

# Rethinking English Classroom Practices in the Post-COVID Bangladesh: Making a Case for Blended-learning

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused large-scale disruption to education worldwide and forced educational institutions to switch to online education. During this pandemic, Bangladeshi educational institutions also transitioned to online teaching. While most teachers and students felt immensely challenged by this new mode of education because of a lack of training and infrastructural limitations, some English language teachers were found to exploit this opportunity to teach online using accessible technologies. The teachers who successfully integrated technology in the classroom recommended continuing online education in the post-COVID period because of the benefits this mode of education offers. However, they did not suggest online education as a substitute for in-person education. This systematic review critically examined the literature that explored Bangladeshi teachers' and students' experiences of COVID-19 online education to understand if online education offers any solutions to the challenges that negatively affect the country's secondary-level English education. Based on the meta-analysis of data, this review paper makes a case for blended learning for English language classrooms in Bangladesh, as research on blended learning shows that this dual-mode education can address the issues of space, time, and reach that negatively impact the country's English language education. More importantly, the blended approach can reduce inequities that characterize the current English language classrooms in the country and can, consequently, increase inclusion. Accordingly, drawing on global and local scholarship, this paper sheds light on various features of blended education.

**Keywords:** *Online education, blended learning, flipped classroom, English language teaching, the substitution, and technological pedagogical content knowledge.*

## Introduction

The education sector was immensely affected worldwide by the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ryan, 2023). The spread of the virus required the authorities to close down schools in Global South and

Global North as an initial response to contain the virus, which marked the most extensive disruption in the delivery of education in history (UNESCO, 2020). School closures affected over 94 per cent of learners across the world (McCarthy & Richter, 2020). To restrict the spread of the virus, educational

institutions transitioned to the online format. However, the pandemic did not deliver a single educational experience worldwide (Breslin, 2020). Research on COVID-19 educational experiences suggests that Global North relatively smoothly transitioned to online education as an alternative to face-to-face (f2f) instruction while Global South struggled. The reason, perhaps, is that developed countries already had flipped classrooms, that is, technology-supported components. Accordingly, the matter of the digital divide between countries became obvious. Notably, COVID-19 online education exposed the digital divide within countries as well, as private and public institutions in many countries responded to the pandemic differently (Khan et al., 2021a; Rafiq, 2023; Ryan, 2023). For instance, Bangladeshi private educational institutions adapted to online education more efficiently than public ones. This public-private difference within the country can be attributed to the better technological infrastructures in private institutions, revealing an inherent inequality between these two educational streams.

Bangladesh, a developing economy, responded to the pandemic by closing educational institutions at all levels in March 2020. Initially, the government utilized broadcasting media to continue primary and secondary education (Ahmed, 2021). Later, educational institutions were directed to continue education online so far as their technological capacities allowed (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021). However, this temporary transition to an alternative mode of education in place of f2f instruction exposed Bangladeshi teachers' and students' lack of training and experience regarding technology integration in education (Bashir et al., 2021; Biswas et al., 2020; Das, 2021; Emon et al., 2020). Public educational institutions were found to lack

technological infrastructures, such as learning management systems (LMS) and educational technologies, to enact online education (Khan et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023). In addition, device ownership and internet connectivity issues negatively impacted online education (Khan et al., 2023; Rafique, 2013). Notably, English language teaching that usually demands teacher-student and student-student interaction for learning to occur suffered the most during the Pandemic-related cancellation of f2f instruction (Rouf & Rashed, 2020).

This paper aimed to conduct a systematic review of the body of research that explored teachers' and students' experiences of online education in Bangladesh during the COVID period to develop an understanding of what possibilities this experience holds for the country's education, especially for English language classrooms. With that aim, this paper sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Bangladeshi teachers and learners regarding the online education that was enacted in the country during the COVID period?
2. In light of COVID-19 online education in Bangladesh, what are the prospects of complementing the secondary-level English language classrooms with online components to extend the reach and increase contact hours?

## Motivation of the Study

My experience of working as an English language teacher in Bangladeshi public colleges for two decades has made me aware of some significant challenges—such as large class sizes, fewer contact hours, and

inauthentic learning resources—that affect English language classrooms in the country’s public education. As a result, I was keen to find feasible solutions to these challenges to make my teaching more effective and to enhance learning outcomes. Macaro (2020) argues that systematic reviews of educational studies allow researchers to generate insights into a particular educational phenomenon to inform major educational stakeholders, such as teachers, educational leaders and policymakers. Thus, my chief motivation behind undertaking this meta-analysis is to find ways to deal with the problems that negatively impact secondary-level English language education in Bangladesh.

