What’s Next? Challenges of Teaching English in the Post-Covid-19 Pandemic in Kuwait

Munirah AlAjlan
Department of English Language & Literature
College of Arts, Kuwait University
Corresponding Author: Munirah.alajlan@ku.edu.kw

Marouj Ani
Department of Civil Engineering
College of Engineering & Petroleum
Kuwait University

Received:10/20/2022     Accepted:01/10/2023     Published:01/20/2023

Abstract
The migration from the traditional teaching to online learning has affected both learners and educators at all levels. In Kuwait, this switch to online has been employed during three semesters. In this paper, we examine the challenges faced by the Teachers of the English Language in Kuwait Post COVID-19. After the temporary on-learning that lasted three semesters, the present study investigates the impact of English language skills on school learners. The survey of the recent study consisted of a total of 58 English female government secondary school teachers. While other studies have focused on the learners’ challenges during this pandemic, this study chiefly investigates teachers. The significance of this study is to provide remedial plans to respond better to emergencies. The study aims to answer the following question: ‘What are the challenges that governmental ESL teachers faced during the pandemic? And what are the remedial plans? The study uses a mixed methodology to achieve the research goal in which data are collected through an open-ended questionnaire and by interviewing three randomly selected participants. Teachers' questionnaires (closed-ended) and semi-structured narrative interviews revealed that COVID-19 has positively and negatively impacted English language skills. Teachers will need to improve the poor level of proficiency of the students. There are numerous challenges facing English Language teachers in the traditional classroom and remedial plans are being implemented to fix the impact that the pandemic left on students' language skills. Keywords: COVID-19, challenges, English as Foreign Language, English language skills, Online classroom, Traditional classroom,

DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/comm1.22
Introduction

A nation's education is one of the most essential elements contributing to its development. Instruction has been provided to people traditionally for centuries. Conventional education is where knowledge and information are provided within classrooms; hence, teacher-student center. Because of the spread of COVID-19, many countries, including Kuwait, have temporarily switched to online teaching-learning. Frallion and Meinck (2022) state that “in April 2020, over 1.1 billion school learners were affected by the pandemic (at that time) with countrywide school closures affecting 117 countries” (p. 202), according to UNESCO, 2021.

The terms online learning, distance learning, and e-learning have been used interchangeably; however, AlAjlan (2011) makes a clear distinction. E-learning refers to classroom activities that involve any type of technology (mobile, computer, smart devices) without necessarily being connected to the internet. Distance learning, on the other hand, means that students receive course material online, or they can be present in the classroom following the lecture via virtual screens. Finally, online learning is a twofold concept; first, students use the internet in the school to work on online exercises/exams, and the instructor's presence is significant to show guidelines of the materials. The second is what is being widely spread, the online courses, where teachers and students interact via blackboard, Zoom and MS meetings. In early 2001, the first distance-learning university in Kuwait has been established - Arab Open University (AOU) in coordination with the Arab Ministers of Higher Education. Moreover, in the same year, Kuwait University established the Distance Learning and Videoconferencing Center in three Faculties: Science, Administrative Sciences, and Arts. The center aims to promote the use of technology in teaching. In the present time, and even pre-Covid times, many instructors use the internet to interact with their students; this could involve discussion boards, emails, or online submission of assignments and online exams.

After the spread of the Coronavirus, the Ministry of Education approved the suspension of the study for both schools and universities for five months; if it were not for the coronavirus, we would not have seen the education crisis faced today (Al-Ebrahim, 2020). In 2020, we encountered both the coronavirus pandemic and the lack of preparation for online learning, causing 35,000 students at Kuwait University to stop their education which consequently delayed the graduation of 4000 students (Motab, 2020); Coronavirus crisis has shown us the hidden failure of the Ministry of Education, as education is not a priority for the government (Al-Ebrahim, 2020).

Online learning is not a different or a replacement system for traditional education; it is a backup for formal education (Al-Mulaiifi, 2020). Online instruction is one of the most up-to-date strategies presently utilized; novel advancements are used to encourage correspondence among students and educators. In this educational method, students learn how to rely on themselves to self-understand the lessons. Further, the online approach can also improve the quality of education by speeding up information.

