

An Exploratory Study into EFL Teachers' Implementation of New Technologies and Distance Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Over the past two years, the Coronavirus exposed the educational division across the globe. The ruling parties, faced with time pressure, sprang into action, quickly imposing new guidelines on school academic units to migrate the entire EFL curriculum online. Moreover, among many academic organizations, the Polish educational system is one in which many limitations and challenges have been appearing. Thus, the contribution of the present work is to examine the avenues and experiences that are significant on the way to implement new technology and which need improvement from the EFL teachers' perspectives in this new context. Overall, 180 EFL Polish teachers participated in the exploratory survey study, which explored their (un)readiness, capacities, support, efficacy, and obstacles in technology integration. Respondents' perceptions enable thoughts, further implications, and recommendations on a more instructive, interactional, and rewarding approach that could be implemented while integrating EFL teaching with a technology-based mode of lesson delivery. It was discovered that not only teachers may establish better EFL remote practices, but also – all the language education policy stakeholders.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, distance language teaching, teacher perspective, EFL teachers, technology implementation, Poland

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Introduction

While new technologies have been growing in significance as a valuable tool aiding language classrooms, their role has changed from a facilitator to a dictator of the educational path. Unfortunately, such an evolutionary step has precipitously left behind core curricula, creative bureaucracy, and, above all, teachers who lack the appropriate tools and training to teach remotely a 30-student English class several hours a week.

Even though this year's e-learning is somewhat new and cruelly surprising, a lot of theoretical work and research indicates the essential factors that can determine the quality of e-learning implementation and facilitate this inevitable process (Abuzagha & Tabieh, 2021; Compton, 2009; Hakim, 2020).

The process of implementing remote teaching appears to have fragile theoretical foundations. Yet, a well-designed and implemented framework constitutes a fundamental scaffolding to make it an effective "vestibule" of stationary education. Appropriately, Li (2017) suggests the most accurate and comprehensive concept (see Figure one) to determine the level of new technology and remote learning adaptation. To appropriately examine teachers' level of adaptation to technologies used during distance learning, it is vital to ask them about their opinions on these four following aspects that can be referred to as pitfalls and opportunities henceforward: i) digital literacy, ii) learning support, iii) access to the necessary software and other resources, iv) satisfaction of the undertaken measures and possible challenges they have approached.

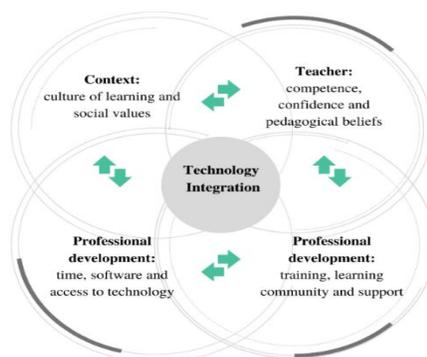


Figure 1. Interlocking factors contributing To technology integration level reproduced and based on Li (2017, p. 205)

That being the case, the first component is mentioned by researchers, such as Li (2017) and Nicol, Owens, le Coze, MacIntyre, and Eastwood (2017). They hold that teachers' confidence and comfortability in using digital tools ensure the efficient organization of online classes. Second, a support team of parents, colleagues, and principals allows the teachers to seek close cooperation and help with any nuisance of internet speed, connectivity problems, and henceforth, maintain a decent level of education (Genota, 2018; Situmorang, Nugroho & Pramusita, 2020). Third, a few studies indicate the lack of resources and bandwidth limitations as

the potential factors discouraging teachers from using technologies in their classrooms (Genota, 2018; Li, 2014). Fourth, Hakim (2020) points out that teachers' levels of self-efficacy and satisfaction may significantly affect the outcome and implied success of the technology-led EFL teaching practices.

