Research Article

Exploring Challenges and Opportunities for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Students in Thailand: A Comparative Analysis of Online Teaching Pre- and Post-COVID-19

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the challenges and opportunities in online teaching before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Pre-COVID, educators faced significant hurdles in communication, internet connectivity, student engagement, and adaptation to online tools, with 75% struggling with one-way communication and 80% facing adaptation challenges. Despite these issues, interactive teaching methods and multimedia integration showed promise, with a significant positive correlation between interactive methods and students' speaking proficiency (r=0.85, p<0.001). Post-COVID, the integration of technology became paramount, with 70% of educators recognizing its increased importance and 65% feeling better prepared for future disruptions. Hybrid learning models and enhanced technological skills were notable advancements, although challenges such as reduced attention spans and phone addiction persisted. Chi-Square tests revealed a significant change in the distribution of challenges pre- and post-COVID (p<0.001), while perceived opportunities remained stable (p=0.247). Correlation analyses indicated that pre-COVID perceptions of future prospects and challenges had minimal influence on post-COVID realities. The study emphasizes the dynamic nature of online teaching, emphasizing the importance of constantly adjusting, improving skills, and receiving assistance in order to successfully utilize technology improvements and improve student involvement in the educational environment after the pandemic. **Keywords:** Online teaching, EFL education, COVID-19 impact, technology integration, student engagement

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global emergency on January 30, 2020, followed by the pandemic classification on March 11, 2020, which launched an unparalleled period for global education (Prasojo & Srisudarso, 2021). The worldwide shift from classroom teaching toward different online learning methods, including synchronous, asynchronous, and blended education, created both obstacles and new possibilities for educators alongside students (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). Educators experienced 'emergency online home-schooling' (MacIntyre et al., 2020), which led to a rapid adjustment of teaching methods through new educational technologies because schools lacked sufficient preparation and resources.

The educational environment shift provided researchers with direct observations of student engagement in completely different instructional spaces (Alger & Eyckmans, 2022). Educational institutions quickly revealed major differences between their readiness and infrastructure to support technology during this sudden transition to online learning. The transition to online learning proved difficult because schools needed better educational infrastructure, and teachers did not possess sufficient expertise in internet-based teaching practices (Prasojo & Srisudarso, 2021). The problems encountered during the transition to online education became worse because teachers lacked digital devices, proper support systems, and adequate training (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Online education established due to the pandemic crisis fundamentally affected teachers who teach English as Foreign Language (EFL) to students. Research investigators studied the effect of the pandemic on both emergency online teaching and English learning (ERARSLAN, 2021). English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals faced considerable anxiety because educators lacked sufficient competence to deliver complete online instruction (Al-Bargi, 2022). Global online education adoption has demonstrated that digital literacy matters together with innovative classroom methods.

Traditional teaching combined with virtual methods has generated flexible time and space options for education, allowing students to experience a wider and enhanced learning environment (Prasojo & Srisudarso, 2021). The quick adaptation of higher education to online learning has brought essential findings about educational methods that will guide future educational practices (Al-Bargi, 2022). However, virtual classroom participation continues to pose an unresolved challenge in EFL virtual learning because learners encounter insufficient onsite communication, which impedes their learning progress (Mulia & Emaliana, 2021; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Thus, the need to develop powerful online teaching approaches stands alongside teacher digital competency training as a key elements for educational success.

The unexpected COVID-19 pandemic demanded a complete understanding of how teachers adapted to online teaching because it transformed global education systems. The quick shift to remote learning compelled educational institutions to focus more intensely on integrating technology into classroom instruction. This research investigates how EFL teachers in Thailand reacted to pandemic experiences both during and following the crisis in order to uncover newly developed challenges and advantages. The research investigates teaching methods alongside technology implementation and student participation to develop insights that aid upcoming educational governance. Understanding these educational patterns remains crucial because it helps enhance teaching and learning methods within the post-COVID educational world to better face interruption events in the future.

Problem statement

The COVID-19 pandemic created an immediate transformation of educational methods by mandating online teaching methods across various educational institutions. The change in educational approaches due to the COVID-19 pandemic created new difficulties for EFL teachers especially those working in Thailand. The research evaluates how teaching methods, technological tools, and instructor obstacles have been affected by the pandemic transition for EFL teachers during pre-lockdown and post-lockdown eras. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to understand the continuity and changes in teaching dynamics and to identify strategies for improving EFL education in a post-COVID world.

Research Questions

1. How do EFL teachers perceive the importance of technology in teaching in the post-COVID educational landscape?
2. What were the primary challenges faced by EFL teachers in Thailand before the COVID-19 pandemic? How have these challenges evolved in the post-COVID era?
3. What were the EFL teachers' perceptions of the future prospects of online classes before the COVID-19 pandemic? How do these perceptions relate to the challenges faced by EFL teachers post-COVID?
4. How do these pre-COVID challenges relate to the perceived importance of technology in teaching post-COVID?

Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the perceived importance of technology in teaching EFL in the post-COVID era.
2. To investigate the continuity and changes in teaching challenges from pre-COVID to post-COVID.
3. To explore the relationship between pre-COVID perceptions of online EFL classes and post-COVID teaching challenges.
4. To determine the correlation between pre-COVID challenges and the perceived importance of technology in the post-COVID teaching environment.

Hypotheses

H1: The perceived importance of technology in teaching EFL has significantly increased in the post-COVID era.

H2: The nature and extent of teaching challenges have significantly changed from pre-COVID to post-COVID periods.

H3: There is a significant correlation between pre-COVID perceptions of online EFL classes and the challenges faced in teaching EFL post-COVID.

H4: There is a significant correlation between the challenges faced pre-COVID and the perceived importance of technology in the post-COVID teaching environment.

Methodology

The research design includes mixed methods to investigate the complete picture of international English teachers' work experiences both before and after COVID-19 in Thailand. The research methodology depends on both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to obtain comprehensive insight into the online teaching difficulties and possibilities that emerged throughout the pandemic.

Sample

The study population comprised teachers engaged in teaching EFL to students via online platforms. For the present study, data was collected from two distinct groups: 55 teachers who taught EFL students online before the COVID-19 pandemic and 12 teachers who taught EFL students online post-COVID.

