

EFL Instructors' Perceptions of Evolving Roles of Post-Pandemic Teachers and Students: Learning and Assessment

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ARTICLE INFO

Received:23.04.2024

Revised form: 22.06.2024

Accepted:01.07.2024

Doi: 10.31464/jlere.1472710

Keywords:

English as a foreign language (EFL)

online test practices

student assessment

student learning

pandemic

higher education

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had substantial and persistent impacts on pedagogical methodologies and student assessment practices. This study provides an overview of language educators' perceptions of the post-pandemic era, synthesizing the factors that undermine the effectiveness of student learning and assessment in online and face-to-face classrooms. Additionally, it offers insight into the potential opportunities and challenges associated with teaching and learning in the future. For this purpose, views of 15 English language teachers affiliated in a school of foreign languages were obtained through an online questionnaire in a Word document. The participants provided answers to the questions by comparing their practices before, during, and after the pandemic. Data collected were subjected to content analysis. Findings revealed that the sudden transition to online education brought many challenges and uncertainties that affected mostly assessment processes and interactions negatively, which caused serious concerns in students' actual performance and fairness of the scores.

Acknowledgments

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Statement of Publication Ethics

Ethics approval for the current study was granted by the ATU Research Ethics Committee under issue number 71096 and decision number 05/5.

Authors' Contribution Rate

First author's contribution: 55%

Second author's contribution: 45%.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no known conflicts of interest.

Reference

Akçayoğlu, D.İ., & Özer, Ö. (2024). EFL instructors' perceptions of evolving roles of post-pandemic teachers and students: learning and assessment. *Journal of Language Education and Research, 10 (2), 560-576.*

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Introduction

The rapid transition from onsite to remote learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic had several effects on the quality of learning and teaching, and the context of learning and teaching English as a foreign language was no different. Despite the long-standing availability of online and remote learning worldwide, what was experienced with this sudden transition was unexpected and caused various difficulties for teachers and learners across all ages and grade levels. For this reason, the process was referred to as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), which is defined by Hodges et al. (2020, p. 7) as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances”. Teachers across all grade levels found themselves in one of the most demanding and challenging positions under ERT. The process presented great difficulties and novelties for students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

Within university settings, the sudden shift to online learning and the subsequent return to face-to-face instruction demonstrated a gradual trajectory between modes of instruction and assessment. This caused a state of uncertainty that required all parties involved to undergo continuous adaptations. Trust and Whalen (2020) reported that the urgent need to adapt to the transition to ERT, as well as the ongoing fluctuations in policies caused many teachers to feel overwhelmed. The study also indicated that due to a lack of proper institutional support, teachers had to rely on “informal, self-directed learning with their professional learning network” (p. 191). These challenges, coupled with lingering uncertainties and a serious lack of resources and capabilities available, led to a high probability of suboptimal implementation (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 5).

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to online and blended learning for many EFL university programs, requiring learners to develop their digital and self-directed learning skills. While some changes in teaching and learning processes were temporary, others have permanently altered how instructors teach and learners engage with English. Consequently, this study aims to explore and compare teachers' perceptions of the factors that hinder or support the effectiveness of student learning and assessment before, during, and after the pandemic.

Literature Review

The implementation of remote teaching in higher education institutions, particularly during the initial stages of the pandemic, led to a state of confusion. As summarised by Vellanki, Mond, and Khan (2023), many of these institutions lacked well-defined policies and guidelines, leaving numerous aspects of the implementation uncertain. This uncertainty extended to areas such as curriculum adaptation, teaching and assessment methods, and workload allocations. Many critical questions in this period remained largely unanswered for the majority of stakeholders. Prevalent concerns and challenges included inadequate or non-existent technological infrastructure, limited prior knowledge and experience in online education for both students and teachers and the inconveniences associated with working and studying from home (Vellanki et al., 2023).