The pandemic affected the educational system in several countries, including Kuwait. Education everywhere shifted to online. In Kuwait, this only lasted for three semesters. During
this period, there has been a noticeable difference in how students learn and acquire their lessons and languages. Traditionally, students were educated in schools that used traditional classes to impart knowledge and teach languages. According to the Top Hat Glossary (a teaching platform that engages students-teachers all in one place), a traditional classroom is one in which the teacher regulates and controls the flow of information and knowledge. As an assignment for the students, exercises and tasks will accompany the development of the data. This is the conventional teaching method, which is followed for generations. According to Schrader (2013), traditional teaching is a technique that assumes students will learn by being told. As for online learning, a teacher and students are physically separated in distance learning, according to Newby, Stepich, Lehman, and Russell (2000).

As a result of the spread of COVID-19, online learning was implemented and adversely affected the language skills of Kuwaiti students. English language teachers traditionally employ different methods to teach foreign language skills, but this changed with the use of e-platforms. Everything was displayed on screens, and the emphasis was mainly on speaking. There was insufficient teacher-student contact since teachers could not see the students on the screens and their work was not monitored the same way it would have been in a conventional classroom. Students hardly wrote and barely spoke due to several reasons. Everything was shown and submitted digitally back then. Thus, English Language Teachers today face many challenges. Students are unable to employ the four skills of English adequately. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the difficulties that schoolteachers face; the objective of this study is to propose possible solutions to improve the English Language skills of students Post COVID-19.

The research questions for this study are as follows: What are the challenges that governmental ESL teachers faced during the pandemic? And what are the remedial plans that could be implemented? Research documents the effects of replacing traditional English classes with online ones on the four language skills. Then it provides strategies for enhancing the skills of Kuwaiti students based on the literature available at the time. In this investigation, we investigate the impact of the temporary replacement of face-to-face English classes with online teaching impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic on English language proficiency among students. How is the students’ performance in the English language Post COVID-19?; and what are the challenges of teaching English Post COVID-19 and what is the plan to improve the student's level in the English language?

In what follows, we review the relevant research to our study, and then present the methodology, instruments, procedures and how the participants were recruited. Then we outline the results and discussion, and finally, we provide remedial plans, suggestions, and recommendations.

**Literature Review**

Before delving into the relevant literature, we bring to the fore the situation of education in Kuwait during the pandemic. Since this study emphasizes the challenges of teaching English post-pandemic, we must note that online learning is not a replacement system for traditional
learning; it is a backup for conventional learning during emergencies. Online instruction is one of the most up-to-date strategies that is presently utilized; novel advancements are used to encourage correspondence among students and educators. In this educational method, students learn how to rely on themselves to self-understand the lessons.

Private institutions in Kuwait have used online learning at the start of the pandemic. Government schools, including higher education (Kuwait University and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training), were suspended for five months without any explicit declaration of when learning will resume. This has negatively affected both teachers and students. The acting director of Kuwait University explained the delay, stating, “We will not start with distance education right now because students are not currently ready for online learning; students and faculty members should be trained for this type of education” (Motab, 2020). Indeed, while online facilities have been available since 2000 at Kuwait University, these were barely used. Even official email addresses were not activated by students. Therefore, the Ministry of Education declared in August 2020 that all teachers and learners are encouraged to undertake training to use the available platforms (Ms Teams and Blackboard).

Nowadays, English is more important than ever as the language of international communication. Therefore, foreign language classes are more valuable than ever before. Due to the online learning switch, some countries have founded weblogs for English Language Learners where they can enhance and acquire the skills ideally. Kuwait's English classrooms were given through the Microsoft Teams program. Thus, language acquisition was not practical for those students who were not interacting with the English Language teachers much. Students did not have the freedom to express themselves and interact or communicate because the platform was mainly used for receiving information during the online sessions. English classes were timed, and the curriculum was compressed. Due to that fact, going back to the traditional classrooms caused a shock to most of the learners. They are struggling a lot with using the four skills of English sufficiently. English Language Teachers usually use different teaching methods in common language classrooms to enhance the employment of the skills. The Direct method is the most famous method being used in teaching the language.