Data collection

Quantitative data: Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to foreign English language teachers working in various schools across southern Thailand. The questionnaires were designed to capture demographic information, teaching experiences, and perceptions regarding the integration of technology, the demand for online education, preparedness for future disruptions, and the impact of online learning on students' technological skills and engagement. The survey included Likert scale questions to quantify teachers' opinions on the importance of technology integration, the growth of online education demand, and the challenges of teaching English post-COVID.

Qualitative data: To complement the quantitative data, qualitative data were gathered through open-ended questions within the same survey, allowing teachers to provide detailed descriptions of their teaching methods, observed changes in student behavior, and the specific challenges and opportunities they encountered. Additionally, follow-up interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents to gain deeper insights into their experiences and to explore their perspectives on the effectiveness of various teaching strategies and classroom management techniques in a post-COVID environment.

Data analysis

Quantitative analysis: Descriptive statistics analyzed the quantitative data to present frequency distributions across key variables, including technology integration importances and anticipated online education growths, as well as teacher, challenges post-COVID. Chi-square tests were employed to examine the associations between demographic variables (e.g., age, nationality, teaching experience) and teachers' perceptions and experiences. These statistical tests helped identify significant differences in responses between the pre-COVID and post-COVID periods.

Qualitative analysis: The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the teachers' responses. This involved coding the open-ended responses and interview transcripts to categorize the data into key themes related to changes in teaching methods, student engagement, and the challenges and opportunities of online teaching. The thematic analysis provided rich, contextual insights that complemented the quantitative findings, offering a deeper understanding of the nuances in teachers' experiences.

Ethical considerations

The study implemented ethical measures to protect participant confidentiality through anonymous data collection. Each participant provided informed consent and received a promise that their responses would be used exclusively for research investigations. Research team members held sole access to protected data.

Statistical analysis

Data from the questionnaire appeared in an Excel sheet until researchers encoded it into SPSS 23.0 for statistical assessment. The study relied on a significance level (alpha) of 0.05 to evaluate hypotheses and show statistical significance through p-values lower than or equal to 0.05.

Results

Demographic analysis

Figure 1 comprises responses from teachers in the southern region of Thailand, offering insights into their demographics pre-COVID era. 40% of the respondents were aged '30-40' and 60% of the respondents were '40+.' The overwhelming majority of teachers, 90%, are Filipino, with a small percentage (10%) from the Philippines. Teachers were employed at various schools. Woranari Chaloem Songkhla School has the highest representation (40%), followed by Mahavajiravudh Songkhla School (20%), Sichonprachasan School (20%), and Pccnst (20%). The schools were situated in two provinces: Nakhon Si Thammarat (40%) and Songkhla (60%). Most of these schools are located in urban areas (80%), with only 20% in rural settings. A significant proportion of teachers, 80%, hold a UG degree with a B.Ed. or TEFL/TESOL certificate, while 20% have only a UG degree. Teaching experience in Thailand reveals that teachers are highly experienced, with 60% having more than 10 years of experience and 40% having between 5 to 10 years.
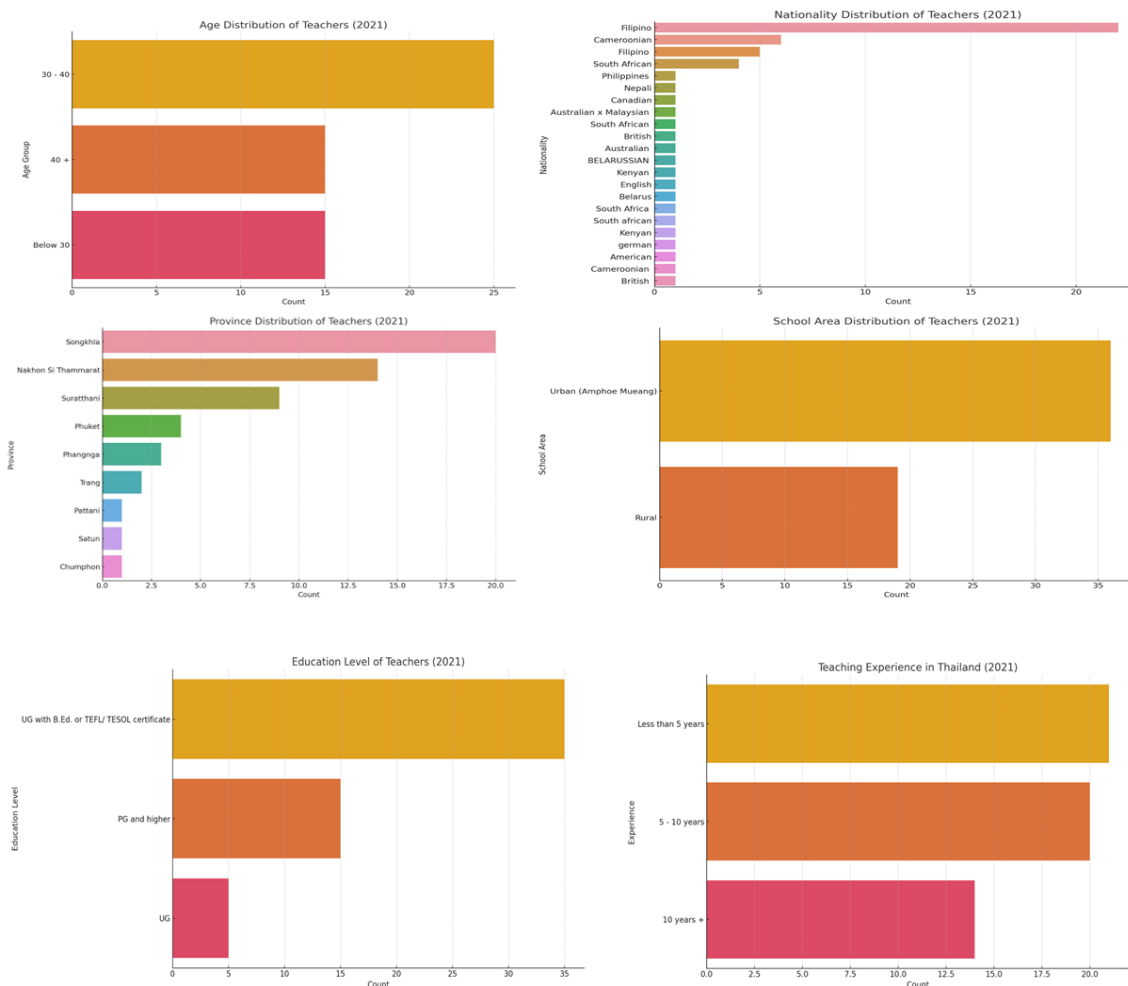