Interactions between teachers and students, as well as students themselves, were also disrupted during the pandemic. A lack of interaction was reported to be one of the main issues in studies focusing on English language teaching and learning during this period (Barrot, Llenares & del Rosario, 2021; Özer & Yükselir, 2023). Instructors, who found themselves teaching synchronous online lessons, mentioned a lack of interaction between teachers, and among students themselves, as a significant challenge. However, such a sudden shift also indicated that teachers required new and additional skills to enhance online interactions (Moorhouse, Li & Walsh 2023).

This new process, while presenting numerous challenges, has also been reported to bring along some advantages. Firstly, online learning provided teachers and students with the opportunity to remain in touch, albeit remotely (Ferri et al., 2020). The process brought benefits such as flexibility (Ni Fhloinn & Fitzmaurice, 2021) in terms of time and place, the elimination of commuting, and the ability to access lessons anytime and anywhere (Barrot et al., 2021). Another advantage is considered to be associated with learning new things. Although lack of technical knowledge was a challenge for many teachers, this process has been documented to help teachers learn so many new applications, websites, materials, etc. available online that they had not previously encountered (Ispinar Akcayoglu, 2023). This process of transition to online instruction required teachers to explore differences in pedagogical approaches during online education. Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo (2020) suggested that the challenges caused by the pandemic should be addressed for the development of methodologies and pedagogical approaches, as well as infrastructure and platforms specifically designed for online teaching.

While students may be willing to utilise digital technologies, this does not necessarily indicate their readiness to participate in online learning. Numerous studies from various contexts, both before and after the pandemic, have consistently demonstrated that students prefer some form of face-to-face learning (Gherheş et al., 2021; Kemp & Grieve, 2014). Furthermore, there is a tendency for student motivation to decline gradually as online instruction continues throughout the academic term (Ozer & Badem, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design/Model

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the views and teaching practices of foreign language teachers who taught before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on the pandemic's impact on student learning and assessment. Before the start of data collection, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Ethics Board at the university where the authors are employed. The anonymity of the participants was ensured by assigning pseudonyms to their responses, thereby preventing the revelation of their identities. Furthermore, access to the responses was strictly limited to the researchers.

Publication Ethics

This study was conducted in adherence to fundamental research ethics principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, integrity, respect for persons, and avoidance of conflict of interest. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University Research Ethics Board (reference number: 71096.05/5), dated September 5, 2023.

Participants

To prepare undergraduate students for English-medium instruction, universities in Turkey offer an English language course in their preparatory classes. This course aims to enhance all language skills to a level that allows students to effectively engage when they start taking their departmental courses (Ispinar Akcayoglu et al., 2019; Karakaş, 2023; Ozer, 2020). The participants of this study were recruited using the purposive sampling method, considering the following criteria: teaching at a school of foreign languages before, during, and after the pandemic and agreeing to participate in the study. Thirty-seven invitations were sent to teachers at state and foundation universities in Turkey, but responses were received only from those working in state universities. Thus, this study involved 15 foreign language instructors from preparatory year programs at state universities in various regions of Turkey. The diversity of the participants in gender, age, degree, courses taught, teaching experience, and the institution they work added to the richness of the data for this study.

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Years of teaching</i>
T-1	Female	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	5
T-2	Male	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	19
T-3	Female	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	15
T-4	Female	B.A.	A state university in southwestern Turkey	18
T-5	Male	M.A.	A state university in southwestern Turkey	20
T-6	Female	B.A.	A state university in southwestern Turkey	19
T-7	Female	PhD	A state university in southern Turkey	10
T-8	Female	B.A.	A state university in northern Turkey	20
T-9	Female	PhD	A state university in southern Turkey	9
T-10	Female	PhD	A state university in southern Turkey	6
T-11	Female	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	13
T-12	Female	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	20
T-13	Male	M.A.	A state university in southern Turkey	13
T-14	Female	PhD	A state university in western Turkey	23
T-15	Female	PhD	A state university in central Turkey	14