This scheme illustrates that the school context interlocks with the teacher and resources. In line with Li (2017), a school may 'supply' the teachers with innovative teaching contexts and helpful resources. On the other hand, teachers' activity is contingent on the organization's development. The mutual advantage appears when the teachers' beliefs and efforts contribute to the change and evolution of the organization's culture. In practical terms, the teachers must assail their professional development, which in turn, needs to be viewed as "a learning community where the teachers are supported in their planning, learning, solving problems and sharing (...) and the duty of schools community and teachers themselves" (Li, 2017, p. 205). The practical implications of this framework will significantly serve as a grounded basis of research methodology and utilization of the variables in the given study.

More specifically, the research questions, set around five variables leveling technology implementation, are as follows: 1) What are the actual, techno-led capacities of school communities in terms of possessed equipment, time management, and material adaptation?; 2) To what extent does the school community provide teachers with appropriate technical and communication support?; 3) To what extent do teachers feel efficient and appreciated during distance teaching?; 4) What types of techno-led devices and resources do teachers use?; 5) What are the problems with distance teaching perceived by teachers?

Respectively, the research tried to meet the main objectives of the study:

- a) determining the level of technology integration and the level of (un)readiness in techno-led remote teaching implementation,
- b) verifying the actual state of the art of schools' techno-led capacities,
- c) understanding the motivation behind the level of teachers' efficacy and engagement in the remote teaching process
- d) exploring the insights on the immediate needs, opportunities, and barriers from the teachers' perspectives.

This study is likely to illustrate the areas of improvement, dilemmas, and current state of affairs that need to be forwarded and studied upon at a larger scale with immediate effect to bring EFL education at its best during the unprecedented times. Although researchers conducted this study in Poland, gap noticing, prompted by demanding a large sample of EFL teachers to formulate their remarks, will potentially enhance the awareness globally.

Literature Review

To respond efficiently to the dynamic shift in teaching methods and values, teachers need to step out of their comfort zone and begin the process of knowledge assimilation and embrace technological advancement. However, this is a multi-stage process, and there is no chance of success without the preceding steps and the provision of tools and an implementation system

(Cuban, 2001; Hakim, 2020; Kopcha, 2012; Li, 2017). The delay in preparing schools for modern technologies means that many schools do not even have computers. Cuban (2001), based on the work of Sandholtz, Ringstaff, and Dwyer (1997), designed a model of technology integration. Amidst the five stages that teachers should experience to proficiently implement e-learning, the first one (*Entry*) describes teachers as computer users, and the third one (*Adaptation*) assumes that students use computers in the class. The fifth step is the *invention* which seems to be the most appropriate model for implementing technology in a pandemic era. However, even if the first steps are barely visible in schools, one can predict adverse outcomes to appear in the fifth stage. Some studies (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Jones, 2001; Kopcha, 2012; Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016) indicate the availability of teachers' time to be crucial. The researchers point out that technology integration is time-consuming, and this factor might discourage them from being creative while integrating curriculum content with techno-led tools. Therefore, the current paper aims to check at what stage of technological implementation are the English language classes in Poland and explore the effects of potential shortages in terms of poor management of working time and materials adaptation.

In an early study, Sandholtz and Reilly (2004) obtained positive feedback that can be motivated by the conclusions and further introduced in other backgrounds. Their findings confirm that technical support is essential while introducing technology in the classroom. In the scenario in which the teachers spend more on troubleshooting software or hardware, the results of the learning outcomes can be counterproductive. The study of Hakim (2020) indicates that solving techno-led problems on priority may create an error-free and more comforting environment for EFL teachers. Timely problem solving, building a support and development community can serve as a channel for self-action and updates started by teachers (Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016). Such active support to introduce training at different levels and technical helpdesk allow the teacher to develop and teach new techniques and skills. Proficiency in managing technological tools and a sense of social support enables interfacing more freely with other community members. The process of establishing and maintaining a robust virtual link between the instructors and learners also appeared to be a potent academic mediator in several studies (Genota, 2018; Hakim, 2020; Khatoony & Nezdhadmehrm, 2020). In line with these premises, we want to examine whether or not the school community provided teachers with appropriate training, technical support and whether the communication with students, with the management, with colleagues, and parents was adequate.

