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Teachers' Perspectives on Instructional Practices for English Language Learners Implemented During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Loubna El bdaoui

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Teachers' Perspectives on Instructional Practices for English Language Learners
Implemented During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by

Loubna El bdaoui

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2023

Abstract

In the education sector, approximately 1.6 billion learners globally were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with English as a second language (ESL) learners being among those negatively affected due to the sudden closure of schools. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives on the change of instructional practices for English language learners during the pandemic. The research addressed ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and their perspectives on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods to meet the unique needs of the ESL population. The study was based on the conceptual framework of Krashen's monitor model, specifically the acquisition-learning hypothesis. Data was collected through semistructured interviews with 10 experienced ESL teachers. Thematic analysis unveiled four primary themes derived from the interviews: The COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instruction to ESL students, teachers felt unprepared for the sudden disruption in teaching practices, teachers found the transition to online teaching challenging, and teachers required support in dealing with the specific challenges posed by the pandemic. The study results provide valuable insights into the experiences of ESL teachers during the pandemic, shedding light on their challenges and identifying the need for preparation and support to transition to online learning for both ESL learners and educators. The study findings contribute to positive social change by furthering knowledge and understanding of ESL teachers' experiences teaching remotely during a pandemic and what they need from administration to successfully teach remotely.

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Dedication

This writing is for my husband, Idriss. Your strong, patient, dedicated, and supportive help while I have worked towards my degree has been important to me, and I'm grateful for it. I am surprised that you allowed me to go back to school even though we had just had a baby. You always support me and my big ideas, no matter how unrealistic they seem. You always help me and keep me going, even when I want to stop trying. You let me be me and help me when I forget who I am. Thank you so much for taking care of the kids and the new baby while I worked on my degree at night, even though you had already worked all day. I really appreciate it. I would not be here now if you weren't beside me. I will always love you.

To my three wonderful children, Ali, Alae, and Amir, I am grateful for your understanding as I try to manage being a mom and pursuing my studies. I want you to understand that everything I did was for us. It was a bumpy 3 years, but we made it through together. I hope the things I have achieved will encourage you to never settle for just okay and always strive for more because you deserve it.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for teaching me the importance of education and encouraging me to work hard towards my dreams, even if they seem impossible. Thank you for trusting me and giving me confidence to do anything I want. At times, during our journey together, your trust in me gave me the strength to keep going. You encouraged me to start this journey even though I wasn't sure if I could do it. Your encouragement and care, and your neverending affection, are what motivate me to keep moving forward.

I want to thank you for supporting me, and I hope that I have done something that makes you feel proud.

I want to address my committee members, especially my leader, Dr. Maryanne Longo; I'm grateful you went along with me on this trip. Thank you for helping me and making me less worried by guiding me every step of the way. I can't even tell you how many times talking to you quickly made me feel better when I was worried. You have been very helpful, polite, involved, motivating, and exactly what a student wants in a group. You taught me a lot, and I'm grateful for the time we spent together. I want to dedicate my dissertation to you because you played a big part in helping me get to where I am now.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly every aspect of life. In the education sector, the COVID-19 pandemic created one of the most significant disruptions in human history, affecting approximately 1.6 billion learners globally. The closure of learning institutions affected 94% of the world's students. The suspension of in-person teaching and learning was meant to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). Many schools transitioned to online learning to reduce the impact of the disease on education (Turnbull et al., 2021). However, the transition was both synchronous and asynchronous, as there was no framework guiding the process (Fabriz et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). Additionally, according to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), many teachers lacked experience and proficiency in instructing learners online. The transition also increased the inequalities in education as learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds could not access or afford the technologies required for online learning (Turnbull et al., 2021). Moreover, the lack of infrastructure for online learning made it difficult for online education to be implemented in some areas (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Turnbull et al., 2021).

English as second language (ESL) learners were among the groups negatively affected by the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The abrupt transition to online learning caused many ESL learners to miss participating in learning activities, duties, and assignments (Khreisat, 2022). ESL learners also experienced reduced communication with other learners. In addition, some ESL learners faced the challenges of accessibility and affordability of technology (Ying et al., 2021). ESL teachers also experienced challenges instructing ESL learners. According to Moorhouse

and Kohnke (2021), ESL teachers had to adapt their instructional practices to the demands of the virtual environment. However, a lack of experience and competence in online teaching made it difficult for them to teach online (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). As a result, the performance gap between ESL learners and their counterparts increased during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hammerstein et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021).