The Direct Method is an intelligent extension of the Natural Method. This branch of psychology is also part of the Behaviorist school. Language learning requires affiliation. The focus is on the requirement for a direct connection between experience and articulation. The goal is to empower students to think in remote languages and to develop an unerring sense of language. Language sense is believed to have its origins in the spoken language and emphasizes the oral approach (Verghese, 1989). It is a method where the target language is used to give the learners all the instructions. Students are not allowed to speak in their mother tongue. Grammar rules usage is avoided, and the emphasis is on pronunciation. After the comeback, the direct method was difficult to be employed with the students because they are using their native language to express themselves instead of using English language. Thanks to the temporary shift that occurred the past three semesters. A huge linguistic gap happened among most language learners. The language
components in the assigned texts are often complex for students to read and understand. As a result of limited language proficiency and insufficient teaching materials, Kuwaiti school students are not motivated to read words, sentences, or even texts (AlDarwish, 2006).

Additionally, following the pandemic and the remote learning approach, the student's writing skills deteriorated, and the effects of online sessions are apparent. Students face issues with subject-verb agreement structure, grammatical problems, and how to compose a paragraph correctly and coherently. The online sessions also reduced their use of imagination and their minds; instead, they used Google Drive or whatever was available through the online resources to find ideas. Hence, coming back to reality proved to be a severe challenge for the majority of the learners because during the online teaching, no writing tasks were given. It has never been easy to teach English as a foreign language. It has become even more difficult since the pandemic. Prentiss (2021) states that:

The fundamentals of good teaching are the same regardless of the modality, and the foundational pedagogical practices are also similar, yet the primary difference is that solid online education has been designed for a virtual modality, not adapted to fit it. (p. 2)

We believe that students will face many and varied challenges beyond COVID-19. We, as educators, are all working together to help students learn more effectively again by enhancing the language acquisition of teachers, educators, and professionals. They are facing numerous challenges and want to increase their confidence and language skills. Any nation can gain something from adversity. In partnership with COVID-19, we will reorganize people and programs to work together more effectively in schools, universities, and community organizations to provide education to young people and mentorship. A crisis should not be gone to waste. Together, educators and other professionals can tackle challenges and develop innovative solutions (Berry, 2020). Due to its recent comeback, the literature only includes reports of implementations of online learning and suggestions for a post Covid19 education. Therefore, this research attempts to fill the gap in the impact of online learning on English language teaching Post COVID-19 in Kuwait. It highlights the teachers' experience, views, and learning attitudes towards traditional classes again. This study also investigates the challenges facing English Language Teachers and the remedial plans being set to improve language skills post the pandemic.

**Challenges of Teaching Language Online**

Since online teaching began, scholars and educators started investigating the effect of this pandemic and the migration to online education, emphasizing the emotional and psychological impact on learners. Prentiss (2021) stated that “Educators need to be mindful of and responsive to the challenges COVID-19 presents to the health and well-being of our students, colleagues, and communities” (p. 3). Indeed, Pawlack, Derakhshan, Mehdizadeh, and Kruk (2022) investigated the boredom that learners expressed during online sessions. Their study investigated Iranian university students and teachers and found that both groups think online classes are boring. This
boredom led to, in some cases, skipping the class. To tackle this, Yazdanmehr, Shirvan, & Saghafi (in press) explain the reason behind boredom caused by online sessions. They state that insufficient attention, low perceived control over tasks, and unfriendly use of technology all contribute to this boredom. Yazdanmehr et al.’s study helps us understand how language learning online should be and provides solutions to overcome this boredom.

On the other hand, other studies found online classes to be more enjoyable. In other words, while the previously investigated boredom, Resnik and Dewaele (2022) explored foreign language classroom anxiety in a survey of 510 European learners. They found that learners were more confident behind the screen. This has revealed that they scored better in courses, unlike the cause of boredom in that low academic outcomes were found.

_Language Teachers and Online Teaching_

The lack of utilizing online platforms was the main challenge, primarily for educators at all levels. With the migration to online teaching, scholars in the field conducted studies from different perspectives of online teaching. For instance, the retention of language teachers using technology (Moser and Wei, 2022), lack of technological skills (Tarrayo, Paz, & Gepila, 2022), anxiety and stress in online teaching (Gregersen, Mercer, & MacIntyre, 2021), the necessity to include technology in conventional pedagogy (Sayer and Braun, 2020), the piloting of new online platforms such as Classmoto (Bonner, Garvey, Miner, Godin, & Reinders, 2022). Other studies investigated students’ perspectives on online learning. Ji, Park, and Shin (2022) investigated students’ attitudes toward online learning. They found that students were taking notes, recording, and searching for additional materials, which consequently assisted in teacher-learner engagement. Another study by He and Loewen (2022) also investigated teacher-learner rapport. This was achieved by constructive feedback during online sessions and motivated students to self-study. Other studies looked into the effect of online teaching on ESL learners’ language skills and the inappropriate feedback during online teaching (Işler & Elmas, 2022; Tosun, 2021). These studies suggested that feedback was reported during online classes. However, some claimed that feedback was merely uploading “course materials as power point presentations, worksheets, home assignments or videos via their Learning Management Systems and left the students with no spontaneous feedback” (Işler & Elmas, 2022, p. 39).

