When "Technology Saves Us": Exploring and Theorizing Pandemic Pedagogies in Adult ELT Contexts

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Abstract

Educators continue to grapple with the ever-changing dynamics of COVID-19 and its effects on teaching and learning. As such, this study contributes to the limited research on the challenges and supports of English language teachers (ELTs) who work with adult learners. Much of the research on teaching during the pandemic has amplified the voices of students, K-12 teachers, and higher education faculty who teach in disciplines where courses are often already offered in online or hybrid formats. In this paper, the researchers highlight the experiences of ELTs in global settings during the onset of the pandemic, when school closure was a necessity and emergency remote teaching was seemingly the only alternative. Utilizing qualitative methodology, data was collected via questionnaires. The researchers provide a thematic analysis of teacher participants' coping strategies, fears, hopes, challenges, and successes of what is termed 'pandemic pedagogies for ELT'. The findings suggest that despite the ability for technology to save us, there is a need for more effective ways of responding to and caring for the English language teaching communities amid a global pandemic.

Keywords: *adult learners, COVID-19, emergency remote teaching, online education, pandemic pedagogy*

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to a shift in both research as well as teaching strategies that most appropriately cater to the skillset demands and safety (e.g., remote teaching, distance learning) of both teachers and students. Initial reactions to the pandemic led to research focused on students' perspectives of the learning experience and how the pandemic has altered education and learning around the world (Joshi et al., 2020; Aboagye et al, 2020; Hu et al., 2021; Kruszewska, et al., 2020). For example, Adan and Anwar (2020) examined the impact of online learning on Pakistani students in higher education. While a large majority were comfortable with technology, a significant number of students had limited access which negatively impacted their learning experience. Similarly, Yi and Jang (2020) focused on the impact of English language teaching in South Korea and concluded that the pandemic had forced creative collaborations and sustainable creativity that would be deemed useful in the post-pandemic era. Vivona-Suarez (2021) highlighted Puerto Rican students' perceptions of the effectiveness of online instruction in their English classrooms. She found a positive correlation between interaction strategies and the language skills being developed. In other words, according to the students, fostering online interaction strategies such as synchronous group discussions or chats in the online classroom, increased the amount of English language skills developed.

While the impact of the pandemic on instruction was evident, the emotional toll of the pandemic has also been documented. The results of a mixed methods study by Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) showed that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic increased stress for both students and teachers across an array of contexts. Similarly, Glew et al. (2020) delved into humanity and concepts of hope of virtual teaching amid a pandemic. This particular approach inspired us to examine perceived fears, hopes, and thoughts, among the myriad of challenges expressed by English language teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective instruction, practical tools, research, and overall praxis were a necessity to facilitate learning amid the pandemic. However, ways to gauge the needs and necessities of the skillset demands and online learning remains underexplored. This study was designed to highlight the experiences of adult English language teachers around the world by documenting the challenges and successes they encountered during the early stages of the global COVID-9 pandemic. Another goal of the study was to examine how support has been extended to language teachers. To guide this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are some challenges English language teachers and their adult students have faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What forms of support and/or advocacy were effective in helping English language teachers persevere during the pandemic?
3. How do EL teachers perceive the impact of COVID-19 permanently impacting English language teaching?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 crises and worldly turmoil, the researchers were inspired to examine the challenges adult English language learners face,

their successes in the face of a pandemic, forms of support and/or advocacy, and how adult English language teachers and students were coping. For many within the ELT community, virtual teaching and remote learning were the only alternative as a means of maintaining safety. In what follows, the researchers briefly summarize existing literature on COVID-19 challenges in ELT settings, socio-economic challenges, distance/online challenges, and advocacy measures that are conducive to serving as an enlightenment for change.

2.1 COVID-19 Challenges in ELT Settings

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the general population in various ways, but one of the populations affected most by the pandemic were adult English language teachers and their students (Afrin, 2020; Evisen et al., 2021; Klimovich & Zhdanovic, 2022; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2022). Research nor empirical data are needed to show that learning under dire circumstances where one's life is at stake presents challenges and results in the activation of survival skills. When dire circumstances are the result of a deadly pandemic that shuts down both local and global operations, imposes legal protocols, and halts ways in which we learn, it certainly exacerbates the need to examine and explore these challenges as well as ways to overcome such challenges should they arise in the future. In March 2020, face-to-face teaching became secondary, if not tertiary, to our perceptions of learning. For example, Karalis and Raikou (2020) discussed COVID-19's impact in Greece and how distance learning took precedence to ensure the safety of both teachers and students. These types of educational safety measures were taken around the world.

