

Current Trends in English Language Teaching in the Post-Pandemic: Where Are We Now?

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Abstract— This literature review explores the emerging trends in English language teaching (ELT) in the post of COVID-19 pandemic. The review synthesizes a comprehensive range of scholarly articles, research papers, and reports mainly published between 2020 and 2023. The findings highlight the importance of technology integration, appropriate assessment methods, and fostering socio-emotional well-being in virtual classrooms.

Index Terms—COVID-19, English language teaching, , online learning, technology integration

I. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) has undergone significant transformations in recent years, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden shift to remote and online learning has accelerated the adoption of new technologies and pedagogical approaches, bringing forth a range of emerging trends in the field of ELT. Educators and institutions worldwide have been compelled to adapt their teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of learners in virtual classrooms. This introduction provides an overview of the current trends in ELT, exploring the integration of technology, adaptive and personalised instructional learning, social emotional learning, and cultural virtual exchanges. Understanding these trends is crucial for educators, policymakers, and researchers as they navigate the post-pandemic landscape and strive to provide effective and engaging English language instruction to learners of diverse backgrounds and contexts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Integration of Technology

Enhancing students' interaction, collaboration and engagement in English classes has attracted attention from educators and researchers around the world especially during and after the global pandemic Covid-19 [1]-[4]. During the epidemic, classes were conducted virtually due to its devastating impact. Thus, the issues of how to engage students and enhance their interaction during the virtual classes was a challenge for the teachers. This problem was compounded in English classes when students had to acquire English as a foreign language.

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Traditionally English classes are mainly conducted through face-face classroom interaction [5]. Furthermore, most of the teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks in English courses are designed for physical classrooms which are not appropriate for virtual ones. More importantly, both teachers and students are not professionally trained for applying technology in the classroom [5], [6]. This results in the issue of integrating technology into teaching English as a foreign language [7]-[10] with the hope to enhance student engagement, collaboration and interaction [5].

Teaching and learning English with the integration with technology

Technology happens in English classrooms under a number of various forms including blended model, flipped model, mixed model or flex model [11],[12]. The technology integration has brought both teachers and students major benefits. Firstly, flexibility is built in the classroom [11]. Students have freedom to choose to learn materials which are appropriate to their level and their time rather than fixed materials for every student [2]. Additionally, students are able to refer to their teachers for help which enables them to gain autonomy in their study. As a result, this practice generates motivation among students and enables them to actively engage in their learning [1]. As soon as students become fully involved their study, this will promote "sustained language development" [11] as well as sustainability in learning which is a very important for quality in educational development in the 21st century. Furthermore, classes are not limited to time and space [13] which allows students to have more opportunities to study. Secondly, classes with technology help to enhance collaboration, engagement and interaction in the classroom [8]. In the research conducted by reference [11], students' achievements in English learning were also improved. Thirdly, the role of teachers in these classrooms is also shifted into a facilitator [7] rather than a knowledge transmitter. In these classes, teachers are not the only source of knowledge. As a facilitator, teachers are able to encourage students to develop their critical thinking ability, effective communication, and problem-solving ability [10]. Not only implemented in teaching and learning, technology is also adopted in assessment in English classes which produces positive results [14].

Assessment with technology

The adoption of technology in English course creates diversity in test types and flexibility in test taking time [15]-[18]. For example, a series of questions or tasks that covered various aspects of digital skills, such as using digital tools for content creation, online collaboration, information

retrieval, and assessment was applied [16]. Again, this flexibility helps to enhance students' engagement and autonomy in their learning [14]. With the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology is purposefully adopted in identifying cheating in examination rooms by using "Mini-Batch Cutting" [19]. The benefits of implementing ICT in English classes are deniable. However, the implementation of technology in teaching and learning English also faces a number of challenges including lack of training for teachers and students, lack of adequate facility, and instability of internet. Further, students' distraction caused by other social media during the class or during their study are unavoidable. For long-term goals and benefits, a systematic and official training program for applying technology in teaching learning English should be provided to teachers and students for the best results and benefits [13].

Use of Edtech tools

The field of educational technology (EdTech) has been the subject of recent research that delves into various aspects related to the use of technology in education. Reference [7] provides a comprehensive review of the book "Educational Duct Tape" by Jake Miller, which offers insights on how to effectively choose the right technology tools for classrooms. Reference [20] contributes to the field by conducting factor analyses on ten instruments that measure EdTech implementation context features. Reference [21] explores how EdTech has transformed the landscape of higher education and discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with this revolution. Reference [22] frames generative AI as EdTech, exploring its potential in supporting teaching and learning. Reference [23] discusses how 5G networks can enhance educational technology. Reference [24] conducts a comparative study on online teaching preparedness and stress profile of faculty in the Philippines. Reference [25] uses the walkthrough method to identify data brokering by EdTech platforms. Reference [26] develops and validate EdTech Align, an instrument for measuring teachers' EdTech competencies aligned to professional standards.