## Methodology

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) provided directions for this paper. As a set of guidelines for educational research, PRISMA emphasizes the need for clear research questions, offers a robust screening process and allows the researcher to explore a vast database of relevant literature. For searching relevant papers, the Peer-reviewed Instrumental Materials Online Database (PRIMO), Scopus, and Google Scholar were used, as these search tools facilitate the search of a wide range of empirical studies and scholarly articles from various sources (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Accordingly, searches were made to identify the literature on pandemic-related online education or emergency remote teaching (ERT) worldwide published between 2020 and early 2023, with a particular focus on Bangladesh. Limiting the search to this particular period can be justified because educational intuitions began to be affected by COVID-19 and

went online between early and mid-2020. A combination of the following keywords was used for the search: online education, emergency remote learning, COVID-19, COVID-time online education, transition to online education, English language learning, English language teaching, Bangladeshi teachers, Bangladeshi students, and Bangladesh.

The search primarily found 112 papers that explored different aspects of online education or ERT during the COVID period in different countries, including Bangladesh. Upon reading the titles and abstracts of these papers, twenty-six (26) papers were found to be relevant to this study. Of these, 20 studies were directly related to the Bangladeshi context. The rest were from international backgrounds. All articles that explored the Bangladeshi experiences of the COVID-19 transition to online education, whether or not published in peer-reviewed journals, were selected for review because of the paucity of research in this particular context. As for studies from international contexts, only peer-reviewed articles and seminal book chapters that provided a holistic view of pandemic-time online education were selected. In total, six (6) papers were selected from international contexts. In addition, some seminal books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed articles on online education, blended learning, and technology integration in education were selected—regardless of their publication date and contexts—to form a general understanding of these pedagogical concepts to inform this research, with a particular focus on English language learning and teaching. The major themes identified by this meta-analysis have been presented in the sections that follow.

## Findings

### The Pandemic: Global Experience

As stated earlier, the pandemic caused large-scale disruption of f2f instruction worldwide. The closures of schools negatively impacted education in all countries. Klein (2020) showed that the management of teaching and learning involved significant challenges all across the world, as the pandemic “ushered in a new era for teaching and learning in general for all countries worldwide” (Upur, 2023, p. 163). According to Ryan (2023), the major challenges were: a) having a device to attend online classes; b) access to the Internet; c) stability of broadband connections; d) having a suitable place to study; e) having in-person resources; and f) having the required linguistic, educational, and cultural capital for online education. It was found that countries with advanced technological set-ups in educational institutions fared much better than low-tech developing countries (Khan et al., 2023; Upur, 2023).

Ryan (2023) further argued that the affluent section of society having adequate digital access also experienced fewer challenges in each country. Thus, digital access and literacy were two defining factors in enacting the COVID-19 emergency remote learning (Corsi & Ryan, 2022). Accordingly, one crucial issue was equity: equity of digital access and equity of environment (Smith et al., 2020). Depending on digital access and digital literacy, Breslin (2023) put the lockdown stakeholders into three categories: lockdown thrivers, survivors, and strugglers. According to him (2023), lockdown thrivers had a relatively positive experience during the pandemic because of their adequate access to technology, stable

connections, and digital literacy. In contrast, lockdown strugglers grappled with the lack of technological access and economic struggles. Lockdown survivors fall between these two groups, who somehow could manage to get by regarding accessing and using technologies.

### The Pandemic: Bangladeshi Experience

In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected education (UNESCO, 2021), as the government was required to implement a country-wide lockdown from mid-March 2020 to implement social distancing (Ahmed, 2021; Dewan et al., 2022). As an initial response, the government temporarily used the national broadcasting service to continue primary and secondary education (Ahmed, 2021). Then educational institutions were asked to continue online teaching and learning with whatever technological support was available. However, scholars argue that such an alternative mode of education to continue education during a crisis does not fit the definition of online education (see Ryan, 2023). In this regard, Hodges et al. (2020) think that emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a more suitable term. Notably, ERT cannot prepare students and teachers for digitally-mediated education in a well-planned way because it is usually a stop-gap solution to a crisis, not a permanent arrangement (Hodges et al., 2020; Ryan, 2023). Thus, it differs from regular online education and impacts institutions and stakeholders varyingly (Smith et al., 2023). The Bangladesh experience attests to this observation. In light of Breslin’s (2023) typology, most Bangladeshi teachers and students can be identified as lockdown strugglers.

