



Coping with The New Normal: Difficulties Met and Strategies Used by Faculty and Students in Teaching and Learning English During the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to discover the difficulties experienced by students and teachers of CSU Piat and the strategies they used in order to address these difficulties in their online classes during the pandemic. It utilized the questionnaire and the interview to gather the data in the study. It was found out that both teachers and students met difficulties in technical aspects and in their actual learning-teaching aspects. Technical difficulties mostly include slow internet connection, physical and ambient noise and lack of knowledge in using and manipulating new gadgets and digital applications. Difficulties in teaching- learning aspects were classified in the different macro-skills. As an output, this study came out with a compilation of best practices employed by both teachers and students when meeting the difficulties in an online class and a list of actions or interventions which can be done to improve the quality of online classes. As the university may consider continuing with the blended learning (combination of face to face and online learning) even after the pandemic, this research output can serve as a reference in making academic decisions.

Keywords: *difficulties, strategies, best practices, interventions, online class*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic paved the way to the dawn of unorthodox methods of living. Consequently, it has also prompted the education sphere to shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to flexible and distance learning.

According to UNICEF, over a billion students around the world are at risk of falling behind academically as a result of school closures to control the spread of COVID-19. Countries have implemented remote education programs to keep the world's youngsters educated. Yet a large proportion of the world's children – notably those from impoverished households – lack access to the internet, personal computers, televisions, or even radios at home, exacerbating the consequences of existing learning disparities. Students who lack access to the necessary technologies for home-based

This shutdown impacted more than 1.2 billion students globally, including more than 28 million students in the Philippines (UNESCO, 2020). In reaction to these circumstances, educational leaders have chosen to embrace the new standard in education. At the basic education, the Department of Education (DepEd) was responsible in executing the Continuity of Learning Plan (LCP), last School Year 2020-2021 which began on August 24, 2020 rather than June 2020 (DepEd, 2020).

In the case of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the term "flexible learning," and "blended learning" are being used to refer to both online learning or printed modular learning whichever the learner chooses to use as a mode of learning since the total abolition of face to face learning. On March 17, 2020, as the expansion of the community

quarantine begun to cover entire Luzon, CHED COVID Advisory No. 5 was released. It stated that “Classes in all levels and school activities including on-the-job training (OJT) and internships for the entire Luzon region are suspended until 14 April 2020 and shall resume on 15 April 2020.” However, following the extension of Enhanced Community in Luzon, CHED released COVID Advisory No. 6. To wit: *“HEIs that are using the old academic calendar are authorized to finish their current semester, trimester, quarter or equivalent academic period by 30 April 2020 utilizing a combination of flexible learning options that reflect the best assessment of their students’ outcomes.*

Due to the sudden changes brought about by the pandemic, teaching and learning English have become more tedious. Concerns are being raised about the quality of instruction that English learners- students receive, especially now that changes are multiplied when education goes online.

English teachers and their learners are struggling a lot. Parker (2020) argued that many of the specific strategies that teachers use with English learners don't translate easily into an online environment. For example, students need to be speaking English, and teachers need to provide scaffolds to support them during academic discussions. That can be very challenging to do in a large, online classroom environment.

Schools provide a wide array of essential services and resources to support English learners' English language development, including formal language instructional programs. These programs vary in their approach across schools, though research generally finds bilingual education more effective than English-only programs (Sugarman, 2018). A critical component of all English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional programs is facilitating opportunities to engage in collaborative peer

learning and "productive talk" in English with classmates, essential to oral language development (Walqui and Heritage, 2018).

Unsurprisingly, school disengagement limits these vital learning moments. Technically, English as a Second Language speakers have a home environment in which English is not the primary language spoken. This may also be true of their neighborhood and broader community. In an archaeological country like the Philippines, where many languages and dialects exist, the school may be students' primary or only source of exposure to listening, speaking, writing, and reading in English, specifically with Academic English which is foundational in determining success in classwork and on standardized tests.

Indeed, students are experiencing setbacks in learning English especially in our “new normal” situation now. Accordingly, there are inferences about the effects of distance learning on learning loss based on existing research. Some research suggests that ELs experience setbacks in their vocabulary during the summer months (Lawrence, 2012). With this situation, some may be coming back to school with limited growth or perhaps even new deficits in their English language skills.

The researchers are now exposed to online learning. Based on their online lessons, students could only utilize the target language in class a few times. The typical class discussion and recitation in English is now relatively restricted. This is because students sat through lectures that were either live or videotaped. Due to internet difficulties and cost constraints, students and professors have limited time for live discussions utilizing Google Meet or Zoom (most of the students use mobile data to connect to the internet). Asynchronous activities do not need contact, so students can text their peers or professors in their own language or in Filipino.

