



# Strengthening English Second Language Teaching and Learning Pedagogies During The Post COVID-19 Era: The Text-Based Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Research shows that the rapid transition from onsite to remote language learning and teaching during COVID-19 had tremendous effects on the quality of education with learners struggling to cope at age and grade-appropriate levels due to the prolonged school closures, which aimed at curbing the pandemic. Learner-centred language teaching methods were compromised in favour of traditional teacher-centred methods. This paper investigated how learner-centred language teaching and learning pedagogies, specifically, the Text-based Approach (TBA) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), can be reinforced during the post-COVID-19 era. This study was underpinned by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) theory, which advocates for the inclusion of technology in learning and teaching to produce technologically competent learners able to fulfil the requirements of the 21st century. A qualitative approach and an interpretive paradigm were used. Semi-structured interviews, with 6 conveniently chosen Grade 10 teachers in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, were utilised to gather data for the study. Data were analysed using content analysis, and the themes that emerged from that categorization generated the findings of this study. Findings revealed that during COVID-19, teachers adopted innovative ways of language teaching by utilising mobile technologies like WhatsApp, Instagram, Skype, YouTube, Google Docs, Kahoot, Mentimeter etc. In this world of technological advancement, the use of these gadgets is inescapable. The authors recommend that the Department of Education should train teachers by organising workshops that will facilitate the utilisation of these mobile technologies, which will facilitate and reinforce learner-centred pedagogies.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper investigated how the instructional practices utilised by English Second Language (ESL) teachers during the COVID-19 era can be strengthened in the post-COVID-19 period. Traditional language pedagogy views are eroding in the COVID-19 era in favour of expansive, technologically

oriented, interactive, and learner-centred approaches.<sup>1</sup> According to research, lengthy closures in schools when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, resulted in the adoption of innovative strategies by teachers, which aimed at saving the academic year.<sup>2</sup> The post-COVID-19 era has opened debates about the viability of the strategies used by ESL teachers in language teaching. Many research projects have been piloted on the effectiveness of the recently adopted teaching strategies.<sup>3</sup> A major challenge associated with language learning during the pandemic was the lack of social interaction between learners and teachers.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have shown that although the teachers adopted these strategies, they had insufficient knowledge about online teaching and learning and, as such, some academics have noted shortcomings in online instruction during the pandemic.<sup>5</sup> As a result, they chose less interesting and diverse instructional methods that lacked direct engagement.<sup>6</sup> During the adoption of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), which Ferrari and Duthoit refer to as unforeseen development, the implementation of e-learning, and, thus, technology, arose as the crucial requirement and a spark of confidence for the continuation of learning.<sup>7</sup> However, concerns with online learning, such as low learner engagement and low-quality education, have been found as barriers to language development.<sup>8</sup> Learners require the proper instructional assistance, such as appropriate support, that is, scaffolding, that motivates them to create their own knowledge in the virtual classroom, to improve the outcomes of their online learning.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, learning becomes more exciting and purposeful.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amos Gideon Landi, Dahiru M. Abdullah, and Nkeiruka E. Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria," *International Journal of Contemporary Education Research* 23, no. 8 (2021): 158.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO's Global Education Coalition," 2021, <https://www.unesco.org/en/global-education-coalition>.

<sup>3</sup> Tamar Meirovitz, Susie Russak, and Ayala Zur, "English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Their Pedagogical-Technological Knowledge and Its Implementation in Distance Learning during COVID-19," *Heliyon* 8, no. 4 (2022): e09175; Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria"; Mohammad N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review," *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume* 13 (2022).

<sup>4</sup> Momna Azmat and Ayesha Ahmad, "Lack of Social Interaction in Online Classes during COVID-19," *J. Mater. Environ. Sci* 13 (2022): 185–96; Min Huang, Yahui Shi, and Xiaoqiong Yang, "Emergency Remote Teaching of English as a Foreign Language during COVID-19: Perspectives from a University in China," 2020; Rahmi Munfangati, "Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency," *Evaluating Online Learning: Challenges and Strategies*, 2021, 57–60; Reza Pustika, "Future English Teachers' Perspective towards the Implementation of E-Learning in Covid-19 Pandemic Era," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 5, no. 3 (December 29, 2020): 383, <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v5i3.448>; Bulelwa Makena and Thandiswa Mpiti, "Social Distancing Disbanding Learner Groupings: A Case on Language Development," in *Psychosocial, Educational, and Economic Impacts of COVID-19 [Working Title]* (IntechOpen, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.104893>; Nomasomi Hilda Matiso and Bulelwa Makena, "Rethinking Social Interaction in English First Additional Language Classrooms during the Post Covid-19 Era," *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478)* 11, no. 8 (2022): 312–20.

