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## **English teachers' experiences about online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic**

## **Experiencias de docentes de inglés sobre la enseñanza en línea durante la pandemia de Covid-19**

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study aimed to describe the English teachers' experiences in online English language teaching during Covid-19 pandemic. Data was collected by interviewing eight EFL teachers from seven Ecuadorian educational institutions: four public and three private institutions during the 2020-2021 school year. Main findings show that teachers used Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Zoom for virtual classes. They also used Microsoft PowerPoint and Prezi to create teaching material and Google Forms for online assessment. In addition, several teaching strategies were applied: songs, games, videos, grapho-plastic activities, and games. The study also found that teachers faced some challenges: difficulty in accessing technology, connectivity issues, lack of preparation, scant English teaching hours, limited teacher-student interaction, and non-parental support.

**Descriptors:** English; pandemic; educational technology; teaching strategies. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

## RESUMEN

Este estudio descriptivo cualitativo tuvo como objetivo describir las experiencias de los profesores de inglés en la enseñanza del idioma inglés en línea durante la pandemia de Covid-19. Los datos se recopilaron mediante entrevistas a ocho profesores de EFL de siete instituciones educativas ecuatorianas: cuatro instituciones públicas y tres privadas durante el año escolar 2020-2021. Los principales hallazgos muestran que los docentes utilizaron Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Google Classroom y Zoom para las clases virtuales. También utilizaron Microsoft PowerPoint y Prezi para crear material didáctico y formularios de Google para la evaluación en línea. Además, se aplicaron diversas estrategias didácticas: canciones, juegos, videos, actividades grafo plásticas y juegos. El estudio también encontró que los maestros enfrentaron algunos desafíos: dificultad para acceder a la tecnología, problemas de conectividad, falta de preparación, pocas horas de enseñanza de inglés, interacción limitada entre maestros y estudiantes y apoyo no parental.

**Descriptorios:** Inglés; pandemia; tecnología educacional; estrategias de enseñanza. (Tesauro UNESCO).

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## INTRODUCTION

In the face of the coronavirus outbreak, online teaching and learning was the only way of education and collaboration (Pratiwi, Solihat&Darsih 2021; Castro et al., 2022). This type of education is characterized by the interaction between facilitators and learners using several technological resources such as videos, audio, animations, texts, and so on (Basar, Mansor, Jamaludin& Alias, 2021). Moreover, it includes a set of activities through the internet that allows easy access and exchange of information (Hamid, 2020). Attendance in the classroom became a virtual meeting through technological tools (Hamid, 2020). Consequently, facilitators had to make abrupt changes in the teaching process (König, Jäger-Biela &Glutsch, 2020). Teachers had to rethink, innovate, and adapt teaching methodologies, digital skills, and lesson plans. So, online learning became a challenge for learners and facilitators (Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020) since obstacles were inevitable (Windiarti, Fadilah, Dhermawati&Pratolo, 2019).

Similarly, the English language teaching took place in an unexpected and completely unnoticed situation (Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020). English teachers experienced different obstacles because they had to make a transition from a face-to-face school environment to an online one, where all their knowledge and skills were put to the test (Nartiningrum& Nugroho, 2021; Erarslan, 2021; Aksyah, Muslem&Marhaban, 2021). There are many international studies reporting EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges, experiences, technological platforms, impact, and recommendations for online teaching (Nartiningrum& Nugroho, 2021; Hermansyah&Aridah, 2021; Nashir&Laili, 2021; Rahayu&Wirza, 2020; Meirovitz, Russak& Ayala Zur, 2022). However, in Latin America and Ecuador, there is little research (Estrella, 2022). Hence, the objective of this study was to describe the English teachers' experiences of online English language teaching during Covid-19 in seven Ecuadorian educational institutions: four public and three private during the 2020-2021 school year.