People working in different organizations need external motivation to develop professionally (Hindle, 2000; Li, 2014). The expectations imposed on teachers on the day of the remote learning announcement might have caused a decline in one's efficacy and shocked teachers into excessive, unsatisfied working activities. Hindle (2000) listed the basic motivational needs of people who work in organizations such as schools. Besides good earnings and other factors, the researcher outlines satisfaction with one's work, feeling of responsibility, acknowledgment of good work by the superior, and having a high status and recognition in the group. Kopcha (2012) conducted a longitudinal case study that allowed him to underline the importance of guiding and rewarding teachers as a solid predictor of successful utilization of technology. Li (2014) advocates that such positive experiences and one's decent level of self-efficacy might be the starting point of believing in one's capabilities in using technology.

Correspondingly, the third variable will provide critical information on whether the teachers feel efficient, appreciated, and well-perceived during distance learning.

Khatoony and Nezgadmehr (2020) examined Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions and challenges in technology integration during the Coronavirus pandemic. The most common and disrupting challenges were lack of fundings and no support provided for language institutions. These findings corroborate other research studies (Hakim, 2020; Chaaban & Ellilli-Cherif, 2016), supporting the thesis that access to technology must be equitable for both teachers and students. These researchers unanimously agree that equipping students and teachers with technological tools is advisable. Similarly, Hew and Brush (2006) associate schools that successfully integrated technology with appropriate equipment and resources. Henceforth, not only do we want to check teachers' equipment in terms of appropriate hardware and software equipment, but we also investigate which of the suggested tools proved to be the most frequently used.

Interestingly, one of the predictors of one's success in technology adaptation is a willingness to change. EFL teachers' resistance may harm the concept of "innovativeness" and technology integration (Becta, 2002; Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016; Hurt, Joseph & Cook, 1977; Jones, 2001; Mumtaz, 2000; Pelgrum, 2001). Teachers' pedagogical beliefs play a vital role in the ways computer-based activities appear in the classroom (Li, 2017). The results of this research prove the beliefs of other researchers (Hurt et al., 1977; Kopcha, 2012; Li, 2014; Mumtaz, 2000) concerning the fact that teachers' positive inclination can facilitate the process of switching to remote teaching. Their philosophy may also affect one of the essential elements of implementing new technologies – whether they want to be more aware and willing to learn how to evaluate and verify online materials and available resources (Abuzagha & Tabieh, 2021; Li, 2017).

Similarly, another data set (Hakim, 2020) shows that generally, teachers represent a positive attitude and perceive online learning as an opportunity rather than a barrier. On the other hand, the findings from the qualitative part plot the most common problems, which were strictly related to assessment tools, internet connection, and attendance issues. Among the few pre-pandemic works on challenges in technology implementation, the study of Bai and Lo (2018) thoroughly addresses and appoints these problems. They enumerate the lack of resources among schools, teachers, students, time restrictions, and weak technical support. They observed that teachers were not familiar with the tools, and the students were not capable of using technology to learn English. In line with one's beliefs, there were challenges in achieving confidence while using ICT tools by teachers and over-achieving excitement by students secretly playing games on their iPads. The questions of the last variable in the present paper are therefore meaningful at checking one's attitude to technology integration, determining the level of satisfaction, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and stress with remote education, and learning about the most common problems they had to endure.

Methods

The survey method was assumed to be the most reliable research method in this particular in-pandemic schooling setting. Recognizing the indispensable role of the teachers in implementing new technologies for language learning, the authors investigated teachers'

sentiments about remote English language teaching (EFL) having been implemented nationally in Poland. The survey, however, is not limited to examining the current state of technological resources in state schools or implementing remote teaching as such. It also intends to explore the teachers' perspectives and the challenges they may have been confronting.