**Method**

This study explores the perceptions of English Language Teachers on COVID-19 and the effects on the English language skills level post-pandemic. The study adopts a qualitative method using a narrative inquiry approach. Therefore, the study utilizes a qualitative approach to gain more insight from participants. The significance behind using a qualitative approach is “to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). In other words, the researchers’ positionality assists in interpreting the findings shaped by our own experiences. Therefore, qualitative research is referred to as interpretive research.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that exploring a central phenomenon requires a qualitative study since it is defined as a process, key concept, or idea that should be examined.
study was conducted during the academic semester of Fall 2021 when online learning is switched back to traditional education. The study included all Kuwait districts (Hawalli, Asima, Al-Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Al-Jahra, and Al-Ahmadi), totaling 58 schools.

**Participants**

In the Fall of 2021/2022, the survey of this research was distributed to all female English Language Teachers in Kuwait's governmental secondary schools. The reason behind focusing only on female teachers is the ease of access to this community of practice. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalized, and it only represents the sample used in this study. The teachers were asked to participate in the survey voluntarily through personal contacts. However, only fifty-eight teachers took part in filling in the questionnaire. Unlike the survey that was distributed to all educational governance, the interviews were conducted with three of the participants. The teachers were all selected randomly, and all of them work at a secondary school in Jabriya. They all possess a bachelor's degree in English.

In Kuwait, to be hired as a teacher of the English language, one must be qualified with a minimum degree of Bachelor of Arts in English or Bachelor of Education in English. All teachers recruited for this study have either a BA in English (N=49) or a Master of Arts (N=9). The status of the English language in Kuwait lies in the third Circle of Kachru’s Model (for details of English status in Kuwait, see AlAjlan & AlQinae in press).

**Research Instruments**

The study uses two instruments: the first was a closed-ended questionnaire to investigate teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the impact of distance learning for three semesters on the four language skills. As a tool to elicit data, an in-depth interview was conducted. Creswell (2014) and Jackson (2012) claim that an in-depth interview is a qualitative method of analysis to ask participants questions where they will be able to answer questions openly and truthfully, and through their answers, probe more questions (Bernard, 2000; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Pathak & Charatdao, 2012, as cited in Krishnan et al., 2020). In-depth interviews conducted by the researchers were well received by the participants. Interviews give more information about the study because it is based on the experiment of using that language, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007):

> interviews enable participants – be they, interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself; its human embeddedness is inescapable. (p. 349).
Research Procedures

The teachers, who were engaged in the study to fill in the questionnaire, were informed by sending a text message via WhatsApp application. The text message highlighted the aim of the questionnaire and the study. As for the interviewees, a consent form was given to them to seek their confirmation to be part of this study. Interviewees were interviewed after giving their consent to the study. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face in English at the secondary school.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed using the Otter.ai website. Within minutes, you can get free transcriptions using the website. The transcriptions can be reviewed immediately after recording. Additionally, you can search, play, edit, organize, and share your conversations from any device. A variety of sign-up options are available. If you have a Google, Microsoft, Apple or any other e-mail account, you can continue to use it. The data were categorized into themes and sub-themes based on the questionnaire and the interviews. Refer to Table one (appendix A) for the demographic background of the participants.

Based on the questionnaire and the interviews, Table two (see appendix B) represents the themes and sub-themes. Participants generally agreed on three fundamental issues: (1) the Effectiveness of the online course on English Language skills, (2) the Challenges of teaching English post-pandemic in Kuwait and (3) the need for a remedial plan to fix the damage done. Both themes and sub-themes are covered in detail in the results and discussion of this study.

Results

All 58 participants were English Language Teachers in the government secondary schools of Kuwait. They were 100% female teachers from the six academic areas, which are Hawalli, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Al-Jahra and Asima.

