

The Changing Paradigms of Teaching: Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic

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DOI - <https://doi.org/10.61421/IJSSMER.2023.1301>

SUMMARY

This study attempts to explore two areas related to the closure of schools during Covid-19. It is a two-tiered exploratory study. Firstly, it investigates how secondary school English language teachers in the state of Kedah in Malaysia conducted online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data for this phase was collected using an online survey questionnaire via Google form. For the second phase, the study explores the efficacy of online teaching as the main mode of teaching in the future. Data for this phase was collected using an interview schedule distributed to three senior lecturers from three local universities in Malaysia. Both these areas have not been researched in Malaysia. As such this study hopes to fill the gap. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis approach. The findings will be useful to teachers to prepare themselves to teach online even in normal times. The education authorities in Malaysia can use the findings to revamp the teacher-training programmes as well as the in-service courses to prepare the teachers for the eventual shift of the traditional mode of teaching to the online modality. The trend will be the use of hybrid teaching form that will blend both the teaching modes to come up with a stronger and more effective teaching and learning process.

1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching mode in Malaysian schools saw a dramatic shift from the traditional 'face-to-face classroom teaching' to the digitally supported online teaching during the Covid-19 Pandemic (2020-2022). The Malaysian Ministry of Education was forced to close down the traditional schools to prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic among the school population especially the students. However, to prevent undue disruption of the students' learning, the Malaysian Ministry of Education embarked on online teaching in all its schools, as it happened in all educational institutions throughout the globe. UNESCO (2020) recommends distance learning programmes and open educational applications during school closure caused by Covid-19.

Online teaching/learning which is also known as e-learning or remote learning is basically a web-based learning system that uses the internet to direct, design and deliver the learning content to students (Khadijah, M., et al, 2020). Apps such as Nearpod, Flipgrid, Kahoot, Moodle, Google meet and Telegram are some of the common platforms available to the teachers to help conduct their e-lessons. Meanwhile, computers, notebooks/laptops, i-pads/tablets and hand-phones have become prominent digital gadgets in online teaching. '... robust IT infrastructure is a prerequisite for online learning' (Ayebi & Arthur, 2017).

Although online classes and tutorials have been in practice for some time, especially in tertiary institutions via distance learning programmes such as computer mediated synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning, it is still a new and unfamiliar mode of teaching for school teachers in Malaysia. Though digital technology, especially the use of computers has found their place in Malaysian schools prior to this unprecedented pandemic, their uses were limited merely as teaching aids in the classrooms. However, with the lock-down on traditional schools, online teaching became the main mode of delivery of lessons, assignments and assessments replacing the face-to-face classroom teaching. With the introduction of new approaches and new technologies, related aspects such as teacher perception and student satisfaction demand investigation (Van Wart, 2020).

Research Problem

The shift to online teaching in Malaysian school system was not a gradual transition but an abrupt course of action due to the urgency of preventing any undue suspension of teaching and learning. This emergency remote education (Sheng-Yi, 2021) posed serious challenges for teachers as well as students. Both teachers and students had to make consequential changes to their lifestyles to confront these unprecedented challenges.

Though there are several studies with regards to the challenges of 'online teaching' during this Covid-19 era, there are still areas unexplored. Firstly, there is a dearth in research done in Malaysian schools specifically on selected course or subject. Next, research on 'online teaching' in Malaysia were more concerned on tertiary institutions rather than schools. There are also no studies so far that have investigated if online teaching/learning will become the order of our future education system and what will be its impact on the age-old learning theories and the traditional schools. This study hopes to close that gap.

On that score, this paper investigates how English language teachers in Malaysian secondary schools managed their lessons during the Covid-19 Pandemic era, as well as attempts to explore the efficacy of online teaching as the future mode of teaching in Malaysia.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine how English language teachers in Malaysian secondary schools managed to conduct online teaching during the Covid-19 Pandemic era though it was an abrupt shift in their teaching mode.
2. To explore if online teaching will replace 'face-to-face' teaching and to investigate its efficacy as the main mode of teaching in Malaysian schools in the future.

Research Questions:

1. How did the English language teachers in Malaysian secondary schools conduct their online lessons during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown?
2. Will 'online teaching' replace 'face-to-face' teaching in the future?

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will give all stake holders in the education system a clear view of future teaching so that they can chart a progressive and successful education system. Education authorities in the Ministry of Education, teacher-education institutions, curriculum developers, text-book

writers and publishers, school administrators, teachers, parents and students will all benefit by knowing the future direction of education. Crucially, teachers as implementers of the curriculum in the classrooms will be able to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and pedagogy necessary for teaching in the future.

2. RELEVANT LITERATURE

‘Online teaching’ during Covid-19 was not an initiative peculiar to Malaysia alone. In fact, it was a global trend. ‘Online teaching’ therefore became a popularly sought topic among researchers and educational experts all around the globe since Covid-19 pandemic. Correspondingly, studies on the benefits and challenges of online teaching have inundated the educational domain in the last two years. Each of these studies has certainly added to the canons of knowledge on e-teaching/learning.

One of the earliest studies on ‘online teaching’ during Covid-19 pandemic was conducted by Khadijah M, et al. (2020). This is a case study conducted at the University of Medicine and University College of Dentistry, Lahore. This study explored the perceptions of teachers and students towards ‘online learning’ in this medical institute. The study collected data from 12 staff and 12 students from this institute via focus group interviews.

This study identified that online learning modality’ impeded practical and clinical work which is crucial in medical schools. Teachers were unable to assess students’ understanding. This study also noted that ‘online teaching’ was resource intensive and this bored students who had limited attention span. This study also unveiled that students tend to cheat during online lessons by assessing online resources during assessments. To overcome these barriers this study recommends that teachers need further training on the use of ‘online modalities’, institutes should have software to detect plagiarism, teachers need to improve their online teaching pedagogies and reduce cognitive workload and increase interactiveness between teachers and students. However, this study’s major finding is that programmes that need practical lessons were at a disadvantage using the ‘online modality’.

