Online Teaching during COVID-19 in Bangladesh: Challenges Faced by the EL Teachers

Md. Abdur Rouf & Harun Rashid

Abstract

The study explored the challenges faced by secondary and higher secondary English language (EL) teachers in Bangladesh while teaching their learners online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like teachers in most countries across the world, Bangladeshi EL teachers had to abruptly switch to online mode of teaching from in-person classes without much preparation. Following the constructivist research paradigm and a qualitative multiple case study approach, four secondary and four higher secondary EL teachers were interviewed to gather in-depth data on the challenges they encountered. The findings showed that the main challenges for the teachers included: unavailability of devices, falling interest, poor attendance of learners, less interaction in classes, lack of technological skills and training, financial hardship, unstable internet connections, almost no practice of language skills, lack of online testing schemes, negative mental and physical impacts, and the overall perceived inefficacy of online EL classes. The paper also discusses the implications of the main findings and proposes some recommendations for the teachers and other stakeholders concerned.

Keywords: *Online teaching, COVID-19, challenges, EL teachers, Bangladesh*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected almost all areas of human life including the education sector (Islam, Alif, & Emon, 2020; Nepal & Kumar, 2020). In fact, the education sector has been one of the worst hit areas worldwide. Educational institutions were forced to shift their teaching mode from physical classes to online classes (Marshall, Shannon, & Love, 2020). However, this sudden paradigm shift in teaching-learning was managed differently by different countries depending on their socio-economic status. Managing online teaching with the required technologies and teacher expertise was a difcult task for all countries to some extent. Even a developed country like New Zealand could not ensure equal learning opportunities for all its learners across the country (Mutch, 2021). Many parts of the country had no internet connectivity, and poor learners could not afford laptops and other gadgets essential for online learning. Moreover, only just half of the schools in New Zealand believed that their learners would be able to attend online classes (Mutch, 2021).

Bangladesh, like other South Asian developing countries, is fighting a tough battle against the corona virus. The first COVID-19 positive case was detected in Bangladesh on March 8, 2020, and since March 18, 2020 all the educational institutions have postponed physical classes to protect the students, teachers, and offcials from the infectious virus (Ela et al., 2021). As many as 40 million students are now

being deprived of formal in-person schooling (Islam et al., 2020). Most of the secondary schools and higher secondary colleges started teaching their students online since July 2020 as the virus continued to wreck its havoc nationwide. However, this sudden shift to online classes was not done in a planned way, rather it was an "emergency conversion" (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020, p. 1). None of the stakeholders - learners, teachers, offcials, and guardians - had any idea about online teaching-learning (Khan, Basu, Bashir, & Uddin, 2021).

Literature Review

Reich (2021) claimed that teachers won't be able to use technological tools and teaching platforms effectively unless they are given adequate training. Furthermore, the curriculum, assessments, and all other aspects of education must be supportive of online teaching. In another study, Marshall et al. (2020) in the U.S.A found that teachers did not receive meaningful training for remote teaching, so they found online teaching challenging. It was also difficult to hold learners accountable online for learning purposes. Lack of real-time interactions with learners i.e., asynchronous lessons also negatively affected online teaching. However, Gautam (2020) affirmed that in Nepal EL teachers attended different types of professional development programs to adapt to online teaching which made them more confident in technology use. Additionally, Altavilla (2020) asserted that EL teachers must be careful about three challenges related to technology use for teaching English - ensuring learners' access to technology and proper use, using software and virtual learning platforms in effective ways, and ensuring interaction for the EL learners.

Moreover, Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) reported that tertiary level ESL teachers and learners in the U.S.A faced problems "regarding health, employment, finances, and other concerns" (p.140). The pandemic enhanced their level of stress across different contexts and reduced the importance of teaching-learning in their lives as they faced other emerging problems. Similarly, MacIntyre et al. (2020) found that language teachers from different countries felt a good amount of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ela et al. (2021) also noted that tertiary level students at a public university in Bangladesh faced mental pressure and frustration due to the disruptions in educational activities. In addition, Casacchia et al. (2021) stated that Italian university teachers faced both technical and psychological difficulties. The absence of eye contact with learners, difficulty with concentration, sleeping disorder, energy loss, and mild depression were some other challenges mentioned by the teachers.