This school year, CSU- Piat adopted the blended learning mode of delivery using

synchronous and asynchronous classes. Accordingly, most students rely heavily on e-learning and only few students asked for printed modules. As this is the primary mode of instruction, e-learning or online learning summoned various obstacles in learning English. From being a supplemental tool used occasionally and as per the demands of the learning outcomes, e-learning overnight became an essential entity of language teaching-learning, which not only brought forth its numerous benefits but also exposed the challenges faced by teachers and students alike while using it. (Fatima, 2020).

As a response to the call for a transition to blended learning, Cagayan State University braced itself with its Learning Environment Network System (LENS), a flexible learning system composed of online lectures and modules. In shifting towards distance learning during the COVID – 19 health crisis, CSU has employed technological applications and specialized educational platforms for its synchronous and asynchronous English classes. Teachers in the campus teach English online through Learning Management Systems. During synchronous classes, teachers and students meet and interact through various media such as Google Meet and Zoom applications. For asynchronous classes, lessons are also made available in the form of videos, PowerPoint presentations, and creating groups on the Facebook site. Also, Messenger creates effective communication among students and the teachers.

While others manage themselves quite well, some students find themselves struggling even more with this situation. Aside from financial and internet issues, students find difficulties in performing their tasks in the macro skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing because of lack of immediate monitoring and feedback. Nevertheless, students try their best to perform their tasks as they are still being assessed according to a set rubric. For language teachers in the campus, their teaching plans

were disrupted and their knowledge and skills of ICT of ICT literacy were challenged. Nevertheless, as teachers, they need to cope with the “new normal” to give what is best to the students even in these trying times.

Unfortunately, little has been reported on how English teachers have responded to such a drastically challenging and evolving teaching and learning environment (cf. Fu and Zhou, 2020). Despite their significance, a limitation common to other researches is the lack of data from both teachers and students. And this study is bound to fill this research gap.

Certainly, the pandemic added more students' difficulties in learning English. Hence, the researchers would like to investigate the difficulties that were encountered by the students and teachers, and at the same time identify the strategies that they employed in teaching and learning English.

Today, teaching and learning English seems to be "survival of the fittest." Now, the question is, how do the fittest survive? What struggles do they face and what strategies do they use to cope with this unprecedented situation? This proposed study on Difficulties and Strategies used by English teachers and learners to cope with the new normal seeks to find answers to these questions.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the challenges encountered by both teachers and students in the context of online English education during the pandemic and explore the strategies they have employed to overcome these challenges. Specifically, it seeks to answer questions pertaining to the difficulties faced in the macro-skills of reading, speaking, listening, and writing within online English classes. Additionally, the study aims to identify the strategies and actions adopted by both educators and learners to mitigate these difficulties in each of these skill areas. By analyzing these experiences, the research aims to compile best practices that can inform effective approaches for online English

instruction and recommend interventions based on the insights shared by both students and teachers to enhance the quality of online English education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive mixed-method design which is the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyze data. The quantitative part of the study is the survey on the difficulties met by the respondents in their online classes during the pandemic. These were gathered through a questionnaire. The qualitative part of the study is the survey of the strategies employed by the respondents to address these difficulties and their possible recommendations to improve the quality of online learning. These were gathered using an interview.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Cagayan State University- Piat Campus, Baung, Piat, Cagayan. The respondents were all the English teachers and English Major students during the School Year 2020- 2021.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

This study used total enumeration using all English Faculty members and all students majoring in English in the School Year 2020-2021. As per data, there are seven teachers who are teaching English and 97 students who are taking English as their major from the College of Teacher Education (CTED) in this campus.

Research Instruments

In this study, two main instruments were employed: questionnaire and interview.

The questionnaire was used to identify the difficulties used by the teachers and students in teaching and learning English. There were separate questionnaires for the teachers and the students.

The difficulties were divided into two - technical difficulties and actual teaching and

learning difficulties both in synchronous and asynchronous classes. This was true to all the macro skills in English.

The difficulties were spelled out in the questionnaire and the respondents were just required to check which among these difficulties were met in their classes. They were also be required to write difficulties they met which were not indicated in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by five language experts at Cagayan State University-Piat Campus. The interview was also used in this research. It was conducted through the fb messenger video/audio call and a phone call. It was used to validate and enrich the answers of the respondents along the difficulties they meet in online class. Also, the interview gathered information on what the respondents think are the best strategies employed when meeting their difficulties. Lastly, the interview was used to elicit the respondents' recommendations on actions and interventions which the students, teachers, school and community could do to improve the quality of learning when doing online classes.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data was collected online. The questionnaire was created through Google forms and was sent through link to the group chats of the classes involved in the study. In the case of teachers, the link was sent individually since there are only seven of them involved in the study. After the retrieval of data from the questionnaire, the researchers and the respondents agreed on the date of the interview. To facilitate the interview, the researchers divided themselves among the number of the students. Each member of the research team has at last 15 students to interview. Only one researcher was assigned to interview the teachers. The interview was transcribed to generate the data in the study.