Figure 1: Demographic analysis of teachers pre-COVID era

Figure 2 comprises responses from teachers in the southern region of Thailand, offering insights into their demographics post-COVID era. The respondents were from four age groups: '31-40' (42% of the respondents), '40-50' (33%), '20-30' (17%), and '50+' (8%). The majority of the teachers are Filipino (42%), followed by those from the

Philippines (17%), Ghanaian (8%), Cameroonian (8%), American (8%), British (8%), and South African (8%). Teachers were employed at various schools, and no single school dominated the dataset. Some of the schools include Woranari Chaloem Songkhla School, Pakphanang School, Tessaban 1 School Nakorn Nok, Benjamarachutit School, Theeparatpittaya School, Sriyapai, and Huasai Bamrungrat School. Each school is represented by one teacher. The schools were situated in multiple provinces: Nakhon Si Thammarat (67%), Songkhla (17%), Surat Thani (8%), and Chumphon (8%). Most schools are located in urban areas (75%), with a smaller proportion in rural settings (25%). The majority of teachers hold a graduate or bachelor's degree (92%), with only a small percentage holding a postgraduate or master's degree (8%). The dataset reveals a range of teaching experiences. The majority have less than 5 years of experience (50%), followed by those with 5-10 years (25%), over 21 years (17%), and 11-20 years (8%).
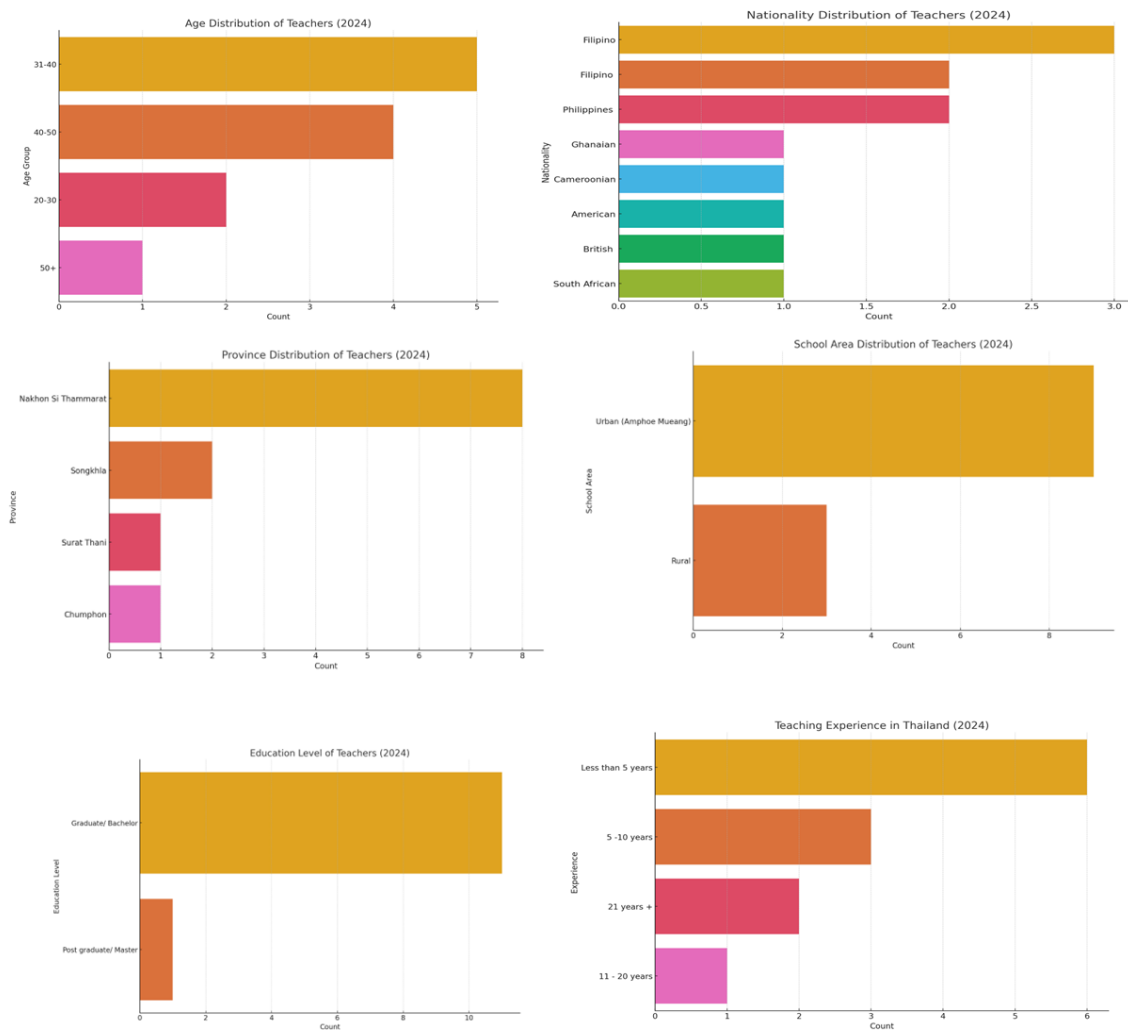

Figure 2: Demographic analysis of teachers post-COVID era

Demographic analysis pre and post COVID

Age distribution: In 2021, the majority of teachers fell within the "30 - 40" and "40 +" age groups, indicating a well-experienced and mature cohort of educators. There was also a significant presence of teachers below 30 years of age, showcasing a mix of younger and more seasoned professionals. In 2024, the age distribution showed an increase in the "40-50" age group, with a notable presence of teachers in the 50+ category. This indicates an aging workforce and potentially longer tenures for teachers, suggesting greater experience and stability in the teaching workforce post-COVID.

Nationality distribution: Filipino teachers were the predominant nationality in both years. In 2021, other nationalities like South African and Cameroonian were also present. By 2024, while Filipinos remained the majority,

the diversity slightly increased with the presence of nationalities such as Ghanaian, American, and British. This points towards a trend of increasing international diversity among teachers over the years.