Next, Nur Rasyidah, et al. (2020) investigated six language instructors from the School of Languages, Civilisation and Philosophy in University Utara Malaysia and highlights the numerous challenges affecting ‘online teaching’ in this university. Firstly, this study found that the instructors had no formal training in ‘online teaching’. The continuous emergence of new digital platforms, were overwhelming for the instructors to cope. The instructors want standard softwares or platforms specified by the authorities for them to use. They find it difficult to choose appropriate platforms on their own. This study found the instructors not only lacked technology knowledge but were reluctant to be creative. Besides, it found that the instructors had little space for interaction with their students, and the class duration is too long for students to concentrate. Inaccessibility to internet services and a lack of student emotional support were other issues highlighted in this study as barriers to ‘online teaching’ in this institute. This study asserts that ‘online teaching’ during the Covid-19 pandemic was not a smooth sailing experience for these language instructors.

Ram Gopal, et al. (2021) investigated students’ satisfaction and performance in ‘online lessons. Data was collected through online survey from 544 students from various universities in India. Structural Equation Modelling was used to analyse the study. This study established that the quality of the instructors, the course design, prompt feedback and students’ expectations were the major

factors that impacted student' satisfaction and performance as well the successful implementation of the 'Online Teaching Modality'.

In this connection, Van Wart, et al. (2020) established (i) Basic Online Modality, (ii) Instructional Support, (iii) Teaching Presence, (iv) Cognitive Presence, (v) Online Social Comfort, (vi) Online Interactive Modality and (vii) Social Presence as significant and reliable factors for successful 'online teaching'. This study was an exploratory factors analysis study online. Nine hundred and eighty-seven students from Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration (JHBC), California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) participated in this survey.

Meanwhile, a mixed method explorative study by Almendingen K, et al. (2021) attempted to assess how university students experienced the shift to online teaching after campus was closed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The study was conducted in a Public Health Nutrition centre from a Campus in Norway. Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to 79 students. The questionnaire was administered once in the second week of their online classes and the second time after twelve weeks of their online classes. It was found that the participants who initially had negative perception towards online teaching changed to a positive disposition after 12 weeks of attending online classes. The students' quick adaptation to the new mode of teaching in this study puts online instruction in a favourable position contrary to most other studies that highlighted the negative aspects in implementing online teaching.

In another study (Zheng M et al. 2021) conducted in the US dental school among 482 pre-doctoral students, it was found that the majority of the students received the online modality positively. In fact, these students wanted the online modality to be continued even after the Covid-19 crisis. This study was a quasi-experiment.

Similarly, Sadid-Zadeh et al. (2020) had established 99% of the dental students from University of Buffalo, U.S. who participated in the survey welcomed the web-based lectures. Similarly, Schlenz et al. (2020) study conducted among dental students in a German dental school also found the participants favouring online instruction.

While all of the above studies involved tertiary education institutions, Sheng Yi Wu (2021) explored how teachers in colleges, secondary schools and primary schools in Taiwan managed their online teaching during the Covid-19 crisis. Two hundred and twenty-three teachers participated in this study (23 college teachers, 51 secondary school teachers and 149 primary school teachers). Data was collected through a web-based questionnaire. Both quantitative analysis and lag sequential analysis were used to analyse this research. The main objectives of this research were to explore the online teaching activities conducted by the teachers and to investigate the similarities and differences of the teachers' instructional behaviours from the three levels of educational institutions. This study found that the instructional behaviours of the teachers from the colleges, secondary schools and primary schools all remained close and rested on the following aspects, namely (i) Roll calls, (ii) instruction using a presentation screen, (iii) in-class task allocation (assignments), (iv) whole class synchronous video/audio-based discussion. The differences between them were, the college teachers explain the ground rules before the students utilise their online lessons, while the secondary school teachers provide practical or experimental activities and use both synchronous and asynchronous methods. As for the primary school teachers they used home-made videos and shared screens for teaching. This study describes the pattern of teaching used by the teachers in all the three levels of education institution but does not specifically highlight

any positive or negative aspects of teaching online during the Covid-19 crisis. This study does not explicitly explore online teaching in schools but is more of a comparative study of online teaching in all three levels of institution – colleges, secondary and primary schools.

On that score, Zulaikha M.B. et al. (2021) is one of the few studies that focused on a secondary school. The study was conducted in a Malaysian secondary school in Jasin, in the state of Melaka in Malaysia. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire from 99 students from that school and analysed descriptively (using percentage and frequency). The study found 93% of the participants were comfortable in using the digital devices and 66.7% of them exhibited the ability to work in groups. However, the students' motivation towards online learning was low (41.5%). In fact, the students' preference for the traditional 'face-to-face teaching' was overwhelming at 98%. This is a peculiar situation where the students preferred the traditional mode of teaching even though they were digitally savvy.

The mixed reactions of the participants towards online teaching, in the studies reviewed, prevents any decisive conclusions. On that note, Shivangi D (2020) brings to a compromise the issue of online teaching. Shivangi's study examines the strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) of online teaching. This study relies totally on secondary data collected from multiple sources such as 'journals, reports, search engines, company websites and scholarly articles and research papers' (Shivangi D, 2020). Shivangi D, finds online learning economical (can save on transport cost), flexible in terms of time and local and it is student-centred. These three aspects is listed as strengths of online instruction. The absence of direct communication and the human touch and the non-seriousness of the students' behaviour in relation to the time and location of the lesson are viewed as weakness of online learning. In addition, no wi-fi services or poor internet connections are deemed as serious weaknesses that can hamper online learning. Relatedly, Favale T et al. (2020) posit that technical difficulties can be a major hindrance to online teaching and learning. Shivangi's study also highlights that the Covid-19 crisis created the necessity for the teachers to learn the use of 'online modality'. Besides learning new skills teachers get the opportunity to create innovative programmes on their own. These are opportunities that opened to the teachers during the forced online teaching caused by Covid-19 crisis. Finally, Shivangi asserts that to produce quality online teaching, the education authorities will need heavy financial support to provide excellent infrastructure, train the teachers to develop the online content. Thus, to create a conducive atmosphere for online instruction, time and money becomes the biggest challenge. By identifying these four aspects Shivangi's research provides better understanding of the issues related to online teaching. However, this research relies totally on secondary data only and has no empirical data to strengthen its claims.