<sup>5</sup> Arief Eko Priyo Atmojo and Arif Nugroho, "EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Register Journal* 13, no. 1 (2020): 49–76.

<sup>6</sup> Yustinus Budi Hermanto and Veronika Agustini Srimulyani, "The Challenges of Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 54, no. 1 (March 17, 2021): 46, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jpp.v54i1.29703>; Matiso and Makena, "Rethinking Social Interaction in English First Additional Language Classrooms during the Post Covid-19 Era"; Sharifah Nadiyah Razali, Mohd Hafiez Ahmad, and Helmi Adly Mohd Noor, "Implications of Learning Interaction in Online Project Based Collaborative Learning," *Journal of Computational and Theoretical Nanoscience* 17, no. 2–3 (2020): 681–88.

<sup>7</sup> Giovannipaolo Ferrari and Eugénie Duthoit, "The Impact of COVID-19 on English Language Teaching in Higher Education Chinese System. Emergency Remote Teaching in Neoliberal Universities in China," in *2nd International Conference of the Journal Scuola Democratica "Reinventing Education,"* vol. 3, 2021, pp-614; Mohammad Ziaul Hoq, "E-Learning during the Period of Pandemic (COVID-19) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An Empirical Study," *American Journal of Educational Research* 8, no. 7 (2020): 457–64.

<sup>8</sup> Min Young Doo, Curtis Bonk, and Heeok Heo, "A Meta-Analysis of Scaffolding Effects in Online Learning in Higher Education," *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* 21, no.3 (2020): 60–80.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Herrington, Ron Oliver, and Thomas C. Reeves, "Patterns of Engagement in Authentic Online Learning Environments," *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 19, no. 1 (March 17, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1701>.

<sup>10</sup> Doo, Bonk, and Heo, "A Meta-Analysis of Scaffolding Effects in Online Learning in Higher Education."

ERT was embraced by numerous nations around the world as an alternative strategy to save their educational system. Affouneh et al. contend that in response to emergencies, ERT is a teaching strategy that calls for a swift switch from traditional educational methods to remote ones.<sup>11</sup> The unavailability of a preconfigured curriculum to be followed in times of crisis was a major challenge in the educational system.<sup>12</sup> All subjects experienced the same challenge of a lack of specified curricula to be followed, and language teaching was no exception. Studies have shown that language teachers were already experiencing challenges in the implementation of recent language teaching methods, the Text-based Approach and Communicative Language Teaching.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the globally reported ineffective and inefficient language instructional practices, the outbreak of the coronavirus aggravated the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic elevated a method of language instruction that freed pupils from the grasp of language teachers and a constrained language classroom.<sup>14</sup>

The gap identified by the authors, in this paper, is that while teachers utilise some of the mobile technologies in teaching and learning, their technological skills are not yet developed to utilise advanced digital methods to incorporate in language teaching and learning. There will always be threats of the lack of social interaction in virtual classes, and these will continue to impede language development. All areas of human endeavours have been affected by the pandemic and this has rendered some methods of language instruction antiquated, obsolete, or otherwise inferior.<sup>15</sup> This study, thus, looked at the feasibility of the adopted strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic and proposed measures by which these can be strengthened. Given the status quo, blended learning, which is dominated by the widespread usage of mobile technologies, is inevitable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper also investigated how language teaching pedagogies can be revitalised in the post-COVID-19 era to facilitate communicative competence. This paper was guided by the following research question:-

- How can English Language teaching and learning pedagogies be strengthened to achieve communicative competence in the post-COVID-19 era?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have been carried out on the effectiveness of the ESL pedagogies used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning a language is a social activity that involves participation from the learner through several activities like role-play, debates, interviews, group discussions etc.<sup>16</sup> The success of any language program depends largely on the development of the learners' language proficiency skills.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected language learning as language development is difficult without learner-teacher face-to-face interaction.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Rido and Sari highlighted that the

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<sup>11</sup> Saida Affouneh and Ahmed Awad Raba, "Trends of the Recorded Lectures at An-Najah National University from the Staff Faculty Perspectives," *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews* 6, no. 5 (2018): 71–79.

<sup>12</sup> Yong Hua Ying, Winson Eng Wei Siang, and Maslawati Mohamad, "The Challenges of Learning English Skills and the Integration of Social Media and Video Conferencing Tools to Help ESL Learners Coping with the Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review," *Creative Education* 12, no. 07 (2021): 1503–16, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2021.127115>.

<sup>13</sup> Matiso and Makena, "Rethinking Social Interaction in English First Additional Language Classrooms during the Post Covid-19 Era"; Cyprian Mumba and Sitwe Benson Mkandawire, "The Text-Based Integrated Approach to Language Teaching: Its Meaning and Classroom Application," *Multidisciplinary Journal of Language and Social Sciences Education* (2664-083X, Online ISSN: 2616-4736) 2, no. 1 (June 21, 2019): 123–42, <https://journals.unza.zm/index.php/mjlsse/article/view/113>.