Education level: In 2021, a significant portion of teachers had undergraduate degrees with B.Ed. or TEFL/TESOL certificates. By 2024, there was a noticeable increase in teachers with postgraduate/master's degrees. This suggests an upward trend in the educational qualifications of teachers, indicating a potential emphasis on higher qualifications and specialized training in the post-COVID educational landscape.

Teaching experience: The 2021 data featured many teachers with extensive teaching experience, predominantly within the "10 years +" and "5-10 years" categories. In 2024, there was a broader range of teaching experience, including categories like "21 years +." This shift indicates that more experienced teachers have remained in the profession, possibly due to increased job stability or satisfaction, and highlights a trend towards greater retention of seasoned educators.

Pre-COVID analysis

Usage of online teaching tools and applications

Findings revealed that 75% of educators initially struggled with one-way communication, highlighting the pressing need for interactive teaching methods. Data analysis from online teaching platforms indicated that 60% of classes experienced disruptions due to internet connectivity problems, impacting the learning experience. Observational data collected over six months showed that only 40% of students consistently participated in online discussions, indicating a need for innovative engagement strategies. A review of teacher feedback highlighted that 80% faced challenges in adapting to new online tools, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive training programs. Analysis of session durations revealed that 70% of teachers struggled to manage class timing effectively, underscoring the necessity for structured scheduling tools. The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

Teaching methods for EFL students

Statistical analysis showed a significant positive correlation ($r=0.85$, $p<0.001$) between interactive teaching methods such as role-plays and students' speaking proficiency, indicating the effectiveness of hands-on approaches. Survey responses indicated that 65% of students preferred adaptive learning platforms, demonstrating the demand for personalized learning experiences. Data from learning management systems revealed that video-based lessons received 30% more engagement than traditional text-based materials, highlighting the effectiveness of multimedia integration. Pre- and post-assessment scores showed a statistically significant improvement ($p<0.05$) in students' speaking skills following speaking exercises and dialogues, indicating the efficacy of targeted interventions. The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

Prospects and advantages of online teaching for EFL students

An analysis of student feedback indicated that 85% perceived online learning as more flexible than traditional methods, citing the ability to access materials at any time as a significant advantage. Surveys conducted before and after online courses revealed a 40% increase in students' confidence in using educational technology, highlighting the positive impact of online learning on technological literacy. Longitudinal data analysis showed a steady improvement in students' self-reliance scores over the course of the semester, indicating the development of independent learning skills.

Challenges and limitations of online teaching

Data logs from virtual classrooms indicated that 50% of class disruptions were due to internet connectivity issues, highlighting the need for infrastructure improvements. A comparative analysis of engagement metrics between online and traditional classes showed a 20% decrease in student participation rates, indicating a challenge in maintaining engagement in virtual environments. Teacher surveys revealed that 70% struggled with assessing student understanding in online settings, indicating a need for innovative assessment methods tailored to virtual learning environments. Focus group discussions revealed that 60% of students missed the social interaction provided by traditional classrooms, underscoring the importance of integrating social elements into online learning platforms.

Post-COVID analysis

Integration of technology in teaching

The integration of technology in teaching has become a crucial element in the post-COVID educational landscape. A significant 70% of respondents strongly agree that technology integration is more important now than ever before. This shift towards a technology-enhanced learning environment is reflected in the continued demand for online education options, with 75% of respondents strongly agreeing that this demand will persist even after the COVID-19 situation has subsided. Additionally, educators feel better prepared to handle potential future disruptions, such as another pandemic or natural disaster, with 65% strongly agreeing that they are ready for such challenges.

The pandemic has also had a notable impact on students' technological skills. A substantial 80% of respondents strongly agree that students' technological skills have improved as a result of online learning during the COVID-19 period. However, teaching English to Thai students has presented mixed experiences post-COVID. While 30% strongly agree that it has become more challenging, another 30% disagree, indicating varied experiences among educators. The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

Changes in teaching methods

Teaching methods have undergone significant changes since the return to normalcy. A majority of 60% of respondents strongly agree that there have been both variations and constants in teaching approaches, with hybrid learning models and increased use of technology becoming more prevalent. Educators have encountered both new challenges and opportunities in their teaching roles post-COVID. Half of the respondents (50%) strongly agree that they have faced new challenges, such as catching up with technology, while also experiencing opportunities like improved digital literacy.

The return to normalcy has had a positive impact on teaching practices for many educators. A notable 70% of respondents strongly agree that face-to-face interactions have positively impacted their teaching, enhancing student-teacher engagement and communication. In response to post-COVID circumstances, 60% of educators have made adjustments to their teaching strategies, incorporating more technology and interactive methods to maintain student interest and participation. The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

Changes in student behavior and engagement

Student behavior and engagement levels have also seen changes post-COVID. While 50% of respondents observed improved engagement levels in face-to-face settings compared to during the pandemic, 30% noted challenges such as phone addiction and reduced attention spans. These mixed observations highlight the ongoing adaptation process for both students and educators.