## Infrastructural Issues and Pedagogical Challenges

It was found that Bangladeshi teachers and educational leaders were unaware of the affordances of educational technologies (Ahmed, 2021; Das, 2021; Tabassum et al., 2021). Their online teaching was limited to uploading videos and teaching materials on the institutional website or YouTube for students to continue their education (see Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Teachers who conducted synchronous classes using video technologies, such as Google Meet and Zoom, needed to familiarize themselves with various features of these technologies. While students were found to be relatively more comfortable with technologies, they were unable to educationally benefit from using them because they lacked training (Biswas et al., 2020). However, some teachers demonstrated high familiarity with emerging educational technologies and exploited their affordances to continue teaching effectively online (see Rafique, 2023).

Studies on COVID-19 ERT in Bangladesh revealed that the major impediment to teaching online was inadequate infrastructural support required for virtual classrooms (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021; Dewan et al., 2022; Farhana et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a, 2023; Mannan et al., 2020; Rafique, 2023). These challenges included: a lack of access to devices and technologies, lack of access to the Internet, unstable and unreliable connections, and high Internet data costs. Thus, in most cases, ERT appeared to be a mere tokenism while waiting for in-person classes to resume (Ahmed, 2021; Shrestha et al., 2021; Dewan et al., 2022). Many students cannot take advantage of synchronous online video classes because of not owning required devices, the high costs of broadband connections, and unstable connections (Farhana et al., 2020;

Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2021a; Khan et al., 2023). Accordingly, studies that explored teachers' and students' COVID-19 experiences found low learner engagement, reduced classroom interactions, reduced classroom discussions, and low learning outcomes (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021; Biswas, 2020; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a, 2023; Rafique, 2023; Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Students were also found to have suffered from not having any training for online education (Ahmed, 2021; Farhana et al., 2020; Rouf & Rashid, 2021). Notably, online education created opportunities for students to take control of their own learning with reduced control of teachers over the classroom; however, few students could utilize this autonomy (Rouf & Rashid, 2021).

Assessment was one of the most vulnerable areas of education during ERT (Kabir & Hasnat, 2021). Research findings revealed that teachers could not design appropriate, reliable, and valid online assessments because of their lack of technical skills and experience ((Al-Maqbali & Raja Hussain, 2022; Bashir et al., 2021; Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2021a, 2023). First, designing assessments for virtual classrooms requires teachers' specific technological skills, which many teachers lack (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Consequently, such assessments cannot ensure learning outcomes. Second, developing appropriate virtual assessment instruments is time-consuming and, thus, significantly increases teachers' workload (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Worse still, it becomes tough for educators to maintain academic integrity through online assessments designed for virtual environments, as monitoring virtual exam halls per se is a challenge (Al-Maqbali & Raja Hussain, 2022). Accordingly, online assignments often allow students to plagiarise

and adopt unfair means during exams and, thus, demotivate students who strictly adhere to academic integrity.

In this regard, researchers in Bangladesh (Bashir et al., 2021; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2020) identified increased occurrences of plagiarism and cheating in COVID-19 online education due to a lack of monitoring. Consequently, many Bangladeshi students expressed concerns that assessments could not ensure justice (Bashir et al., 2021). However, private educational institutions were found to experience fewer challenges as they already had technological infrastructures, such as Blackboard, required for online education (Khan et al., 2021a; Rafique, 2023). Thus, inequities of access and educational environment were two significant issues in the Bangladeshi experience of ERT during the pandemic situation.

## **ERT and English Language Teaching in Bangladesh**

Research suggests that integrating technology in the English language classroom can create unique opportunities for learners to learn and practice the target language by enabling them to access authentic materials and enhancing exposure to the target language (Hockly, 2018; King, 2016). However, Bangladeshi public education has yet to capitalize on the affordances of educational technologies (Khan & Abdou, 2021). The COVID-19 ERT allowed the country's English language teachers to use and experiment with technology as a substitute for f2f instruction (see Munni & Hassan, 2020; Rafique, 2023; Rouf & Rashed, 2021). However, teachers' lack of experience and competence did not allow them to take full advantage of this opportunity (Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Curiously, the impact of ERT on English language learning did not receive

adequate scholarly attention in Bangladesh. While the majority of the researchers who explored teachers' and students' education-related experiences during COVID-19 ERT in the country were practising English language teachers, their empirical studies primarily focused on ERT's impact on education in general rather than on English language education in particular (see Bashir et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a; 2023). However, three studies could be traced that solely focused on the impact of ERT on English language classrooms during the crisis period.