Online learning in Kuwait has lasted only for three semesters, during which students have been deprived of direct contact with their teachers and their mates. Still, it affected the language skills of the English language learners massively. Both a survey and interviews were conducted to highlight the impact of the pandemic, the challenges of teaching English traditionally again post COVID-19, and the best enhancement approach for enhancing English skills properly in traditional classes again. We will present the questionnaire results, and then the interview responses will follow.

Questionnaire

The following table displays the teacher’s perceptions of the language skills that were affected.
In questioning the participants about which teaching methods they prefer to teach language, the following table (Table four) outlines their responses.

**Table 4. Teachers’ preference for language teaching method**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We note how participants in this study believe that traditional teaching is more effective and preferred (47%). Even those who prefer online education still opt for integrated education (53%); however, online instruction is not effective solely (0%).

**Interviews**

Three teachers were selected randomly for a one-to-one interview. All three teachers were from Jabriya (Hawalli District) because it was easier to access them through personal contact. Before the interview, the three teachers signed a consent form and were informed of the study’s intention.

All the participants were excited to be back to physical teaching. One teacher stated, “It feels great to go back to the traditional way; the face-to-face sessions are so different.” Prestiss (2021) says that “Faculty are expected to engage and connect with students and do so in intentional, innovative, and impactful ways” (p. 3). The overload for online class preparation that teachers need to go through was very overwhelming. The lack of administrative support, lousy internet connection, and the lack of digital pedagogical competence have all contributed to the discouraged environment. Students have been behind the screen for three semesters, that the load was on the teacher. Some students were *sleeping* as claimed by one teacher. This agrees with Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina and Bruce (2020) who claimed that difficulties in accessing the Internet led to irregular and low student attendance.

Thus, when online teaching migrated back to the traditional one, students were “waiting for the information to be given. More likely they like to be spoon fed, and they hardly use English.”
as claimed by one participant. She continued, “Before the pandemic, students were way active in the class, they used to engage themselves in their discussions and come up with brilliant ideas, creative ideas, and they were so creative in using the English language”. When it comes to productive language skills (speaking and writing), some studies claimed that students were more active behind the screen because they were anxious in class to speak; this study found that online sessions “boosted up the skills because, in online sessions, they used to be engaged using the microphone. But other skills like writing and reading deteriorated a lot. And that's because they never wrote while they were going through the online sessions. That's why they are now facing and struggling a lot in terms of writing.”

The participants faced challenges teaching English in terms of students' performance. One teacher has already planned to “targets their [students] writing skills mostly. I am assigning writing tasks to prove their level by writing introductory paragraphs about themselves composing short stories using random words, and composing poems, and that task is for high achievers. As for speaking skills, I try to engage them in discussions by asking general questions.” The post-pandemic has affected the students not only academically but also socially. One teacher noted that "The hardest part was having passive students that it was weird for them to be back in the class with others. They felt it was socially awkward. They were very shy and barely spoke. It was really hard to teach with satisfaction. When no one wanted to respond in their class, especially in the first week. It feels like talking to myself loudly.” Indeed, Ro (2021: 1) tells us that:

We’ve been forced to be asocial, at least in physical terms, for a year now. As a result, many are finding that any in-person social interaction is awkward – it feels like we have to re-learn how to sit in a room with another human. (p. 1)

Migrating back to physical education led students to wonder about how to socialize again. This is critical, specifically for kids whose brain at this age is still developing social abilities and defining connectivity. This prologue isolation during lockdown will lead to social phobia and therefore, impact learners on social and academic levels.

Discussion

In this section, we discuss the study’s findings and tend to answer the research questions. First, we have shown how online learning was challenging for Kuwaiti educators and students. The challenge lies behind the fact that educators, more than learners, have proven to be illiterate when it comes to utilizing technology in teaching. It was only in 2020 that they were finally forced to use different platforms. While this use was effective, it negatively impacted the learner’s language skills when conventional teaching returned to normal in the Fall of 2021/2022.

Effectiveness of the Online Learning Course on English Language Skills

All the participants agreed that the insufficient ways of teaching and assigning homework for the students over Microsoft Teams influenced the four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The skills were either impacted positively or impacted negatively. Mainly, most of the participants agree that the writing skill was the most skill that went down.
Students rarely used paper and a pen to note back in the online session. Therefore, most of the students are not capable of composing correct sentences in terms of structure or coherent paragraphs. They face difficulties in planning their ideas in the pre-writing sessions and they do not know how to form sentences that follow the correct structure of Subject-verb agreement.