Furthermore, different studies (Efriana, 2021; Nashir & Laili, 2021; Sumardi & Nugrahani, 2021) in Indonesia with pre-service and in-service high school EL teachers found that teachers faced different problems with online teaching: learner management, learners' poor comprehension of the class contents, lack of interest, assessments confined to quizzes and assignments only, teachers' poor technological skills, heavier workload, limited technological facilities, expensive internet data packs, unstable internet connections, difficulty with sharing materials and giving assignments and feedback, lack of learners' seriousness and participation in class activities. Lukas and Yunus (2021) in their study in Malaysia with primary ESL teachers also reported similar challenges. Likewise, Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) argued that teachers at EL Institutes in Iran could use the online teaching platforms efficiently, but shortage of teaching materials and inadequate budget were some of the challenging issues. Additionally, Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) stated that lack of direct interaction with students and the new setting affected Chilean EFL teacher candidates' learning.

Similarly, Alhumaid, Ali, Waheed, Zahid, and Habes (2020) in Pakistan, Rahim and S. C (2020) in Afghanistan, Hakim (2020) in Saudi Arabia, Chiatoh and Chia (2020) in Cameroon, and Tarrayo,

Paz, and Gepila (2021) in the Philippines in their studies with the tertiary level EFL teachers found that learners' uneven access to e-learning, callous attitude, low motivation, poor comprehension of the teaching contents, and irregular electricity supply, limited ICT resources, unstable internet connections, costly internet packages, teachers' lack of technological competency, and inadequate training on online teaching were the main challenges of online teaching. Studies with university teachers and learners in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2021; Parvej, Tabassum, Mannan, & Ahmed, 2021) also reported related challenges along with teachers' limited knowledge of online pedagogy and assessment.

Research Objective and Significance of the Study

The study reviewed above investigated different aspects of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined the challenges of online teaching faced by the secondary and higher secondary EL teachers in Bangladesh. Therefore, to uncover those challenges, the present study was carried out based on the following research question (RQ):

RQ: What were the major challenges of online teaching faced by the secondary and higher secondary English language teachers in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The findings of the study would help the policy makers and other stakeholders formulate pragmatic policies and devise an effective mechanism for tackling the challenges of online teaching faced by the EL teachers.

Research Design

This section describes the research methodology used for conducting the study. It discusses the approach, participants, data collection tool and method, and how the collected data were managed and analysed.

Approach and Rigour of the Study

The present study was carried out following the constructivist research paradigm and a qualitative multiple case study approach. Constructivism implies that human interactions create knowledge, and the constructivist research paradigm emphasises a profound comprehension of an issue (Magoon, 1977). Moreover, a multiple case study involves more than one case, so we selected eight EL teachers as individual cases. As rigour or trustworthiness is an important issue in qualitative research (Robson, 2011), the rigour of the present study was ensured through collecting data from different sources, maintaining a case study data base, and using self-reflections and bracketing for avoiding bias (Chenail, 2011; Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Participants

Four secondary (S) and four higher secondary (HS) English language (EL) teachers were selected for interviews following the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique helped to select participants who could provide rich data on the examined issue (Stake, 1995). Different researchers claimed that four to ten cases can produce enough data for comprehending an issue by depth (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 2006). Alpha numeric labels (T1S-T8HS) have been used throughout the paper to safeguard

the anonymity of the participating EL teachers (Zein, 2016). The demographic details of the teachers are given in Table 1.