To begin with, Munni and Hassan (2020) reported creating a Facebook group to develop the listening and speaking skills of a cohort of 52 undergraduate students in English. They reported that the online arrangement allowed them to use authentic materials from YouTube and BBC to develop speaking and listening skills, in which learner satisfaction and motivation were found to be high. They argued that Facebook or similar social media could be useful in teaching English in Bangladesh if teachers were trained for the job. Rouf and Rashed's (2021) case study on secondary and higher secondary English education explored teachers' experiences of implementing ERT in English classes. The study found that teachers used institutional Facebook to upload recorded content-based videos to teach English. Unsurprisingly, such non-interactive and asynchronous lessons were found to have low learner engagement. The researchers argued that these video lessons could not significantly contribute to developing any of the four skills of English. The authors also mentioned that teachers' inadequate training and digital literacy did not allow them to design appropriate online assessments. They concluded that the instruction was primarily ineffective. Despite these limitations, Rouf

and Rashed (2021) see the immense potential of flipped classrooms for teaching and learning English in Bangladesh and advocate for continuing technology-integrated English teaching in the post-COVID period alongside f2f instruction.

Finally, Rafique (2023) conducted her action research with undergraduate students who took “Functional English” and “Academic Writing” courses with her between November 2020 and April 2021 at a premier public university in Bangladesh. After a thorough needs analysis, she designed instructional activities to build an online learning community. Her methodologically rigorous qualitative study explored learner engagement, interaction and collaboration in a technology-mediated online environment by encouraging students to practice writing and providing feedback online. The researcher used Google Classroom as LMS, Zoom for synchronous online classes, Google Jamboard for brainstorming, and Google Docs for writing practices. While typical technological issues and lack of context-specific training posed challenges for teaching online in this particular context, the researcher reported increased learner participation, interaction, and collaboration among her students. Based on her experience, she recommended the continuation of online teaching in the post-COVID period because of the affordances such technology-supported online teaching offers. Notably, these three researchers stressed the need to adequately train teachers before enacting online classes.

## Lessons from COVID Experiences

Despite various challenges that characterized emergency remote teaching in Bangladesh, this crisis-time stop-gap solution allowed Bangladeshi educators to use and experiment with various educational tools. A general

consensus is that teachers could ensure higher learning outcomes with adequate training and preparation. During this period, English teaching professionals in Bangladesh also became aware of many free and inexpensive educational technologies that significantly facilitate learning. While the literature on technology-mediated language learning finds a positive link between technology use and second language acquisition (Hockly, 2016, 2018; King, 2016), Bangladeshi English language teachers are yet to learn to integrate technologies in teaching. However, Rafique’s (2023) theoretically informed technology-mediated English language courses set an example of exploiting technological innovations to make teaching and learning more effective. She mainly relied on accessible educational technologies for her initiative, which points to the feasibility of integrating such technologies to address the challenges that impede effective teaching in English language classrooms in Bangladesh, especially at the secondary level. In this regard, studies on secondary-level English language teaching in the country identified three crucial impediments: a need for more authentic and rich input, overcrowded class size and limited contact hours (Al Amin, 2022; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman et al., 2019; Rahmatuzzaman, 2018).

Munni and Hassan (2020), Rafique (2023) and Rashed and Rouf (2021) recommend continuing technology-supported teaching to complement f2f classes to make ELT more effective and ensure learning outcomes. Motivated by their initiatives, this author argues that the blended learning approach to language learning might revolutionize the learning and teaching of English in the country’s English language education at all levels. This approach will enable teachers to address the issues of time and space (King,