How teachers should instruct ESL learners online remains unclear. Furthermore, little information is available on the experience of ESL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exploring teachers' perspectives on teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially instructing learners online, could help in addressing some of the challenges of the abrupt transition to online learning. In this study, I explored the experiences of ESL teachers in teaching ESL learners online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exploring teachers' perspectives can contribute to positive social change by addressing the existing performance gap between ESL learners and their counterparts (Bonal & González, 2020; Huang, 2021; Khreisat, 2022). Data from this study may assist teachers and other stakeholders in developing the best solutions to the challenges of the abrupt transition to online teaching and learning. Additionally, the results from the study can support the transition process to online learning by providing ideas on how the process should be conducted to ensure maximum learning.

In Chapter 1, I review the background literature, problem statement, nature of the study, research questions, purpose, and significance. I also identify and provide a brief explanation of the conceptual framework guiding the study. Important definitions are also

provided. Other items that are covered in Chapter 1 include the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations of the study.

Background

The first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was reported in December 2019 in China. This was preceded by many cases of patients with symptoms of atypical pneumonia in some local hospitals in the Wuhan province. Most of the patients from this province were linked to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale market (Kumar et al., 2021; She et al., 2020). Attempts to control the disease in China were futile as it spread across the globe quickly (Kumar et al., 2021). Despite the lack of identification of a reservoir, scientists classified the COVID-19 pandemic as a zoonotic disease, implying that it is transmitted from animals to human beings (Haider et al., 2020). The alarming spread and severity of the disease led to the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring it a pandemic in March 2020 (Mahase, 2020).

The declaration of the COVID-19 infection as a pandemic initiated a cascade of global public health interventions. Brauner et al. (2020) found that most of these public health interventions were nonpharmaceutical. In the United States, the interventions varied from state to state. However, the most common interventions included school closures, mask wearing, promotion of personal hygiene, stay-at-home policies, closures of nonessential businesses, travel restrictions, quarantine and isolation of infected individuals, and social distancing (Hartley & Perencevich, 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021).

The closure of schools had various impacts on the education sector. Hammerstein et al. (2021) found that the closure of schools negatively affected student achievement,

especially in younger learners and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Additionally, the researchers discovered that the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the inequalities in the education sector (Hammerstein et al., 2021). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to disparities in education by influencing accessibility and affordability. One group of learners negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic was ESL learners. According to Ying et al. (2021), the closure of schools created various learning challenges for ESL learners. Khreisat (2022) pointed out that during COVID-19, most ESL learners missed participating in learning activities, duties, and assignments. Additionally, the closure of schools led to reduced communication between ESL learners (Khreisat, 2022). As a result, the performance of ESL learners was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Bonal & González, 2020; Huang, 2021; Khreisat, 2022).

One solution implemented due to school closings was the transition to online learning. Turnbull et al. (2021) opined that transitioning to online learning was the only viable option for preventing the total closure of all learning institutions. However, transitioning to online learning posed new challenges for teachers and learners. According to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), the abrupt transition to online learning contributed to widespread synchronous and asynchronous learning and teaching. Another challenge was related to access to technology. Some ESL learners could not access the technologies required for online learning (Turnbull et al., 2021). Turnbull et al. stated that the success of online learning depended on various factors, including the quality of communication infrastructure, software availability and access, and hardware platforms.

Learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds had challenges accessing some of these requirements, and good internet connectivity was a problem for many ESL learners.

ESL teachers also faced challenges due to the abrupt transition to online learning. According to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), ESL teachers struggled to adapt their instructional practices to the demands of the virtual environment during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. One reason for their struggles was a lack of experience and competence in online teaching (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). Turnbull et al. (2021) suggested that teachers must be competent and confident in online teaching's technical and pedagogical aspects. Despite these challenges, online education became the most prevalent mode of delivering instruction to ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the prevalence of online learning has lessened over the past 2 years and regular teaching has returned, there is little understanding of the experience of ESL teachers instructing learners. The literature is scant on the impacts of the abrupt and synchronous transition to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, little information is available on how teachers introduced ESL instruction to ESL learners in an online environment during the pandemic. Less is known about the perspectives of ESL teachers and their experiences teaching learners online during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research may contribute to the literature on the abrupt transition to online learning. The results of my study may also help expand the understanding of instructing ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. This may effect social change as I address the challenges faced by ESL learners (see Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). I also address

the performance gap between ESL learners and their counterparts during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Bonal & González, 2020; Huang, 2021).