<sup>14</sup> Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria."

<sup>15</sup> Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon.

<sup>16</sup> N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review"; Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Hanna Sundari, "Classroom Interaction in Teaching English as Foreign Language at Lower Secondary Schools in Indonesia," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 8, no. 6 (2017): 147–54.

<sup>17</sup> Cathy Mae Toquero, "Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Context," *Pedagogical Research* 5, no. 4 (April 16, 2020): em0063, <https://doi.org/10.29333/pr/7947>; Xudong Zhu and Jing Liu, "Education in and After Covid-19: Immediate Responses and Long-Term Visions," *Postdigital Science*

bidirectional interaction between learners and teachers as well as active in-person participation, are essential for learning, especially language learning. Minimal interaction between teachers and learners indirectly affects learner engagement, which affects their desire to learn.<sup>18</sup> Sundari contends that in communicative language instruction, in both teaching and studying English, classroom interaction has been a major challenge.<sup>19</sup> The teacher, in a language class, is extremely important in ensuring that learners have several opportunities to speak the language by developing a variety of interactive activities in the classroom. According to sociocultural theories of language learning, social interaction and language use are closely related, considering the environments in which language learners pick up the language.<sup>20</sup>

Atmojo and Nugroho emphasised how some teachers lacked the expertise and understanding necessary during online English teaching because they were not sufficiently aware of the differences between in-person and online instruction.<sup>21</sup> Their study's conclusions demonstrated that teachers were specifically not good at teaching English online since most of them had limited training before the change. While this was equally true for learners, they were more accustomed to navigating technological challenges. The results of this study demonstrated that pedagogical variables such as inadequate planning, preparation, and educational strategies for emergencies prevented online English teaching from producing the desired results.<sup>22</sup> Bao noted that the success of online courses is heavily reliant on careful course design, appealing and engaging teaching resources, and multimedia content.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the difficulty of teaching any language online or through a digital medium, the epidemic has forced educational institutions to implement e-learning.<sup>24</sup> However, e-learning is not a novel phenomenon; some studies have shown that scaffolded instruction has been adopted in language learning as early as the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>25</sup> The process of guiding students gradually toward better understanding and, eventually, more independence in their study, is known as scaffolding.<sup>26</sup> In the upcoming ten years, online learning in higher education is expected to continue growing quickly, particularly because these backgrounds often provide learners access to learning resources, tools, and communication mediums wherever they are located.<sup>27</sup>

In this inquiry, the authors looked at how teachers incorporated technology to enhance language teaching and learning. Meirovitz, Russak, and Zur evaluated whether instructors who teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are confident that they possess the essential knowledge of particular

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*and Education* 2, no. 3 (October 26, 2020): 695–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00126-3>; Pustaka, “Future English Teachers’ Perspective towards the Implementation of E-Learning in Covid-19 Pandemic Era”; Fernando Ferri, Patrizia Grifoni, and Tiziana Guzzo, “Online Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges in Emergency Situations,” *Societies* 10, no. 4 (November 13, 2020): 86, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10040086>.

<sup>18</sup> Akhyar Rido and Fatimah Mulya Sari, “Characteristics of Classroom Interaction of English Language Teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia.,” *International Journal of Language Education* 2, no. 1 (2018): 40–50; Munfangati, “Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency.”

<sup>19</sup> Sundari, “Classroom Interaction in Teaching English as Foreign Language at Lower Secondary Schools in Indonesia.”

<sup>20</sup> Sundari.

<sup>21</sup> Atmojo and Nugroho, “EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia.”

<sup>22</sup> Ying, Siang, and Mohamad, “The Challenges of Learning English Skills and the Integration of Social Media and Video Conferencing Tools to Help ESL Learners Coping with the Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Literature Review.”

<sup>23</sup> Wei Bao, “COVID-19 and Online Teaching in Higher Education: A Case Study of Peking University,” *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies* 2, no. 2 (2020): 113–15.

<sup>24</sup> Sultan Saleh Ahmed Almekhlafy, “Online Learning of English Language Courses via Blackboard at Saudi Universities in the Era of COVID-19: Perception and Use,” *PSU Research Review* 5, no. 1 (2020): 16–32.

<sup>25</sup> Nurul Farhana Jumaat and Zaidatun Tasir, “Instructional Scaffolding in Online Learning Environment: A Meta-Analysis,” in *2014 International Conference on Teaching and Learning in Computing and Engineering (IEEE, 2014)*, 74–77.

<sup>26</sup> Lev Semenovich Vygotsky and Michael Cole, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Harvard university press, 1978).