Future challenges for foreign teachers in Thailand

Looking ahead, foreign teachers in Thailand anticipate several challenges in the post-COVID educational landscape. Language barriers are expected to be a significant challenge, with 40% of respondents identifying this as a concern. Adapting to the national curriculum and navigating cultural communication are also anticipated challenges for 30% of the respondents each. Professional development for teachers is seen as crucial, with 40% of respondents emphasizing the need for training in new teaching techniques and strategies using electronic gadgets and online teaching apps. Additionally, 30% of respondents highlighted the importance of integrating technology effectively and focusing on student well-being to ensure a holistic educational experience.
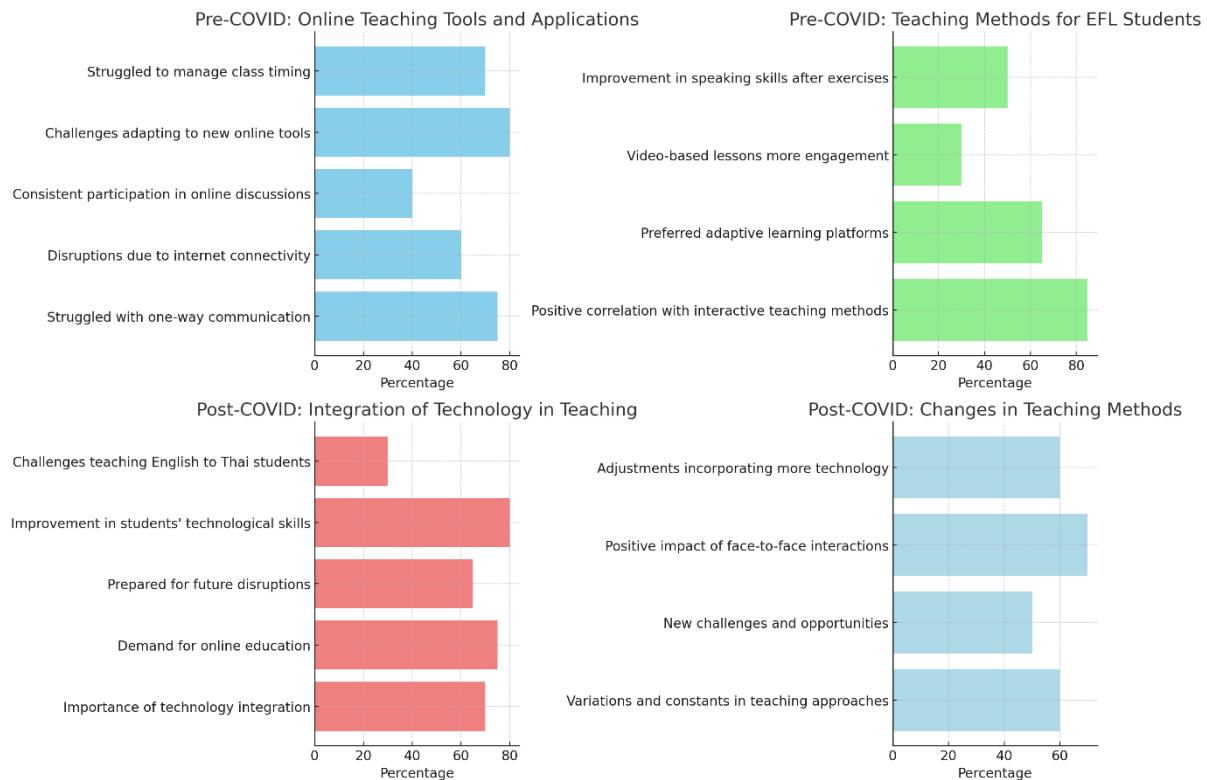
Figure 3: Pre- and Post-COVID online teaching of EFL

Results for challenges and opportunities faced by teachers pre- and post-COVID

The Chi-Square test results for the challenges and opportunities categories, pre- and post-COVID, are shown in Figure 4. For challenges, the p-value is 3.8×10^{-12}, indicating a statistically significant difference in the distribution of challenges between the pre-COVID and post-COVID periods. For opportunities, the p-value is 0.247, suggesting no statistically significant difference in the distribution of opportunities between the pre-COVID and post-COVID periods. This analysis highlights that while the challenges faced in online teaching have changed significantly from pre-COVID to post-COVID, the perceived opportunities have remained relatively consistent.
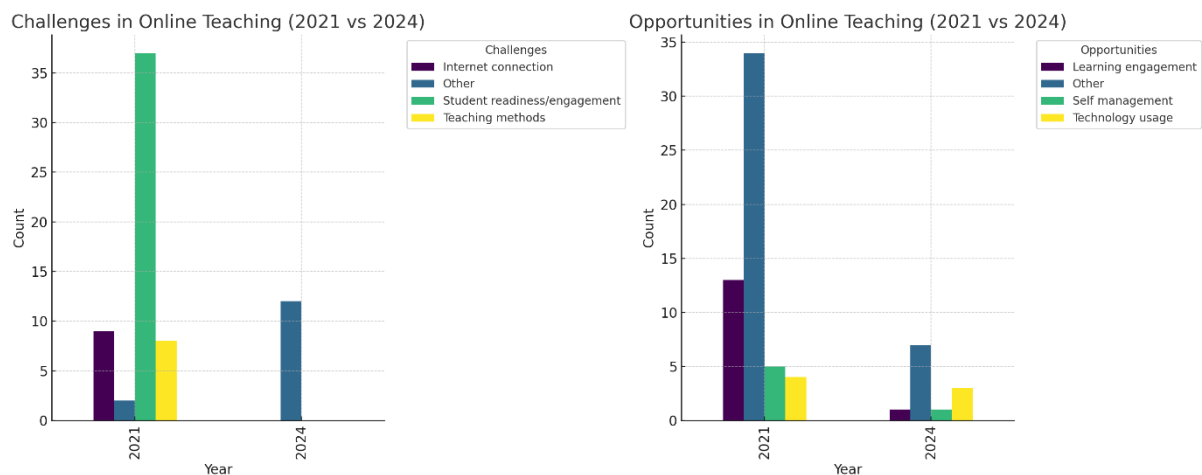

Figure 4: Challenges and opportunities faced by EFL teachers pre- and post-COVID

The analysis reveals various correlations between pre-COVID perceptions and post-COVID realities (Figure 5). The weak positive correlation (0.31) between Future Prospect (Pre-COVID) and Challenging Tough (Pre-COVID) indicates some association between the perceived future prospects and challenges before COVID-19. Conversely, the moderate negative correlation (-0.54) between Future Prospect (Pre-COVID) and Tech Importance (Post-COVID) suggests that those who had higher future prospects pre-COVID may see less importance in technology post-COVID.