The survey form was sent to participants online via a Word document, along with an explanation of the study participants' rights. The participants were asked to respond within ten days. Data analysis was performed after a waiting period of two weeks, when no more responses were expected to be received. A 75-page document, compiled from the responses of teachers to the questions, was prepared by the researchers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from this study were collected using an online survey form sent through a Word document. Open-ended questions were selected as the data collection method because they were considered an effective way to engage instructors from various universities across Turkey. Furthermore, this method does not limit their responses, allowing them to provide as much information as they wish. The survey form sent to teachers asked them to comment on the following issues:

- (1) Compare and contrast how language teachers assessed student learning at their school in the three periods: before, during, and after the pandemic.
- (2) Compare and contrast how students' interactions with each other and with the teachers took place in the three periods: before, during, and after the pandemic, based on the teachers' own experiences.
- (3) Compare and contrast teachers' feedback practices during face-to-face and online courses in the three periods: before, during and after the pandemic.
- (4) Compare and contrast students' actual performances with the grades they received or were deemed to deserve in the three periods: before, during and after the pandemic.
- (5) Share insights on the practices that became integral to EFL instructors' professional lives during the pandemic and continue to be utilized in face-to-face teaching today.

Content analysis was employed for the data obtained from this study. The analysis was conducted by adhering to established guidelines in the literature, as recommended by Smith and Osborne (2003) and Selvi (2019). This approach involved clearly defining the research questions and using a systematic coding scheme, among other methods. After the coding process, data were meticulously structured and categorised in alignment with codes and thematic constructs. The collaborative effort between the two authors was the key to the process of grouping similar codes under main themes. The authors coded the themes separately and reached an agreement about the themes emerged. Direct quotations were used to further interpret the categories and sub-categories, which served as examples of participants' viewpoints.

Results

The first question in the survey form aimed to ascertain how teachers assess/assessed student learning in the three periods: before, during, and after the pandemic.

Table 2 provides a summary of teachers' responses regarding the assessment procedures before, during, and after the pandemic. Before the pandemic, all assessments were conducted face-to-face ($f = 15$), reportedly using more reliable assessment methods ($f = 8$) with an equal assessment of all language skills ($f = 9$), which enabled a fair judgment of students' actual performance ($f = 7$). The pandemic made it impossible to conduct these assessment procedures in school environments. Hence, teachers experienced trials of different online assessment tools ($f = 15$), yet there was a lack of control over assessment procedures, particularly in the first half of the pandemic period. The participants highlighted unreliable online assessment experiences they faced ($f = 9$). Assessments before and after the pandemic

were emphasized to be more reliable ($f = 8$), and teachers mentioned equal assessment of all skills after the pandemic, as well ($f = 9$). The lack of control and thus unreliable assessment procedures then paved the way for focusing more on assessing speaking during the pandemic period ($f = 5$). Finally, uncertainty about students' actual performance was the top-cited issue mentioned as a challenge for grading during the pandemic ($f = 11$), which was reportedly not such a challenging issue before and after the pandemic ($f = 7$ and $f = 6$, respectively).

Table 2. How Student Learning Was/Is Assessed Before, During and After the Pandemic

before the pandemic		f	%	during the pandemic		f	%	after the pandemic		f	%
Only face-to-face assessment		15	100	Trial of different assessment tools	online	15	100	A combination of face-to-face and online assignment options	12	80	
More reliable assessment		8	53	Unreliable assessment experiences	online	9	60	More reliable assessment	8	53	
Equal assessment of all language skills		9	60	More focus on assessing speaking		5	33	Equal assessment of all language skills	9	60	
Fair judgment of students' actual performance		7	47	Uncertainty about students' performance	about actual	11	73	Fair judgment of students' actual performance	6	40	