Participants

The study sample consisted of 180 EFL teachers working in state schools in Poland. Due to the limited access to schooling contexts, the researchers used an online non-probability convenient sampling strategy. The respondents filed the questionnaire during the first four months of lockdown (from March to June 2020) and the following two months. Researchers administered questionnaires via the Internet channels of communication. They have measured the effect of unexpected conditions caused by Covid-19 in the prism of technology implementation and teachers' instantaneous reaction in adjusting to the remote service. A total of 14 male and 166 female EFL teachers with the age range between 22 to 60 took a participatory part in the data collection process. Their background was diverse in seniority, workplace, and living place. Such a wide range of response distribution significantly facilitates understanding the full spectrum of reported barriers.

Instruments

The final version of the questionnaire evolved from prior adjustments and reviews made by fellow researchers and EFL teachers to ensure its validity and readability. The questionnaire included several questions divided into the following five categories describing the phases of ICT implementation in the EFL classrooms to meticulously investigate the current situation and the teachers' general mood, (Li, 2017) (see Table one below):

Table 1. *Summary of measurement scales*

Themes	Measured Items
Technological Capacity	Has your institution previously used techno-led devices in language teaching? With what sort of technological equipment is your language classroom equipped? Do you have enough time to evaluate and adapt techno-led materials to the curriculum? How many hours a day do you spend adjusting techno-led materials since closing schools?
Professional Development and Learning Community	Have you been trained in techno-led tools by your institution in the face of distance learning? Do you feel supported by your organization in using techno-led tools? What type of remote support, if any, have you been using from other people? How do you consider remote communication with your colleagues? How do you consider remote communication with the parents? How do you consider remote communication with your students? How do you consider remote communication with your principal?
School Values Context	Do you feel recognition from your institution and, or local authorities? Do you think that the performance of remote learning causes resentment towards EFL teachers? Do you think that the performance of remote learning causes empathy towards EFL teachers? Do you think that you meet the expectations of school culture (language skills and competence, assessment, testing, examinations)?
Resources	Do you have access to the computer/laptop/notebook/iPad and the Internet at home? Did your institution purchase or rent the equipment for you? Did you purchase the equipment on your own? Did you work on the school equipment in the workplace?

	Do you use EFL textbooks during remote work? Which of the resources listed below do you use as channels of communication with the school community? Which of the resources listed below do you use the most often as remote working tools? Which of the resources listed below do you use most often as lesson content?
Pedagogical Beliefs	Do you enjoy working with online resources? Are you confident enough to use ICT resources effectively? Are you open to integrating new technology into the classroom? Is distance teaching more stressful to you than on-site work? Do you consider remote English language education in your institution effective? Do you implement the core curriculum in lesson planning? If you could name ONE the most challenging aspect of distance teaching, what would it be?

All categories include a variety of questions. For example, there are two-way and multiple-choice questions to elicit more detailed answers. The questionnaire also includes rating scales with ordinal levels to build sensitivity and still generate numbers. Furthermore, ratio data questions are present to determine the number of working hours while teaching remotely. The open-ended question in the last category was the most accurate to elicit information about teachers' perceptions, particularly about barriers they encountered.

Procedures

It took six months to collect the initial data. And yet, this data may have changed, and teacher barriers can be less apparent today as data collection targeted the implementation phase during the pandemic. The pre-stage of the research was to design the questionnaire according to the model proposed by Li (2017) and to supplement it with questions and information related to the context of distance learning. After analyzing the questionnaire and defining its goals, it was available to colleague teachers. Then, after suggestions, adding information, and other sources, it was modified and made available to English teachers in online forums and social media. The decision to collect the material on such platforms was motivated by the fact that these are the virtual places for researchers and teachers to form affinity groups and networks of contacts. This context may have positively influenced the credibility of the answers. Statistical analysis was helpful in the interpretation of the closed questions, and the coding technique was applicable in the open-ended question that was to be assigned to the most common categories later.