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Experience is something that happens to human beings, it concerns a change in the ways in which they relate and understand each other or at some point in reality (Sklair&Larrosa, 2009). Due to the pandemic, full-time online education represented a challenging and new experience for facilitators and learners (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021). Analyzing the English teachers' experiences about online teaching during the first year of the pandemic is significant because other teachers and school administrators can enrich their knowledge about teaching English online and its challenges. In this context, Hermansyah&Aridah (2021) state that “online language learning in teaching English was new and never imagined before” (p.76). So, given the complicated situation of the pandemic and online education, the teacher's role was essential because it required considerable physical and mental effort (Nartiningrum& Nugroho, 2021). For that reason, Andrade, Estevao, Iriarte, Riofrio&Yunga (2021) mention that “the resilience of teachers thus merits new studies, especially within the context of Covid-19” (p.7).

Three research questions guided this investigation:

- a) What are the EFL teachers' experiences of using technology in online teaching?
- b) What are the EFL teachers' experiences in applying teaching and assessment strategies during online teaching?
- c) What are the challenges experienced by EFL teachers during the online modality?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative descriptive research focused on exploring, understanding, and describing in detail without any alteration (Cresswell, 2012). Based on this, the EFL teachers' experiences about online teaching during Covid-19 in Ecuador were studied.

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This research was carried out in five public and three private Ecuadorian educational institutions, one belonging to the province of Santo Domingo de Los Tsáchilas, three to Pichincha, and three to Cotopaxi. Convenience sampling was used due to the easy accessibility and proximity of the subjects for the researchers (Cresswell, 2012). That is, the participants were teaching English in the educational institutions where the researchers were doing their teaching practices. The participants signed an informed consent where they voluntarily agreed to participate in the research, so their names and the institutions are identified with codes. (See table 1). Data was collected by means of an online structured interview, which contains 16 open questions related to personal information and to the online teaching-learning process.

**Table 1.**  
 Teachers' information.

Code	Meaning	Academic degree	Institution	Public (P) Private (PS)	School Location	Levels with which the teacher works	Time work in the school
ET1PS	English Teacher 1 Private school	Third Level- Preschool Education	FB School	PS	Urban	Initial and preparatory education	1 year and a half
ET2PS	English Teacher 2 Private school	Third Level- Environmenta l Engineering	FB School	PS	Urban	Basic elementary	2 years
ET3PS	English Teacher 3 Private school	Third Level- Technologist in Nursery School	B School	PS	Urban	Basic elementary, middle and higher	3 years
ET4PS	English Teacher 4 Private school	Fourth level- Pedagogy in English- Spanish education	YIC School	PS	Urban	Basic elementary, middle, superior and high school	1 year and a half
ET5PS	English Teacher 5 Private school	Third level- Degree in language	SFA School	PS	Urban	Basic middle and higher.	3 years

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		pedagogy, English					
ET6UP	English Teacher 6 Urban public-school	Third level- Education Sciences mention English	BJ School	P	Urban	High school	14 years
ET7RP	English Teacher 7 Rural public-school	Third Level - Degree in language pedagogy, English	SJG School	P	Rural	Basic elementary, middle and higher.	4 years
ET8RP	English Teacher 8 Rural public-school	Third level- Systems engineering	L School	P	Rural	Basic elementary, middle and higher.	3 years

**Source:** The authors.

### Data collection

Data was collected by means of an online structured interview, which contains 16 open questions related to personal information and to the online teaching-learning process.

### RESULTS

The teachers' responses were compared considering that the teachers belonged to a private-urban, urban-public, and rural-public educational sector. Nevertheless, no difference was found. Likewise, the responses were compared between teachers who had a degree in English and those who only had proficiency in the language, but there was not any significant difference. Therefore, the excerpts are presented without differentiating the teachers' education sector and academic degree, and the most relevant ones were chosen to analyze and discuss.

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**Table 2.**  
 Categories and subcategories.