Arguably, the pandemic has rapidly changed everyday life activities around the world. The COVID-19 crises have resulted in changing instructional approaches of how English language teaching and learning takes place. As a result of the pandemic outbreak and the subsequent lockdown and social distancing restrictions implemented by most governments around the world, the majority of global education systems from elementary to tertiary levels, swiftly entered an unprecedented new era of full-mode online teaching and learning (Firmansyah et al., 2021; Seyyed-Abdolhamid, 2021). The lockdown restrictions and the implementation of full-mode online delivery can very much be considered a disorienting dilemma for English language teachers. The situation brought about a critical re-evaluation of teachers' own pedagogical practices and furthermore, a consolidation of their experiences, and beliefs about the role of technology in teaching.

Adult English learners have faced major obstacles because of COVID-19 (Evisen et al., 2020; Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021; Sugarman and Lazarin, 2020). Some schools reported that less than half of their population of original students were engaging in online study. Unfamiliarity and a lack of experience with online learning was a factor along with the necessity of education when lives are being lost due to a deadly pandemic. Among many other reasons, adult English language learners were either unable to gain access to efficient digital devices, lacked the resources to maintain remote study from home, or could no longer continue due to a lack of trained professionals who could teach them remotely. The large gap in their education resulted in a loss of progress and language development in their retention of the English language. However, educational progress is not all they lost during the transition to online learning or no learning at all. Many adult English learners, along with their families, lost their only significant access to food and income. The levels of uncertainty

and lack of social support students needed to help them cope with the many stressors they face daily was at an all-time high that led subsequently to socio-emotional challenges.

2.2 Socio-emotional Challenges

High levels of uncertainty and the demand for rapid changes in pedagogical methods resulting from the pandemic "pushed many educators to the brink, compromising their mental, social, and emotional well-being" (Hererra, et al., 2022, p. 1). As such, social and emotional challenges are arguably a number one factor influencing one's learning. Hipsari (2021) examined the distance learning anxiety faced by higher education students in the time of crisis (Covid-19). The participants were students in English classes at an Indonesian institution. The data were collected using two instruments, a questionnaire, and an interview. The researcher modified the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale questionnaire (FLCAS) by Howitz and Young (1991) to determine the levels of anxiety. Since the study focused on distance learning, the researcher also decided to adopt an On-line Language Learning Anxiety (OLLA) Inventory (Majid, Othman, & Rahmat, 2007). Findings revealed that students experienced higher anxiety levels in the beginning stage of distance learning (at the beginning of the lockdown). A year after the implementation of distance learning, students had adapted well and the level of anxiety they encountered was reduced. Yet, technical problems like unstable internet connection and devices malfunction that occurred during distance learning still triggered much anxiety among students, since that condition made them lose the opportunity to receive some important information and chances to actively participate in online activities as well as improve their language skills.

Allison (2021) studied the impact of COVID-19 in the Chinese contexts. Not surprisingly, 97% of the participants indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected them in a negative way. This corresponds with an array of literature in various countries that attests to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic had been anxiety-provoking. There were worries about employment, relationships between family and friends becoming strained, the fact that COVID-19 can cause death and serious bodily harm, and the possibility of contracting the disease themselves and spreading it to vulnerable family members and those around them. Worries about running out of supplies were mentioned in two interviews, although on a somewhat jocular basis. Managing to stay happy, sane, not bored, and mentally active, seemed to be the biggest fear that participants expressed. Seven of the eight (87%) participants in the qualitative sample stated that their English learning journey had been harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reasons stated in the interviews included not being able to focus at a highly stressful time, having to worry about other issues, not being able to communicate with others in person, and being away from their teachers.

Some students felt that online learning was inadequate and none of them felt as if learning could always be conducted online, because it was not as rigorous or effective as learning in-person. Technical issues and challenges were a contributing factor to participants holding this position. However, there was a silver lining in terms of socio-emotional learning. For example, Li et al. (2021) explored social-emotional learning amidst COVID-19

school closures. Research findings were reported as positive through an "Adventures" program.