The impact went far beyond the structural and grammatical errors. It significantly affected cognitive levels too. Students’ critical and creative thinking level is moderate (See Figure one below). Students are not using their minds to criticize, analyze or even express their opinions openly. Most students do not do well on their exams when the exam is centered on analysis and inventive vitality, essential considering, and problem-solving; thus, students complain and mostly fail to answer. However, they excel when exams are based on memorization and repetitive learning (Fareh, 2010). As for reading skills, it is the second most affected skill after writing. Many students are not able to read properly. The struggle lies in pronouncing the words.

Fluency in a language depends on correct pronunciation. However, it is difficult to pronounce correctly. Neuro-scientifically speaking, Lenneberg (1967) stated that a second language could not be learned after puberty (cited in Taqi, Algharabali, & Akbar, 2018). Although many researchers disagree with Lenneberg’s theories, they still agree that mastering a language ultimately can be difficult.

Interference between the learners' first and second languages significantly contributes to pronunciation errors. In addition to pronunciation, interference between the learner’s L1 and L2 extends to other skills, including reading and writing. Thus, it is not uncommon for errors found in one skill to be found in another skill. Baloch (2013) stated that Arab students had been accused of spelling errors due to 'pronunciation misconceptions' cited in (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018). When the consonant /p/ appears before or after vowels, mainly the vowel /o/, students often confuse it with the letter /b/.

Second language pronunciation can be affected by several factors. Usually, adult language learning is complex due to interference from L1 (Brown, 2000, as cited in Taqi et al., 2018). According to Carter and Nunan (2001), non-native speakers make most of their errors due to L1 transfer. First language habits of speaking might differ in perception, organ use, and suprasegmental features. Different phonemes, intonation, and tones distinguish a foreign language from a native language (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018). Learning English pronunciation may also be hindered by L1. Since the English vowel system is considered to be complex, speakers of L2 might employ a vowel from their L1 to “compensate for the lack of their knowledge of the L2 vowel structure’ (p. 4). As Gimson and Cruttenden put it, "qualitative opposition" causes L2 strategies (As cited in Taqi et al., 2018, p. 4). Learning English is difficult because learners create generalization rules. The learner in this scenario would recognize vowels due to overgeneralizations in English spelling conventions.

On the other hand, distance learning impacted speaking skills positively. Students became fluent speakers; thanks to the constant usage of the microphone to be engaged in the lessons back in the virtual classes on Microsoft Teams. Most of the participants rated their speaking skills after
going back to the traditional styles as middle-level. This supports AlZamil's (2021) study on the comparison of face-to-face learning and online learning. He found that 77.7% of his participants improved their speaking skills through speaking tasks. Moreover, 83.4% of the participants believed that videotaping their speaking tasks has enhanced their skills by editing the quality of their speaking.

![Figure 1. Rating English language skills](image)

The figure above shows the percentage of the items that were investigated in the study. The participants rated the students’ skills (i.e., speaking, writing). We noted that almost in all items explored, students’ skills were rated as low. This is due to the lack of proper interaction with students during online teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language fluency</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, we note that all teachers' participants have agreed that the students’ levels in the first semester back to traditional learning were highly influenced by online teaching. All skills were significantly impacted. This is prominent specifically in the writing skill (67.2%) and vocabulary acquisition and use (56.9%).
Challenges of Teaching English Post COVID-19 in Kuwait

According to both the survey and the interviews, English Language Teachers are facing a lot of challenges in teaching post COVID-19 face-to-face again. One of the biggest challenges is that students love being spoon-fed by their instructors. Having unmotivated and passive students creates a massive challenge for teachers. They seldom love to interact or add any information using English to answer a question or express a thought. Also, teachers are struggling with activating the class to make it student-center again rather than teacher-center. Yukhymenko, Brown, Lawless, Brodowinska, and Mullin (2014, p. 102) claimed that “In a PBL [Problem-Based Learning] environment, the teacher is not the information provider or classroom controller. Rather, the teacher facilitates, coaches, and models good problem-solving skills for their students” (cited in Keiler, 2018, p. 102). Many students would rather have the teacher lead the lesson because of their anxiety and fear of using English. Anxiety is ranked as the essential psychological phenomenon related to fear, unpleasantness, and worries (Batiha, Noor, & Mustaffa, 2014). This is also applied to teachers who were overwhelmed with online preparation. Moder & Wei (2022) categorized teachers into three groups: stayers, leavers, and conditional stayers. They call for the inclusion of using technology during physical classes to develop students’ language skills enhancement.