The researchers used coding during their interview in order to identify similar answers for employed strategies and recommended

interventions. This also facilitated the separation of re-occurring or similar answers to that of a different response. After the gathering of data, the researchers treated them using statistical tools. The data gathered through the interview was recorded and taken note by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Difficulties Met and Strategies Used by Students in Learning English During the Pandemic

Speaking

Table 1. Technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their speaking skill development, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow internet connection	90.3	- Purchased Wi-Fi or broadband connections - Submitted assignments at night - Sought stable connectivity in open areas
Noise barriers during tests	92.5	- Used noise-reduction applications - Recorded late at night - Found quiet spaces for recording
Lack of access to necessary gadgets	37.6	- Borrowed gadgets from family, friends, or classmates - Engaged in "gadget sharing" with peers who had better equipment
Outdated devices or software	28.0	
Difficulty with digital applications	26.9	- Sought help from classmates and online tutorials - Demonstrated a willingness to learn and adapt
Learning Difficulties		
Insufficient discussions due to time constraints	68.8	- Engaged in self-study - Conducted group study sessions - Searched for additional resources online (Google, YouTube, etc.) - Memorized scripts
Lack of confidence in performing speaking tests	62.24	- Practiced in front of mirrors - Demonstrated dedication to improvement - Sought extensions for submission deadlines
Struggling with submission deadlines for outputs	59.1	- Scheduled tasks in advance
Insufficient explanation and demonstration by teachers		- Asked classmates for assistance - Conducted self-study - Discussed lessons in group chats - Messaged teachers privately
Lack of feedback mechanisms	43.0	- Sought input from peers and teachers through private messages - Utilized group chats for feedback

Table 1 shows the several technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their

Statistical Treatment

Frequency distribution and percentage were used in the study. They were utilized to treat the data on the difficulties met by the respondents in their online classes. Frequency table was created to represent the difficulties met by the students and teachers in their online classes in English during the pandemic.

speaking skill development. Among the technical challenges, slow internet connection and noise barriers during speaking tests were

predominant, with 90.3% and 92.5% of respondents experiencing these issues, respectively. Lack of access to necessary gadgets and outdated devices or software were also significant concerns for 37.6% and 28% of students, while a smaller portion struggled with using digital applications for editing and submitting speaking outputs (26.9%). These challenges were largely attributed to financial constraints and the Philippines' slow internet infrastructure.

In response to these technical difficulties, students adopted various strategies. To address slow internet connections, they purchased Wi-Fi or broadband connections, submitted assignments at night, and sought stable connectivity in open areas. Lack of gadgets was mitigated by borrowing from family, friends, or classmates, and some engaged in "gadget sharing" with peers who had better equipment. Students lacking digital application skills sought help from classmates and online

tutorials, demonstrating a willingness to learn and adapt. Noise barriers were managed through the use of noise-reduction applications, late-night recording, and finding quiet spaces for recording. Moving to learning difficulties, students reported that insufficient discussions due to time constraints posed a significant challenge, with 68.8% highlighting this issue. Lack of confidence in performing speaking tests was another hurdle for 62.4% of respondents, while 59.1% struggled to meet submission deadlines for their outputs. Moreover, 57% felt that insufficient explanation and demonstration of speaking activities by teachers hindered their learning, and 43% expressed disappointment with the lack of feedback mechanisms from teachers, leaving them uncertain about their performance.

To overcome these learning difficulties, students developed various strategies. To compensate for insufficient discussions, many engaged in self-study, conducted group study

Learning

Table 2. Technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their learning skill development, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Noise barriers	94.6	- Seek quieter environments - Use noise reduction applications
Slow internet connections	87.1	- Seek stable Wi-Fi connections - Find suitable locations
Outdated devices and software	28.0	- Update devices and software
Lack of gadgets	32.0	- Borrow gadgets from relatives - Explore computer shops
Lack of knowledge in using digital apps	31.2	- Utilize online tutorials to enhance digital skills
Learning Difficulties		
Lack of motivation or focus	63.4	- Supplement learning with online resources - Seek motivation through personal activities
Lack of motivation or focus	59.1	- Seek inspiration and motivation through personal activities
Fast pacing and inaudible voices	55.9	- Turn to peers and teachers for clarification - Engage with podcasts and online listening activities
Tight submission deadlines	53.8	- Manage deadlines with time extensions - Collaborate with peers
Lack of separate listening activities	40.9	- Supplement listening skills with online resources

sessions, or searched for additional resources online, leveraging platforms like Google and YouTube. Confidence issues were tackled by memorizing scripts and practicing in front of mirrors, demonstrating their dedication to improving their speaking skills. Seeking extensions for submission deadlines and scheduling tasks in advance helped students manage their time effectively. In response to inadequate teacher explanations and demonstrations, students turned to online resources, asked classmates for assistance, conducted self-study, discussed lessons in group chats, and messaged teachers privately. To address the lack of feedback, students proactively sought input from peers and teachers through private messages or group chats.