Results

Technological Capacity

This variable is composed of answers considering pre-existing conditions before the imposed lockdown. This category allows the authors to make slight predictions regarding the quality and pace of remote language learning utilization. Although the "yes" response in the very first question constitutes the vast majority of participants (70%), the resistance in implementing new technologies into the classrooms had been still too frequent (30%) amid many of our respondents' schools to embrace technology fast on an everyday basis. Regarding the multiple-choice question on equipment possession, there is one computer in most EFL classes (80%). Barely eight teachers (4%) had had the opportunity to work in EFL classrooms where computers were available to every student. Surprisingly, *Tablets* appeared more often (7%). The following most common technological tools proved to be subsequently *Interactive Whiteboard* (70%) and *Projectors* (70%).

Professional Development and Learning Community

This section presents broadly understood professional development, including support and quality of communication channels with the entire learning-teaching community. The very first question shows considerable deficiencies in providing professional care to teachers. Few EFL teachers received training or other introductory technical support for distance learning (23%), while the rest (77%) remained in the shade of self-training. Even a more significant number of English language educators (78%) do not feel the support of their educational institution. At the time of the pandemic, teachers needed social support. Their activity in this area was as follows. First of all, every teacher required a sort of help or assistance. The most frequently chosen technological mediators turned out to be *Facebook Groups* (92%), *Webinars* and *Trainings* (84%), and *Fellow workers* (59%). The following four questions present the results collected using the Likert scale since they assess the state of communication with various units of one's learning community. The results show that the most effective and "no-complaints" collaboration occurred between the teachers and colleagues (50%). A significant proportion (43%) of respondents rated their cooperation with the students as "good," communication with their supervisors (50%), and legal guardian or parents (51%) as "sufficient."

Schooling Value Context

Data collected within this variable indicates that the way one perceives social values and culture of learning in terms of the negative attitudes and certain biases may have emerged during the pandemic. Despite somewhat evened distributed answers "yes" and "no," there are more (52%) EFL teachers who do not feel the authorities' recognition and acclaim. The following question shows that the implementation of remote teaching causes students' adverse reactions towards EFL teachers. Feelings like "resentment and avoidance" were chosen almost twice as often (62%) as "goodwill and empathy" (38%). More than half (53%) of the respondents believe they meet the standards of school culture and EFL norms. "Assessment" is considered as the most challenging (59%) in terms of the next question. The areas of "Improving language competencies," are the least problematic.

Resources

The number of people without permanent access to the Internet, computer, or laptop is quite representative and constitutes about a tenth of respondents. The rest (86.1%) remain optimistically equipped with these primary resources. Teachers purchased most of these tools for their use. Only 34 respondents received laptops from their school, and 45 used the tools available at the school facilities. Interestingly, the traditional mailbox turned became a more prevalent (36%) communication channel than the electronic grade book (31%). *Microsoft Teams* was being used most willingly as a remote working tool by teachers. When it comes to the textbooks in schools, most teachers (84%) linked their coursebook content with interactive online tools. More than a fifth of teachers decided not to use textbooks and only used online materials. Seven percent of the respondents preferred to work with paper textbooks only.

Pedagogical Beliefs

The last category of questions aimed to collect the data on the approach, beliefs, efficacy, conditions, feelings, and well-being of teachers, which enabled us to specify the problematic

situation of EFL educators. Surprisingly, 73% of the teachers indicated that they enjoyed remote work and using online materials. However, this satisfaction appeared not to correlate with their sense of certainty and self-efficacy. Almost half of the teachers demonstrated confidence in using ICT resources efficiently, while most showed uncertainty of their skills. Based on further data, most of the teachers (83%) are aware of the potential of new technologies since they remain open to their implementation. Most teachers (68%) pointed out that the stress level is higher during distance learning than conducting on-site EFL classes. According to the majority (68%) of English language teachers, implementing distance learning from their subject's perspective is somewhat effective. More importantly, there is a significant difference between the amount of material implemented during the lessons because barely 53% of teachers execute the previously established core curriculum. In comparison, 47% of them choose only the most important segments. The final question aimed to test another data by enabling free responses. The authors analyzed all the challenging aspects specified by EFL teachers and grouped them by the most frequent categories:

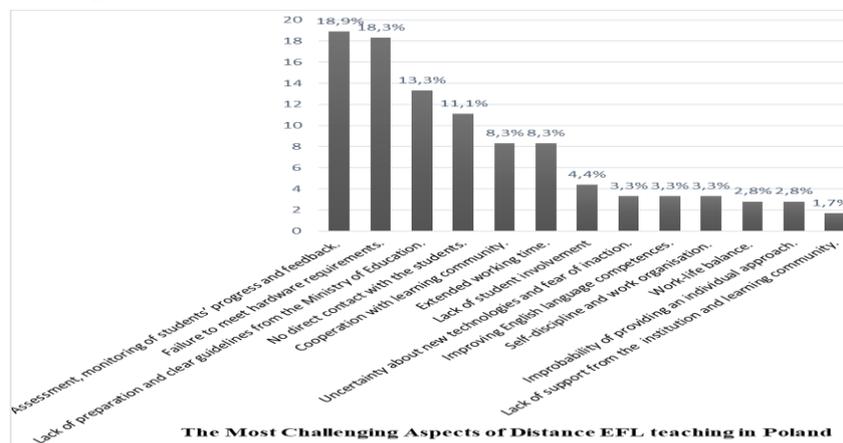


Figure 2. The most challenging aspects of distance EFL teaching in Poland

Figure two shows thirteen of the most often mentioned categories of problems the EFL teachers have encountered. The categories such as *Assessment, Monitoring of students' progress, and Feedback* have been the worst threat of remote learning amid almost one-fifth of respondents (19%). Another difficulty that occurred almost at the same frequency was *Hardware failure* (18%). Besides, two more problems that proved to be vastly common were *Lack of preparation and clear guidelines from the Ministry of education* (13%) and *Lack of direct contact with the students* (11%). Further joint winners are *Cooperation with the learning community* (8%) and *Extended working time* (8%). The remaining challenges, such as *Lack of student involvement, Uncertainty about new technologies and Fear of inaction, Improving English language competencies, Self-discipline and Work organization, Work-life balance, Improbability of providing an individual approach, Lack of support from the institution and learning community*, were indicated with the lowest frequency.

Discussion

The present paper explores the background elements and natural barriers concerning EFL teaching in Poland and the EFL teachers' pedagogical beliefs within their concerns. The

theoretical framework (see Figure one), which is the foundation of the resulting survey and its five pillars, resulted in profound conclusions and a more predictive analysis of the most frequently stated needs to improve the condition of remote teaching. As research proves, the investigated micro context might highly influence one's pedagogical views.

Many prominent researchers (Hurt et al., 1977; Kopcha, 2012; Mumtaz, 2000; Becta, 2002; Pelgrum, 2001) agree that access to resources and one's level of competence, positive attitude, and confidence – while using them – are crucial. They all highlight the importance of schools being well-resourced. It simply applies to relevant software, courseware, electronic resources, and e-learning materials. Yet, this correlation may succeed in the ideal scenario. The current investigation shows that there are still many teachers who are reluctant to use techno-led devices. This attitude appears to result from a very time-consuming process of gaining technological knowledge and adapting e-learning materials. The time devoted to work is three times longer than their regular working hours (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Kopcha, 2012; Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016). On the other hand, the pre-pandemic capacities of schools were quite favorable – the great majority of schools had at least one computer, an interactive whiteboard, and a projector. Unfortunately, some schools have no access to even one computer per class, which limits the chances at the very beginning of introducing the model of integration of new devices into the classroom (Cuban, 2001; Hew & Brush, 2006; Li, 2014).

In addition, little experience in using and adapting e-learning materials in institutions contributes to the reported low level of confidence and comfort in remote education. Most of the teachers in the study duplicate the pattern of responses from previous research (Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Kopcha, 2012; Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016) and claim to be less confident and more stressed while teaching remotely. Most teachers indicate that they do not feel valued or recognized by their employers and that parents are prone to show resentment towards them considerably more often than appreciation. In line with Li (2014) and Kopcha (2012), colleagues', organizations' and authorities' expectations and, or recognition can affect the teachers' beliefs both positively and negatively.