Digital literacy and digital citizenship

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital literacy and digital citizenship skills for language learners. English language programs may incorporate instruction on digital skills, such as online communication, information literacy, and responsible use of technology, to prepare learners for the digital world. For instance, [27] presents a snapshot of the current understanding of digital literacy and highlights its relevance in today's digital world. Assessing digital literacy among educators is a crucial area of research, and [15] conducts a review of assessment tools for teacher digital literacy. Reference [28] highlights the importance of incorporating digital literacy skills into pedagogical approaches and instructional designs to enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences in digital environments. Furthermore, the relationship between information literacy and digital literacy is explored [29], who proposes a complementary approach that integrates both skills for effective academic writing in digital environments.

Online and Hybrid Programs

English language programs have traditionally been offered in-person, but with the advancement of technology and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, online and hybrid programs have gained popularity as an alternative mode of language instruction. In this literature review, we will explore the current landscape of online and hybrid programs from 2021-2023, examining their benefits, challenges, and effectiveness as reported in recent research.

1. The current landscape

In recent studies, [30]-[34] explore various aspects of online language learning and instruction. Reference [35] finds that collaborative learning, social interaction, and knowledge co-construction in online communities of practice can effectively facilitate language development. Reference [31] highlights the importance of engaging and interactive multimedia materials to facilitate language learning for learners. Reference [35] suggests that online translanguaging and multiliteracies strategies can effectively support multilingual learners in terms of language development, identity construction, and engagement in online learning environments. Reference [32] highlights the benefits of webinars, such as self-directed learning, flexibility, and collaboration, as well as challenges related to technical issues and time management. In addition, [33] emphasizes the importance of designing online English language instruction with equity in mind, using universal design and accessible instruction principles and provides practical strategies for creating inclusive, accessible, and engaging online English language instruction for diverse learners. Reference [36] discusses the challenges and opportunities of online teaching in an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the US, and the need for sustainable practices in the shift from emergency to sustainable online teaching. Reference [34] focuses on effective pedagogical strategies and best practices for adapting English language teaching to online environments during the COVID-19 crisis.

2. Benefits of Online and Hybrid Programs

Online and hybrid programs offer several benefits, including increased accessibility, flexibility, and convenience for learners. These programs can provide opportunities for learners to access instruction from anywhere, overcoming geographical and transportation barriers [37]. The convenience of online and hybrid programs also allows learners to work at their own pace, providing personalized learning experiences [38]. Furthermore, online and hybrid ESL programs can incorporate various multimedia and interactive elements, such as videos, games, and discussion forums, which can enhance learners' engagement and motivation [39]. These programs can also offer opportunities for social interaction and cultural exchange through virtual classrooms, discussion boards, and collaborative group activities [40]. Online and hybrid programs may also provide learners with authentic language input by utilizing real-life materials, multimedia resources, and online language tools.

3. Challenges of Online and Hybrid Programs

Despite the benefits, online and hybrid ESL programs also face challenges. One significant challenge is the potential for

technical issues, such as connectivity problems, software glitches, and hardware limitations, which may disrupt the learning process and impact learners' engagement [41]. Additionally, online and hybrid programs may require learners to have a certain level of digital literacy and technological proficiency to navigate the platforms effectively. Learners who are less familiar with technology may face challenges in accessing and utilizing online resources. Another challenge of online and hybrid ESL programs is the potential for reduced opportunities for face-to-face interaction and communication compared to traditional in-person programs [42]. This lack of face-to-face interaction may impact learners' development of speaking and listening skills, as well as their cultural competence. Additionally, online and hybrid programs may pose challenges for instructors in terms of managing class dynamics, providing timely feedback, and assessing learner performance.

Blended learning approaches

In recent years, blended learning has gained significant attention in the field of education as a powerful approach to combine traditional face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated learning experiences. To stay updated with the latest developments in this field, several notable publications have emerged [43]-[47]. This study [49] aims to explore the use of a blended learning strategy in architectural education as a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study indicated several key points. Firstly, the implementation of blended learning in architectural education was found to enhance students' engagement and interaction with course content and fellow students. It facilitated collaborative learning and provided opportunities for self-paced learning. Secondly, the flexibility offered by blended learning was seen as beneficial, as students could access course materials and resources at their convenience. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of effective instructional design and technological infrastructure in ensuring a successful blended learning experience.

Reference [38] sought to determine whether the integration of online and face-to-face learning modalities through blended learning leads to improved academic outcomes for students. The findings of the meta-analysis revealed that the overall effect size of blended learning on student performance was positive and statistically significant. This indicates that, on average, students in blended learning environments performed better academically compared to those in traditional face-to-face settings.

B. Adaptive Learning and Personalised Instructions

Personalised adaptive learning is referred to a new pedagogical strategy which pays much attention to the personal growth of learners by integrating smart learning technologies and effective pedagogies [49], considering learners' unique preferences, needs, performance [50], and is supported by both adaptive adjustment and positive feedbacks [51]. Adaptive learning systems come in different types, ranging from basic systems that follow predetermined rules to sophisticated systems equipped with self-learning algorithms [52]. Adaptive learning is

considered engaging and memorable for students of all ages and abilities in various educational settings [53]. An adaptive learning approach involves considering the unique characteristics of each student and can be achieved through the implementation of an adaptive learning framework, instructional techniques, and adaptive teaching methods. In the realm of higher education, adaptive learning represents both a scientific and technical advancement. This system offers several educational benefits, including rapid feedback, remediation, metacognition, and mastery-based learning [45].