Table 2 reveal several technical and learning difficulties faced by students while developing their listening skills in an online learning environment. Among the technical challenges, the majority of respondents (94.6%) highlighted noise barriers as their top concern

during listening activities and lectures. Slow internet connections were also a prevalent issue, affecting 87.1% of the students. Outdated devices and software posed problems for 28% of respondents, while a lack of gadgets (32%) and a lack of knowledge in using digital applications (31.2%) were additional obstacles.

In response to these challenges, students adopted various strategies. To address slow internet connections, they sought stable Wi-Fi connections and suitable locations. Borrowing gadgets from relatives was a common solution for those lacking the necessary equipment.

Additionally, students turned to computer shops and online tutorials to enhance their digital skills and update their devices. Noise barriers were tackled by finding quieter environments or using noise reduction applications.

On the learning front, students faced difficulties due to insufficient discussions

caused by time constraints (63.4%), a lack of motivation or focus (59.1%), fast pacing and inaudible voices from speakers (55.9%), tight submission deadlines (53.8%), and a lack of separate listening activities (40.9%). To overcome these obstacles, students resorted to using online resources such as YouTube and Google to supplement their learning, as well as seeking inspiration and motivation through personal activities. They also turned to peers and teachers for clarification when struggling with unclear audio or fast-paced lectures. Time extensions and collaborative efforts with peers were employed to manage tight deadlines. Furthermore, students supplemented their listening skills by engaging with podcasts and online listening activities available on platforms like YouTube.

Writing

Table 3 highlight several technical and learning difficulties faced by students in the context of writing skills. Among the technical challenges, students primarily struggle with slow internet connections (79.6%) and the presence of noise barriers during writing tasks (81.7%). These issues significantly hinder their ability to research and concentrate. Noise pollution, as noted in related studies, has been identified as a pervasive problem in learning environments in the Philippines, impacting cognitive performance negatively. Slow internet connections also impede online learning, with access issues affecting a significant number of students.

To address these technical challenges, students employ various strategies. They seek out quiet locations to minimize noise disturbances, lock themselves in their rooms, or request others to be quiet. To tackle slow internet connections, they look for areas with better signals, connect to Wi-Fi or broadband, and often prefer submitting their work during times of stronger connectivity. When faced with a lack of gadgets, students borrow devices from family, friends, or classmates and sometimes resort to manual methods for tasks. Additionally, they seek assistance from classmates or individuals

Table 3. Technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their writing skill development, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow Internet Connections	79.6	Seek areas with better signals, connect to Wi-Fi/broadband, submit work during strong connectivity, borrow devices from others, seek assistance from those familiar with digital tools
Noise Barriers During Writing Tasks	81.7	Find quiet locations, lock themselves in rooms, request others to be quiet
Learning Difficulties		
Insufficient Lecture Discussion	65.6	Engage in self-study, use pre-made essays/outputs
Difficulty Comprehending Topics	63.4	Repeatedly review provided modules, seek assistance from classmates, use online resources
Limited Time to Complete Assignments	53.8	Seek help from peers, family, friends, request deadline extensions
Lack of Learning Skills in Vocabulary, Grammar, and Writing Composition	51.6	Use online resources, seek assistance from knowledgeable individuals
Lack of Teaching Strategies	43.0	Not specified
Lack of Feedback Mechanism from Teachers	40.9	Rely on peer feedback due to the absence of teacher feedback

familiar with digital applications to overcome a lack of knowledge in using such tools.

On the learning front, students face several difficulties related to writing skills. The most prominent issue is the insufficient discussion of lectures due to time constraints (65.6%). Students find it challenging to comprehend topics (63.4%) and often struggle with limited time (53.8%) to complete their assignments. A significant portion (51.6%) also lacks learning skills in vocabulary, grammar, and writing composition, which hinders their writing abilities. Furthermore, students face issues with the lack of teaching strategies (43%) and a feedback mechanism from teachers (40.9%).

To address these learning difficulties, students adopt various strategies. They engage in self-study when lectures are insufficient, relying on pre-made essays and outputs. To improve comprehension, they repeatedly review provided modules, seek assistance from classmates, and resort to online resources. Managing time constraints involves seeking help from peers, family, and friends, as well as requesting deadline extensions. Addressing

vocabulary, grammar, and composition issues, students turn to online resources and seek assistance from knowledgeable individuals. Lastly, they look for information online to enhance their writing skills and rely on peer feedback for improvement due to the absence of teacher feedback.