Table 1 The Participating Teachers' Demographics

Teachers	Gender	Age	Designation	Teaching Experiences	College, School Type	Location
T1S	Female	31-35	Assistant Teacher	5 Years		Rural
T2S	Male	51-55	Assistant Teacher	25 Years		Rural
T3S	Male	26-30	Assistant Teacher	5 months		Urban
T1S - T7HS	Male	26-30	Assistant Teacher	5 years	Non-government	Rural
T5HS	Male	41-45	Assistant Professor	16 years		Urban
T6HS	Female	36-40	Lecturer	8 years		Urban
T7HS	Female	31-35	Lecturer	10 years		Urban
T8HS	Male	46-50	Assistant Professor	16 years	Government	Rural

Data Collection Tool and Method

A semi-structured interview checklist was developed for collecting the relevant data from the teachers. The interview checklist had ten items relating to different aspects of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rigour of the items was ensured through a literature review and a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with two EL teachers, and necessary modifications were made in the interview checklist. The interview checklist is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 *The Interview Checklist*

SL	Interview Items
1.	Both teachers' and learners' interest, participation, and interaction in classes
2.	Training and technical support from the authority concerned
3.	Technological barriers (equipment/devices)
4.	Network/connectivity related issues
5.	Study materials related challenges
6.	Teaching the four language skills
7.	Online continuous assessments and tests
8.	Financial aspects
9.	Emotional wellbeing, psychological and physical impacts
10.	Effectiveness of online teaching and learning

Data were collected by conducting individual phone and Zoom interviews with the participating teachers. The semi-structured individual interviews helped the iterative nature of data collection (Merriam, 1988; Tellis, 1997). Interviews with the teachers were stopped when we reached the stage of data saturation (Trotter, 2012). For getting rich data, interviews with the teachers were conducted in Bengali (L1), but T5HS responded in English.

Data Management and Analysis

All the interview data were securely recorded using cell phones and personal computers, and later they were transcribed verbatim. An iterative approach was used throughout the data analysis phase to obtain a holistic picture of the emerging scenario. The thematic analysis framework as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for data analysis (Dawadi, 2020). Thematic analysis consists of six iterative steps: getting familiarised with data, producing initial codes, discovering themes/subthemes, re-evaluating themes, naming themes, and producing a report. The reliability of the findings was ensured through member checking and the participants' verifications. The excerpts presented in the findings section have been translated into English by the first author. Throughout the study, the researchers were cautiously aware of their role as 'human instrument' in qualitative research and ensured that their professional and personal disposition and beliefs did not impact the study.

Findings

The key findings of the study, according to the RQ, are presented in this section supported by representative excerpts from the participating teachers.

Unavailability of Devices

The EL teachers used different technological tools for teaching online, but their respective schools and colleges could not provide them with the required technologies. Most often, they managed their own technological devices like cell phones, laptops, cameras, tripods, boards, etc.

> *My college has only one camera for the use [recording classes] of all teachers. (T8HS)*

The teachers faced problems with connecting their learners to online classes. Some of the learners did not have the financial ability to buy the required devices to join online classes.

> *Some of the students, especially in the rural areas, they are not connected, and they also don't have the ability to join online classes. (T5HS)*

The teachers, especially at the secondary level had to use Facebook as an online teaching platform as most of their learners could not access Google Meet and Zoom because of device unavailability and poor technological knowledge.

> *Our learners are from different socio-economic backgrounds….Facebook is easily available for all. (T3S)*

Falling Interest, Poor Attendance and Interaction

One of the main challenges the EL teachers faced was teachers' and learners' low interest, poor class

attendance, and inadequate interaction in classes. Initially teachers, though unprepared, felt interested in conducting online classes, but gradually they lost their interest and no longer liked teaching online.