Some excerpts regarding teachers' experiences during the pandemic period reflected the difficulties experienced. For instance, T-9 said: *"During the initial period of the pandemic, everything was a mess. We were not ready for it at all. Moving classes and everything online - all at once - caused teachers and administrators to leave some things behind, and I guess assessment also got its fair share from this. We just carried what we had been already doing face to face [over] to online platforms. We didn't have a chance to perform necessary adjustments"*. According to teachers, in the first period, March 2020, the transition was so sudden that there was no time to make necessary adjustments. More experience was gained in the following term, which was explained by T-12 as *"... In the first period of the pandemic, we had no control over students' performance during the exams. However, in the last semester of pandemic, we asked students to provide two cameras for exams and did online proctoring. We asked to check their IDs before exams, see them and their computer screen during the exam. In order to guarantee more objectivity, we added more speaking exams to our assessment and increased speaking exam percentage in the total grade"*. Another example includes *"Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, we had to shut our eyes to assessment, so all students got very high grades on exams. Actually, we had to let it go because everything happened and got serious unexpectedly fast. The quality of education fell behind the concerns for survival."* indicated by T-12.

After the pandemic, unreliable assessment procedures and uncertainty about students' actual performance ($f=11$) gave its place to equal assessment of all language skills ($f=9$) and fair judgment of students' actual performance ($f=6$). Although many participants reported to get back to face-to-face assessment procedures and thus more reliable assessment ($f = 8$), a great majority mentioned having a mixture of both face-to-face and online assignment assessment procedures ($f = 12$). For instance, T-5 said *"We started face to face exams again.*

At first, students were not so willing for face-to-face education and exams, but they quickly adapted. We used some of the methods we learned from online education, such as using [the] online learning system for assignments and making them part of the assessment". T-7 similarly stated, "We began to have both online and face-to-face quizzes, assignments and exams". However, this integration did not become an essential part of teaching for some teachers, as stated by T-9 in the following sentences: "I can say that we mostly went back to what we did before the pandemic. We tried to keep some of the tools we used during the pandemic, which have proved to be beneficial in terms of managing students' assignments such as Google classroom. But I believe not all teachers maintained their use of these tools and they abandoned them after some time."

Table 3 presents findings in relation to interactions among students and between students and the teachers observed before, during, and after the pandemic.

Table 3. Students' Interactions With Each Other and With The Teachers Before, During and After The Pandemic

<i>before the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>during the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>after the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Meaningful and sincere interaction	15	100	Reluctance to interact	12	80	Disrupted and more superficial interaction	9	60
Out of class interaction as well	3	20	No out of class interaction	5	33	In-class and out-of-class interaction similar to pre-pandemic levels	6	40

Findings related to students' interactions with each other and with the teacher revealed the negative effects of the pandemic on interaction. Students' reluctance to interact ($f = 12$) and lack of out-of-class interaction ($f = 5$) were the top-cited issues mentioned by the participants. Interactions before the pandemic, as compared to during and after the pandemic, were more meaningful and sincere ($f = 15$), which reportedly enabled out of class interaction and learning as well ($f = 3$). After the pandemic, interactions were reported to be disrupted and more superficial ($f = 9$), especially in the first weeks long time after isolations. However, according to some participants, it became more effective as it included in-class and out-of-class interaction similar to pre-pandemic levels ($f = 6$). The participants' views about interaction during the pandemic period were associated with negative experiences. For instance, T-9 said "We lost the interaction because there was an artificial environment. Most of the students took part in the lessons initially but [over time] they lost interest and got bored or had difficulties due to their family issues or technological problems. Teachers also had similar problems, but they were able to adapt themselves and they managed to cope with many [of these] problems. They tried their best to interact with students". T-9 also indicated these problems as "...I know they had very little interaction throughout the year as they almost never saw each other. They never had their cameras on no matter how much and how often we asked for it... So, they wouldn't recognise each other. They just knew each other's voices. [...] I know they never met in person. This [lack of personal interaction] had certain impacts on their social lives as well as academic lives. They missed out opportunities where they could learn from each other as they would in a traditional classroom environment." The lack of interaction during the pandemic enabled participants to better compare their

experiences and observations regarding interaction. For instance, T-8 stated “...Before the pandemic, although there were minor problems with student-to-student teacher-to-student interaction, students had a good interaction with each other and their teachers. This [interaction] made a good contribution to their social and academic development”. T-11 similarly reported “Before the pandemic, my students often collaborated in pairs and groups. We played language games during classes. They supported each other or approached me when they had difficulties with a task. We [also] shared experiences during breaks. Also, they would spend time together outside of the school environment. None of these [interactions] happened during the pandemic”. T-13 also stated that “Due to the transition to online education during the pandemic, there was not enough interaction between students and teachers. This had a negative impact on learning and teaching”.