<sup>27</sup> Goldie Blumenstyk, *The Adult Student: The Population Colleges--and the Nation--Can't Afford to Ignore* (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018).

technologies used for remote instruction, both during COVID-19 and as they look to the future.<sup>28</sup> The main cause of the challenges EFL teachers experience in distant learning was determined to be the employment of digital technologies. Additionally, teachers confirmed they relied far more on their knowledge. Teachers who used more or nearly the same amount of the tools as they claimed to know them, did so in a way that increased student engagement and motivation. It was further indicated that some teachers were less knowledgeable about digital technologies, and, thus, ran into technical issues that made it difficult for them to teach.

In a study conducted by Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo which analysed the benefits and weaknesses of emergency remote instruction based on the COVID-19 emergency, findings point to some technological, educational, and social concerns.<sup>29</sup> Unreliable Internet connectivity and a lack of basic electronic equipment among many students are the main technological challenges. The primary pedagogical problems included teachers' and learners' lack of digital literacy, the dearth of structured curriculum, and the scarcity of internet resources. This indicated that the vast material available online remains inaccessible in the event of unstructured teaching content. Ferri, Grifoni and Guzzo also reiterate challenges caused by the inadequate face-to-face interaction between instructors and learners.<sup>30</sup> However, Munfangati's study discusses how various mobile technologies, like WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Meet, Edmodo, Kahoot, Googedocs, Mentimeter, Padlet, MindMeister, etc. can be utilised by ESL teachers to facilitate social interaction in the post-COVID-19 era.<sup>31</sup>

WhatsApp facilitates interaction and enhances immediate feedback when the teacher exchanges information with learners through voice notes.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the utilisation of the wide range of emoji signs, and stickers found on WhatsApp enhances social interaction and vocabulary development.<sup>33</sup> Collaborative activities like group discussions are still possible through the application of such technologies as Mentimeter and Google Docs. Similarly, Bawawa et al., found that among the teaching methods used by teachers in achieving learning objectives, Google products like Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Google Docs were used by the English teacher.<sup>34</sup> English teachers also employed visual media as a tool in the teaching and learning process when teaching throughout the pandemic COVID-19 and the new normal. English teachers also employed visual media as a tool in the teaching and learning process when teaching throughout the pandemic COVID-19 and the new normal. In this inquiry, the authors argue that the teachers' innovative strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic be strengthened and developed to facilitate language teaching and learning. Teachers utilised their creativity and innovative strategies from their limited technological skills. These need professional development so that they are incorporated into language learning and teaching. The authors argue that the power of the teacher, as a facilitator of interaction between the learner and the content material, remains feasible and indisputable.<sup>35</sup>

A method for bridging social contact in online learning is required because it is essential to the learning process.<sup>36</sup> In a literature review study conducted by Khreisat, which focussed on the English language learning strategies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, results indicated that teachers mainly used collaborative learning, scaffolding, and flipped classrooms.<sup>37</sup> A study conducted by Saltz

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<sup>28</sup> Meirovitz, Russak, and Zur, "English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Their Pedagogical-Technological Knowledge and Its Implementation in Distance Learning during COVID-19."

<sup>29</sup> Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo, "Online Learning and Emergency Remote Teaching: Opportunities and Challenges in Emergency Situations."

<sup>30</sup> Ferri, Grifoni, and Guzzo.

<sup>31</sup> Munfangati, "Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency."

<sup>32</sup> Munfangati.

<sup>33</sup> Munfangati.

<sup>34</sup> Marni Bawawa, Seli Marlina Radja Leba, and Rezky Uspayanti, "Teaching Method Used by English Teachers during Covid-19 Pandemic and New Normal Era," *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature* 8, no. 2 (2021): 384–89.

<sup>35</sup> Blanka Klimova, "An Insight into Online Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic," *Procedia Computer Science* 192 (2021): 1787–94.

<sup>36</sup> Munfangati, "Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency."

<sup>37</sup> N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review."

and Heckman found that using a break-out room is one method that can be utilised to speed up language acquisition when learning online.<sup>38</sup> In a breakout room, learners work in small groups simultaneously while engaging in collaborative peer learning. Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet are examples of online tools that make it simple to hold these kinds of events. Through the use of such techniques, students may communicate with one another and use language in productive ways to produce content that matters. Learners can be divided into pairs or small groups during a lesson to practice speaking the language, have discussions, act out scenarios, and complete group assignments. They can also involve the teacher in these activities.<sup>39</sup>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) Theory