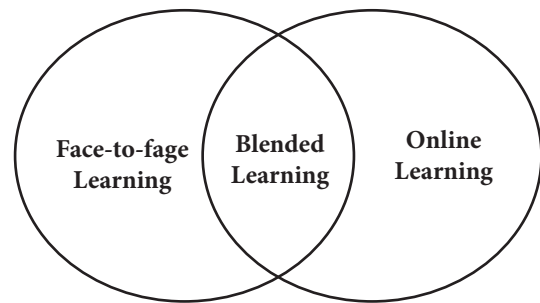
2016) that negatively affect the country's English language education (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman et al., 2019). Moreover, the approach will also contribute to minimizing the digital divide that creates inequities between public and private education concerning English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014; Hamid & Erling, 2016). As a developing economy aiming at becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2031 (Gupta & Liton, 2023), Bangladesh prioritizes learning English to produce English-proficient graduates to exploit the opportunities created by the global open market (Roshid & Sultana, 2023). Such an English acquisition plan requires restructuring the learning environment to decrease inequities and increase inclusion. Based on global and local experiences, this paper makes a case for blending virtual components with f2f instruction in English language classrooms in Bangladesh to extend the reach and increase effectiveness. Rafique (2023), Khan and Abdou (2021), and Munni and Hassan (2020) showed that there are affordable and accessible educational technologies, such as Facebook and Google Classroom, that can be used as LMS and supportive learning tools to enact blended learning in English education. Accordingly, the following sections shed light on blended learning and issues closely related to such technology-mediated education for policy consideration.

## The Blended Approach: The Best of both Worlds

Blended learning is a bridge between online and F2F education, although scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding the definition of this new mode of education (Saichaie, 2020; Sharpe et al., 2006; Sharma & Barrett, 2008). Consequently, it is understood differently in different contexts (Graham, 2013). The

general understanding is that it is a blend of f2f instruction and online instruction and a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous deliveries (Graham & Dziuban, 2008; Hockly, 2016). However, disagreements exist about the right blend (Whittaker, 2013).

*Figure 1: Blended Learning*



*(Adapted from Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019)*

According to King (2016), blending occurs whenever a teacher uses technologies as media, such as audio or video. In contrast, Dziuban et al. (2018) argue that at least 30 per cent of classroom instruction should be in an online format to qualify as blended. However, Whittaker (2013) argues that “any combination of face-to-face teaching and computer technology” (p. 12) should be considered blended. Singh and Reed (2001) argue that what is important is having more than one delivery mode, not a virtual-physical ratio, that aims to optimize delivery cost and learning outcomes. It is important to note that blended learning does not intend to replace seat time with full-time online instruction but aims to redefine the learning process (Strayer, 2012).

## Why Blended Learning for English Language Learning?

From Chomsky's (1965) theory of competence and performance to Hyme's (1972)



communicative competence to Halliday and Hassan's (1976) discourse competence to Holec's (1981) theory of learner autonomy, a significant number of theories have informed the field of applied linguistics during the last five decades, reshaping language classroom practices globally. These theoretical orientations have encouraged classroom practitioners to move from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness with two main aims: allowing more learner autonomy and greater learner responsibility. In short, these conceptualizations have also motivated teachers to look at the learning process from the learner's perspective (King, 2016). As a result, the teacher's role has expanded, requiring them to facilitate, monitor, and observe learning, standing aside to intervene only when necessary (King, 2016). In this new paradigm, teachers are less interested in the passive transmission of knowledge (King, 2016). In addition, social, cultural, economic and political changes also call for a more flexible and cost-effective learning environment (Nicolson et al., 2011). The new realities demand methodological reorientations of the curriculum. The concept of blended learning can be seen as the desired methodological innovation because it allows flexibility (King, 2016; Sharpe et al., 2006) and personal agency (Osgurthorpe & Graham, 2003). This hybrid mode also economises costs, space and time (Dewar & Whittington, 2004; Osgurthorpe & Graham, 2003; Singh & Reed, 2001), increases access (Graham, 2004; Hockly, 2018; King, 2016; Singh & Reed, 2001), enriches pedagogy (Graham, 2004; Hockly, 2018; King, 2016), enhances effectiveness (Hockly, 2018; King, 2016; Singh & Reed, 2001), and support diversity (Sharpe et al., 2006).

In this regard, King (2016) identifies some key benefits of blended learning for teachers

and learners of English, which are as follows: 1) accommodating diverse learning styles, 2) providing individual attention, 3) maximizing interaction, 4) enhancing learner confidence and motivation, 5) facilitating rich input, and 6) fostering autonomy. Notably, the blended mode offers several benefits for institutions as well. First, this educational approach allows the authorities to make the best use of resources. Second, it allows institutions to reach a large number of learners, which increases its scalability (Thanekar, 2013). Moreover, the approach enables authorities to leverage learning by allowing students to use devices they already own, such as cell phones (Thanekar, 2013).