> *I do not like online teaching that much. Now, I am compelled to teach online; so, I am teaching. (T6HS)*

> *I am not that much interested in online classes as learners do not participate [On Facebook]. I just go on talking in a teacher-centred manner. (T2S)*

As for the learners, teachers found that they were initially interested in attending online classes, but slowly they also lost interest, especially in the pre-recorded classes on Facebook. A good number of learners attended online classes at the beginning, but gradually the number significantly dropped. Sometimes learners even tried to mislead the teachers regarding their class presence. Guardians were not very careful about online learning, as well.

> *They are not sharing, they are not supporting, they are not doing the classes with the enthusiasm they had at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. (T5HS)*

> *Sometime learners join the class, but when we call them by name, they do not respond; that means they have already left the class after ensuring their class attendance at the beginning. (T7HS)*

Again, the teachers could not interact with learners at all in pre-recorded or live classes on Facebook. The learners, in general, did not play an active role in classes. The senior learners were more reluctant to respond and participate in class activities than the younger ones.

> *Only 20% learners respond in the class. The rest of the learners, they join but do not speak. (T6HS)*

> *When I ask my students for feedback, they do not answer. Only a few of the students give me feedback. (T5HS)*

Poor Technological Skills and Lack of Training

Despite their poor technological skills, most EL teachers received no training from their institutions for teaching online. So, they could not make effective presentations in online classes using digital teaching materials. Table 3 gives details about teachers' training, and devices and online platforms used by them.

Table 3 *Teachers' Training, and Devices and Online Platforms Used by Them*

Teachers	Training	Teacher Device	Online Platforms Used by Teachers
T1S	No Training	Mobile	Live or Recorded Classes on Facebook
T2S	No Training	Mobile	Live or Recorded Classes on Facebook
T3S	No Training	Mobile	Facebook Live (mostly), Zoom, Goggle Meet
T4S	No Training	Desktop Computer	Facebook Live (mostly), Zoom, Goggle Meet
T5HS	Received Training	Laptop, Mobile	Zoom
T6HS	Received Training	Laptop, Mobile	Zoom
T7HS	No Training	Laptop, Mobile	Facebook Live, Google Meet, Zoom
T8HS	No Training	Mobile	Recorded Classes on Facebook

Moreover, many teachers did not know that class recording was possible on Zoom. The young teachers were comparatively better in using platforms like Zoom and Google Meet.

Especially the elderly teachers initially faced technological difficulties with handling Google Meet, Zoom, and Facebook platforms. (T7HS)

Many of us do not understand the technologies that well. (T6HS)

Online classes could be effective if we were given training on how to teach online. (T8HS)

Teachers' Financial Hardship

The EL teachers faced financial hardship mainly for two reasons while teaching online during the pandemic. First, they had to buy the devices and internet data packs with their personal fund. No financial allowance was given from their schools and colleges to buy tools and data. Second, educational institutions across the country, especially the private ones reduced teachers' salary and paid only the basic as their incomes generated from the learners significantly dropped. So, unfortunately, many teachers gave up teaching.

I bought and used my own data packs at home for teaching online. Our school used to give us the house rent allowance, but now it is postponed. (T2S)

I watched some news on NTV [a private TV channel in Bangladesh] showing that a kindergarten teacher selling vegetables on the street. (T6HS)

Insecure Internet Connections

The unstable internet connection was another challenging issue for the teachers. They got repeatedly disconnected in the middle of classes due to the unstable internet connections both in the rural and urban areas. It wasted valuable class time as they had to reconnect, and they also lost their focus. Many learners left the class during the network disruptions. Moreover, learners could not understand the discussed contents properly due to poor audio quality.

This is really frustrating to get repeatedly disconnected in the middle of a class. It disrupts the natural flow of a class. Many learners also leave the class. (T3S)

Many learners cannot join classes due to network problems. They always complain about unstable internet connections. (T6HS)

Even though some teachers used broadband internet service in cities like Dhaka, they could not depend on that for uninterrupted services.