Having reviewed all these literatures, it is clear that more studies need to be conducted in online teaching to have a comprehensive understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching to and to make informed and conclusive decisions with regards use of online modality in the future.

Online learning' facilitated remote learning – students have convenience of accessing teachers and teaching materials from home or elsewhere without being in classrooms. This mode of teaching reduced expenses such traveling cost, reduced administrative tasks like recording and marking attendance. More importantly, online learning encourages student-centredness and encourages students to become self-directed learners. However, teachers' lack of training and knowledge to

teach online and the poor infrastructure in the institutions were the major challenges. Clearly, Instruction, Content, Motivation, Relationship and Mental health are the five important aspects that an educator must remember when imparting online education (Martin, 2020). On that premise, this study is proposed to validate earlier findings as well as predict the status of 'online teaching' in the future.

3. METHOD

Basically, this is an explorative qualitative study involving two-tiered data collection procedures. In the first phase, data was collected from practising English language teachers (n=153) from Malaysian secondary schools via a survey questionnaire. In the second phase, data was collected from three experienced lecturers (n=3) from three local universities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two methods of data collection were used in this study. Firstly, data was collected via a questionnaire administered among practising English teachers through Google-forms and secondly via an interview schedule distributed to three selected senior lecturers from three local universities. The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis approach.

Participants

A total of 153 English language teachers from Malaysian Secondary Schools from the state of Kedah participated in this survey. Among them 101 (66%) of them are females and 52 (34%) are males.

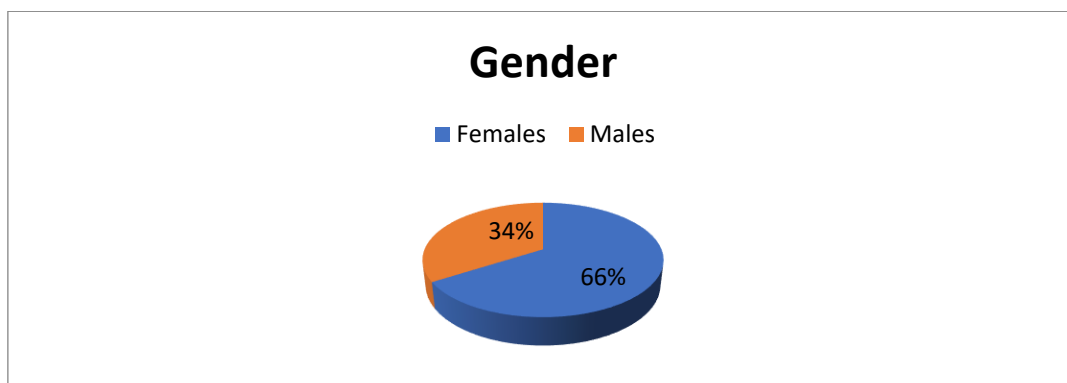


Fig 1: Gender Composition of Survey Participants

Based on the demographic information collected it was found 32 of the female teachers were between 31 to 40 years of age. The remaining 69 female teachers were between 41 to 50 years of age. Meanwhile 11 of the male teachers were between 31- 40 years old and 41 of them were between 41 to 50 years old (see Fig.2).

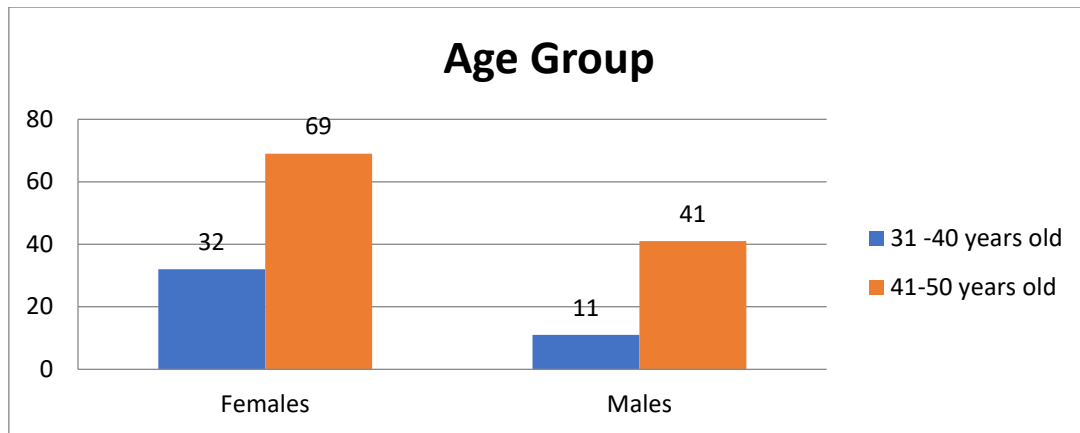


Figure 2: Grouping of Survey Participants according to Age

It was found that all the 153 teachers had sufficient experience in teaching English.