Modern English classrooms aim to develop students' communicative competence through developing four skills of English. Research indicates that blended learning plays a crucial role in developing four macro-skills by engaging students in diverse ways. For instance, Shih (2010) introduced video-based blogs in a traditional English class to develop students' speaking skills and found that students' speaking abilities significantly improved because of the blending. In an experimental study, Adas and Bakir (2013) found that their EFL students improved in different areas of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, and grammar, because of adopting a blended mode. Similarly, Banditvilai (2016), Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017), and Tosun (2015) found EFL students' improvement in listening, reading, and vocabulary development, respectively as a result of adopting a blended approach.

## Critical Considerations

While blended language classrooms have significant benefits, as stated above, it is not an educational panacea. Before adopting this

## Issues Related to Technology Integration in Education

mode, policymakers and teachers need to consider some related issues. As global and Bangladeshi experiences suggested, teacher training is essential for technology integration in education for two reasons. First, teachers' digital literacy and subject knowledge must be developed simultaneously to exploit the benefits offered by educational technologies (the following section discusses the issue in greater detail). Second, teachers' mindsets need to be changed. For instance, teachers habituated to teacher-fronted classrooms might face challenges with this learner-fronted approach. Thus, teachers' mental preparation is crucial. Then, choosing an appropriate combination of in-person and online components is essential.

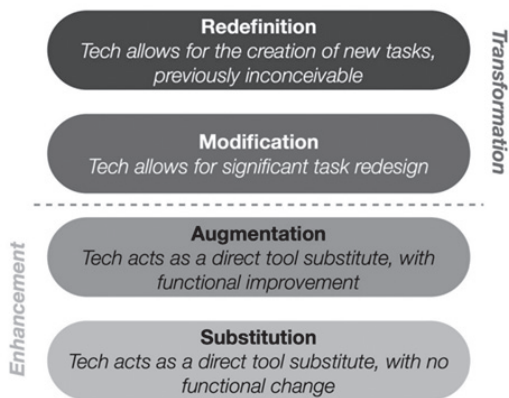
Regarding the appropriate blend of physical and virtual components, King (2016) thinks that the blend must be determined by course objectives and aims, not by teachers' personal choices. Costs are also an essential factor to consider. For example, affordability and accessibility of technologies are two crucial factors for low-resource contexts (Twig, 2006), such as Bangladesh. Another relevant issue that needs attention is learner motivation. Learners' lack of interest in the blended mode might cause student attrition (King, 2016). High difficulty levels of materials or assignments, time pressures, and increased workload may demotivate learners about blended education (Picciano, 2016). Finally, peer support, a useful motivator in any learning environment (Hughes, 2007), is essential in blended learning. Accordingly, students must be trained to foster the mindset to help their peers before adopting blended education.

It has been argued that technology-mediated learning can transform the traditional classroom into a vibrant, learner-friendly, and more inclusive learning space. However, technologies can do more harm than good if they are integrated without proper planning and appropriate design. First, teachers' mindsets concerning technology use must be changed by informing them of its potential. Then they should be adequately trained to feel comfortable with technologies by developing their digital literacy. Finally, they should be made aware of the principles that inform the field. In this regard, two models are instrumental in developing teachers' competence in using technologies for educational purposes: the SAMR (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) model and TPACK (technological, pedagogical, content knowledge). The following two sub-sections briefly introduce these two models.

### The SAMR Model

The acronym SAMR stands for substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition. Puentedura (2006) designed this model to provide secondary-level teachers with guidelines regarding technology integration in education. The model has four levels (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition), which fall into two higher levels: enhancement (includes substitution and augmentation) and transformation (includes modification and redefinition).