> Adventures was specifically designed to translate the content and cognitive-behavioral strategies of an established, evidence-based in-person SEL [Socio-Emotional Learning] intervention into a game-based environment. It is a comprehensive program that addresses all five social-emotional competency clusters identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, which include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. (Li et al., 2021, para 5)

One thing to note, however, is that Li et al.'s (2021) research focused on students in primary education and did not specify whether these students were English language learners. Thus, the participants of this study may have already been accustomed to online learning and/or digital tools. Nonetheless, data revealed technological resources to support socio-emotional learning and overcome online challenges were a necessity.

2.3 Distance/Online Challenges

There were various challenges that resulted from the quick transition from face to face to online teaching. Research suggests that learners lacked communication with their teachers because they were not accustomed to online communication. They had low levels of motivation, confidence, and experience in online learning. This was supported by Aboagye et al. (2020) and Amri and Alasmari (2021) who found that learners' need to be independent resulted in decreasing levels of motivation to perform efficiently in school. Hijazi and AlNatour (2021) arrived at similar findings whereby the learners were not efficiently engaged with online learning as it was merely listening to and watching the lecturers, and they were passive learners with only a one-way mode of communication. This was also reinforced by Sufyan et al. (2020), who reported limited feedback from learners. Likewise, it was found that online learning resulted in the loss of goals, low self-efficacy, and low engagement and motivation, and fear and a negative role (Al-Jarf, 2020; Arshad et al., 2020).

Asonze et al. (2020) focused on teaching English to adult learners who are studying English through online instruction in the Nigerian context. They identified challenges of online English language instruction in adult education programs during COVID-19. The findings of this study recommended more inclusive digital technologies for distance learning to support adult ESL learners, improvement of internet infrastructure and access to the internet, increased support for adult education teachers and trainers to operate in the new environment, and additional career guidance and digital skills development for adult English learners.

Al-Bargi (2021) explored the availability and provision of ELT professional development (PD) opportunities at English Language Institutes (ELIs)/English Language Centers (ELCs) at five major universities in Saudi Arabia and the perception of the ELT teachers on its coherence and adequacy. A total of 307 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participated in a custom designed 20-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale, as well as ten EFL teachers (6 female and 4 male) taking part in 40-minute semi-structured interviews, to explore their perception and opinions of online PD opportunities. Analysis of

the gathered data indicated that most of the teachers felt that there were adequate online PD opportunities. However, some teachers voiced concerns regarding the correlation between contextual, full-mode online teaching and the online PD sessions provided.

Adult ELs were either unable to gain access to efficient digital devices, lacked the resources to maintain remote study from home, or could no longer continue due to a lack of trained professionals who could continue to teach them remotely. The large gap in their education resulted in a loss of progress and development in their retention of the English language. COVID-19 only added to the list of challenges those within the ELL community experience. Bao (2020) outlined six specific instructional strategies to improve students' engagement in online learning, and they are as follows: 1) making emergency preparedness plans for unexpected problems; 2) dividing the teaching content into smaller units to help students focus; 3) emphasizing the use of "voice" in teaching; 4) working with teaching assistants and gain online supports from them; 5) strengthening students' active learning ability outside of class; and 6) combining online learning and offline self-learning effectively, all of which impacted student learning retention and concentration from in-person to online learning.

2.4 Advocacy Amid Challenges

The impact of the global pandemic led to virtually everyone being an advocate in some regard. In U.S. education contexts, many were advocating for not only safety precautions but also the technology to effectively work from home. Within the ELT contexts, many were not only advocating for the aforementioned items, but also living accommodations, food emergencies, family support and more. When we are faced with challenges, such as a pandemic, surrendering should never be the answer. Instead, we improvise and think of ways to manage. This sentiment has rung true especially for the ELT context. Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021) provided a long list of measures taken by members in the ELT community around the world. Some results showed that students were more motivated to participate when strategies fostered autonomous learning and social interaction.