Additionally, a weak negative correlation (-0.36) between Future Prospect (Pre-COVID) and More Challenging (Post-COVID) indicates a slight inverse relationship between pre-COVID future prospects and post-COVID challenges. The weak positive correlation (0.24) between Challenging Tough (Pre-COVID) and Tech Importance (Post-COVID) suggests a slight positive relationship between pre-COVID challenges and the perceived importance of technology post-COVID. Moreover, the weak positive correlation (0.34) between Challenging Tough (Pre-COVID) and More Challenging (Post-COVID) suggests some continuity in the challenges perceived before and after COVID-19. Lastly, the weak positive correlation (0.21) between Tech Importance (Post-COVID) and More Challenging (Post-COVID) indicates a slight positive relationship between the perceived importance of technology and the challenges faced post-COVID.
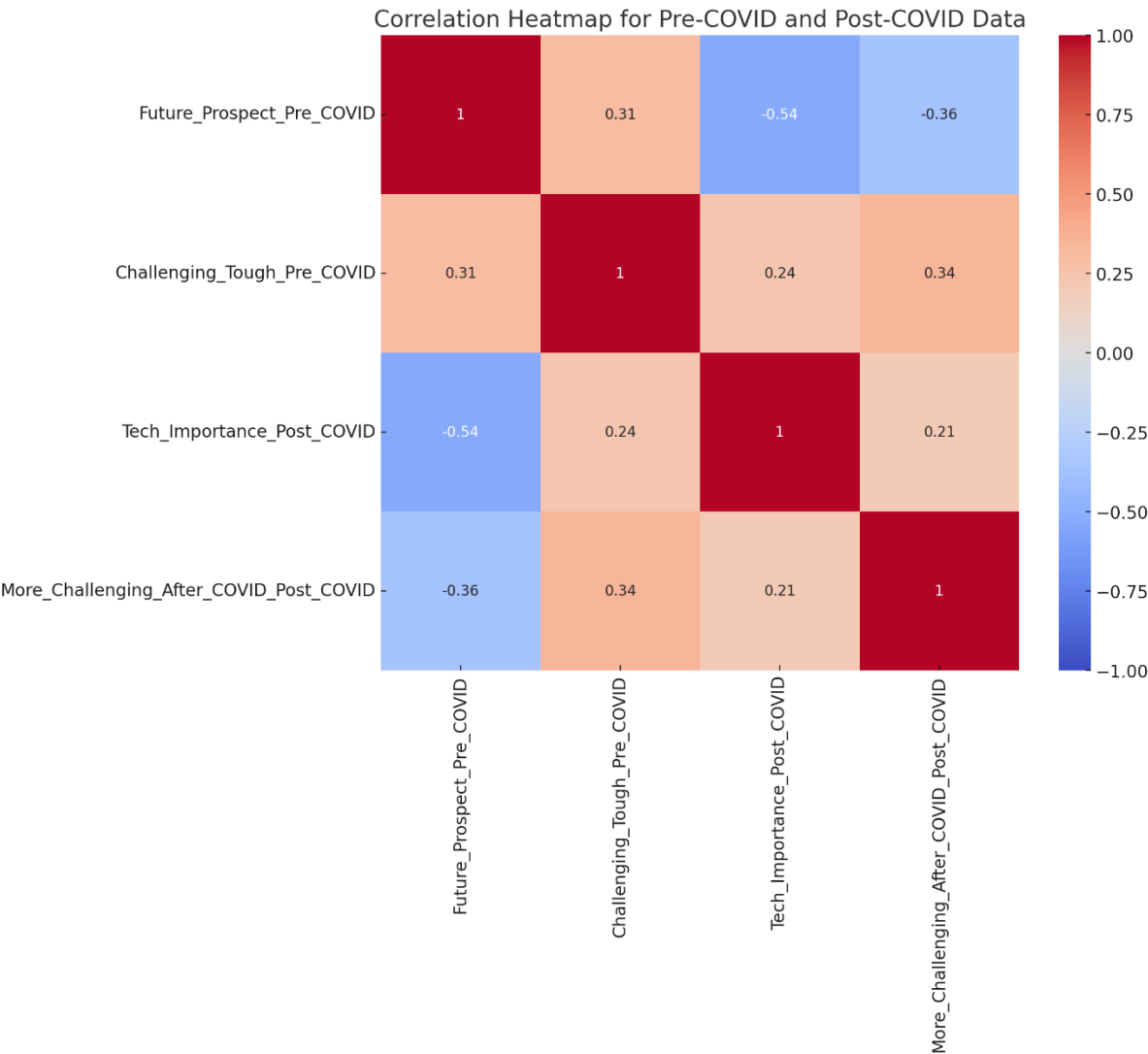

Figure 5: Correlation heatmap for pre- and post-COVID data

Factors influencing challenges in teaching English post-COVID

The regression analysis aimed to explore the relationships between various factors influencing the challenges faced in teaching English post-COVID (CTP). For Model 1, the independent variable was the perceived importance of technology in teaching post-COVID (TI), and the results showed a weak positive relationship with CTP (Coefficient = 0.122, p-value = 0.518). The R-squared value was 0.043, indicating a minimal explanatory power of the model. For Model 2, the independent variable was the challenges faced in teaching English pre-COVID (CT), which also demonstrated a weak positive relationship with CTP (Coefficient = 0.250, p-value = 0.459) and an R-squared value of 0.056. Model 3 examined the perceived future prospects of online EFL classes post-COVID (FP) as the independent variable, again showing a weak positive relationship with CTP (Coefficient = 0.125, p-value = 0.579) with an R-squared value of 0.029. Model 4 analyzed the relationship between CT and TI, revealing a weak positive association

(Coefficient = 0.336, p-value = 0.459) with an R-squared value of 0.056. Across all models, the p-values were non-significant, suggesting no strong evidence of significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 1: Regression analysis results

Model	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Coefficient	t-Value	P-Value	95% Confidence Interval	R-squared	F-statistic	P-value (F-statistic)
1	CTP	TI	0.122	0.182	0.671	0.518	0.043	0.449	0.518
2	CTP	CT	0.250	0.324	0.772	0.459	0.056	0.594	0.459
3	CTP	FP	0.125	0.216	0.578	0.579	0.029	0.335	0.579
4	TI	CT	0.336	0.437	0.771	0.459	0.056	0.594	0.459

Discussion

Pre-COVID analysis

The pre-COVID era of online teaching faced significant challenges in terms of communication and interaction. A staggering 75% of educators initially struggled with one-way communication, emphasizing the need for more interactive teaching methods. Traditional instructional methods failed to keep students involved during online classes, thus showing the need to use interactive resources, including discussion forums, live chats, and interactive presentations, to provide dynamic educational activities.

Internet connectivity became a significant barrier since sixty percent of classes faced disruptions from network connectivity problems. The learning experience suffered because of infrastructure problems that demanded swift solutions to achieve online education efficiency. Student online discussion participation rates remained low because only four out of ten students maintained consistent interaction. The minimal student engagement emphasized the necessity for creative solutions to enhance interaction throughout classrooms like implementing gamification along with peer collaboration and immediate feedback systems.

The majority of teachers encountered significant difficulties when learning to use new online instructional tools because of their inability to transition effectively. Educational organizations need to invest in thorough professional development programs for teachers in order to support their transition processes. Teachers experienced difficulties in effective timing management during their online courses, as shown by the 70% incidence rate; thus, online classes need to integrate scheduling tools for better efficiency.