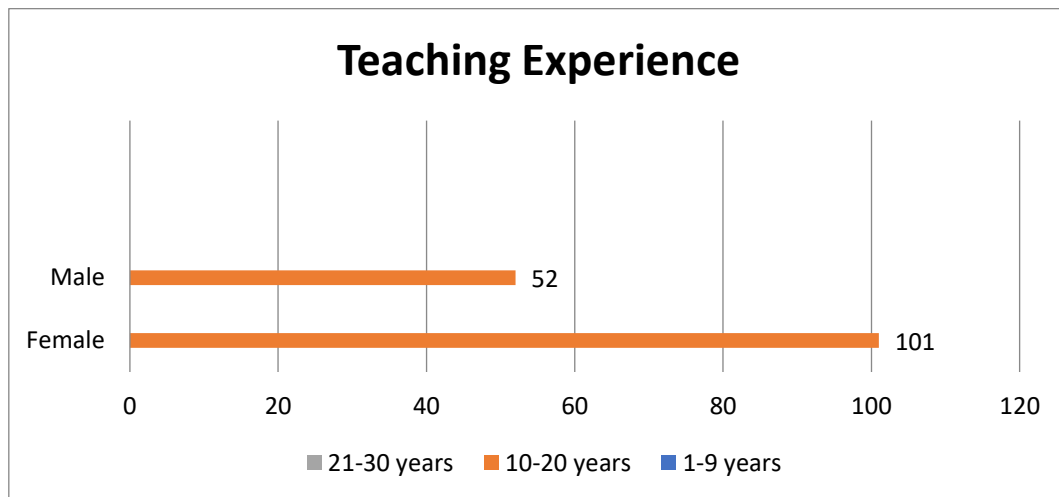


Figure 3: Teaching Experiences of Survey Participants

In fact, all the 52 male teachers and the 101 female teachers had 10-20 years of teaching experience (see Fig 3).

In addition, three senior lecturers from three local universities were interviewed. They were selected based on their excellent credentials in the field of education. For confidentiality purpose. The three lecturers are referred as Dr. A, Dr. B & Dr. C in this study.

Dr. A, is a full professor and a Dean of the School of Technology in a Malaysian University. With more than 30 years of experience in the teaching of Information and Communication Technology Dr. A is deemed as an excellent candidate for this study.

Dr. B, is a senior lecturer and the director of the ICT Department of another prominent Malaysian university. Dr. B's doctorate thesis is in 'online teaching' and he has written numerous research papers on 'online teaching'. He has 15 years of teaching Education Technology in this Malaysian university. Currently Dr. B is also serving as the Chief Technology Officer of an Industry. On that score Dr.B, fits well for this study.

On the other hand, Dr. C is a retired Associate professor from another prominent local University in Malaysia. He had served as an English language teacher for 10 years in Malaysian secondary

schools and as an English language lecturer for 20 years in a prominent Malaysian University. Dr. B was selected, as this study concerns the teaching of English.

Research Instruments

Two sets of instruments (i) A survey questionnaire and, (ii) An interview schedule were used to collect data for this study.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire created by the researcher has two sections. While, section 'A' seeks the participants' demographic information, section 'B' seeks information on how the teachers managed online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic era. The survey questionnaire has fifteen items which are divided into three subdivisions under the following headings: - (i) Lesson, (ii) Implementation and (iii) Challenges. Each of these constructs comprises 5 items as indicated below.

- i. Lesson: Items 1 – 5 in this questionnaire refers to the aspects pertinent to the planning of a lesson such as, number of students in the class, the class timetable, number of lessons per week, lesson preparation and sourcing of teaching aids/resources.
- ii. Implementation: Items 6 – 10 seek information on the manner the teachers conducted their lessons.
- iii. Challenges: Item 11 – 15 refers to the difficulties that the teachers faced when conducting online lessons.

All the fifteen items were open-ended questions and as such the participants could give their answers more elaborately in their own words. Open-ended questions give the respondents greater freedom to give their responses and opinions thus providing the data greater diversity to explore (Albudawi D, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and thematic analysis method. The participants most common written reply are produced here (in italics) for better understanding of the online teaching scenario in these participating schools. The participants' responses are coded as Teacher 1, 2, 3, and so on for easier reading.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The fifteen items in the survey questionnaire were analysed item by item to answer Research Questions 1. (i.e. How did the English language teachers in Malaysian secondary schools conduct their online lessons during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown?

It was found that generally the classes in these participating schools had between 28 -31 students in each class and during their online lessons only 2 - 3 students were absent. In other words, all the classes had over 90% of student attendance which is just as it was during the 'face to face' lessons conducted prior to the lockdown. As such, students' attendance was not a problem during the online lessons in these schools.

All schools in the state of Kedah had revised their normal school timetables to suit the online teaching mode. The new timetable was rigidly followed to ensure minimum absenteeism from students and to ensure proper interaction between students and teachers. In other words the lessons

were conducted very close to the normal ‘face-to-face’ school system except the fact that the students and teachers interacted online. The participants’ responses below support the above findings.

Teacher 1: I have 28 students in my class, usually only 1 or 2 of them are absent with good reasons. My school admin prepared special timetable for the online classes, which students and teachers strictly follow.

Teacher 2: I teach Form 2, and have 30 students in my class. A special timetable was arranged by the school which we followed during the lockdown.

Teachers 3: In my class I have 32 students and usually all students attend the lessons. Yes, for our online lessons a different timetable was prepared by our school.

Based on the 153 teachers’ responses it was found that secondary schools in Kedah had allocated 2 lessons per week in their online timetable. Each lesson is given 2 hours. This is different from the normal school timetable which had 4 English lessons per week and each lesson was allocated an hour. All 153 teachers had almost similar answers except that they had used slightly different words. Three teachers’ written answers representative of all the participants’ responses are produced here.

Teacher 1: 2 lessons of 2 hrs each.

Teacher 2: I teach two classes, each class 2 hours and twice a week.

Teacher 3: 2 lessons (1 lesson is for 2hours)

Based on the analysis of the teachers’ answers (Table 1) 93 teachers (60.8%) spent about 3 hours to prepare their online lessons, while 36 teachers (23.5%) used about 2 hours to prepare their online lessons, and 20 teachers (13.1%) spent 4hrs. Only a small number of teacher (2.6%) finished their online lessons preparations in about 1 hour. In other words, it is safe to say that the majority of the teachers needed between 2-3 hours to prepare their online lessons. In addition, the teachers indicated that selecting relevant materials such as videos and you-tube from the internet were time consuming.

Table 1: Time Taken to Prepare Online Lessons

Hours	1 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs
Number of Students	4	36	93	20
Percentage	2.6%	23.5%	60.8%	13.1%

The participants responses lend weight to the above claim.