Safira et al. (2021) advocated for virtual task-based learning activities that enable students to work autonomously. Research showed that students were motivated and inspired to learn English due to digital task-based activities. Garcia and Villegas (2022) called for virtual learning screening and assessment, teacher support by embedding videos and digital accessibilities, COVID-relief funding for English learners to enroll in tutor programs and work one-on-one with specialists. Ribeiro (2020) discussed reaching out via Youtube channels and social media outlets, such as Instagram TV, to stay connected with adult English language learners. Similarly, Fansbury, et al. (2020) researched ways in which digital content media outlets, such as Facebook and Youtube were useful for teaching English in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. They concluded that English learners found learning not only easier but were more motivated using digital social media outlets. While research continues to show ways in which teachers utilize technology to support and advocate for the ELT contexts, students' specific strategies implemented in countries where technology and digital devices are extremely limited still lag. Thus, further research is required.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

For the method, the researchers identified and examined challenges teachers of adult ELs have faced in the wake of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), forms of effective support received, and how the impact of COVID-19 potentially impacts teaching permanently. The study utilized a qualitative research design where participants responded to a web-based open-ended questionnaire. This tool allowed participants to write as much or as little as they desired at a pace that was comfortable for them. Four processes were blended throughout the study: collection, coding, analyzing, and theorizing, and refining and writing up themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This approach allowed for a level of flexibility that is important to qualitative research.

3.1 Participants

There were 42 participants within this study, all of which were adult English language teachers. Out of the 42 participants, 40 consented to take part and include data. Out of the 40 consenting participants, participants of this study are from a wide selection of institutions, ranging from four-year universities to religious-based affiliations. Participants of this study represent several countries, such as Germany, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and the U.S. The diversity of countries and a lack of face-to-face interviews imposes limitations on unison solutions, because of several factors, such as geographical location, educational and language policies, economic circumstances, and possibly linguistic (mis)interpretations.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected over a three-month period at the end of 2020. Qualtrics, a web-based software, was used to collect and manage participant responses to three questions regarding their experiences teaching during a pandemic. Participants were asked to respond to the following prompts: What insights and/or successes have come from having to plan, teach, and assess during the COVID-19 pandemic? What self-care or coping strategies are you finding most valuable for dealing with the added stress and unpredictability brought by the global pandemic? Share your thoughts/fears/hopes related to how teaching may change permanently because of the pandemic. See *Figure 1* for a few snapshots of participants' responses to the questions:

Insights / Successes	Self-care / Coping Strategies	Thoughts / Hopes / Fears
Improved competence using online tools, e.g., Zoom	Quality time with family and friends	Greater role to be played by technology in education
More time-consuming planning with various digital tools	Physical activity e.g., exercising	Online instruction limitations
Growth in knowledge with positive student engagements	Reading and studying with support groups	Lack of student enrollment, more online instruction, loss of teaching jobs

Figure 1: Snapshots of participant responses

3.3 Data Analysis

Thematic coding was applied throughout the data collection and analysis phases. All the data were the basis for the researchers to generate concepts or a framework. According to Gibbs (2007), "thematic coding is a method of qualitative data analysis that includes identifying passages of text that are linked by a common idea allowing the researcher to set the text into categories and consequently develop a 'framework of thematic ideas'" (p. 923). For this study, researchers employed the following stages coding:

1. Coding text and theorizing: small chunks of the text were open coded line-by-line. Useful concepts were identified by key phrases and marked. The concepts were then named (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At this stage, theorizing occurred by pulling concepts together and thinking through how each concept related to one another.

2. Memo-ing, integrating, refining, and theorizing: As the questionnaires were coded, the researchers wrote running notes on each of the concepts being identified. This constituted an intermediate step between coding and the first draft of the completed analysis. Researchers linked codes together to form themes and construct central categories that hold concepts together and contribute to theory building.