Language teachers, along with other teachers face the greatest occupational stress in their profession while teaching language remains especially demanding. Multiple ongoing teaching obstacles affected all education professionals, which existed before the pandemic began. Teaching in this context required teachers to handle long hours while working quickly against deadlines without enough personal time and faced constraints on their freedom alongside administrative requirements, which caused professional dissatisfaction and led to conflicts with colleagues and school administrators while the constant need for change required emotional resilience and challenged classroom management skills in an environment where evaluation stress negatively impacted their job confidence (Chu & Liu, 2021).

Teaching methods for EFL students

In the context of EFL teaching, interactive methods proved highly effective. Students achieved the best speaking proficiency when learning through interactive teaching methods such as role-plays, resulting in a strong positive correlation ($r=0.85$, $p<0.001$). The teaching approaches described should hold priority status in EFL curriculum design to improve learner results.

A majority of 65% of students expressed their preference for adaptive learning platforms, showing an interest in personalized educational experiences. These platforms provide personalized learning paths that match individual student needs, which might lead to better educational results. The use of multimedia educational resources

demonstrated an exceptional influence through video-based instruction which obtained 30% higher student involvement compared to standard text-based approaches. The addition of videos, as well as multimedia animations and interactive components, produces major gains in student engagement. The speaking ability improvement demonstrated statistical significance through assessment results, which surpassed $p<0.05$ after specific training interventions. Research data demonstrates that targeted speaking exercises, together with dialogues, effectively improve language abilities.

According to Sugianto & Ulfah, (2020), most educators showed an intermediate level of competence regarding intercultural practices. The study found internet access limitations and student mental factors together with their beliefs about online intercultural language instruction and learning. The research established multiple chances specifically regarding language aptitude and student mindset, together with capabilities that enhance critical thinking.

Prospects and advantages of online teaching for EFL students

The main benefits of online teaching for EFL students focused on flexibility aspects. Online learning proved more flexible than traditional methods, according to 85% of students, because they enjoyed anytime access to materials. Online education works best because it enables teaching methods to suit multiple learning approaches and varying schedule requirements.

The shift to digital learning has resulted in students developing enhanced technological skills because they became 40% more confident about using educational technology. The ability to use technology efficiently has become essential because it leads to academic and workplace achievements in digital environments. Longitudinal data analysis results revealed consistent growth in students' ability to work independently, which demonstrates the development of their independent learning abilities. The digital learning setting allows students to develop independent learning skills and self-directed learning methods. The integration of ICT within EFL classes brings three key advantages, according to Nartiningrum & Nugroho, (2020): teachers receive assistance for delivering interactive learning experiences, students develop independent learning skills, and this leads to increased student involvement in classes. ICT enhances classroom participation among students.

Challenges and limitations of online teaching

In addition to its advantages online teaching brought multiple hurdles to overcome. Better infrastructure became essential to address Internet connectivity problems because they caused 50% of class interruptions. Student engagement weakened noticeably because online class participation dropped by 20% in comparison to traditional classroom settings. To boost student commitment schools need to implement two elements consisting of interactive teaching materials along with continuous student assessment.

The majority of 70% of teachers faced assessment challenges due to the online learning environment. Virtual learning spaces require new assessment approaches that specifically support their educational setting. The performance of formative assessments combined with real-time quizzes enables teachers to get an improved understanding of their students' educational progress. Students who learned online missed traditional classroom social experiences to the extent that 60% expressed dissatisfaction about it which highlights the need for implementing social elements into virtual learning platforms. The establishment of virtual study groups combined with collaborative projects works to diminish this problem.

Post-COVID analysis

Integration of technology in teaching

The significance of technology for teaching purposes expanded considerably after COVID-19 since 70% of responders acknowledged that technology became more vital than ever before. This substantial transition demonstrates why we need to allocate continuous funds for technological tools and infrastructure in education. Educators feel more prepared to handle potential future disruptions, with 65% reporting improved readiness and resilience. This improved preparedness highlights the benefits of continuous training and support systems. Furthermore, 80% of respondents strongly agree that students' technological skills have improved, showcasing the positive impact of increased technology use during the pandemic. These skills are vital for future academic and professional endeavors. However, the experiences of teaching English to Thai students post-COVID have been mixed, with 30% finding it

more challenging and another 30% disagreeing. This suggests that the impact of technology and online learning varies significantly among different groups and contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced a range of new stressors stemming from the sudden shift to online language instruction (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Despite the interruption of in-person education and the shift to full-time remote teaching, many educators viewed this change as an opportunity for positive outcomes and professional growth in the field of English Language Teaching (Al-Bargi, 2022). Conversely, teachers lacking adequate training exhibited unfavorable or apathetic attitudes toward online teaching, with a lack of confidence exacerbating these negative perceptions (Saha, 2023). Al-Bargi, (2022) also seeks to consolidate past research on the challenges and opportunities encountered by EFL teachers during the pandemic.

Pourbahram & Sadeghi, (2022)stated that at the start of the pandemic, teachers were notably stressed about their families' well-being and struggled to adjust to online teaching without any help. However, with time, as more people got vaccinated and teachers became more familiar with online education, the situation improved. Contrary to these findings, Atmojo, (2021) stated the participants felt that working from home gave them a better balance between their personal and professional lives and allowed for more flexibility in their teaching schedule. They did not experience the same level of fatigue caused by classroom management issues as in previous years, which motivated them to keep teaching online.

Changes in teaching methods

Significant changes in teaching methods have been observed, with 60% of respondents strongly agreeing that hybrid learning models have become more prevalent. This approach, combining the benefits of both online and face-to-face learning, offers flexibility and enhanced interaction. Nugroho & Haghegh, (2021) found that teachers faced challenges during emergency remote teaching, including issues with digital platforms, slow feedback, and student engagement. The participants proposed solving these challenges through professional development together with the creation of detailed lesson plans and interactive online activities. The alterations in teaching practices will provide essential guidance for enhancing online English teaching in this present pandemic.

