the utility of the TPACK model and the need to build within and upon it. Within the TPACK model, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need to develop teachers' technological pedagogical knowledge. The importance of context in considering the development of TPACK has also been affirmed. Further, the role of the teaching community, both local and online, in supporting the development of TPACK has been brought to the fore.

Regarding teacher support and training, there has been a great deal of ad hoc teacher support available during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been of vital importance in enabling the delivery of ERT. The pandemic has also created support networks for English language teachers in using different platforms and technological tools. The next step in terms of embedding teacher support may be to add a more structured element, for example via the inclusion of blended and remote teaching as a central part of English language teacher education programs, and, within this, a focus on developing teachers' critical thinking and creativity in order to use the platforms and technological tools both appropriately and innovatively.

Another issue foregrounded in this chapter has been the need to pay more attention to both teacher and student wellbeing in remote teaching, particularly in ERT situations. The extra burden placed on English language teachers in terms of preparation time and the effect of a more isolated learning environment for English language students, with limited interaction with their peers, have created issues with both teachers' and students' mental wellbeing. This is an area that, in the unexpected move to ERT, seems to have been somewhat overlooked, and that should be given more prominence when considering remote teaching.

Further research is needed regarding this newfound situation. One area covered in this chapter that could benefit from more in-depth research is an exploration into the role of community in remote English language teaching situations, considering, for example, the relative importance of local versus online communities. Another area for further research in ERT situations is evaluating the effectiveness of ERT from different perspectives, including the student perspective. In this area, Hodges et al. (2020) note that ERT should be evaluated with a greater focus on context, input, and the process as opposed to the product of learning. A related concern is that of how to assess English language students when face-to-face assessments and examinations are difficult to conduct. Finally, a further issue not covered in this study but of great importance is the child safety aspect of remote learning. This is another issue that, in the ERT environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, seems to have received limited attention.

Appendix: Open-Ended Questionnaire

1. Briefly summarise the context of your online teaching experience in the past year (e.g., education level, time involved, class size, synchronous/asynchronous)
2. What challenges have you experienced when teaching online – technical, administrative and/or pedagogical?
3. What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?
4. How has teaching online impacted on your teaching style?
5. How have you been supported in developing your knowledge of how to teach online?
6. How does online practice differ from face-to-face classroom practice?
7. To what extent *do* teacher training programmes you're aware of cover:
   (a) using technology in the classroom?
   (b) blended learning?
8. To what extent *should* teacher training programmes you're aware of cover:
   (a) using technology in the classroom?
   (b) blended learning?
9. In the light of current realities, to what extent should teaching training programmes cover online teaching?
10. Looking back, what do you wish you had known about online teaching before you'd started doing it?

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