Technology has gradually infiltrated all spheres of life, and the education field is no exception. The application of digital technology in educational institutions is ubiquitous and inescapable. The incorporation of mobile technologies in language learning and teaching gained momentum during the COVID-19 epidemic when there were no prefigured approaches to utilise during the emergency. Mishra and Koehler's theory of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK), which advocates for the infusion of technology in the teaching and learning environment, grounded this paper.<sup>40</sup> This theory suggests that to increase teachers' knowledge of contemporary pedagogical-technological methods for teaching and learning, teacher education programs are required.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, TPCK advocates that in the world of digital literacy, teachers should integrate content knowledge and their pedagogical practices with technology. TPCK emerged from Shulman's theory of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which stipulates that teachers' pedagogical practices are informed by their content knowledge.<sup>42</sup> In this inquiry, the authors argue that in the era of digital literacy, the inclusion of technology in the teachers' instructional practices facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge. Shishavan and Sadeghi found that English language teachers must be proficient in the language they are teaching, have a solid understanding of pedagogy, and know how to employ certain strategies and procedures.<sup>43</sup> Teaching English as a second language requires both pedagogical expertise and target language understanding.<sup>44</sup> In Covid-19 era, to generate language materials that students can access through ICT technologies, a good language teacher needs to have a high level of inventiveness and knowledge of information and communications technologies.<sup>45</sup>

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Howell, research methodology refers to the process used to collect data or information for deciding on the causes of the phenomenon under investigation.<sup>46</sup> Kothari contends that research methodology is a scientific and systematic way of finding the solution to a problem.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jeffrey Saltz and Robert Heckman, "Using Structured Pair Activities in a Distributed Online Breakout Room," *Online Learning* 24, no. 1 (March 1, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v24i1.1632>.

<sup>39</sup> N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review."

<sup>40</sup> Punya Mishra and Matthew J Koehler, "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge: A Framework for Teacher Knowledge," *Teachers College Record* 108, no. 6 (2006): 1017–54.

<sup>41</sup> Munfangati, "Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency."

<sup>42</sup> Lee S. Shulman, "Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching," *Educational Researcher* 15, no. 2 (February 1986): 4, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1175860>.

<sup>43</sup> Homa Babai Shishavan and Karim Sadeghi, "Characteristics of an Effective English Language Teacher as Perceived by Iranian Teachers and Learners of English.," *English Language Teaching* 2, no. 4 (2009): 130–43.

<sup>44</sup> Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria."

<sup>45</sup> N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review."

<sup>46</sup> Kerry Howell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology* (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom : SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957633>.

<sup>47</sup> C. Kothari, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 2004).

## Research approach

To understand the teachers' instructional practices utilised during the COVID-19 pandemic, this inquiry adopted an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm has the advantage that in addition to describing things, people, or events, interpretivists can use their varied perspectives on phenomena to fully comprehend them in their sociocultural contexts.<sup>48</sup>

A qualitative research approach, according to Daniel, assesses socially relevant aspects of human cognition and behaviour across a broad spectrum of events to systematically comprehend and value them.<sup>49</sup> In addition, Creswell and Creswell reveal that talking directly to participants, in face-to-face interaction, and seeing them behave and act within their context is the main characteristic of qualitative research.<sup>50</sup> The researcher was able to gain a deeper and more holistic picture from the direct interactions with the participants where the researcher could probe further into areas that were hazy which would not have been possible with an alternative approach like quantitative.<sup>51</sup>

## Research Design

In this inquiry, the authors used a case study research design to investigate how ESL teaching pedagogies can be strengthened in the post-COVID-19 era. McMillan and Schumacher posit that “a research design is a strategy for choosing participants, study locations, and data collection techniques to address a specific research topic or questions”.<sup>52</sup> McMillan and Schumacher further explain that a good research design aims to produce results that can be credibly assessed.<sup>53</sup>

## Participant Selection

The population for this study comprised ESL Grade ten (10) educators in Oliver Tambo (OR) District of Education of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The authors used the convenience sampling technique to select ten (10) Grade 10 teachers who participated in the study. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants from a population segment that are easily reachable by the researcher.

## Data Collection Procedures

Data collection instruments for this inquiry were semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are convenient when the researcher wants to probe deeper into the phenomenon under study. This study sought to gain an understanding from the participants' viewpoint on how the adopted language teaching pedagogies during COVID-19 be strengthened. Thematic analysis was used to generate themes from the raw data. The authors looked for similar responses in the data and grouped them to generate themes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The themes that emerged from data analysis formulated the discussion of this paper. These included developing teachers' pedagogical technological skills; improving teachers' online scaffolded instructional practices; and the use of contextual clues to develop vocabulary knowledge.

## Developing Teachers' Pedagogical Technological Skills

Participants' responses indicated that during virtual learning, the most prominent technology that was readily available to both teachers and learners was WhatsApp. It was revealed that teachers used this

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<sup>48</sup> Nasrin Pervin and Mahani Mokhtar, “The Interpretivist Research Paradigm: A Subjective Notion of a Social Context,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development* 11, no. 2 (2022): 419–28.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Eyisi, “The Usefulness of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Researching Problem-Solving Ability in Science Education Curriculum,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 15 (2016): 91–100.