**Figure 2:** The SAMR model.



*(Adapted from Hamilton et al., 2016)*

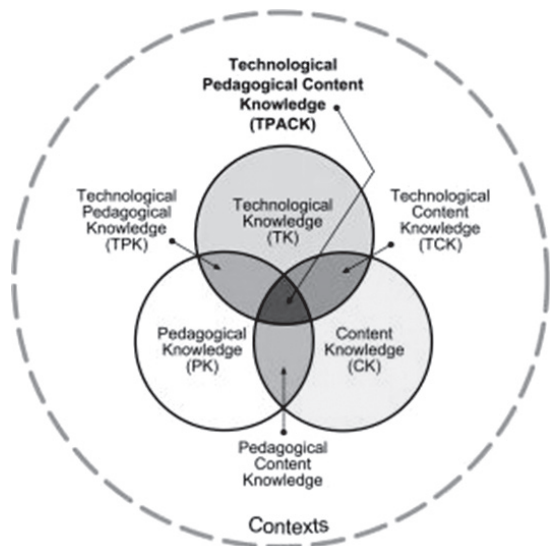
The enhancement level allows teachers to enrich input through technical support to foster lower-order thinking skills. In contrast, the transformation level can enable teachers to transform the learning environment to foster higher-order thinking skills. For instance, a piece of printed text can be substituted with a similar text in the electronic format, which can be further augmented with colours and illustrations. However, an electronic format of the exact text with interactive features can further modify the text to increase its functionality. The fourth level, redefinition, is the highest level in which a task can be innovatively redesigned. For example, instead of assigning an ESL student to write a dialogue between a salesperson and a customer, s/he can be asked to visit a nearby shop, record her/his real-life transaction with the salesperson, and then submit the assignment in the audio format.

## TPACK

Teachers’ content knowledge is undeniably an important factor so far as teaching is concerned. However, Shulman (1987) contends that mere

content knowledge cannot make an effective teacher. According to him, effective teaching requires a teacher to have pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), that is, the ability to make lectures comprehensible. When a teacher is required to use technology for educational purposes, his role becomes more complex and challenging, as it evidently involves three distinct but overlapping knowledge bases: content-related, pedagogical, and technological. Drawing on Shulman’s (1987) theory of PCK, Mishra and Koehler (2006) developed the TPACK framework. The framework aims to enable teachers to integrate technologies in education effectively.

**Figure 3.** The TPACK Framework



*(Adapted from Mishra & Koehler, 2008)*

According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), the domains of content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) become intricately intertwined during the process of integrating technology for pedagogical purposes and lead to four new domains: 1) pedagogical knowledge (PK), 2)

technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), 3) technological content knowledge (TCK), and 4) technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK). The main argument is that teachers must be able to separate the intertwined bases of knowledge and understand their interactions at the same time (Zhang & Fang, 2022). According to Koehler and Mishra (2006), TPACK provides teachers with guidelines that enable them to observe and reflect on actions about technology integration in education to inform their teaching practices. It is important to note that uninformed use of technology in education can, in the best-case scenario, develop students' lower-order thinking (Tseng et al., 2020). In contrast, TPACK can foster students' higher-order thinking (Wang, 2022). In this regard, the recent trend in EFL education encourages teachers to aim at developing students' higher-order thinking skills while teaching the target language.

## Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The pandemic required Bangladeshi educational institutions to switch to online education temporarily. The experience was marked by various infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. However, the silver lining to this COVID cloud is that the pandemic initiated Bangladeshi educators into virtual classrooms. Some English language teachers exploited this opportunity to their advantage. They explored available technological resources to teach online, enhance learner engagement and motivation, and increase learning outcomes. Their initiatives can be motivational for the country's English language teachers to explore further the possibilities that educational technologies offer. It is time for English language teachers to take it one step further by envisioning blended

English language classrooms to extend the reach, increase effectiveness, enrich learning experiences, and minimize inequities.

Based on the learners' and teachers' experiences of pandemic-time online education in Bangladesh as well as other contexts, this author recommends considering the adoption of the blended learning approach to English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladeshi public education for several reasons. First, the blended approach will enable teachers and administrators to respond more efficiently to future natural or artificial disasters disrupting f2f instruction. Second, the approach can be enacted using accessible educational technologies, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to help English language teachers address the challenges of time and space that negatively impact language classrooms in Bangladesh (see Khan & Abdou, 2021; Munni & Hassan, 2020; Rafique; 2023). Third, the right blend of f2f and online components will enable students to access authentic learning materials and enhance their exposure to the target language, which is critical for second/foreign language learners. Finally, blending in-person and virtual classrooms can be expected to help English language learners construct knowledge autonomously by taking control of their own learning. However, teachers and students must be adequately trained and prepared to use useful educational technologies to achieve the desired goals.

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