Though I am using a broadband service, I always keep alternative data packs ready as broadband does not guarantee uninterrupted services. (T3S)

Developing Learners' Four Language Skills Online: An Uphill Task

The teachers could not teach and practise writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills in online

classes. As learners were not directly involved in classes on Facebook, teachers had no way to develop their four language skills. The recorded classes were mostly contents-based, not skills-based as teachers usually explained the contents and activities of a specific lesson.

> *We cannot teach these four skills properly online. Learners are only listening to the teachers. (T4S)*

> *If the learners do not directly participate in the class [Recorded class on Facebook], how will I develop their four language skills? (T8HS)*

Sometimes teachers tried to involve them in writing tasks, but they could not ensure whether learners completed those tasks, and teachers were not able to give feedback. Besides, it was difficult to develop learners' writing skill through take-home tests and assignments as guardians might help or learners could copy from other sources.

> *I ask them to write something and send me through email, but many learners are not interested. (T5HS)*

> *If the learners do not put their cameras on, if I cannot see their scripts, and if they do not speak, then how will I teach them writing online? (T6HS)*

As for the reading skill, teachers tried to engage learners in reading, but most learners did not want to read. Besides, they could not do the post-reading activities.

> *Most learners do not want to read in online classes….Nobody simply responds. So, sometimes I feel helpless. (T6HS)*

> *Even on Google Meet and Zoom we cannot do effective reading practices as time is limited, and there are too many learners. (T3S)*

Moreover, all the teachers stated that they could hardly practise speaking and listening skills online.

> *We rarely practise speaking and listening skills in online classes. Our focus is on those two skills that are covered in the exams - reading and writing skills. (T1S)*

Lack of Online Testing Schemes

The teachers could not assess their learners online as they had no experiences in online assessments, and the institutions also had no learning management system (LMS) for assessments. So, learners were given offline assignments instead of class tests and quizzes.

> *We give assignments, but now it is postponed as per the order of the government [as the COVID-19 situation has worsen]. (T1S)*

> *For technological limitations, we cannot carry out continuous assessments and tests online. (T3S)*

As the half-yearly and yearly tests were also postponed, learners were given take-home tests by some institutions. Teachers uploaded the question paper on an online platform, and learners wrote those tests at home and later submitted their exam scripts to their respective institutions. However, reliability was a big issue with the take-home tests as teachers were concerned about possible cheating by learners.

They are writing at home and later submitting the scripts at schools…. Are they copying or taking help from their guardians? We cannot sort that out. (T4S)

Negative Emotional and Physical Impacts

The teachers taught online for more than one year and were negatively affected both emotionally and physically. Many of them were experiencing stress, anxiety, backpain, seeing and hearing problems, and sleeping disorder. They taught learners looking at the screen for a long time, and some of them also used the headphones. They had to spend a significant amount of time taking preparation for online classes which created pressure, as well.

Recording a class in a closed room switching off the fan is a very stressful task. (T8HS)

I am always in a doubt whether my learners are understanding my class lecture online. It creates anxiety. No self-satisfactions. (T3S)

Online classes create stress. I cannot sleep properly. (T2S)

When teachers taught from home, they were frequently distracted so could not concentrate on classes fully. The female teachers found it more challenging to teach classes from home as they had to manage their children and chores, as well.

Working from home and babysitting make life difficult. My little baby wants to get my attention during the class, again I am preparing foods, and then I must teach the class - whenever I think about all these, I lose my temper. (T6HS)

Moreover, learners' non-cooperation and disinterest in classes also made teachers feel frustrated, bored, and demotivated.

But, sometimes, when the students do not respond - when they do not prepare their lessons, in those situations sometimes I feel irritated and bothered. (T5HS)

Making Classes Effective: The Toughest Challenge

The key challenge for the teachers was making online classes effective. They emphatically stated that the online EL classes were not being that much effective for factors discussed above along with short class duration and inadequate digital teaching materials.