Table 4 presents teachers' feedback practices during face-to-face and online courses in the three periods: before, during and after the pandemic.

Table 4. Teachers' Feedback Practices During Face-To-Face

<i>before the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>during the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>after the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
More effective feedback practices	7	47	Ineffective feedback practices	3	30	More effective feedback practices	7	47
Personal feedback	7	47	Emphasis on grades over learning	3	20	As effective as before	6	40
Easier	3	20	Uncertainty about who you are providing feedback to	3	20	Easier	2	13

Participating teachers were found to provide a more effective feedback process before and after the pandemic ($f = 7$ for each). Feedback provided before the pandemic could be given personally and in a more detailed manner ($f=7$). However, during the pandemic period, the teachers stated that feedback practices were ineffective ($f =3$); greater emphasis was placed on grades rather than on learning ($f = 3$); and there was uncertainty about who the feedback was provided to ($f = 3$). For instance, T-12 stated that “During the 2020-2021 academic year, I gave feedback on students’ writing assignments. However, many students didn’t place much emphasis on these tasks since writing was not a graded component of the courses”. T-7 highlighted the disrupted process of feedback contributing to students’ learning by saying, “The students did not want to get any feedback from the teacher, because their main focus shifted to passing [the course] rather than focusing on their learning process”. On the other hand, while some teachers discovered some practical methods of providing feedback, others resorted to less efficient solutions. The following quotes from T-15 and T-9 illustrate these circumstances: “I used Google classroom and assigned daily homework and projects from there. It was easier to give feedback. It was a more interactive approach as students could instantly see my feedback and respond accordingly. The auto-correction

feature helped me a lot so that I could focus more on content” (T-15) and “We had to use Word’s comment feature to add our feedback on writing tasks” (T-9). After the pandemic, feedback became more effective ($f = 7$) or as effective as before ($f = 6$) and the process was easier ($f = 2$). Moreover, it was reported that “Interaction between students and the teacher, allowing for a warmer feedback circumstance, which especially consisted of mutual trust and attachment, could be maintained after the pandemic again”. (T-2).

Table 5 presents a comparison of students' actual performances with the grades they received or were deemed to deserve. All the teachers ($f = 15$) agreed that the grades awarded before the pandemic reflected the students' performance. For instance, T-9 said, “...In face-to-face education, either before or after the pandemic, the actual performance and the deserved grades were coherent. We had no difficulties regarding assessment”. However, all teachers found the grades awarded during the pandemic to be inflated ($f = 15$). The pandemic period raised serious assessment concerns regarding the students' actual performance. T-10 indicated, “During the pandemic, I believe that the students' grades did not reflect their actual performance”. T-9 also expressed concerns, stating, “There was always a possibility that they cheated during the pandemic. I guess we all know that most students got help from outsiders with the exams where they didn't have to turn cameras on. In return, it's questionable if they actually deserved the grades they received. On the other hand, there were students who consistently attended classes and did all their assignments on time and showed a lot of effort. They did their best with everything they could and took their exams themselves and finished the year successfully”. T-12 also stated, “...During the pandemic, most of the students struggled to participate actively in online classes, so it was not easy to monitor their performance. [...]. However, students received grades that exceeded their course performance during the online education process.” After the pandemic, the scores reportedly returned to levels similar to those during the pre-pandemic period ($f = 10$). T-14 indicated the effect of the pandemic on students' learning and performance as follows: “... The pandemic conditions affected the post-pandemic educational environment in that students sought easier ways to get higher grades”.