It is clear that, the adaptive learning model should provide immediate and proper feedback and discard meaningless and complicated work for the students and instructors [42]. The notion of personalised learning allows e-learning design to change from a 'one size fits all' approach to an adaptive and student-centred learning. The results also indicate that learning outcomes and learner's satisfaction, motivation, and engagement can be improved by implement of personalised adaptive learning [36]. With that information, adaptive learning needs to use a blended and online learning environment, to provide a personalized learning experience. Such an environment is equipped with technological innovations such as learning analytics and machine learning or systems that monitor learners' progress and use data to continuously modify the teaching content according to the needs of individual learners [46]. Since it considers the unique characteristics of each student, an adaptive learning method is more engaging and memorable for students of all ages and abilities in a variety of educational settings. An adaptive learning framework, instructions, and adaptive teaching techniques can also be used to accomplish adaptive learning.

In higher education, adaptive learning has been both a scientific and technical advancement. Fast feedback, remediation, metacognition, and mastery-based learning are just a few of the many educational advantages of this system [40]. The benefits of adaptive learning to achieve personalized learning are obvious. Firstly, in the personalized learning, students can learn at their own speed with personalized content and instruction based on their strengths, weaknesses, and learning style, so it increases performance in knowledge acquisition. Secondly, it enables students to learn faster and preserve information long-term. Teachers can identify areas where students need more support and modify instruction appropriately, therefore, this can reduce stress in learners. Next, this can be a cost-effective method to access education because it can reduce the demand for teachers and other personnel [55].

C. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The social and emotional well-being of learners has become a prominent concern in the post-COVID era. ESL programs may include SEL components to help learners develop their social and emotional skills, such as empathy, resilience, and self-regulation, which are important for language acquisition and overall well-being. Research on social and emotional learning (SEL) has gained significant attention in recent years, as evidenced by several papers published in 2023. Reference [56] proposes a diverse booklist for gifted learners and advanced readers,

emphasizing the importance of representation in children's literature for promoting SEL skills. The authors highlight that when children see themselves and their diverse identities represented in literature, it fosters a sense of belonging and promotes empathy, compassion, and understanding towards others, which are crucial social and emotional skills. Reference [57] argue that educators need to have a deep understanding of SEL principles and practices, as well as possess the necessary skills to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment and emphasize the importance of ongoing professional development for educators to enhance their SEL competence, which in turn positively influences student outcomes.

Reference [58] adds that teachers who are emotionally competent, self-aware, and practice self-care are better equipped to create a positive classroom climate that fosters social and emotional skills among students. Teachers who prioritize their own well-being are more likely to have positive interactions with students, model healthy social and emotional behaviors, and effectively manage challenging situations in the classroom. Furthermore, they highlight that the pandemic has presented unique challenges to students' social and emotional well-being, including increased stress, anxiety, and isolation. They argue that SEL has become even more critical during this time to support students' emotional resilience, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills.

D. Virtual Cultural Exchanges

The limitations on travel and in-person interactions during the pandemic have led to an increased interest in virtual cultural exchanges. English language programs may incorporate virtual cultural exchange programs, where learners can interact with speakers of English from different countries, learn about diverse cultures, and practice language skills in an authentic context. The field of telecollaboration and virtual exchange is rapidly evolving, and recent research has explored various aspects of this emerging trend. In a bibliometric study [59], it highlights the potential of virtual exchange for promoting intercultural communication, language learning, global competencies, and transformative learning. Reference [60] discusses how virtual teacher exchange programs can serve as models for global teaching pedagogies and contribute to the development of globally engaged teachers. Reference [61] also points out the benefits and challenges of virtual exchange programs in promoting intercultural communication and language learning. Reference [62] discuss the integration of virtual exchange into teacher education curriculum and provide recommendations for effective implementation. This research emphasizes the importance of incorporating virtual exchange programs into teacher education to prepare future educators for diverse classrooms and promote intercultural understanding among students.

III. CONCLUSION

The current trends in English language teaching reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of the field in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of technology has become an essential component, offering new possibilities for interactive and engaging language learning experiences.

Remote learning has brought both challenges and opportunities, emphasizing the need for effective teacher training and professional development to ensure high-quality instruction in virtual classrooms. The assessment and evaluation of language skills in online environments present unique considerations, calling for innovative approaches that maintain reliability and validity. Additionally, the focus on socio-emotional well-being has emerged as a critical aspect of language teaching, promoting a supportive and inclusive virtual learning environment. By understanding and embracing these trends, educators, policymakers, and researchers can effectively navigate the post-pandemic era and continue to provide effective English language instruction that meets the needs of diverse learners.

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