I do not think online teaching is that much effective, especially for the school level learners. (T2S)

Teachers' poor knowledge of the pedagogical aspects of online teaching is making classes ineffective. (T5HS)

Moreover, as learners were not physically present in front of the teachers, they felt that they were speaking 'to a void'. This distance barred teachers from giving full attention and efforts in online classes. It was basically a teachers' show as learners were hardly involved in group work, pair work, and other interactive tasks.

Eye contact is a great factor in teaching which is missing here. (T5HS)

When I call, they listen to me, but they don't respond. (T6HS)

Besides, teachers did not provide learners with class recordings. Again, the number of classes for each subject was reduced to half. Teachers then could not manage online classes properly.

Before the pandemic, I used to teach eight EL classes per week, but now I teach only four classes. (T4S)

Learners, especially the younger ones go on talking without muting their microphones. That's why the online classes [On Zoom] become chaotic like a fish market. (T7HS)

While attending classes online, children got easily distracted and went for some other activities like watching cartoons and playing games forgetting the class.

Children are more interested in playing games or something else on mobile, not attending classes. (T2S)

Eventually, online teaching became sort of a ritualistic activity. No body cared about the effectiveness anymore. However, the teachers said that they had no other alternative, so they must continue teaching online.

Now, the official order is that we must continue the classes online. It does not matter whether the learners attend the classes. (T2S)

Discussion

Arranging the required technological devices was a key concern for both the teachers and learners as also found in previous studies (Altavilla, 2020; Hakim, 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Parvej et al., 2021). One fact was that most of the teachers were not given any financial help from their respective institutions for buying the required technological tools (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020). Again, the learners' poor socio-economic conditions did not allow them to buy devices for online classes (Alhumaid et al., 2020; Ela et al., 2021). Additionally, the learners' falling interest was substantiated by their poor attendance in online classes (Efriana, 2021; Hakim, 2020; Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020) which ultimately made teachers lose their motivation for teaching. The learners were not interested in playing an active role in classes, as well (Efriana, 2021; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Tarrayo et al., 2021).

Moreover, the teachers' poor technological skills as reported in other studies (Altavilla, 2020; Casacchia et al., 2021; Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Efriana, 2021) could be explained by the fact that many of them, especially the senior teachers could not handle smartphones and laptops properly in their daily use, let alone using them for online teaching. The situation aggravated as most of the teachers did not receive any training for online teaching (Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Marshall et al., 2020) unlike the EL teachers in Nepal (Gautam, 2020). Teachers, especially those who were working in the non-government educational institutions were then usually poorly paid in Bangladesh. They faced financial hardship as they had to buy different technological tools and expensive data packs with their personal fund (Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Nashir & Laili, 2021), and their salaries were reduced.

Additionally, many other studies also reported the negative effects of unstable internet connections across different contexts in Cameroon, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and the Philippines (Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Hakim, 2020; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Nashir & Laili, 2021; Rahim & S. C, 2020;

Tarrayo et al., 2021) and in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2021; Parvej et al., 2021). Both the broadband internet service providers and the mobile phone companies in Bangladesh miserably failed to upgrade their networks and ensure better services for their subscribers during the pandemic (Alhumaid et al., 2020). Furthermore, online teaching exerted negative impacts on teachers' mental and physical health (Casacchia et al., 2021; Ela et al., 2021; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020) as they had to teach classes looking at the screen for a long time every day. The absence of physical movements during online classes and the associated anxiety for extra preparation, digital materials making (Nashir & Laili, 2021), poor internet connections, and the overall inefficacy of online teaching also contributed to their mental stress.