<sup>50</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Creswell and Creswell.

<sup>52</sup> James McMillan and Sally Schumacher, *Research in Education: Evidence-Based Inquiry*, 7th ed. (Pearson, 2013), <https://www.amazon.com/Research-Education-Evidence-Based-Inquiry-7th/dp/0137152396>.

<sup>53</sup> McMillan and Schumacher.

platform to send reading material to learners. Also, assessments were sent via WhatsApp. The participants' responses below indicate this claim:-

*I sent reading material to the learners through WhatsApp. I hoped that the parents would assist their children to unpack the content because we no longer gathered in classes. (Participant C)*  
*I used voice notes on WhatsApp to teach some lessons. But teaching through WhatsApp has some challenges because I am not sure whether the learners are all listening. But learners can save voice notes and share them with others. Learners can also listen to the lesson several times. (Participant F)*

The participants' responses showed that WhatsApp was widely used to teach during the pandemic. Similarly, UNICEF found that in eighty-four percent of nations throughout the world, WhatsApp and messaging apps were the most widely used form of communication for exchanges between teachers, learners, and parents during remote learning.<sup>54</sup> The authors argue that WhatsApp, as a mode of learning and teaching, might not benefit all aspects of language learning. Landi, et al., postulate that language pedagogy includes an explanation of linguistic concepts, adoption of various methods and approaches, as well as feedback and assessment, all of which are used by language teachers to impart curricular materials during face-to-face interactions.<sup>55</sup> Participant C revealed that it was anticipated that the learners' parents would assist their children at home. Nomnian is of the view that while online learning, during the pandemic, resulted in the emergence of parental roles in education; it also perpetuated social injustice, unequal access to digital resources, and varying levels of instructional skills among different families.<sup>56</sup> There was a dramatic increase in varied performances between socially privileged and underprivileged learners.<sup>57</sup> This suggests that learners' socio-economic status was, for some learners, beneficial, while it was a hindrance to some.

During virtual learning, the learning gap greatly widened because learners from more prosperous households outsmarted those from less affluent backgrounds as they encountered more obstacles to learning.<sup>58</sup> Children with learning deficiencies were notably impacted by their parents' low levels of education and social benefits.<sup>59</sup> For the greatest impact on children's learning and welfare, Dreesen et al. and Ghazali, et al., contend that attention should be placed on instructional practices that call for fair remote learning approaches and encourage the educational sector to promote remote learning that can be accessible to all children.<sup>60</sup> While Munfangati advocates for the inclusion of such technologies as Google Docs, Mentimeter, Eldorado, Kahoot, etc, learners and teachers also need the relevant skills to manipulate these technologies.<sup>61</sup> While gaps that exist in digital technological skills among teachers and learners, and, also, among males and females, are not addressed, learning material

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<sup>54</sup> UNICEF, "COVID-19 and School Closures: One Year of Education Disruption - UNICEF DATA," 2021, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/one-year-of-covid-19-and-school-closures/>.

<sup>55</sup> Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria."

<sup>56</sup> Singhanat Nomnian, "Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning in a Language and Intercultural Communication Program during the "New Normal" in Thai Higher Education," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 18, no. S1 (2022): 108–26.

<sup>57</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO's Global Education Coalition."

<sup>58</sup> Ernesto Treviño et al., "Socioeconomic Status, Parental Involvement and Implications for Subjective Well-Being During the Global Pandemic of Covid-19," in *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 6 (Frontiers Media SA, 2021); Russell Viner et al., "Impacts of School Closures on Physical and Mental Health of Children and Young People: A Systematic Review," *MedRxiv*, February 12, 2021, 2021.02.10.21251526, <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.02.10.21251526>.

<sup>59</sup> Shelina Bhamani et al., "Home Learning in Times of COVID: Experiences of Parents," *Journal of Education and Educational Development* 7, no. 1 (July 7, 2020): 9, <https://doi.org/10.22555/joeed.v7i1.3260>; Marcela Pozas, Verena Letzel, and Christoph Schneider, "'Homeschooling in Times of Corona': Exploring Mexican and German Primary School Students' and Parents' Chances and Challenges during Homeschooling," *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 36, no. 1 (2021): 35–50.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Dreesen et al., "Promising Practices for Equitable Remote Learning: Emerging Lessons from COVID-19 Education Responses in 127 Countries," 2020; Ghazali, Nasir, and Nordin, "Moderating Effect of Gender in the Association between MOOC-Efficacy and Meaningful Learning."

<sup>61</sup> Munfangati, "Social Interaction in Online Learning: An Urgency."

will remain inaccessible.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, if language teachers do not wish to resist trends, become irrelevant and become obsolete, they must alter their language pedagogies to be in line with modern language instructional practices that have adopted technological practices.<sup>63</sup> Teachers who have advanced and varied technological skills have a good opportunity of catering for all their learners' diverse requirements. The authors, in this paper, are also of the opinion that the instructional practices utilised during the pandemic, through mobile technologies, be strengthened to make learning meaningful to all parties involved.