Categories	Subcategories
Applications and Technological platforms	Learning management system Video conferencing tools Content maker applications Assessment tools
Teachers' strategies in online learning	Strategies for EFL teaching Teachers' assessment strategies
Challenges in online teaching	Difficulty accessing to technology Connectivity issues Lack of preparation in online education Scant English teaching hours Limited teacher-student interaction Non-parental support in online learning

**Source:** The authors.

### **Category A. Applications and Technological platforms**

To answer the first research question about the use of technology in online teaching, extracts referring to technological tools were analyzed. Teachers mentioned the ones that have been free and more common: learning management systems, video conferencing tools, content maker applications, and assessment tools.

#### **Subcategory A.1. Learning Management System**

This subcategory focused on the experiences that teachers had in the use of technological tools to manage digital education.

The teachers experienced the use of different Learning Management systems (LMS) such as Idukay, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp to send learning material and instructions, upload recorded classes, and receive homework. The studies showed that for online English teaching, LMS such as Google Classroom and WhatsApp

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were used due to their easy use and access for carrying out activities to learning management (Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020; Nashir&Laili, 2021). In the same way, other teachers used Microsoft Teams because it allowed them to communicate and interact with the learners in an easy way. In an online modality, learning management systems, which are used to guide all aspects of learning and teaching, were considered by the English facilitators as an option to develop the teaching-learning process during the Covid-19 outbreak (Rahayu&Wirza, 2020). In this line, Hamid (2020) asserted that these platforms have been chosen according to the subject content and the students' conditions.

### **Subcategory A.2. Video Conferencing Tools**

The teachers basically experienced two video conferencing platforms to carry out academic meetings. The teachers explained that to hold video conferences, they used the Zoom platform since it was the most popular among students. In this regard, Atmojo& Nugroho (2020) and Hermansyah&Aridah (2021) asserted that the teachers used Zoom as a synchronous language teaching tool that allowed them to maintain interaction with their students. This tool also allowed students to get excited about learning as seeing their friends could reduce the boredom of learning from home (Nashir&Laili, 2021). Another common tool that the interviewed teachers used was the Microsoft Teams platform because it provided unlimited meeting time. Moreover, the teachers mentioned that these platforms helped them to develop their classes synchronously and asynchronously.



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### **Subcategory A.3. Content Maker Applications**

This subcategory referred to the content maker applications that teachers used to prepare materials and explain the English content during online classes.

For the creation and explanation of the learning content, the teachers used some well-known content maker applications such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Genially, and Prezi because they are interesting. The use of resources for the creation of content was an effective strategy to facilitate student's comprehension of the themes and, in turn, they allowed the students to access the material whenever they required it. However, these are not the only tools to use; for that reason, teachers might explore other educational tools for more active language practice and interaction.

### **Subcategory A.4. Assessment Tools**

This subcategory focused on the assessment tools used by teachers. For online assessment, teachers used the Google Forms tool because it was more reachable, it had multiple choice questions, and the students could easily access the link. As another option, they used Quizizz. In this regard, Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) also stated that teachers created multiple-choice, true-or-false, and long-answer tests in Google Forms and Quizizz due to their convenience and easy processing of scores. So, technological platforms could be another practical resource to interact with the student who could answer the teacher's tests and then send them back easily. In this sense, Nartiningrum & Nugroho (2021) emphasize that the facilitators must find convenient tools of evaluation for online assessment.

### **Category B. Teachers' strategies in Online Learning**

This category responded to the second research question about the teachers' experiences with the application of EFL teaching and assessment strategies.

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### **Subcategory B.1. Strategies for EFL teaching**

This subcategory was related to several strategies adjusted and applied by teachers during their experience in online teaching.

The strategies used for teaching online classes were videos, movies, songs, art, grapho-plastic activities, competition system games, speaking activities, and projects. So, they tried to use as much visual and auditory material as possible. To this extend, the educational system moved to an online environment that encouraged facilitators to transform their teaching strategies to make it easier for students to learn from home (Nashir&Laili, 2021). In pandemic conditions, strategy in the teaching process has been very essential because it has allowed the student's learning to be uncomplicated (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the teaching strategies used by the teachers interviewed were the same as those used in face-to-face education. This might be because these strategies gave better results due to they were demanded by the students (Nartiningrum& Nugroho, 2021).