Teacher 4: Usually, 3-4 hours. Preparing digital worksheets and selecting materials like videos from internet and you-tubes is time consuming

Teacher 5: About 3 hours. Getting appropriate resources is a big problem.

Teacher 6: About 3 hours. Searching for materials take a lot of time.

The internet was the most popular resource provider for the teachers. You-tube, prescribed textbooks, live worksheets and professional chat groups were also indicated as sources of reference by these teachers. It is interesting to note that these teachers were all linked in a professional chat

group monitored by the State Education Department. And most of them shared their lesson plans and teaching materials in the chat group.

Teacher 7: Text-book, You tube, live-worksheet, professional chat Group, panel group, material lesson sharing.

Teacher 8: Text-book, You tube, British Council, online interactive quizzes, online modules.

Teacher 9: Text-book, U-tube, internet, professional chat group.

Teacher 10: Text-book, internet, professional chat group.

It was found that about 38.5% of the 153 teachers had indicated that their students followed their online lessons independently and 61.5% of them said that their students studied with parental guidance. The study also found that students from Forms 1, 2 and 3 received parental guidance while students in Forms 4 and 5 followed their online lessons independently (see Table 2). Perhaps parents of lower secondary students were worried that their children may not be able to follow their online lessons as it is a new and an unfamiliar mode of teaching.

Table 2: Parental Guidance during Online Lessons

Forms	F 1		F 2		F 3		F 4		F 5	
Parental Guidance	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Frequency	46	5	36	4	12	23	-	21	-	6
Percentage	30.1	3.3	23.5	2.6	7.9	15.0	0%	13.7	0	3.9

Some of the teachers' responses which were mostly similar and representative of other participants are produced below.

Teacher 11: Some attend independently. Some have their parents beside. Form 1, so still under guidance.

Teacher 12: Mostly independent. But some parents also do supervise their children, like in Forms 1 and 2.

Teacher 13: Some independent and some with parent guidance.

Teacher 14: Most students have parents sitting with their children throughout the lesson.

Teacher 15: Independently. Parents treat children (in Form 4) as adult enough to attend online classes independently.

With regards to individual attention during 'online lessons', there was a mixed reaction from the participants. From the 153 participants 101 (66%) of the teachers answered in the affirmative while 52 (34%) of the teachers answered in the negative (see Table 3)

Table 3: Teachers' responses in being able to give individual attention to students during online lessons.

Teachers Responses	Yes	No
Frequency	101	52
Percentage	66%	34%

From the 153 participants, 2/3 of them had indicated that they were able to give individual attention to their students during online lessons. Their statements below support their conviction.

Teacher 16: Yes, when they raise their hands, I talk to them individually.

Teacher 17: Yes, in Google meet lessons I answer students' questions individually.

Teacher 18: Yes, students usually put up their hands, when asking questions or answering questions, so I call out their names to participate.

Teacher 19: Students raise their hands to ask questions which I immediately attend in Google meet.

Teacher 20: Yes, because I often use 'breakout rooms' for discussions or request students who need more explanation to 'stay back' in the Google-meet session while the rest leave after class.

Meanwhile, another 1/3 of the 153 participants (52 of them) gave the following reasons for not being able to give individual attention during online lessons. Most of their answers fell into one the following categories. (i) Time constraint, (ii) Students switch off camera, (iii) Participants prefer to be listeners, (iv) Physically difficult to see them all in online, (v) Students shy to speak in English in online.

Teacher 21: No, students are usually quiet participants. So, I always teach them the topic and give them written work for them to answer.

Teacher 22: No, it is difficult because some students usually switch off the camera.

Teachers 23: Not exactly, Lessons need to finish in time. Otherwise, students won't attend future classes.

Teacher 24: No, quite difficult to see all online at the same time.

Teacher 25: No, students don't like to be called out to speak English online.

On the question on assignments, all 153 teachers had answered in the affirmative. In other words, teachers ensured that students did written work after every topic to effectively assess students' learning. In addition, it was found that Telegram and Google-classroom were the main platforms used by these teachers to assign tasks and assess their learning. Some common responses of the teachers are quoted below:

Teacher 26: Writing tasks are graded via Google Doc with help of marker annotation and suggestion.

Teacher 27: Yes, I give them assignments which students complete and send them through our Telegram group which I mark and send back school telegram group.

Teacher 28. Yes, I do give work online. Students need to complete their work and turn in 'Google-Classroom'. I will mark and return them.

Teacher 29: Yes, every lesson is followed by assignment. All written work is given through telegram in class group. Marked work is sent back through the same class group.

Teacher 30: Yes I give assignment at the end (of) every topic. Written tasks are given, marked and sent back to students through telegram.

On giving feedback by teachers, it was found that all the 153 teachers gave feedback on students' performance after grading their work. For Oral work, teachers seem to give feedback promptly during the online lesson via the Google-meet itself. On the other hand, feedback on written work is given after marking and grading students' work through telegram group. The 153 teachers were in unison in this approach. Some common responses of the teachers are quoted here in support of their claim.

Teacher 31: By recording my feedback and posting it in the class group using telegram. Students correct their work (mistakes) and take photo and send to me.

Teacher 32: Usually oral work I correct them in Google-meet. Written work is sent to me via telegram, which I mark and send back my feedback through telegram.

Teacher 33: I give feedback during online lessons in Google Meet. Feedback for written work is given through telegram group.

Teacher 34: Feedback is given orally in Google meet during lessons and for written work feedback is recorded and sent to students in the group via telegram.

Teacher 35: I give oral feedback during lesson through google meet. Feedback for written work is given by recording my comments (and) sending it telegram class group.