4. FINDINGS

Teachers were forced to adapt to a new way of facilitating learning, and students had to remain flexible during the transition as teachers sought to discover the best ways to maintain a safer, yet equally successful, educational environment. There were many challenges during the process of adapting to the new normal, but there were also quite a few successes that took place once an adjustment took place. For many, coping strategies were employed to make the transition less unpleasant. Self-care became even more crucial during this time and played a major role in helping teachers best navigate teaching during the pandemic. Delving further into participant responses enabled us to identify five common themes expressed by participants to the three given prompts:

Prompt #1: *What insights and/or successes have come from having to plan, teach, and assess during the COVID-19 pandemic?*

4.1 Theme 1: Successes - Use of New Technology, Tools, and Resources

Among a few of the successes that teachers stated having experienced while having to plan, teach and assess during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the major successes involved the creative use of technology. Many of the participants had to adjust to the new reality and came to the realization that "*technology saves us*". A few of them mentioned how much Zoom, with its breakout rooms and recording option, helped with the learning process, stating that "*screen sharing can be very helpful in some cases*" and that while "*using Zoom was initially a challenge*", practice with friends and family helped better prepare them for using Zoom with their students. One of the participants even discussed the "*capitalization on the use of technology in teaching and learning*" and the impact it has had on the teacher-student dynamic. Another participant concluded that "*faculty and students are resilient and can use the available technology to aid in the process of learning*", echoing the sentiment

that technology has been instrumental in helping aid teachers and students during this transitional period.

Additionally, the success many teachers have experienced was attributed to the new tools and resources they discovered were at their disposal. One participant documented that they were "*able to help students to access several resources that they were not aware of before COVID-19*", something that may have served as barriers to students in the past. When providing further insight into what many of the participants believed was lacking before, but improved since the pandemic, "*more tools*" and "*more PD [professional development]*" were mentioned. Other participants stated that "*pd in online teaching techniques*" and that "*being able to teach all the classes online, using different tools and methodologies*" were successes that occurred as well. These responses revealed that the discovery of new tools and resources helped make the transitionary period much smoother during the pandemic.

Prompt #2: *What self-care or coping strategies are you finding most valuable for dealing with the added stress and unpredictability brought by the global pandemic?*

4.2 Theme 2: Forms of Self-Care, Various Coping Strategies, and Use of Adaptive Strategies in Attaining Knowledge

With the ever-changing challenges that online instruction poses to both students and teachers, self-care has never been more imperative. One of the most common forms of self-care reported by the participants was physical activity. Many of them mentioned "*exercise*" whether that be through "*walking*", "*swimming at the gym*", or engaging in "*yoga*". Another coping strategy that was mentioned by many of the participants involved quality time with friends, family, and pets. While face-to-face interaction was limited by the pandemic, a participant mentioned that they "*stay connected with friends and family over the phone*", an excellent alternative for those who needed to maintain a certain level of social interaction during a pandemic that otherwise limited it. There were participants who even stated that they were regularly "*asking for emotional help when needed from family and/or friends*" or attending "*support groups*", which was the best way to maintain a level of sanity as well. Alternate forms of self-care for the participants involved forms of escapism. For a few participants this involved "*reading books*", focusing on their "*studies*", or engaging in forms of "*meditation*". For other participants, this involved watching "*tv shows*", engaging in "*mindfulness*", or doing "*gardening projects*" around the house. Regardless, the participants reported having used this transitionary period to discover which coping strategies work best for them.

Once the pandemic started, there were various strategies that teachers had to employ to adjust to the transition to online learning. According to a few participants, using "*different assessment strategies*" and a "*design for [a] learning model*" were a few ways they adapted to a new way of teaching. Some discussed the successful use of "*e-books that are embedded in the D2L*" when paired with other learning components. One participant even stated that moving to online learning forced them to consider altering their lesson plans to suit a more "*online format*" involving "*restructuring some projects, assignments, and assessments*". All of these are examples of how teachers maintained their flexibility in their continued efforts to provide the utmost education for their students. Additionally, a participant documented

that the "*most important insight we have gained is to be part of the team and learn from one another*", indicating that their joint efforts contributed majorly to the success of these efforts.

Prompt #3: *Share your thoughts/fears/hopes related to how teaching may change permanently because of the pandemic.*

4.3 Theme 3: Online Collaboration and Student Engagement

One of the major perks of virtual learning is the level of interaction that can take place in real-time between multiple individuals at once. The participants reported an increase in online collaboration between teachers and students that led to an increase in "*participation by students during synchronous and asynchronous learning*" as well. Furthermore, they also stated that "*timid students who do not usually participate in face-to-face classes came out of their shell and engaged more in online activities*", which played a significant role in the increase in overall student engagement. Among other things, Google docs was reported to be another excellent way students could "*collaborate in real time*", and the various other methods of online communication helped contribute to the "*global outreach of professional colleagues*" that was mentioned by another participant.