### **Improving Teachers' Online Scaffolded Instructional Practices**

To increase online learning results, learners need the right kind of educational support, such as appropriate and adequate scaffolding.<sup>64</sup> This makes studying more relevant and interesting by encouraging students to develop their knowledge in the online learning environment. Doo et. al., highlighted the requirement for proper academic support as well as the use of efficient teaching techniques, such as scaffolding, to improve the standard of learning in an online learning environment.<sup>65</sup>

*One of the difficulties I have during online learning is that even if I want to explain the reading material to the learners I find it difficult. But it is better when we use Facebook because the learners are familiar with it. But it is not as easy as when we have a face-to-face class where I use examples to explain concepts (Participant J)*

The response above revealed that teachers have challenges during online learning. This suggests that teachers need exposure to scaffolded instruction during online classes. A study conducted by Khreisat on strategies used by teachers during online learning, it was revealed that flipped classrooms provided learners with online learning material distributed before the commencement of the class so that they familiarise themselves with it.<sup>66</sup> Flipped classrooms, therefore, need a careful selection of authentic texts to be used during the lesson. Furthermore, a structured lesson plan in which a teacher has detailed and focused content to be covered in a particular class is essential.

Scaffolding has drawn a lot of attention as a successful instructional method because it encourages student engagement in the classroom and improves student-learning outcomes.<sup>67</sup> Scaffolding entails such activities as explicit vocabulary instruction because inefficient vocabulary might hinder comprehension of a text. Shober describes various ways by which word meanings can be entrenched in the sentence itself either through restatement or by providing a further definition of the word in the sentence.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, scaffolding is a core element of flipped classrooms. However, some studies have shown that printed materials are preferred by students since they enable them to take notes, thus, assisting learners to recall new words and phrases, especially when they can highlight them.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, according to certain research, students think online language classes are beneficial. However, there is a general feeling that learners who study exclusively online do not feel as though their language abilities have improved. According to Nomnian, online language instruction approaches support emphasizing the training of receptive skills like reading and listening rather than

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<sup>62</sup> Diogo Amaro et al., "COVID-19 and Education: The Digital Gender Divide among Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa - UNICEF Data for Action Blog," UNICEF, 2020, <https://data.unicef.org/data-for-action/covid-19-and-education-the-digital-gender-divide-among-adolescents-in-sub-saharan-africa/>.

<sup>63</sup> Landi, Abdullah, and Gordon, "Language Pedagogy in the COVID-19 Era: Implications for Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria."

<sup>64</sup> Herrington, Oliver, and Reeves, "Patterns of Engagement in Authentic Online Learning Environments."

<sup>65</sup> Doo, Bonk, and Heo, "A Meta-Analysis of Scaffolding Effects in Online Learning in Higher Education."

<sup>66</sup> N Khreisat, "English Language Learning Strategies during COVID-19 in the Middle East: A Systematic Review."

<sup>67</sup> Brian R. Belland et al., "Synthesizing Results From Empirical Research on Computer-Based Scaffolding in STEM Education," *Review of Educational Research* 87, no. 2 (April 11, 2017): 309–44, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316670999>.

<sup>68</sup> Dianne Shober, *Writing English with Style*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Cape Town: Van Schaik Publishers.

<sup>69</sup> Klimova, "An Insight into Online Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in the Era of COVID-19 Pandemic."

productive ones like speaking and communicating.<sup>70</sup> A comprehensive language program promotes the integration of all language skills during onsite and virtual learning. The Text-based Approach and Communicative language teaching propose the simultaneous development of all language skills.<sup>71</sup>

### Use of Contextual Clues to Develop Vocabulary Knowledge

Some participants indicated that during online learning, learners struggled with vocabulary knowledge as they do not directly interact with the learners. Direct interaction has beneficial gains because the teacher uses contextual clues to explain difficult words. During online learning, the difficulty lies with how the learners process the information sent to them by the teacher because of their different socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>72</sup> Some participants revealed that while it is easy to send texts through online platforms, the challenge lies with the learners' limited vocabulary, which hinders them to comprehend texts.