The aforementioned views mean that the teachers require attractive strategies because learners are often bored when studying in their rooms (Nartiningrum& Nugroho, 2021). Hence, no strategy is better than another, the facilitator uses a strategy that suits the student's learning needs (Pratiwi et al., 2021).

### **Subcategory B.2. Teachers' assessment strategies**

This subcategory was focused on the strategies used by teachers to assess students' performance.

The teachers assessed the students' performance using a checklist where they reviewed student learning based on pre-established criteria. They also used several strategies such as projects, lessons, and individual and group assignments about speaking and reading activities. The assignments sometimes were assessed through

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peer or group evaluation. Tosuncuoglu (2018) emphasized that in the teaching and learning process, assessment has been a primordial aspect. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that assessment is not just about measuring and scoring, but also about providing feedback that increases the amount of knowledge learned (Tosuncuoglu, 2018).

### **Category C: English Teachers' Challenges in Online Teaching**

To answer the last research question concerned with the EFL teachers' challenges during the online modality, this section presents six subcategories: difficulty in accessing technology, connectivity issues, lack of preparation in online education, scant English teaching hours, limited teacher-student interaction, and non-parental support.

#### **Subcategory C.1. Difficulties in accessing technology**

This subcategory corresponded to EFL teachers' views on issues related to lack of internet service and limited availability of technology devices during online teaching. In this respect, the teachers said that:

The Internet is an essential tool for online teaching and learning. However, teachers highlighted some challenges in online education, such as: some students only had one cell phone or one computer that shared with their siblings; or the parents did not provide their children with the necessary materials to work with. In addition, the lack of access to the internet service, as well as the connectivity troubles made it difficult to practice the planned activities. These results were similar to the conclusions of Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) who stated that online teaching was difficult for the teachers because the students could not access the Internet and have their own electronic devices, so they had to borrow phones from their parents or siblings. It might be because the social and economic inequalities of families prevented learners from accessing the necessary

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infrastructure to receive an online education (Erarslan, 2021; Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020). Overall, online learning should take place with the help of electronic resources at school, since it could facilitate the students' active participation in their classes.

### **Subcategory C.2. Connectivity issues**

This subcategory corresponded to the EFL teachers' experiences related to difficulties with the unstable internet signal during online English classes. Some of the teachers' expressions were:

According to the teachers' opinions, neither they nor the students had optimal connectivity due to their place of residence, which prevented the classes from being carried out normally and successfully. In fact, one of the factors that made internet signal stability varied was the geographical place. As it was expressed by Windiarti et al. (2019) the lack of a stable internet signal was due to its speed, and intensity varying in each geographical site. Moreover, the teachers expressed that sometimes their internet connection dropped, and therefore, their voice turned unstable making their classes difficult during the normal teaching process. This poor internet connection might be due to the fact that families had limited capital to purchase good internet packages (Basar et al., 2021). These findings were similar to that demonstrated by Nartiningrum& Nugroho (2021) when they said that English teachers experienced a connectivity problem that affected the effectiveness of their teaching practice. This situation could cause the planning and execution of different activities or tasks for students to be difficult.

### **Subcategory C.3. Lack of training in online modality**

The change from traditional learning due to Covid 19 pandemic was demanding for everyone. This subcategory covered the EFL teachers' experiences of the fortuitous shift from face-to-face to virtual education.