Problem Statement

The problem I addressed in my research was concerns about the impacts of abrupt closures of schools and the transition to online learning for ESL students. According to a study by Mahyoob (2020), Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of ESL students struggled to meet the expected milestones in their English language learning journey, primarily because of technical, communication, and academic challenges. Additionally, ESL teachers faced the challenge of adapting their instructional practices to the demands of a virtual learning environment because of a lack of competence in online teaching (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Turnbull et al., 2021). While transitioning to online learning, teachers were also expected to change their instructional practices. The transition to online learning requires redefinition of subject matter, the role and needs of teachers, the role and needs of learners, assessment methods, and context (Al-Zaabi, 2021). However, these areas were not given the same weight during the transition to online learning due to time constraints (Al-Zaabi, 2021). The aim of my study was to explore the teachers' perspectives on instructional practices for English language learners implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. I explored the changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers' views of these changes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives on the change of instructional practices provided to English language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. My research could provide insight into

challenges faced by teachers while delivering instruction to learners. Additionally, my research provided information on the solutions to the challenges that learners and teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. To fulfill the purpose of my study, I conducted a qualitative research study with semistructured interviews with 12 ESL teachers from local school districts.

Research Questions

The following research questions were influenced by the conceptual framework of Krashen's monitor model and guided this study:

RQ1: What are elementary-grade ESL teachers' perspectives on how the delivery of instruction to elementary-grade ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of elementary-grade ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study was Krashen's (1982) monitor model (KMM). KMM consists of five hypotheses that focus on the acquisition of a second language: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the natural order hypothesis (as cited in Lai & Wei, 2019; Schütz, 2007). The acquisition-learning hypothesis and the monitor hypothesis were helpful in the present study. Krashen (1983) asserted, "We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading" (p. 440). According to Krashen, learning a foreign

language involves the "learned system" and the "acquired system." The acquired system is a result of a subconscious process that requires meaningful interaction in the target language (Lai & Wei, 2019). Conversely, the learned system is a result of a conscious process that leads to conscious knowledge. The monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between the learned and acquired systems.

In delivering instruction, teachers perform the role of the learned system, whereas the students perform the role of the acquired system. According to Krashen (1983), the relationship between these two systems is critical to the effective acquisition of a second language. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this relationship (Engzell et al., 2021; Goodrich et al., 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). To restore the relationship between the two systems, learning institutions developed different strategies. For example, most learning institutions and teachers embraced online learning (Marshall et al., 2020; Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021). These changes required several modifications in syllabi, including the redefinition of subject matter, the role and needs of teachers, the role and needs of learners, assessment methods, and context, all of which resulted in changes in instructional practices.

The results of my basic qualitative study may contribute to the construction of knowledge based on the understanding of teachers' experience in teaching ESL students. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a basic qualitative study is based on the view that knowledge is constructed by engaging and constructing meaning from an activity or experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ESL teachers were engaged in activities that were meant to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learners (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Turnbull et al., 2021; Ying et al. 2021). For example,

teachers were involved in transitioning to online learning as a way of reducing the health risk associated with in-person learning (Al-Zaabi, 2021, 2021; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Turnbull et al., 2021; Ying et al. 2021). Due to their engagement in transitioning to online classes, ESL teachers were able to construct knowledge on the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning, and instructional practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

KMM provided the foundation for exploring the relationship and roles of ESL students and teachers. The interview questions were designed using the constructs of the KMM conceptual framework. KMM supported the collection of data about teachers' perspectives in instructing ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the KMM conceptual framework helped in the identification of codes and themes from the collected data during the interviews.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative design. One rationale for using a basic qualitative study was that it allows researchers to explore how people make sense of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used semistructured interviews to collect data from 10 ESL teachers. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semistructured interviews are useful when researchers want to collect qualitative and open-ended data and when researchers want to explore the feelings, beliefs, and thoughts of participants about a given topic. In my study, I explored ESL teachers' perspectives on changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were those involved in transitioning into virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022. The participants were recruited from the Walden University Participant

Pool and teachers' social media groups. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data.