Reading

Table 4 shows several technical and learning difficulties faced by students in developing their reading skills. A significant majority of students, approximately 83.9%, identified the presence of noise barriers during discussions as a major hindrance to effective learning. This noise pollution, in line with WHO guidelines, negatively impacts comprehension and concentration, posing risks to students' academic development. Moreover, 75.3% of respondents encountered challenges related to slow internet connections for attending online and downloading reading materials, reflecting issues with internet access in the Philippines. Furthermore, 62.4% of students received blurred or incomplete reading materials, often due to weak internet connections. In contrast, about 25.8% faced difficulties related to a lack

Table 4. Technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their reading skill development, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Technical and learning difficulties faced by students in their writing skill development, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges	79.6	-seek out a location or spot with a reliable signal. -connect to Wi-Fi or broadband. -submit writing outputs during night time when the internet connection is strong. - they proceed to a quiet place -lock themselves in their room to lessen the noise and to focus more on their writing activity.
Presence of noise barriers during discussion and perform writing tasks (ambient noise, echo, etc.)	81.7	-ask everyone to keep quiet and leave the place for them not to be bothered.
No/Lack of gadgets to use in researching and creating a writing task	33.3	-borrowing devices from family, friends, and classmates.
Lack of knowledge in using digital applications in creating my writing outputs/tests	33.3	- sought assistance from classmates or someone who is familiar with digital applications. -did Google searches and watched YouTube tutorials.
Outdated Device and Software to join online class or to do writing assignments (your device or software is not applicable to use for zoom, google meet, etc.)	25.8	-update their gadgets' software or borrow from family, friends, or classmates.
Learning Difficulties		
Insufficient discussion of lectures due to time constraints	65.5	-do self-study -rely greatly on ready -made essays and outputs
Lack of feedback mechanism from teachers	40.9	-ask their peers about their work
Poor comprehension on the topic due to limited discussion of the teacher	63.4	-read the provided module over and over -ask their classmates' assistance -search on the internet
Lack of strategies used in teaching writing skill	43	-search on the internet for relevant information -use the internet to find out more about improving their vocabulary, grammar, and writing composition skills.
Lack of learning skills in vocabulary, grammar and writing composition	51.6	-seek assistance from someone
Insufficient time to accomplish written tasks	53.8	

about 25.8% faced difficulties related to a lack of gadgets, insufficient knowledge in using digital applications, and outdated devices or software. These technical obstacles hindered their participation in online classes.

Regarding learning difficulties, the study revealed that the majority of students (80.6%) struggled with excessively long or numerous reading modules. Many students coped by summarizing modules or resorting to skimming

and scanning to save time. Additionally, 60.2% felt the lack of accompanying lectures for reading materials was problematic, leading to potential misunderstandings.

Other challenges included insufficient time to meet assignment deadlines (48.4%), difficulty in vocabulary and pronunciation (36.6%), and uninteresting reading materials (25.8%). To address these issues, students adopted various strategies, such as seeking extensions for

deadlines, self-study, using online resources for vocabulary improvement, and searching for alternative materials. This underscores the multifaceted difficulties students encounter while developing their reading skills, encompassing technical, internet-related issues, and learning-related challenges. Students employ a range of strategies, from summarization to online resources, to navigate these obstacles and strive for effective learning outcome.

Difficulties Met and Strategies Used by Faculty Members in Teaching English During the Pandemic

Speaking

Table 5. Technical and teaching difficulties faced by teachers in teaching speaking skill, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow internet connection, which makes speaking activities difficult to implement	100	-rely on using messenger group or Facebook page -asked their students to record their outputs and let them send online whenever they have a strong internet connection. -conducted individual graded recitation especially during times when there is good connection of internet connectivity. -watch video tutorials -send materials attachments that are speaking in nature, video and audio
Lack of gadgets to use in creating and conducting speaking activities	16.66	-provide the students with models and then post them on their Facebook page or send in their messenger group chat
Lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications in creating speaking activities	50	
Unnecessary noise barriers when performing/recording sample speaking task	83.33	-rely on discussions using the FB page, the messenger group chats -went to a room where there are no people
Outdated device and software, which hinders quality speaking demonstration task	16.66	-invest and purchase a cellphone or laptop suitable for blended learning -used the computer in the library
Teaching Difficulties		
Insufficient demonstration of speaking activities due to technical difficulties	50	-provide videos from credible sources for the students to watch and use as basis. -divide the class into small groups and are going to do peer evaluation.
Lack of designed feedback and monitoring mechanisms	66.67	-get feedback from students themselves
Lack of opportunity to apply varied and more skill in teaching speaking strategies	83.33	-chose the most important activities in the syllabus or the most needed activities -giving their students multiple resources and references
Insufficient discussion because of time constraints	66.67	-provide supplementation through module, group chats, Facebook discussions and YouTube videos.
Lack of self- confidence in performing speaking demonstrations	16.66	-engage and expose themselves in seminars and trainings
Delayed submission of outputs from students	50	-remind their students via group chat and phone calls
Too much time in listening/ watching checking students' outputs	83.33	-choose the important activities to be required -detoxify syllabus and module detoxification

Table above shows several technical difficulties faced by teachers when teaching speaking skills in an online setting. A significant challenge, identified by 100% of the surveyed teachers, was the slow and unreliable internet connection, hindering the implementation of speaking activities. Additionally, 83.33% of respondents reported difficulties arising from noise barriers during speaking tasks. Furthermore, 50% of teachers expressed a lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications for teaching speaking, while only 16.66% faced issues related to the availability of gadgets and outdated devices.