Table 5. Students' Actual Performances With The Grades They Received or Were Deemed To Deserve

<i>before the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>during the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>after the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Fair grades	15	100	Inflated grades	15	100	Fair grades	10	67

The final question in the survey form was designed to explore the practices that became integral to the participants' professional lives. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Practices That Became Part of Teachers' Professional Lives.

<i>During and after the pandemic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
More frequent use of online systems	11	73
Use of online assignments	3	20
Reduced paper usage	3	20
Use of online meetings	3	20

As shown in Table 6, some practices that were initiated and learned during the pandemic became part of teaching practices after the pandemic. For instance, the integration of online systems was the most frequently cited item in this regard ($f = 11$). After the pandemic, teachers reportedly continued using the techniques they learned during the pandemic. T-4 stated, “...*Online homework has made evaluation easier and faster, and it is environmentally friendly*”. T-3 added, “...*We kind of used more technology in our classrooms since returning from the pandemic period*”. Similarly, T-11 stated that “...*I think one significant change is the integration of technology into my teaching. During the pandemic, I became accustomed to using different digital tools*”. Teachers seemed to benefit from the strategies they learned during the pandemic period and continued using them. T-10 stated, “...*Online tools, apps, Teams (for sharing files and Q&A), and asynchronous support material recordings are used. They are all necessary and they work well*”. The discovery process of learning to use a new digital tool required time and effort, but the result was a long-term effect as indicated by T-2 as follows: “...*Use of educational technologies - I became a student again. It was amazing to see how many of them actually existed before I could get time to master one. Now I still use most of those technologies*.” Some practices that became part of our lives included the use of online assignments ($f = 3$), reduced paper usage by using online technologies ($f = 3$), and the use of online meetings ($f = 3$).

On the other hand, not all teachers shared this positive outlook. For instance, despite adopting new teaching habits during the pandemic, T-12 expressed a desire to return to pre-pandemic methods, saying: “*Actually, I can't name a practice that pandemic brought into my teaching. [...] Perhaps it is related to my age but I could easily get back to my pre-pandemic practices. I just use Google Forms at times when I want to share some worksheets and extra exercises, which is more convenient than photocopying*”

Discussion

This study aimed to explore English language educators' perceptions of the post-pandemic era, synthesising the factors that undermine the effectiveness of student learning and assessment in both online and face-to-face classrooms.

The assessment of student learning in the three periods, before, during, and after the pandemic, was a prominent issue. The majority of teachers strongly advocated that face-to-face assessments before the pandemic enabled a fair judgment of students' actual performance. Before the pandemic, these assessments did not have the potential drawbacks associated with remote or online assessments, which were perceived as prone to technical issues and the risk of cheating. Ozer and Badem (2022) state that all education activities went online on a previously unimaginable scale, largely untested, and most practices were based on trial and error. Neither students nor teachers were adequately prepared for remote learning and teaching (Abduh 2021). Our study also found that the shift to ERT caused institutions to try various online and distant methods for assessment procedures. Universities could not provide the necessary infrastructure for the accommodation of secure and proctored exams

during ERT (Koris & Pal 2021). Hence, assessment procedures were affected negatively. On the other hand, while the first period of the pandemic caused significant uncertainty and a lack of necessary resources for assessment in Turkish universities (Dişlen Dağgöl & İspınar Akçayoğlu 2023; Ozer & Badem 2022; Sunar, Yükseltürk & Duru 2022, p. 12) similar to most parts of the world (Al Shlowiy et al., 2021; Hajar & Manan 2022), the second academic year, which started and continued fully online in many countries, was managed with some new measures. These included a new era in which more priority was given to attendance, active participation, online proctoring (Gupta et al., 2023), increased number of speaking exams, etc. In this way, the procedures aimed to prevent cheating and dishonesty through formative assessment methods. In a process of supporting language learning through formative assessment, teachers can provide students with various types of feedback (Jensen, Bearman & Boud 2021, p. 2). The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift to online or blended learning environments, which propelled the use of technology-based formative assessment tools in foreign language learning (Awajan, 2023). When used thoughtfully, these tools can enhance teaching and learning by prioritizing students' development and learning over mere judgment (Morris et al., 2021). Koris and Pal (2021) reported that during the pandemic period, formative assessment methods were given more priority over summative assessment methods. After the pandemic was over, there was a transition back to face-to-face assessment with a similar diversity of methods. However, the experience gained under extraordinary conditions seems to contribute to post-pandemic practices because some participants reported using some online procedures such as giving assignments and feedback through online platforms and making it part of their assessment. In the post-pandemic era, teaching and learning have become more flexible due to the presence and use of online education services during the pandemic period (Khaerani et al., 2023).