Meanwhile, a large contributor to student engagement was the increased level of planning teachers were able to engage in due to the pandemic. One participant mentioned how the proper planning helped them "*focus on other ways…to engage all the students and to have extra time to help those students that needed it*", encouraging students to want to remain involved. Another mentioned that "*facing this reality with creativity and new ideas that are helping our students to improve their skills*" is what has inspired students to continue their education as well. The collaboration between teachers and students has fostered a renewed sense of motivation in both students and teachers, and one participant concluded that "*teaching in general has become more flexible and teacher-student communication has improved*". Much of this rapport was made possible through the flexibility that comes with online modes of communication.

4.5 Theme 4: Challenges faced in and out of the classroom

There were many challenges that participants reported when discussing the insight they gained during their transition to online learning, and one of those challenges involved "*racism at the teachers' rooms*". One participant documented that it was "*a lot easier to deal with these online*" and that they needed to "*emphasize that online education is not immune to racism, sexism, and other types of oppression*". They discussed what their experience was like and reported that they had to "*deal with the shock of some of the students as they expect to have a white teacher from a so-called English-speaking country*" - an indication that online education did very little in preventing this from occurring. Additionally, planning for online teaching proved to be more tedious as well. Many of the participants referred to the planning process as "*time-consuming*", due to the amount of additional time needed to properly plan for an online course. One participant addressed this issue by stating that one would need "*adequate training […]plenty of support, and students should only take online*

classes if that is their choice", meaning that this challenge could be rectified with the proper assistance, advising, and financial support.

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion section is centered around each of the three research questions. Both literature and the data are used from the thematic analysis to support our claims and implications.

5.1. RQ#1) What are some challenges English language teachers and their adult students have faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

As supported by much of the research cited in our review of the literature, the impact of COVID-19 challenged the English language teacher participants and their adult students in that they were forced to quickly learn new digital learning management systems, become adept with new technologies almost instantly (Kamisli & Akinlar, 2022), assess oral production and learning outcomes virtually, balance study habits and working from home as caregivers (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2022), and for some, maintain employment as freelancers. Participants shared that planning for online instruction proved to be more tedious and time-consuming. English language professionals trained to design modules and teach online would concur that the time and effort that it takes to create engaging lessons that are linguistically accessible is extensive but necessary.

The challenge of effective lesson planning was prevalent not only in ELT contexts, but across all educational sectors. Nonetheless, participants understood the power of technology as a life-saving measure to accommodate alternative teaching and learning styles. Additionally, social issues, such as racism and other forms of marginalization, were evident in online settings. It is important to note that the online classroom, too, is a microcosm of society where oppression can. The recommendation of getting to know students, ensuring everyone use their assigned name, establishing a culture of respect, and setting the tone in the classroom can help to prevent these sorts of occurrences.

Fortunately, the data suggested that challenges were often turned into successes. While many teachers elaborated on their challenges, we believe these challenges should be viewed as tactics of resiliency as they in some way resulted in professional skills or greater awareness of what they can expect in a similar situation moving forward. Participants shared that a lack of familiarity with the technology resulted in them being even more prepared for online instruction as they would practice lessons with friends and family. In addition, they (re)considered aspects of projects, assignments, and assessments that needed restructuring to guide students to helpful resources that they probably would not have, had it not been for the pandemic and transition to online instruction. Workplaces provided additional technology trainings and teachers learned about features of Zoom and their learning management systems that they otherwise would not have experienced or acquired as part of their teaching repertoires.

For these participants, and possibly teachers around the globe, challenges ultimately became strengths if not skillsets. The challenges encountered, and the lessons learned during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, interestingly can serve as a preparatory guide for institutions and educators moving forward.

5.2. RQ#2) What forms of support and/or advocacy were effective in helping English language teachers persevere during the pandemic?

One of the biggest forms of support and/or advocacy was job retention. Except for freelancers, many participants kept a full-time employment status despite low enrollment so that is an excellent perseverance in the wake of dire times. Moreover, many participants highlighted that their school's administration team were very supportive and prepared to move forward with online learning and professional support to teach virtually. While these forms of support alleviated some stress about teachers' concern for teaching online, the support for adult learners was still uncertain. To provide assurance, some institutions provided laptop computers to students and staff, offered professional training online, extended assessment deadlines, and even excused some examinations as a requirement. Additionally, within the U.S., higher institutions were provided with COVID-relief emergency funds for students who were displaced, faced job and food insecurity, and were at risk of unenrolling from school.