To address these technical challenges, teachers employed various strategies. They relied on messenger groups and Facebook pages for communication and had students record and submit their speaking tasks when internet connectivity was stronger. Some conducted individual graded recitations during better internet connectivity periods and allowed lenient submission deadlines for videos. Teachers also updated their broadband plans to accommodate data allowances. To mitigate noise barriers, they used alternative locations for online classes and asked students to find quieter environments.

Regarding teaching difficulties, the majority of teachers (83.33%) encountered issues related to the lack of opportunity to apply diverse teaching strategies for speaking skills and spending excessive time evaluating students' speaking performances. Many indicated that the transition to online teaching limited their ability to conduct comprehensive discussions, group presentations, and impromptu speaking exercises. Furthermore, 66.67% faced challenges related to providing timely feedback and monitoring students due to time constraints and the volume of student outputs.

To address these teaching difficulties, teachers selectively prioritized essential activities in their syllabus that were conducive to online teaching and provided multiple resources to engage students in various materials. They also encouraged peer feedback and evaluation, which helped save time and improve the quality of assessments. Teachers reminded students

about submission deadlines and engaged in continuous communication to ease the submission process. Additionally, some employed strategies such as using videos from credible sources as demonstrations, dividing classes into small groups for peer evaluations, and participating in professional development opportunities to boost their self-confidence in performing speaking demonstrations. In managing time constraints, teachers supplemented discussions with modules, group chats, online discussions, and pre-recorded video lessons, while being mindful not to overwhelm students with excessive readings and activities. Overall, these strategies were crucial in addressing the teaching difficulties encountered by educators during online teaching, ensuring a more effective learning experience for students.

Listening

Table 6 shows the technical and teaching difficulties encountered by teachers in the process of teaching listening skills in a remote learning environment. Technical challenges were prominently represented, with 100% of respondents identifying slow internet connection as a major hindrance to implementing effective listening activities. The Philippines' lower-than-desired internet connectivity was cited as a contributing factor. Additionally, 83.33% of respondents faced unnecessary noise barriers during sample listening tasks, which disrupted the learning process. The lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications for creating listening activities was a concern for 50% of teachers, primarily due to their traditional teaching background. Furthermore, limited access to gadgets and outdated devices and software posed obstacles for some educators, each accounting for 16.66% of respondents.

In addressing these technical issues, teachers adopted various strategies. To mitigate slow internet problems, some teachers provided listening materials in advance, while others encouraged students to record and submit their outputs when their connections were stable. Regarding the lack of digital skills, teachers

Table 6. Technical and teaching difficulties faced by teachers in teaching listening skill, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow internet connection, which makes listening activities difficult to implement	100	-give listening text ahead of time -instruct students to record their outputs then send it online anytime when their internet connection is strong
Lack of gadgets to use in creating audio materials	16.66	-uses the facilities in school such as the computer -borrow gadgets from his colleagues
Lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications in creating listening activities	50	-ask help to young teachers on how to run certain apps -forward attachments that are in speaking in nature, video and audio lifted from the internet
Unnecessary noise barriers when performing/recording sample listening task	83.33	- go to a conducive place and ask students to go in an area -rely on speaking and listening materials that already found on the internet.
Outdated device and software, which hinders quality listening demonstration task	16.66	-upgrade gadgets
Teaching Difficulties		
Students' lack of motivation or focus in listening to the lectures	83.33	-lean on to their Facebook page to monitor students' participation -give students an interesting approach of the lesson
Lack of opportunity for recitation activities to monitor whether the students are listening or not	66.67	- note the name of people who failed to participate in their discussion then ask them to recite in the next discussion
Insufficient discussions because of time constraints	66.67	-give students a listening activity utilizing the Facebook page -pick the most important of the nature part of the lesson to discuss
Insufficient or no separate listening activities included in the syllabus	66.67	-record lectures and sample activities, and provide materials to the students
Insufficient appropriate materials to enhance listening skills	33.3	-search for credible sources
Too much time in listening and checking students' output	66.67	-develop their own audio materials for their students -spend so much time listening and checking outputs -choose the important activities or the most important requirements

sought assistance from tech-savvy colleagues and utilized online resources like videos and audio. Teachers dealing with inadequate equipment borrowed resources from peers or used school facilities.