The success of a language program is associated with the improvement in learners' language proficiency skills, especially when students engage in activities such as role-playing, pair work, group discussions, etc. (Lee & Ng, 2010; McDonough, 2004). However, reduced input and classroom interaction have impacted language education during the pandemic. In this study, a lack of or minimum interaction was found to cause significant disruptions to teaching and learning practices during the pandemic. The findings of the present study underscore the substantial impact of the pandemic on students' interactions with each other as well as with the teacher, indicating a notable decline during the pandemic and some signs of recovery afterwards. The shift in engagement was significant in different phases of the pandemic. Although certain advantages of online education over traditional face-to-face education, such as flexibility, independence, accessibility, interactivity, ubiquitous learning, were reported (Moore, 2019), interaction in online classrooms during the pandemic period was severely disrupted (Saman, 2022). Today's learners, who have more interaction with the virtual and digital world as well as different sorts of technology for various purposes, are potentially active recipients of e-learning (Adams et al., 2018). Gallardo et al. (2015) noted that being a digital native does not automatically translate to being a proficient digital learner. This implies that assumptions cannot be made a priori regarding students' acquisition of the essential skills needed for success in an e-learning environment. Although online technologies enabled the continuation of education, reluctance to have

cameras on, reluctance to speak, low participation, and technical issues seem to have disrupted engagement and interaction (İşpinar Akçayoğlu & Dişlen Dağgöl, 2021), indicating the difficulties experienced by teachers, who apparently had difficulties in implementing pedagogical knowledge and skills in this process. Teaching online seemingly had different conditions than teaching face-to-face. Hence, Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) reported that many teachers lacked essential knowledge about the distinction between online and face-to-face English teaching, and a lack of training required for this caused teachers to experience problems. While this unpreparedness was relevant for students as well, they were still more familiar with online technologies due to their age. From both the student and teacher perspectives, the success of online teaching, much like that of in-person campus teaching, depends on numerous factors, ranging from course design to teaching materials. The professional development of teachers for the effective delivery of content in both online and face-to-face settings, as well as in blended learning modes, is of paramount importance. Bao (2020) stated that careful planning of the course design, engaging teaching materials, and multimedia content are required for the success of online education. Moreover, as stated by Moorhouse, Li, and Walsh (2023), teachers require new and additional skills to interact effectively online.

Teachers participating in our study were found to provide more effective feedback both before and after the pandemic, with feedback before the pandemic being more personalised and detailed. However, disruptions were noted in feedback practices during the pandemic, despite some teachers reporting benefits from using online platforms to provide feedback during and after the pandemic. Luthfiyyah, Aisyah and Sulisty (2021) also found that teachers believed technology helped them in various ways by reducing effort, providing feedback, and encouraging students' autonomous learning. On the other hand, as noted by the participants, some students gave less importance to the process of learning due to their fixation on grades during the pandemic, which hindered the effectiveness of feedback. Fatmawati, Purnawarman, and Sukyadi (2021) found that most students did not pay attention to feedback as they only focused on submitting their assignments. Some students were reported to lack the necessary knowledge to complete the tasks at all (Pelikan et al., 2021), and according to teachers, some students did not pay attention to comments (Beaumont et al., 2011). Hence, despite providing some technical advantages, feedback practices seem to have been significantly disrupted during the pandemic.