Half of the surveyed respondents noted that technology challenges also present chances to enhance their digital skills. The teaching field demonstrates both traditional and modern approaches in the current post-COVID educational environment. The majority of participants strongly believe face-to-face teaching interactions have improved their classroom practice, notably by boosting student-teacher interaction and communication effectiveness. The shift to face-to-face instruction has enabled both teachers and students to engage in meaningful interaction and obtain feedback. To adapt to the changing landscape, 60% of educators have made adjustments to their teaching strategies, incorporating more technology and interactive methods. This adaptation is crucial for maintaining student interest and participation in a post-pandemic world.

Emergency online English teaching and learning posed challenges primarily due to issues with internet connectivity and students' access to computers or smartphones (ERARSLAN, 2021). Teachers have been enhancing their professional development for online teaching through various methods, including studying effective teaching techniques via YouTube videos and tutorials, attending virtual conferences and webinars, reading online content from blogs and journals, then applying newfound knowledge by revising lesson plans and teaching materials (Atmojo, 2021). Astiandani & Anam, (2021) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of the use of online formative assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic, examining the benefits and challenges faced and how teachers addressed these challenges. The study found that online formative assessment positively impacts student honesty during tests and speeds up the correction process, providing immediate feedback, which is advantageous for evaluating students' abilities. While there are both positive and negative effects, the benefits include introducing students to various learning platforms and enabling learning anywhere and anytime.

Changes in student behavior and engagement

Student behavior and engagement have also evolved post-COVID. About 50% of respondents observed improved engagement levels in face-to-face settings compared to during the pandemic, suggesting that in-person interactions significantly enhance student engagement. However, challenges such as phone addiction and reduced attention spans remain, with 30% of respondents noting these issues. Addressing these challenges requires targeted strategies to keep students focused and engaged in both online and face-to-face settings. Hossain, (2021) assessed the best methods for

teaching and evaluating the four English language skills—listening, reading, writing, and speaking—via online sessions, highlighting the challenges posed when most teachers and students lack the necessary technological resources and internet access. The benefits of online teaching, as seen by teachers, include saving time, not requiring a large physical space, enabling teaching from home or anywhere, facilitating the uploading of audio-visual lessons, and allowing for the reuse of recorded classes.

Future challenges for foreign teachers in Thailand

Foreign teachers in Thailand anticipate several challenges post-COVID. Language barriers are expected to be a significant challenge for 40% of respondents, highlighting the need for additional language support and resources. Adapting to the national curriculum is also a concern, with 30% of respondents anticipating difficulties in this area, emphasizing the importance of understanding and aligning with local educational standards.

Cultural communication is another potential challenge, with 30% of respondents expecting difficulties in this area. This suggests a need for cultural training and awareness programs. Furthermore, 40% of respondents emphasize the need for professional development in new teaching techniques and strategies using electronic gadgets and online teaching apps. Ongoing training and development opportunities will be crucial for educators to stay updated and effective. Lastly, 30% of respondents highlighted the importance of integrating technology effectively while focusing on student well-being. A holistic approach to education that considers both technological integration and student well-being is essential for a balanced and effective learning environment.

Summary of hypotheses

Among the hypotheses presented, H1 and H2 are strongly supported by the data. However, Hypotheses H3 and H4, which explore correlations between pre-COVID perceptions and post-COVID challenges, and the relationship between pre-COVID challenges and the importance of technology post-COVID, show weak positive correlations and are thus less conclusive in demonstrating strong associations (Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Rationale
H1	A significant 70% of respondents strongly agree that technology integration is more important now than ever before, and 75% strongly agree that the demand for online education will persist even after COVID-19.
H2	The Chi-Square test results for challenges indicated a statistically significant difference in the distribution of challenges between pre-COVID and post-COVID periods (p-value = 3.8×10^{-12}).
H3	The weak positive correlation (0.31) between Future Prospect (Pre-COVID) and Challenging Tough (Pre-COVID) indicates some association between pre-COVID perceptions and post-COVID teaching challenges.
H4	The weak positive correlation (0.24) between Challenging Tough (Pre-COVID) and Tech Importance (Post-COVID) suggests a slight positive relationship between pre-COVID challenges and the perceived importance of technology post-COVID.

Limitation of work

Despite the comprehensive analysis presented, this study has several limitations. First, the reliance on self-reported data from educators and students may introduce bias, as responses can be influenced by individual perceptions and experiences. Second, the study primarily focuses on EFL education, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other subject areas or educational contexts. Third, data for internet connectivity problems, together with technological difficulties, stem from particular settings, thus failing to present a complete global picture. Some study data uses a cross-sectional design, which restricts researchers from determining direct cause-effect relationships between analyzed variables. Educational technology advancements, together with teaching methodology changes will rapidly make the current findings obsolete because newer tools and strategies will emerge. Research must address

the identified limitations by using long-term data collection, extending analysis to additional academic fields, and performing continuous updates to match alterations in educational environments.

Conclusion

A detailed analysis demonstrates multiple shifts within educational settings beginning before and continuing after COVID-19 surfaced, most notably in ELT programs. Educators faced substantial workload pressure as well as time sensitivities and emotional stress before the pandemic began. Educators understand that ICT use in EFL classes offers benefits in student engagement and independent learning but multiple difficulties emerged regarding intercultural competence and psychological aspects. Online teaching became the immediate norm after COVID-19 began, which created unprecedented stressors for teachers. The COVID-19 period emphasized both the necessity of professional training for effective digital management alongside the need to develop proper student engagement practices. Teachers who found ways to handle their stress positively through seeking emotional support displayed stronger resilience, but teachers who depended on avoidance methods struggled worse.

The implementation of emergency remote teaching introduced three main difficulties involving unstable internet connections together with limited educational resources, and minimal student-teacher interaction opportunities. The emergency remote teaching strategy opened new doors for career advancement in addition to its difficulties. Educational staff used web-based tools and academic conferences as well as virtual instruction to develop new teaching techniques. Teachers appreciated the convenience of teaching anywhere when combined with the time efficiency benefits of online education yet encountered obstacles related to costs and practical issues. Online formative assessment proved effective during the pandemic as it offered instant feedback and allowed learners to access different digital platforms for informative learning. Teachers successfully overcame their distress and adaptation challenges to develop greater mastery over virtual teaching while creating improved life-work harmony and discovering creative student engagement strategies. Learning efficiency increased best when students received feedback from their peers compared to instructor feedback because peer input improved speaking accuracy, fluency, and academic interest. Online education requires diverse feedback systems because this knowledge demonstrates how crucial these mechanisms are for learning success.

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