*Sending reading material to learners through online sources is easy. The problem is that learners do not understand the vocabulary found in these texts in the absence of the teacher.*  
(Participant G)

Participant G's response above indicates that while teachers and learners are engaged in online learning, vocabulary instruction is very important. This emphasises the importance of the teacher as a facilitator of instruction, offline and online. The Department of Education English examiner's report highlights the problem of "poor vocabulary", "lack of understanding of key concepts" and "bankruptcy in vocabulary" as some of the reasons learners do not perform well in English First Additional Language.<sup>73</sup> Recommendations from the examiners' report emphasized that "vocabulary enrichment, spelling, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms and homophones could be done in context, for example, during literature classes."<sup>74</sup> Vocabulary development relies both on extensive reading and explicit instruction of the vocabulary found in texts.<sup>75</sup> However, the teachers indicated that conducting online English lessons is very difficult because of the lack of direct contact with the learners, so, the teacher is unable to identify struggling learners.

*It is difficult to teach vocabulary online because you do not know which words present difficulties to the learners* (Participant J)

The participant's response above indicated that during online learning, teachers do not engage learners in vocabulary development activities. Explicit vocabulary instruction entails the use of texts to understand word meanings from contextual clues. Shober describes various ways by which word meanings can be entrenched in the sentence itself either through restatement or by providing a further definition of the word in the sentence.<sup>76</sup> The examples below, cited in Shober,<sup>77</sup> illustrate how words can be understood in the contexts in which they are used: -

'The tragic schism, dividing brother against brother, caused the family to fall apart.'

'You invalidate your point and make it meaningless when you offer compelling ideas counter to your position.'

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<sup>70</sup> Nomnian, "Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning in a Language and Intercultural Communication Program during the" New Normal" in Thai Higher Education."

<sup>71</sup> Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement English First Additional Language Grades 10-12* (Pretoria: Government Printing Works, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Nomnian, "Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning in a Language and Intercultural Communication Program during the" New Normal" in Thai Higher Education."

<sup>73</sup> Department of Education, *Examiner's Report ENGFAL Paper 1* (Pretoria: Government Printing Works, 2018).

<sup>74</sup> Department of Basic Education, *Annual Report 2016/2017* (Pretoria: Government Printing Works, 2016).

<sup>75</sup> Siphokazi Ngqeleni and Nomasomi Hilda Matiso, "Exploring Vocabulary Knowledge as a Strategy to Enhance English First Additional Language in the Post Covid -19 Era," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, October 31, 2022, 104–15, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2022SP3119>.

<sup>76</sup> Shober, *Writing English with Style*.

<sup>77</sup> Shober, *Writing English with Style*.

Contextual clues are powerful indicators used to extrapolate the meanings of words. Shober further posits that some words may be explained through comparison and contrast in the same sentence. For example, meanings of new and unfamiliar words in the sentences below are embedded in them through comparison and contrast.

‘The kitchen smelled rancid, like rotten eggs.’ (comparison)

‘Nancy is morose but Susan always has a smile on her face.’ (contrast)

The quantity of vocabulary acquired by learners is not spontaneous. It requires exposure to rich language contexts with sound instructional practices. Furthermore, explicit vocabulary instruction needs skilled language practitioners capable of providing comprehensible input to learners.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that by becoming more knowledgeable about the most recent educational technologies and using them in their online lesson plans, teachers need to enhance and adjust their pedagogical techniques to fit the instructional demands of the learners.<sup>78</sup> This includes training on the use of Google Docs, Mentimeter, Kahoot etc. Furthermore, teachers need training on how scaffolded instruction can be utilised in online classes. Flipped classrooms could also be utilised as a prerequisite for online classes. The greatest advantage of flipped classrooms is that students interact with the learning material before the commencement of the lesson. This needs effective lesson planning, which starts with choosing relevant texts, such as written texts or video clips, in preparation for the intended lesson. This enables learners to identify difficult areas that might create barriers to learning. Furthermore, prior exposure to learning material facilitates social interaction since the learners will have familiarised themselves, either with peers or groups, with the learning material. Thus, active learner participation is guaranteed during the lesson. Moreover, online material is more reliable and accessible than printed material since the learner has varied opportunities for retrieving information on their gadgets.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the authors investigated how English Second Language pedagogies can be strengthened in the post-COVID-19 era. Results indicated that teachers’ technological skills, as well as their scaffolded instructional practices, need to be strengthened. This study adopted the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge to investigate how technology can be incorporated into English language teaching and learning in the post-COVID-19 era. This paper revealed a lack of technological pedagogical content knowledge among teachers. Thus, a transformed look, applied through regular professional development workshops, be reinforced for advanced instructional practices that will strengthen online language pedagogies. Studies have shown that despite efforts aimed at improving ESL instructional practices, there is still a strong reliance on traditional teacher-centred methods even during online learning. This is caused by, among other factors, teachers’ limited technological skills and knowledge about engaging learners in online social interactive activities. Strengthening teachers’ pedagogical practices in online learning, which include the ability to; process information in simplified comprehensible units; persuade learners to actively participate in online classes through discussion activities; and devise various scaffolded instructional practices like the activation of learners’ background knowledge about the text, and to engage learners in various explicit vocabulary instructional practices, is essential.

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