On the teaching front, teachers grappled with students' lack of motivation or focus during online lectures, affecting 83.33% of respondents. To tackle this, some instructors monitored participation on social media platforms, employed engaging lesson approaches, and posed questions intermittently. The lack of opportunities for recitation, faced by 66.67% of teachers, prompted measures like

noting absentees for future recitation and utilizing alternative platforms for recording student responses. Teachers also confronted time constraints, with insufficient discussions and prolonged listening and checking of outputs affecting 66.67% of respondents. Strategies included conducting post-class discussions, time management, and supplementing learning materials through various channels. Lastly, the absence of dedicated listening activities in the curriculum and a shortage of suitable materials affected 66.67% of teachers. Teachers addressed this by recording lectures and providing additional audio and video resources.

Writing**Table 7.** Technical and teaching difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing skill, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow internet connection, which makes discussion unclear	66.67	-organize groups and requested the group leaders to help other members who cannot submit on platforms that they require
Unnecessary noise barriers during discussions	16.66	-proceed to a quiet room -work late at night or when the surrounding is already silent
Lack of gadgets to use in creating writing activities	16.66	- give advance activity to students
Lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications in designing writing activities	16.66	-seeking other teachers' assistance especially the young teachers to teach him/her how to use the applications
Outdated device and software, which hinder quality writing task	16.66	- updating the gadgets
Teaching Difficulties		
Insufficient demonstration of writing activities due to technical difficulties	33.3	-look for ready-made video presentations and demonstrations in the internet
Lack of designed feedback and monitoring mechanisms	50	-use group chats to ask and to tell if there are concerns
Lack of opportunity to apply teaching writing strategies	50	-require one draft and final draft
Insufficient discussions because of time constraints	50	-manage time
Delayed submission of outputs from students	66.67	-constantly remind the students who did not submit their outputs on time
Too much time needed in reading and checking students' outputs	100	-minimize the activity -choose the most important activity in the syllabus

Table 7 shows various technical difficulties faced by teachers when teaching writing skills. It reveals that a significant proportion, specifically 66.67% of the respondents, encounter challenges related to slow internet connections, which adversely affect the clarity of discussions. Additionally, 16.66% of teachers struggle with unnecessary noise barriers during discussions, mirroring the challenges experienced by students. Some respondents also grapple with a lack of necessary gadgets (16.66%), limited knowledge and skills in digital applications for designing writing activities (16.66%), and outdated devices and software (16.66%), all of which hinder the quality of writing tasks.

To combat slow internet connections, teachers have organized groups and enlisted the help of group leaders to assist students who face difficulties with online submissions. Another approach involves having students' hand-write their work and submit it online when they have

a stable internet connection. Some respondents have also increased their data allowances to mitigate this issue. When it comes to other technical challenges like lack of gadgets, insufficient digital skills, and outdated technology, teachers have taken proactive steps such as providing advance activities, seeking assistance from peers, and updating their devices.

100% of respondents struggle with the extensive time required to read and assess students' written outputs, a challenge intensified by the shift to online learning. Furthermore, 66.67% face issues with students' delayed submission of assignments, while 50% find it challenging to apply effective teaching writing strategies due to limitations in class discussions and slow internet connections. Another 50% grapple with the absence of structured feedback and monitoring mechanisms and insufficient discussions due to time constraints. Lastly, 33.33% of teachers

struggle with providing adequate demonstrations of writing activities because of technical difficulties.

To cope with the time-consuming task of reviewing and checking students' outputs, some teachers prioritize key syllabus activities, focus on specific rubric elements, and check one class's work in a single sitting. In response to delayed student submissions, teachers issue reminders, simplify lessons, and may even deduct points from late submissions. To overcome the lack of opportunities for teaching

writing strategies, teachers often require one draft and a final draft to streamline the assessment process. Addressing issues related to feedback and monitoring, educators use group chats to facilitate communication. When faced with insufficient time for discussions, teachers manage their time effectively and concentrate on crucial lesson components. Finally, for teachers struggling with providing demonstrations due to technical challenges, they seek ready-made video presentations and demonstrations on the internet to share with their students.

Reading

Table 8. Technical and teaching difficulties faced by teachers in teaching reading skill, along with the strategies employed to overcome challenges.

Challenges and Difficulties	Percentage of Respondents Facing Challenges (%)	Strategies Employed to Overcome Challenges
Technical Challenges		
Slow internet connection, which makes discussion unclear	83.33	-ask the members of the class who are willing to help others with weak connectivity, poor or no connectivity at all
Unnecessary noise barriers during discussions	16.66	- use their cars which are soundproofed during the conduct of their synchronous classes. This is aside from their usual solution of going inside their rooms or other places
Lack of gadgets to use in creating reading activities	16.66	-give in advance the activity to the students
Lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications in designing reading activities	16.66	-seek help of other teachers on how to navigate the emerging gadgets and applications
Outdated device and software, which hinder quality in reading activities	16.66	- seek help of other teachers on how to navigate the emerging gadgets and applications
Teaching Difficulties		
Too long or/ and too many modules for the students to read	66.67	-give students enough or ample of time to read the module
Lack of opportunity to apply teaching reading strategies	50	-give assignment or homework -give reading activity or materials
Lack of monitoring mechanism on whether students really read the modules and other reading materials	66.67	-keep on checking up their students
Delayed submission of outputs from students	66.67	-remind the concerned students
Too much time needed in reading and checking students' outputs	83.33	-limit, choose and give only the important activities -if they require submission, make it a point to check and give them back