In a study based on Malaysian's foreign language learners, a random survey was conducted of 700 ESL students from the University of Putra Malaysia for an oral communication test. Language learning is being affected by students' fear. In addition, significant levels of communication anxiety, fear of negative assessment, and test anxiety have been found among the students. Another survey was distributed among 115 EFL learners in China to test the participants' level of fear. The authors explained that fear of negative assessment was the primary source of anxiety among the students (Batiha et al., 2014).

The lack of language skills among the students is evident. The inability to use English appropriately in the different language skills, especially in writing and reading is quite problematic. The flow of the classes decreased, thanks to this barrier. Students became slow writers, and they lack neat and clear handwriting. It resulted in postponing instant feedback due to the unreadable handwriting. The two productive skills are writing and speaking. Writing is a vital communication skill that cannot be neglected. Said (2018) stated that among the four language skills, writing is the most challenging skill that EFL learners struggle with (As cited in Ahmad, 2019). Native students and non-natives alike find that writing properly is a significant challenge. The most common difficulties arise due to incompetence in syntax, lack of coherence, and an absence of vocabulary, critical thinking, content selection, sentence subject, technicalities, and lack of organization, as well as the inappropriate use of vocabulary. It would be beneficial to discover and survey the factors that negatively affect students' writing skills; this is due to the fact that issues in writing can be better managed if factors that generate them are identified (AbuRass, 2015, as cited in Ahmad, 2019).

In addition, the curriculum that is given to the learners by the teachers is intensive compared with the intended given time. Teachers are neither able to focus on teaching the required
materials nor able to enhance the student’s skills properly. AlDarwish (2006) claimed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is often taught ineffectively in Kuwait (As cited in AlDarwish, 2014). The Kuwaiti Ministry of Education supplies schools with materials based on the English language curriculum of a particular stage, so English teachers seldom use authentic material in the classrooms. Having graduated from the same system in the past, AlDarwish (2014) found that learning consisted of memorizing English words and grammar forms. Although this could be done relatively soon, students would soon forget what they learned about English. As a result, English has always been a crucial aspect of education in Kuwait. English language learners shy away and shield from using English to express their ideas of a lack of self-confidence. This shyness causes an obstacle that deprives having fun from grasping the target language. Finally, the ultimate challenge here is enhancing the four skills in a fun and less pressured way.

Remedial Plan

There is a need to fit into a globalized world today, where communication and foreign languages have a greater impact than in years past. These days, English is the international language of communication. Due to this, foreign language lessons today are of more significant importance than in the past. Therefore, English teaching should not only focus on the study of the grammar of language but should also focus on using the language in different contexts to adapt to this new reality (Díaz Merino, 2010, as cited in Renau, 2016).

The pandemic has negatively affected English learning in Kuwait and most areas worldwide. Thus, there should be more exposure to the language to make up for the extended lockdowns of schools. The learners are intrinsic in the educational process, and they should improve their language skills through different exercises and ways. Hybrid education can also help in language acquisition and improvement. Participants of this research believe that this hybrid system can benefit them and plays a vital role in L2 learning. This also agrees with Paechter and Maier’s (2010) and Gorra and Bhati’s (2016) findings. Teachers, educators, and professionals are working hand in hand to execute a remedial plan to improve the English language skills in Kuwait among the learners traditionally. The emphasis is chiefly on writing and reading skills which were adversely affected. AlZamil (2021) emphasized that 61.1% preferred traditional face-to-face teaching, especially in reading and writing skills.

Students will be provided with different reading and writing tasks from level zero to advanced levels to enhance their reading comprehension skills and writing as well. Tasks like reading sentences to match a particular highlighted word with its correct definition; reading an e-mail to fill in the blanks with correct vocabulary. Also, read different writing questions to compose a writing plan before creating an essay/ e-mail related to the head of the question.

Most of the tasks and exercises will be irrelevant to the curriculum because improving the language should be the focus. Moreover, everything being done in a fun and creative way is memorable and enjoyable. Thus, the enhancement progress of the skills will go up quickly. Students love reading and writing things that capture their attention and interests.
This study has mainly focused on female teachers. Most studies conducted in this area investigated the impact of Covid19 on learners. In other words, the study’s limitation is the ignorance of the learners’ perceptions of learning language post-pandemic.