However, with regards to conducting assessments, it was found that 119 teachers (78%) of the 153 had carried out some form of assessments during this online teaching era. Meanwhile 34 teachers (32%) admitted that they did not conduct any test or assessment throughout this pandemic era. Except a few, most of these 34 teachers did not specify any particular reason for not conducting any assessments during this lockdown era. On the other hand, the 119 teachers not only had said that they carried out assessments during the online teaching era but also mentioned the type of assessments that they carried out as quoted below:

Teacher 36: Yes, we conducted monthly tests such as quizzes and multiple-choice comprehension tests using Google forms.

Teacher 37: Yes, every month we conduct tests and quizzes.

Teachers 38: Yes, we have monthly assessments. Usually quizzes and MCQ tests.

Teacher 39: Yes, I conduct quizzes and MCQ assessments which are easy to mark. Students' marks are recorded to monitor their progress.

Teacher 40: Yes, every month, usually quizzes and short questions using MCQ format which are easy to mark.

Clearly, quizzes and tests using multiple choice questions were the commonest form of assessments used by the teachers which seemed to be conducted every month in most schools. One important point to note is that the teachers had chosen assessments that can be easily marked like quizzes and

short multiple-choice questions. Subjective questions that need elaborate answers or essays were notably avoided. The trouble of marking assessments could also be one major issue why some teachers did not conduct assessments at all, though none of these teachers had mentioned that. In the case of those teachers who did not conduct any assessments, some of their responses (though not many) are quoted here.

Teacher 41: No, because the tendency to cheat is high.

Teacher 42: No, not yet. May be (at the) end of the year.

Teacher 43: No, I monitored using the students' assignments only.

Teacher 44: No, only normal homework.

Teacher 45: Online tests cannot help grade the students because students use the internet to find answer(s).

The fact that schools generally did not conduct any summative assessments during this pandemic era is very clear. Schools merely conducted formative assessments through the monthly tests to monitor their students' progress. On that score, the 34 schools that did not conduct any monthly tests had alternately relied on the students' homework to oversee their progress.

On the topic of interaction during online lessons, 38 teachers (25%) of the 153 participants answered that their lessons were not interactive, while the remaining 115 teachers (75%) said that their lessons were interactive (see Table 4).

Table 4: Teacher's responses of 'students-teacher' and 'student-student' interaction' during online lessons

Teachers Responses	Interactive Lessons	Non-Interactive Lessons
Frequency	115	38
Percentage	75%	25%

Though, 75% of the participants had answered in the affirmative, the fact that a quarter (25%) of the participants did not conduct interactive lessons needs attention. Based on the 75% teachers' responses, it was found that student-teacher interaction took place at the end of the lesson during 'question and answer' sessions, and other activities such as 'Random Name Picker Spin, and Jamboard presentations. In other words, sessions were designed with activities that provided space for students to interact with teacher. But there seems to be a void for students to interact among themselves. The lesson exhibits a rigid format where students were given specific time to raise their doubts. Teachers' instructions, explanations and illustrations formed the major part of the lesson. Lessons were more a one-way traffic and teacher-centred. Clearly, teachers' responses below emphasize this phenomenon.

Teacher 46: Yes, My lessons are interactive as there are Q and A sessions, Random Name Picker Spin, and Jamboard presentations via break-out room.

Teacher 47: Yes, when I ask questions, students participate by answering in chorus. I also call out students by names to answer my questions.

Teacher 48: Students ask questions by putting up their hands. As our lessons are conducted live, I answer them promptly creating interaction.

Teachers 49: Yes, especially during the Q & A sessions.

Teacher 50: Yes, my students participate actively during discussions and Q and A sessions.

Meanwhile, teachers who answered in the negative for this item commonly gave the following reasons for being unable to conduct interactive lessons.

Teacher 51: No, my students are always passive even during face-to-face lessons.

Teacher 52: Non interactive. Lesson finishes in giving explanations, instructions and written exercises.

Teacher 53: Not much. Mostly students follow my teaching silently.

Teacher 54: Not exactly, it has always been one-way traffic.

Teacher 55: No, students just listen to my presentation.

When questioned on their preferred mode of teaching 83 of the teachers (54.2%) showed preference for face-to-face teaching, 68 of the teachers (44.4%) opted for both (face-to-face and online teaching) and 2 teachers (1.3%) preferred online teaching (see Table 5)

Table 5: Participants preferred mode of teaching

Mode of Teaching	Face-to-Face Teaching	Both Modes of Teaching	Online Teaching
Frequency	83	68	2
Percentage	54.2%	44.4%	1.4%

Among the reasons given by the teachers for their preference for face-to-face teaching were better class control, human aspect of teaching i.e. knowing the students personally and easy monitoring of students' progress. Meanwhile teachers who opted for both modes of teaching expressed that as the world is rapidly moving towards digital technology e-learning is inevitable and need to be included in the system. However, 2 teachers preferred online learning because they find this mode of learning stress free. Most commonly expressed responses of teachers who opted for face-to-face teaching/learning are quoted below.

Teacher 56: Prefer face-to-face. Nothing like seeing my students in person. We need the human touch.

Teacher 57: Face-to-face teaching gives better control. Easy to keep track of student participation.

Teacher 58: Face-to-face. It gives me better confidence when I see the students in person in front of me. Talking to them and also conducting group activities are very important for language teaching.

Teacher 59: Face-to-face. I can have better class control. Give immediate feedback and correct students' mistakes. Encourage students to participate in group activities.

Teacher 60: Face-to-face. It is more realistic and practical. More room for meaningful interaction.

Teachers who opted for a blended form of teaching (using both modes of teaching) made the following statements in support of their choice. Clearly, the emphasis seems to be on the need to upkeep with the rapid technological development.

Teacher 61: With the risk of Covid 19 still lingering, I believe a blended mode of teaching, F2F and online teaching on certain days of the week could be a good idea. Which means students from various classes take turns to attend school, while a part of the students attends online lesson. This could be a welcome breakthrough in the academic fraternity.

Teacher 62: I find both have their advantages and disadvantages. Because I am trained in the traditional teaching and am also IT savvy, I would go for a blended form of teaching.