Definitions

The following are the definitions of important terms that were used in the study:

COVID-19 pandemic: A highly contagious viral infection that was first reported in Wuhan, China. The infection was classified as a pandemic in March 2020 by the WHO. The condition is caused by a coronavirus and causes a range of symptoms including respiratory distress, high fever, cough, and loss of sense of smell (Hartley & Liu et al., 2021; Mahase, 2020; Perencevich, 2020).

English as second language learners: Students whose first language is not English (Hashim & Yunus, 2018; Nuriska, 2021).

English as second language teachers: Educators who teach learners whose first language is not English (Hashim & Yunus, 2018).

Instructional practice: How information or learning material is delivered, received, processed, and experienced by learners (IGI Global, n.d.).

Online learning: Also referred to as *virtual learning* or *e-learning*. It is the type of learning that takes place over the internet (Adebo, 2018).

Virtual learning environment: An integrated learning platform that allows learning to take place over the internet (Alves et al., 2017).

Assumptions

In designing this study, I was influenced by several assumptions. First, I assumed that the basic qualitative study and semistructured interviews I developed would be appropriate for answering the research questions. Another assumption was the perception

that the participants would provide honest answers. This assumption was informed by the assurance of confidentiality and respect during the engagement. I also assumed that the participants would be representative of the target population. As the researcher, I also assumed that I would not influence or entice the research participants into participating in the study. Lastly, it was assumed that the delivery of instruction was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the participants were involved in transitioning to online learning.

Scope and Delimitations

This basic qualitative study was carried out within specific boundaries defined by the purpose. Accordingly, in this study I focused on ESL teachers' perspectives on the change in instructional practices provided to learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another boundary was defined by the experience of the teachers. While carrying out this study, I only focused on teachers who were involved in instructing ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. As this was a basic qualitative study, data were only collected through semistructured interviews.

The delimitation of this study involved specifying the sample size. I recruited 10 participants from two districts with approximately 90+ ESL teachers each. The duration of my research was from March 2020 to April 2022. The rationale for choosing this time frame was that this was the time that the COVID-19 intervention strategies were strictly implemented. The sample population was also limited to only ESL teachers. I did not involve teachers who did not teach ESL students. The rationale for this was that, as the researcher, I wanted to understand the challenges and perspectives of only ESL teachers. The study was also limited to local school districts. However, I did not limit participants

by level of experience. Other factors that I did not control included gender, intervention types, and instruction used.

Limitations

To conduct this study, I recognized several limitations. One limitation was the challenge of recruiting participants. Accordingly, I adhered to COVID-19 intervention guidelines while recruiting the participants. For example, I ensured that I minimized physical conduct with the participants. This limitation was addressed by relying on new technologies for recruiting participants. I used Zoom and social media to contact the participants. Another limitation I recognized was the challenge of controlling the information gained from the participants. While collecting data, I focused on collecting information that was useful or necessary to the study. I addressed this limitation by providing guidelines on the kinds of information I would seek.

Another challenge that I recognized was the issue of participant expectations. While I was able to supervise the recruitment of the participants, it was difficult to establish the expectations of all participants. For example, some of the participants might have expected compensation for participating in the study. I addressed this limitation by clearly explaining the purpose of the study and providing clarity on various information, including the issue of no compensation. Additionally, I ensured that all participants understood the expectations of their responsibility during the study. Scheduling interviews was also a limitation because of the teachers' time and the responsibilities they had to their work and their families. I addressed this limitation by collaboratively developing the interview schedules with the participants according to their schedules and the time they could provide to participate in the study. Another limitation I addressed was

personal bias. I addressed any personal bias by using a reflection journal to identify any biases I may have had during participant interviews.

Significance

This study is significant in that it provides deeper insight into the experiences of ESL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature review indicated that ESL learners were affected disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic (Bonal & González, 2020; Huang, 2021; Khreisat, 2022; Turnbull et al., 2021). The results of my study could expand the understanding of challenges that ESL teachers faced and the effectiveness of different learning interventions. My research contributes to the current literature by demonstrating some of the areas that researchers and policymakers need to focus on. This study is also significant due to the contribution it makes toward improving the instruction of ESL learners.