**Conclusion**

This study tended to provide solutions to emergencies that will help educators perform and respond better. The unreadiness of online teaching and the force to use it later have affected both learners and teachers. This was clear in the academic performance during the post Covid19 period. It is fundamental to fill the gap in the student's performance in the English language post COVID-19 in Kuwait during the traditional classes again. As a result of the pandemic and being away from classes, many students find it challenging to maintain or improve their English language level. They tend to avoid doing their assignments by relying on others to do them, whether colleagues who might be fluent in English or through using an online resource. Thus, it results in unmotivated and uncreative language learners. Learners waste their time; they may have the opportunity to access the internet for academic purposes. Instead, they surf, browse, play online games, and even use unproductive social networks. In most online classes, feedback is not helpful for writing assignments and is primarily focused on grammar and other subjective questions. As a result, the majority of learners are facing significant difficulties in writing English correctly in traditional classes. Let us not forget the cheating issue that students undergo during online courses. Cases of cheating rose post-pandemic since learners relied on getting information and answers from different sources (i.e. Wikipedia or textbooks).

**Suggestions and Recommendations**

We believe in fixing the language gap among Kuwaiti students, a corrective program should be designed in a fun and irrelevant way to the Kuwaiti English curriculum. Teachers should improve remedial plans by asking students to use English in their daily communication. Regardless of grammar, the emphasis should be on the correct pronunciation of the words. Engage the students in reading more passages and completing other types of assignments. Additionally, teachers should develop interactive activities encouraging students to be more engaged with the subject. The learning process becomes memorable if it is fun or you assign tasks that capture their interest, such as writing about a favorite hobby, a person, or even a video game. Inside and outside the EFL classroom, the remedial plan can address the four skills jointly. Students can reorder sentences to create a cohesive paragraph, which can indirectly help them identify the correct form of a coherent paragraph. Furthermore, critical questions can be incorporated into the plan that focuses on the learners’ opinions about any general topic. The enhancement here will focus on two skills instead of just one since students must read and write.

Due to technology’s dominance nowadays, creating a listening-based writing task is easy and creative. The QR code exercise can allow learners to listen to an audio or watch a video in English to write about something specific. Furthermore, students can be given a list of general vocabulary to memorize, followed by testing them through a spelling-bee competition. In addition,
students can use words from the list to improve their writing skills and stimulate their creativity. If students are asked to create a short story, a fairytale for children, or even a poem, they can unleash their inner creativity and without fear of making mistakes, they will be using English more in their writing.

About the Author
Munirah AlAjlan holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (the University of Newcastle upon Tyne) and a Ph.D. in Applied Sociolinguistics (King’s College London). She is currently teaching in the Department of English Language & Literature, College of Arts, Kuwait University. AlAjlan research interests fall into discourse and narrative analysis, language and media, political linguistics, and gender studies. ORCid ID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4977-1239

Marouj Ani is a senior student in the College of Engineering & Petroleum at Kuwait University. She is currently majoring in Civil Engineering where she is learning to design, construct, and manages projects using better-quality materials with fewer costs. ORCid ID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6037-005X

References


Ro, C. (2021). Why we may have to re-learn to socialise. Worklife BBC. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210218-why-we-may-have-to-re-learn-to-socialise


What’s Next? Challenges of Teaching English in the Post-Covid-19


Appendix A
The following table displays the demographic characteristics of the study’s participants

Table 1. Demographic features of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Information</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor (BA)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (MA)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawalli</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asima</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Farwaniya</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mubarak Al-Kabeer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Jahra</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Ahmadi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2Y</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5Y</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
The following tables outlines the themes and sub-themes of both interviews and questionnaires data

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes of interview and questionnaire guide response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of the online learning course on English language skills</td>
<td>Negative effects on writing skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative effects on reading skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive effects on speaking skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effects on the cognitive level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of teaching English post COVID-19 in Kuwait</td>
<td>Passive/ unmotivated students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensive curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of teaching time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of the Language skills among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Plan</td>
<td>Reading tasks from level 0 to advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing tasks from level 0 to advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irrelevant exercises to the curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade of Teaching

| Grade 10 | 20 |
| Grade 11 | 19 |
| Grade 12 | 19 |

More than 10 years | 31 |

Total | 58 |