Teacher 63: The world is going into digital technology, so we cannot ignore online teaching. Both face-to-face teaching and online teaching is needed to successfully teach in the future.

Teacher 64: Both are important. Face-to-face teaching gives teaching the human touch, and online teaching gives students chance to use modern technology.

Teacher 65: Both type of teaching is necessary for successful teaching in this information technology era.

On this premise, 2 teachers alone showed preference for online teaching claiming that online teaching to be less stressful.

Teacher 66: I prefer online teaching. It is less stressful.

Teacher 67: Online teaching. It takes away stress of having 30 students physically in front of me.

On the adequacy of their technological knowledge and skills only 2 teachers (1.4%) said that they had advanced technological knowledge and skills to conduct online lessons. The rest of the teachers (151) indicated that their technological knowledge and skills are only fairly adequate to conduct online lessons successfully. These teachers had said that though there are multiple platforms that can be used to conduct online lessons, their knowledge and skills are limited to the usage of google meet and telegram.

Teacher 68: Our current technological knowledge and skill are limited to the usage of google meet and telegram.

Teacher 69: We have the basic knowledge to serve the internet, conduct google-meet and set assignments through telegram. We need to upscale our knowledge and skills in the future.

However, the two exceptional teachers confidently claimed that they had advanced technological knowledge and skill.

Teacher 70: I am aware of several other platforms like Nearpod, Flipgrid, Kahoot, Moodle, Google meet and Telegram to effectively conduct online lessons.

Though the teachers' responses on how they managed their lessons online give a positive picture, their responses on the many difficulties that they faced in carrying out the lessons say otherwise.

The participants indicated that sourcing for relevant materials for their lessons to match the topics, time constraint in sourcing these materials, students' cheating by switching of the camera during lessons and when doing their assignments, lessons get disrupted due to poor internet connection, and the fact that their online classes are open to parents' scrutiny as their main challenges. The following responses from the participants were helpful in coming to the above findings.

Teacher 71: Preparing the lessons to be within the two hours. Getting materials for the topic other than the text book. Lesson has to be very well prepared because parents may be watching the lesson.

Teacher 72: Getting the relevant materials is a problem – takes a lot of time.

Teacher 73: Class control is always a problem in online teaching. Very often lessons get disrupted because of poor wifi connections.

Teacher 74: Some students do some other work during online lesson by switching off the camera. And we won't know.

Teacher 75: One serious problem is, students cheat in doing assignments by using the internet to get answers, unlike in the classroom where I can monitor them.

Next, the participants also indicated that the lockdown had affected their personal and professional life. The participants admitted that teaching online is stressful and not their favourite mode of teaching though they were able to cope with this new mode of teaching over time. Some statements quoted here give a clear picture of their grievances.

Teacher 76: Well, mentally I wasn't prepared and had difficulty in managing my time to fit the new timetable. When teaching from home I have many other families work that distract my teaching. But now, I am okay.

Teacher 77: Now, we are working more hours, looking at 25-30 students for two hours and I have 3 classes in a day. Imagine looking into the computer for 6 hours daily and talking to students. It is very stressful.

Teacher 78: Teaching has become very challenging. A lot of time needed to prepare lessons. Fear of being scrutinized by parents who view my lessons make me nervous.

Teacher 79: The problem with online teaching is that parents can view our lessons and give remarks which are very demoralizing. This make our life miserable.

Besides these grievances, which generally apply to both male and female teachers, it was also found that the challenges seem to be heavier for female teachers than male teachers. The following statement by a lady teacher (though rather long) clearly explains this phenomenon.

Teacher 80: There are both advantages and disadvantages. Disadvantages mostly befall the female teachers with toddlers or elderly (persons) at home. The professional role of a teacher is often ignored where she (the teacher) is looked upon as a family provider first. Unlike male teachers who enjoy better freedom during lockdown indulging in their passion. Privacy (for female teachers) is at stake and a quiet environment is often

obstructed. Unlike 'free period' at school where teachers could spend time, planning and grading, lockdown is a complete struggle with juggling and organizing breakfast for family and dashing to the kitchen to prepare simple meals in between the gap of two lessons. Thus, lockdown is absolutely not a smooth sail for me.

The detailed analysis of the responses of the participants to the 15 items in the questionnaire helps to conclude that the 153 participants generally conducted their online lessons fairly well besides the many difficulties posed by the abrupt shift in the mode of teaching. However, their preferred mode of teaching is still 'face-to-face teaching.

Having said that, the next question of whether the online mode of teaching will permanently replace the 'face-to-face' teaching mode and how effective will it be needs to be investigated. For that purpose, the three lecturers' responses to the interview schedule were analysed. The lecturers' responses to the interview questions emerged thematically as (i) Implementation, (ii) Challenges and (iii) Implications.

Implementation

Firstly, all three lecturers agreed that 'online teaching' was the best option during the Covid-19 Pandemic period as traditional schools were closed from operating. The lecturers appreciated that this initiative helped the schools running and kept the process of teaching and learning going on despite the lockdown. 'Online teaching' implemented during covid-19 in Malaysian schools were synchronous and that helped to ensure teaching and learning went on in a disciplined manner. The respondents opined that Malaysian teacher struggled in the initial stages of the implementation of 'online teaching' but became more comfortable in the later period. However, all three respondents posit that 'online teaching' was not a smooth sailing process in Malaysian Schools during this covid-19 pandemic.

Dr. A: Not all teachers were prepared and it posed difficulties for the teachers who are not so technologically savvy. So, they faced a lot of problems. Moreover, they were forced to use this mode during the emergency of the pandemic.

Dr. B: I think the 'online teaching' conducted in schools during the lockdown was carried out with little success. Teachers were not trained to deliver lessons in a fully online teaching mode.

Dr. C: The beginning was a struggle, teachers took some time to get used to this new mode of teaching.