Additional support and advocacy came through collaboration with the "global outreach of professional colleagues" and "working as a part of a team to learn from one another". Participants acknowledged that working closely with other ELT professionals helped them to persevere. Our findings support Moorhouse and Kohnke's (2021) and Ryan and Deci's (2020) assertions that teachers need adequate autonomy, support, and trust—that is, the freedom to implement practices that best meet the needs of their [adult] learners. They also need to feel competent by possessing the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach and then witness the positive impact of their instruction on students. Teachers "need to experience a sense of relatedness—that is, generally maintain positive relationships with their students and colleagues" (Moorhouse and Kohnke, 2021, p. 280). Doing so fosters a community of support and advocacy.

Lastly, participants were advocates for themselves by engaging in mental, social, emotional, and physical well-being (Hererra et al., 2022) through self-care and effective coping strategies. They exercised and participated in yoga, stayed connected with friends and family over the phone, connected with support groups, and in general, did what they felt was needed to survive the trauma of a global pandemic.

5.3 RQ#3) How do EL teachers perceive the impact of COVID-19 might permanently affect English language teaching?

Considering the challenges and forms of support, many participants also reflected on new insights, coping strategies post-pandemic, and hopes for the future of education and English language teaching. Teachers come to emergency remote teaching or emergency online teaching equipped with various competencies, needs, and expectations, and understanding the differences among them is essential (Hodges et al., 2020; Wang, 2020). Some participants shared sentiments of never seeing themselves as a digital teacher or using technology to teach classes noting that it is with great gratitude to pick up that skill and hopeful for a more digital future that enables global access to education for all. While some were glad to gain professional development training and get skilled with new technology, others were reluctant and hesitant that online learning would replace in-person teaching, thus

removing the value and dynamics of learning via physical contact. There was also the concern of more lesson planning and time-consumption while working from home, and ultimately a lower quality of learning. Many participants also noted that their students were less "present" for synchronous learning due to being caregivers or some other hindrance taking away their focus. Nonetheless, one of the most positive takeaways for participants was that online learning and the need for educators to be skilled as digital educators were inevitable. Since the world is still recovering, if not currently being impacted, from the pandemic, exploring socio-emotional games and learning activities are crucial. Drawing from the work Li et al. (2021), social-emotional learning in the digital class can permanently impact ways in which students respond to worldly crises, such as a pandemic.

6. CONCLUSION

While this study contributes to the literature by amplifying the voices of ELT teachers who taught adult ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings suggest a need for additional studies that: 1) explore both educational and socio-emotional challenges that impact ELT professionals, 2) provide examples of effective English language teaching practices as well as digital resources that can be used in the event of another global pandemic, and 3) offers template supplements that support ELT educators across the board. While this study lends voice to an entire community, a comparative study of the experiences, perceptions, and coping mechanisms of ELT professionals in various contexts would shed a brighter light on global inequities. As members of a global community, teaching in the U.S. and dedicated to empowering people through the teaching of English, a constant questioning on what can we do, as a society who has digital support, e.g., access to learning management systems, for those less fortunate are imperative.

Queries comprising anticipatory measures beyond borders that stabilizes or levels ways in which access is distributed in the middle of crises are crucial as well. Mindful that holistic U.S.-centered measures present challenges considering the various contexts, government protocols and limitations around the world, it is important for transnational collaboration in teaching, learning, and researching. Future studies could also further examine the support received from private versus public institutions and how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped or continues to shape the future of education for ELL, specifically adult English learners, around the world. Reimers et al. (2020) produced teaching and learning outlines of curriculum resources, professional development resources, and teaching tools, to assist various populations and languages around the world. While these outlines are a great start and useful for many teachers and learners, we would still question the efficacy and application of these tools when applied to ELT context during a pandemic. The current effect of the pandemic necessitates digital tools in classrooms around the world, but more importantly, robust training that has, unfortunately, exposed countries and places that are disadvantaged due to the lack of technological support.

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