The limited number of hardware devices could not adequately serve the needs of every teacher and student of the local schools. The current study detected failures in equipping and financially supporting teachers and students. In light of these conditions, local stakeholders should introduce low-cost technologies in much greater numbers to stretch their purchasing capacity (Bai & Lo, 2018; Khatoony & Nezgadmehr, 2020; Situmorang et al., 2020). As for software, teachers should be familiar with free or cheap e-tools that check students' responses regularly and give the possibility of student integration and feedback. These tools must have an alternative to using them on the phone and the computer, as not every student owns both devices. For example, teachers in Poland can use *Kahoot* application for immediate quiz-based responses, *Testportal* for assessment control, *Bamboozle* as an interaction incentive, free language corpora to contextualize learning, and – finally – applications such as *Microsoft Teams*, *WhatsApp*, *Messenger*, *DropBox*, or *Librus/Vulcan Electronic Grade Book* to freely communicate with students, parents, and colleagues.

Interestingly enough, this stands in opposition with a high indicator of teachers' positive attitude, openness, engagement in acquiring new knowledge, and faith in the irreplaceable role of new technologies. Here, the pandemic situation plays a unique role that perpetually motivates teachers who, despite the neutrality or negativity of the school context, still know that technology and their persistence are the only chance for the learning process to occur. These opposing data were also visible among teachers from Hong Kong (Bai & Lo, 2018), Saudi Arabia (Mahyoob, 2020), Qatari (Chaaban & Ellili-Cherif, 2016) and Iran (Khatoony & Nezdhadmehrm, 2020). These investigators admit that the teachers' positive inclination can perform the catalyst to increase one's self-confidence only when offered training in the indicated areas. Based on the suggestions of Bai and Lo (2018) and responses of the teachers in this study, there might be training sessions organized addressing the most common needs in the area of:

- basic knowledge of technology and the opportunities it provides,
- collaboration within the affinity groups of subject teachers,
- online classroom management,
- examples of free resources and their use in the classroom,
- training the leadership team in appreciating and recognizing the role of their employees.

Finally, the critical factor which proves to increase the likelihood of using technology effectively is making teachers aware that this process will, in the end, save one's time and reduce their workload (Jones, 2001).

Although the research offers plenty of valuable information, there were four significant limitations of this study that shall be acknowledged. Firstly, the research method – the survey answers could be more generalizable with more responses than were collected. Accordingly, it would be advisable to complete this study with observations or interviews to provide a more in-depth look at the research problem. Next, the questions in the survey are not standardized and focused on a smaller number of recipients. To make this research instrument more reproducible, the researchers can devote more time to the validation and data collection. Finally, the last limitation can be a form of data collection – convenience sampling – which can bias the validity and generalizations of the results.

Conclusion

In summary, all the variables listed and discussed above are equally significant while structuring any model for introducing online classes. More significantly, each component of this integration differs in the distribution of the emphasis within different educational settings. In the explored context, unlimited access to many tools and materials can confuse even people whose attitudes are generally affirmative about new technologies. At the pandemic in Poland, the most significant barriers were no access to the necessary equipment, technical support, and affinity network. The findings show that teachers were craving for collaboration and guidance. Other contributing and significant factors, which could have prompted more barriers-like responses, are the lack of guidelines from the Ministry of Education, weak support of the local stakeholders in recognizing one's effort, and mediocre provision of training sessions with longitudinal backing. The open-ended question of the last section led to the milestone of this study and revealed that teachers reported different challenges under these unprecedented circumstances. Namely, Polish EFL teachers proved to be facilitators of language education, researchers, mediators, and

receivers of the incoming-from-everywhere feedback. They had to simultaneously perform didactic, technical, social, and managerial functions. The heightened awareness of the barriers will also sketch a roadmap towards more effective and genuinely desirable forms of FL community of shared practice. Hopefully, this paper has fulfilled a noticeable gap in understanding what *technology implementation* means under unprecedented circumstances.

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