Table 8 shows various technical and teaching difficulties encountered by teachers in the context of teaching reading skills. When it comes to technical challenges, the predominant issue identified by 83.33% of respondents was

a slow internet connection, which hindered clear discussions and the timely delivery of reading activities. This aligns with broader concerns about internet access among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in

studies and articles from the Philippines and Indonesia.

Unnecessary noise barriers during discussions were a difficulty for 16.66% of respondents, while only one teacher (16.66%) faced the challenge of lacking gadgets for creating reading activities. Additionally, a lack of knowledge and skills in using digital applications for designing reading activities, as well as outdated devices and software hindering the quality of reading activities, were each reported by one respondent (16.66%).

To address these technical challenges, teachers adopted various strategies. For slow internet connections, teachers sought assistance from classmates with better connectivity, asked students to record and submit their work during strong connections, and allocated extra time for reading activities. Regarding unnecessary noise barriers, some teachers utilized soundproofed environments like their cars or quiet rooms for synchronous classes. To address the lack of gadgets, knowledge, and skills, teachers provided reading activities in advance, sought guidance from colleagues on emerging technologies, and adapted their teaching methods accordingly.

For teaching difficulties, the most prominent challenge, identified by 83.33% of respondents, was the extensive time required for reading and checking students' outputs. Furthermore, 66.67% of teachers encountered difficulties due to an excessive number of modules and a lack of monitoring mechanisms to ensure students' engagement with reading materials. Delayed submission of student outputs also posed a challenge for 66.67% of respondents, while 50% mentioned a lack of opportunities to apply teaching reading strategies effectively.

Teachers employed several strategies to address these teaching difficulties. To manage lengthy reading and checking tasks, they allocated ample time for reading, focused on essential activities, and included higher-order thinking questions in assessments. For addressing the issues of module overload and monitoring student engagement, teachers communicated regularly with students, used online platforms

for Q&A sessions and comprehension assessments, and provided additional assignments and reading materials. To tackle delayed submissions, teachers issued reminders, simplified lessons, and applied score deductions for late submissions. Lastly, to overcome the lack of opportunities to apply teaching reading strategies, teachers assigned homework and reading activities, ensuring that their strategies aligned with the students' needs and circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

This research found out that both the teachers and students experience difficulties in teaching and learning English in their online classes during the pandemic. These difficulties were categorized as technical and actual teaching/learning difficulties.

The technical difficulties include slow internet connection, physical and ambient noise, lack and outdated gadgets and lack of knowledge in manipulating gadgets and applications needed for online classes. These findings lead the researchers to conclude that the English students and teachers in the campus still need technical assistance when conducting an online class.

Both the students and the teachers also experienced difficulties in their actual learning and teaching activities which show that they are not totally prepared for an online class. However, the efforts of the students and teachers to employ strategies in order to address their difficulties are proofs that they are willing to learn and continue their academic endeavors no matter how difficult the situation maybe.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Primarily, this research was conducted to survey the difficulties and the strategies employed by both English students and teachers to address their difficulties in their online classes during the pandemic. This study confirmed that indeed, both teachers and students met difficulties technically and in actual online learning and teaching activities. These difficulties must be addressed through the following:

Parents, the school, the community, and the students and teachers themselves may continue initiating and supporting activities that will lead to addressing the technical difficulties specifically on slow internet connection, low quality of online outputs and classes due to noise and lack of knowledge and skills in manipulating new gadgets and new applications

Teachers and students' difficulties in actual teaching and learning maybe addressed by bringing them out to the proper authorities. A dialog maybe utilized to promote awareness of the situation. Students may be encouraged to talk to their teachers and bring out their problems such as the inability to understand long modules, lack of time to accomplish all requirements, the need for feedback mechanism among others, so that teachers can do necessary adjustments. Teachers on the other hand must also be open about their difficulties in teaching during the pandemic so that their supervisors may become more considerate and may do necessary academic decisions that will address these difficulties.

Considering the bulk of work teachers in the university are required to do along instruction, research, extension and production, and considering the shift to digital learning in the 21st century, the university may still opt to continue with the blended learning scheme for the next school years to come. If so, results of this study must be disseminated to proper authorities as basis for decision making, policy design and curriculum revision.

The strategies, best practices and interventions recommended in this study maybe tried, tested and adopted when conducting an online class. Further studies may also be conducted to test the reliability and effectiveness of these strategies, best practices and interventions.

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