Again, for lack of technological pedagogical knowledge (Khan et al., 2021; Koehler & Mishra, 2009) and access to appropriate online platforms (Alhumaid et al., 2020), teachers failed to practise and develop learners' four language skills in classes. They did not know how to interact with the learners meaningfully using the inbuilt add-ins like the breakout room on the online platforms like Zoom and Goole Meet (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Besides, the teachers simply did not make the efforts and were not willing to go beyond their comfort zone to involve learners in language skills practice. The learners' unwillingness to take part in class activities also rendered practices of language skills in classes difficult. Furthermore, as all the stakeholders - teachers, learners, guardians, and officials - were exam-driven in Bangladesh, lack of online testing schemes could explain the learners' poor interest and participation in online classes. Teachers also had poor knowledge of online assessments (Khan et al., 2021). Therefore, continuous assessments and tests were confined to offline assignments and take-home tests only (Efriana, 2021; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Nashir & Laili, 2021).

Finally, the perceived inefficacy of online teaching could be explained by the fact that online teaching was started in Bangladesh as an emergency alternative mode of teaching without much preparation (MacIntyre et al., 2020). As the EL teachers failed to manage classes properly, sometimes the class went chaotic (Marshall et al., 2020; Sumardi & Nugrahani, 2021). It seemed that the teachers and learners could not aptly handle 'the void' in between them in online classes. Learners' poor comprehension of the class contents was a key concern for the teachers (Efriana, 2021; Tarrayo et al., 2021). The teachers and learners did not become habituated to online classes, especially they failed to think beyond the traditional classroom model (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Lack of teachers' and learners' commitment and motivation also made online classes ineffective (Alhumaid et al., 2020; Hakim, 2020; Marshall et al., 2020). Then, delivery of quality online teaching was not prioritised by the teachers and authority concerned. There was no rigorous monitoring for ensuring quality online teaching, as well.

Conclusion and Suggestions

There is a strong possibility that the educational institutions will follow the hybrid mode of teaching-learning, once the pandemic ends. So, teachers should no longer consider online teaching an emergency alternative mode rather they must be equipped and skilled to make it effective. For lack of devices, the teachers could not teach classes effectively, and learners failed to join. Moreover, teachers' poor technological skills did not allow them to make the best use of available tools and online platforms. Besides, financial hardship could be a strong demotivating factor for any professionals, not only for the teachers. Then, unstable internet connections, dropping interest, low attendance, less interaction, inadequate language skills practices, and short class duration combinedly lessened the efficacy of EL classes. As Bangladesh has a test-driven education system, online teaching-learning would never be successful until and unless a reliable online assessment framework is put into place. Additionally, the negative impacts on teachers' mental and physical health highlighted the fact that they must be more careful about digital wellbeing.

On a different note, the case study reported here did not target to generalise its findings rather aimed to understand the challenges of online teaching faced by the EL teachers by depth. Future studies can be carried out with a larger sample to get the general scenario across the country. Based on the key findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for the EL teachers and other stakeholders concerned:

a) Essential devices and stable internet connections must be ensured for the teachers and learners across the country. The respective school authority should support teachers financially in this regard. The government can arrange soft loans for the learners if it cannot arrange free devices for them.

b) Teachers must get intensive training on online teaching so that they can improvise their technological skills and come to know the pedagogical aspects of online teaching. In the training programs, a separate module can focus on teaching and practising the four language skills in online classes. Thus, they would be able to make classes more interesting, interactive, and ultimately, effective.

c) The schools and colleges must arrange efficient online assessment platforms for the learners and teachers.

d) There should be institutional counselling for the teachers so that they can properly deal with the negative mental and physical impacts of online teaching and retain their motivation.

e) Teachers can use teacher agency to tackle all challenges related to online teaching and collaborate among themselves to exchange experiences. The EL teachers must engage in reflective practices for improving their online teaching, as well.

The Authors

Dr. Md. Abdur Rouf works as an associate professor in English at Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. His recent research interests include second language teacher education (SLTE), ICT in language classrooms, and educational policies. Corresponding author. Email: rouf777@gmail.com

Harun Rashid works as a lecturer in English at Md. Abul Kalam School & amp; College, Comilla, Bangladesh. His research interests lie in the areas of technology-based language learning and teaching, computer assisted language learning (CALL) and communicative language teaching (CLT).

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