Our study also revealed the changes in teachers' views about the students' actual performances over the three periods: before, during, and after the pandemic. While before the pandemic, the teachers found students' grades to be fair and in line with students' performance, during the pandemic, the consensus among teachers remained unanimous, with all of them deeming the grades to be unfair and often higher than deserved. The pandemic raised significant concerns about the accuracy of grading, with teachers expressing suspicions of cheating and difficulties in assessing students' actual performance. The literature has documented that cheating was perceived to be easier and more prevalent in online courses, and more cheating behaviours existed in unproctored remote exams compared to proctored ones (Clark et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2023). The sudden transition to online education led to unproctored exams and thus serious concerns regarding fairness. This study showed that

some schools' response to this problem was increasing the percentage of the speaking exam scores. Proctoring exams and implementing safety measures are also possible during online exams. However, during the pandemic assessment procedures, some students argued that supervisors became more concerned about preventing students from cheating than measuring their learning (Bilen & Matros, 2021, p. 207). Data from students at a South Korean university indicate that existing online exam proctoring systems do not foster positive educational results and fail to promote the development of higher-order thinking skills. This deficiency is primarily attributed to tutors' prejudiced perceptions of students as cheaters, leading to negative ethical consequences (Xianghan Christine & Stern, 2022).

Finally, the lasting impact of the pandemic on teaching practices was indicated as the integration of online systems as the most frequently cited item. Teachers were found to acknowledge the benefits of online tools, applications, and blended learning platforms, online assignments, reduced paper usage, and virtual meetings, reflecting a shift toward the use of more digital platforms. While several teachers were found to embrace these changes, individual differences were also detected in acceptance and adaptation. In the post-pandemic era, teachers need to adopt new technological components to cater to the needs of the new digital generation of learners, which was found to boost learners' motivation and learning process (Jeong, 2023). The participants mentioned having discovered applications and online tools that they did not know existed and began to benefit from them. While some incorporated these tools into their teaching, others indicated that they wanted to return to their previous practices or could easily abandon the techniques they learned. Kohnke and Zou (2021) also reported teachers' transition to online instruction under extraordinary conditions. During the first phase of the pandemic, a lack of preparedness and competency impeded teachers' confidence in online teaching; however, despite the familiarity gained, there is a need to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of pandemic-imposed online learning and teaching in the new post-pandemic era.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was centred on assessment and feedback practices, interaction, and actual performance issues as well as practices that teachers adopted during the pandemic and ultimately incorporated into their teaching in the post-pandemic period. The results indicated differences, difficulties, uncertainties, and various learning opportunities during and after the pandemic. Firstly, assessment was the most negatively affected factor during the pandemic. Assessment and feedback procedures need to be designed and improved in a way that enhances safe assessment procedures and supports students' learning processes. This can be achieved by employing academic integrity tools and providing timely, specific feedback for a more personalised approach. Additionally, our study revealed varying perceptions among teachers regarding student learning and assessment. Future research should explore teacher demographics, such as years of experience, to explain these differences in perceptions and practices. Secondly, a lack of interaction was a great obstacle for teachers and learners of English as a foreign language. Hence, teachers should be trained on ways to improve interaction in online learning environments. Strategies such as using breakout rooms, live polls, and collaborative projects can be particularly effective. Additionally, there is a clear

need to equip teachers with more effective strategies for providing feedback during online education. Next, teachers were found to learn many new things online due to the changing conditions. While some of the changes were adopted and continued to be used in the post-pandemic period, some others were abandoned. However, the need to maximise the effectiveness of learning technologies and platforms that support pedagogical approaches is self-evident. Further research is required for developing and improving digital pedagogies. This might involve exploring how digital tools can address common challenges in online language learning, such as limited speaking practice or interaction. Additionally, this could entail creating resources and workshops for continuing professional development.

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