Apart from the fact, that the teachers were not properly trained to teach 'online', internet disruptions, students' mannerisms like not switching on the webcams, lack of peer interactions as well as parental interruptions were a few other factors that affected the implementation of 'online teaching' in Malaysian schools. The rigidity of the timetable was another factor which defeated the flexibility of 'online teaching'. It was a stressful phase of time for teachers as they were not prepared for this sudden change in the mode of teaching and the challenges that came with it.

Challenges

The respondents identified three major challenges that emerged with the implementation of 'online teaching' during the Covid-19 pandemic namely (i) teacher inadequacy (ii) Student and parent behavior (iii)

Firstly, the teachers were unprepared for this emergency. Their inadequacy in technological skills hampered them from using the many available digital tools such as breakaway rooms and white boards. 'Online teaching' is not in the teacher-training system and teacher-training institutions and whatever short courses conducted for the in-service teachers insufficient without follow up sessions. Teachers are left to survive on their own self-learning, thus missing out on expert guidance. Clearly, teachers during this emergency teaching lacked techniques, skills, approaches and attitudes towards new innovations. Thus, their quality of teaching suffered.

Secondly, students' and parents' behaviour weighed heavy on the teachers. There always some students who cheat during the 'online lessons. For instance, students do not switch on the webcams. So, students' photos and names appear onscreen while they may not be in the session. There were also instances when students who are very well-versed in digital technology completed their assignments by plagiarising answers posted elsewhere in the internet. Thus, teachers faced an uphill task in monitoring the students. Besides that, parents or siblings' interference during lessons like answering questions posed to the students and making unfavourable remarks intimidated the teachers causing emotional stress to them.

The third challenge that the respondents identified was the poor standard of infrastructure. In Malaysia not all students had WIFI service in their homes. Even if they had, constant disruption to the internet connections is an equally distressing experience for the teachers. In addition, the students needed to share the computer or handphones with their siblings which again disrupted their lessons. Digital mediated learning cannot be complete without ready availability of proper digital infrastructure.

Implications

The 3 respondents unveiled several serious implications resulting from the implementation of online teaching in Malaysia during the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, it exposed the limited technological knowledge of Malaysian teachers. It is spurious to assume that efficiency to teach in a face-to-face environment will automatically qualify the teachers to be effective in 'online teaching' as well. The nature of both this medium is inherently different. Training for the pre-service and in-service teachers needs to address this online teaching knowledge gap. This emphasises the urgent need to revise the curriculum and teacher training programmes.

Teachers need to embrace a constant and lifelong learning attitude. With the rapid advancement in the field of technology, teachers have to continuously keep learning to remain relevant. Teachers will have to possess sufficient knowledge and skills in ICT to create new and innovative pedagogies to survive the dramatic developments in educational technology.

The government on its part needs to ensure that students are provided with sufficient infrastructure such as si-pads, mobile phones and any other digital gadgets deemed necessary for a smooth 'online learning' system. Most importantly, easy accessibility to internet connection needs serious attention. No students should be left out when 'online teaching' takes centre stage in the future. Besides these, text-books and other 'online learning' platforms like you-tubes and telegram must be readily available to ensure that everyone can learn online.

‘Online teaching’ is a powerful mode of knowledge delivery. Its synchronous and asynchronous quality opens up a plethora of possibilities to educators and learners – learning can be anytime, anywhere and for anybody. With the steady move towards the concept of singularity of artificial intelligence, ‘online teaching’ is certain to be the main mode of teaching in the future. As such, the above implications need serious attention.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study clearly show that the implementation of ‘online teaching’ in Malaysian secondary schools during Covid-19 pandemic particularly the teaching of English was only fairly successful. While all 153 participants in the survey had claimed to have carried out their ‘online teaching’ well, and had even given a detailed explanation of how they designed, prepared and delivered their subject content, the grievances that these participants expressed in conducting ‘online teaching’ shows that it was not a major success. There were several root causes for this phenomenon.

Firstly, teachers were not trained to deliver lessons in a fully online teaching mode. This presented a unique pedagogical challenge that was unfamiliar to them. Even though there were numerous online workshops given by the ministry at the start of the lockdown to consolidate this gap, the process of learning, unlearning and relearning cannot be crammed within a few weeks. Furthermore, the online workshops and training provided by the ministry were often too tool-centric with less consideration on equipping the teachers with proper approaches, strategies and concepts underlying online education.

Secondly, teachers were also not properly trained to prepare online learning materials. As such, teachers depended heavily on the internet to source materials which was very time consuming and stressful for the teachers. Teachers also resorted to using worksheets from the prescribed textbooks which were designed for face-to-face teaching, which were often a mismatch for their ‘online lessons’.

The teachers also found classroom management in ‘online teaching’ as another challenge. In ‘online teaching’ the teachers lose their ‘teaching and social presence’ which existed in the face-to-face classroom. Teachers, therefore, need to figure out how to re-establish their authority in the mediated environment.

The infrastructure barrier was another concern in the ‘online teaching’ embarked during Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia. Even though the internet penetration rate in Malaysia is high, the quality of the connection, access to the devices and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) needs to be improved. On that premise, the viewership, the curriculum suitability, programme scheduling and the impact of the programmes need to be constantly measured and improved to ensure the effectiveness of ‘online teaching’.

Meanwhile, the three lecturers’ responses favour a hybrid form of teaching in Malaysia. While the lecturers admitted the importance of and the inevitability of ‘online teaching’ in Malaysian schools in the future they also asserted that face-to-face teaching will not be totally erased but will have co-exist parallel with ‘online teaching’. The lecturers envisage that though the role of teachers will have to change from instructors to facilitators, their presence cannot be negated. The lecturers also felt that the human factor in teaching and the many age-old learning theories will still remain relevant in the hybrid form of teaching that blends face-to-face teaching and ‘online teaching’.

Based on the findings it is clear that ‘online teaching’ was not a smooth sailing process during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, with the dramatic technological advancements, ‘online teaching’ will have to be reckoned as a prime mode of teaching in the future. On that premise both the teachers’ choice and the lecturer’s proposal in this study is the hybrid form of teaching for Malaysia.

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