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The teachers reported that they and their students were not prepared for the unexpected shift from face-to-face to virtual education due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This change made students feel anxious and teachers could observe some of the children cry during classes, creating a kind of resistance against the school. In addition, the participants mentioned that nobody was prepared for the change in the teaching modality, including teachers, parents, and children. In the case of teachers, they were not trained to teach in an online environment and even it was their first time using the zoom platform, for instance. In this regard, the findings of Atmojo& Nugroho (2020) revealed that online teaching lacked teachers' training and disposition because this event arose unexpectedly due to the Covid-19 emergency. For that reason, Erarslan (2021) emphasizes that teachers must be trained and prepared with the necessary knowledge to teach online optimally and effectively. Likewise, "the students have to be familiarized with online learning to enhance their digital literacy and refine their misperceptions about online learning" (Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020, p. 72).

#### **Subcategory C.4. Scant English teaching hours**

The teachers mentioned their opinion about the number of hours for teaching English during online classes.

Teachers were concerned about the reduction in hours for online teaching because, at the time, they taught only two hours a week, and that was not enough time to cover the necessary content as well as activities. Perhaps it happened because the school followed government regulations and provided limited teaching hours for each teacher (Hermansyah&Aridah, 2021). This is in line with Hermansyah&Aridah (2021), who expressed that during the pandemic, teachers were dissatisfied with the class schedule because it was reduced to a single class hour and they needed more time to explain the materials and complete the activities. Besides, the interviewed teachers mentioned the

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students were not able to develop the expected language skills and their learning did not improve either. This factor indicated that facilitators had to manage time for students to learn effectively (Windiarti et al., 2019).

### **Subcategory C.5. Limited teacher-student interaction**

The EFL teachers mentioned their experiences about the lack of face-to-face contact with their students in online teaching.

The teachers pointed out that it was very impersonal to work through a computer, as it was difficult to know what the students thought or felt, since sometimes, they could not see the students' face. For that reason, teachers preferred formal education over virtual education due to the great communication and interaction (Rahayu&Wirza, 2020). Teachers also said that they did not know how to explain complicated topics and also did not know how to monitor students' understanding directly. In this regard, Nashir&Laili (2021) claimed that some difficulties in online teaching were limited interaction with learners, low student participation, and low monitoring of their work; sometimes what the students learned did not match what was taught. So, unlike face-to-face classes, the lack of teacher-student interaction and the lack of social relationships between them could result in unsatisfactory online education (Basar et al., 2021).

### **Subcategory C.6. Non-parental support in online learning**

This subcategory referred to the absence of parents in their children's online learning, a situation that was confirmed by the EFL teachers. This reality was in line with Atmojo& Nugroho (2020), who mentioned that the parents were absent to monitor their children's participation during online classes because they were workers or they had business to attend to. These factors contributed to parents not being able to monitor their children's online education, stay with them, help them in doing homework, and control the proper

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use of the technological device to achieve optimal online learning (Nashir&Laili, 2021). It means that “the students’ parents must be notified to monitor and maintain their children's participation and engagement in the online learning” (Atmojo& Nugroho, 2020, p. 72).

## **CONCLUSION**

To teach English online during the covid-19, the teachers used several free applications for different purposes. For virtual classes, they used Microsoft Teams and Zoom. To share material, assign homework, give instructions, record scores, and share recorded classes, teachers used Idukey, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp. To create content for their classes, teachers used Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, Genially, and Prezi. Finally, to create tests with multiple choice questions, teachers used Google Forms and Quizizz. On the other hand, the most used teaching and assessment strategies were videos, movies, songs, art, grapho-plastic activities, competition system games, speaking activities, projects, individual and group speaking and reading assignments, and quizzes. Online English language teaching was an unexpected event for teachers and students. Teachers had to adapt their usual teaching to an online environment, where they experienced some challenges such as teachers' and students' lack of preparation and familiarity with online learning, teachers' and students' anxiety, difficulties the students' accessing the technology, and the unstable internet connection, lack of teacher-student interaction, insufficient class time, and non-parental support. These results are subjected to certain limitations such as sampling size. So, further research should be conducted with a large population. Moreover, it would also be advisable to investigate suggestions for English teachers to carry out effective online teaching.

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