Another area of significance for this study is that it contributes to positive social change by helping address the academic challenges faced by ESL teachers and learners (Khreisat, 2022). The current study is also significant due to its potential impact on future educational policies. Accordingly, the findings of this study might be useful in improving policies on the training of ESL teachers and on the instruction of ESL learners.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 1, I introduced the purpose of this basic qualitative study. Additionally, I provided the background of the study, the problem statement, the nature of the study, the research questions, and the conceptual framework. I provided an explanation of the significance of the study with important definitions. I also addressed the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations in the study. In presenting the

background of the study, I provided a brief review of existing literature about the topic. I identified the conceptual framework I used as KMM with the acquisition-learning and monitor hypotheses.

Successful learning of the English language requires the maintenance of the relationship between the learned system and acquiring system. However, the literature demonstrated that COVID-19 disrupted these relationships (Engzell et al., 2021; Whitley et al., 2021). I used a basic qualitative research method to explore teachers' perspectives on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population. A basic qualitative study was ideal for the present research due to its ability to help in the construction of knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2018). Semistructured interviews were used to collect the data from the participants. The rationale for selecting semistructured interviews as a method of collecting data was that they allowed me to explore the feelings, opinions, thoughts, and beliefs of the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Additionally, semistructured interviews allowed me to scrutinize and seek clarity on information collected from the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

In Chapter 2, I examine existing literature on the research problem. The search strategies used to identify relevant research are identified. Additionally, the conceptual framework is explored in more detail. Chapter 2 ends with a summary of the available literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem addressed in this study was understanding the changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I focused specifically on understanding the teachers' perspectives on the instructional practices for English language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conceptual framework deployed in this study was KMM, which provided insight into acquiring a second language (Krashen, 1982; Lai & Wei, 2019). Through KMM, I explored the roles of teachers and learners in learning English during the height of the COVID pandemic.

In this chapter, I identify the literature search strategy, outline the conceptual framework, and provide a detailed review of scholarly work on critical concepts. Krashen's monitor model's acquisition-learning and monitor hypotheses are addressed as the study's conceptual framework through KMM's "learned" and "acquired" systems. The literature review focuses on concepts related to COVID-19, the transition to online learning, instructional practices, ELL learners and teachers, academic gaps, and challenges caused by the COVID pandemic. Throughout the chapter, I summarize the major themes and gaps in literature and practice. Additionally, I provide insight into how the present study fills gaps in literature and practice.

Literature Search Strategy

A literature search is one of the critical steps in performing excellent and authentic research. Parajuli (2020) suggested that a literature review is part of preparatory work that enables researchers to conduct studies. Through literature review, researchers are able to provide background information and establish the importance of their studies (Parajuli, 2020).

In the present study, I used a semisystematic approach to the literature review process. The literature review process involved establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria that identified only potentially relevant articles, online databases and search engines, search strategies to retrieve articles, and a method for scoring published articles for completeness.

Inclusion Criteria

The research included in this study possessed specific characteristics that defined the research. First, the articles must have been published within the last 5 years (2019 to 2022). The rationale for restricting the literature review to the last 5 years was to ensure that the information is up to date. The articles used in this literature review also had to be peer reviewed. During the peer-review process, poor research articles are filtered out (Tullu & Karande, 2020). The rationale for restricting the articles to those that were peer reviewed was to uphold the quality of the literature (Koshy et al., 2018). The articles included in this study were original studies.

Exclusion Criteria

While conducting the literature review, I excluded articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria. For example, articles published more than 5 years ago were excluded from this study. I also excluded articles that were not published in English. Articles that were not peer reviewed were also excluded from this study. I excluded publications that were reviews, editorials, and letters. I also excluded studies that were not available in full text.

Search Terms

In searching for literature for this study, I used various fundamental terms. Under the concept of the COVID-19 pandemic, I searched for the terms *coronavirus*, *pandemic*, *SARS*, *COVID-19 pandemic*, and *pandemic*. To obtain articles on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, I searched for the terms *pandemic* and *learning COVID-19* and *teaching*, *COVID-19* and *education*, *COVID-19* and *online learning*, and *coronavirus* and *schools*. To obtain articles on the impacts of COVID-19 on ESL learners, I searched the databases using the terms *COVID-19* and *ESL*, *COVID-19* and *ELL*, *COVID-19* and *English language learners*, and *COVID-19* and *English as second language learners*. Under the concept of online learning, I searched for the terms *virtual learning*, *virtual teaching*, *online learning*, *remote teaching*, *remote learning*, and *remote teaching*.

Online Databases and Search Engines

The following is the list of databases and search engines that were used in this study: EBSCO, Walden Online Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, Education Source, JSTOR, Science Direct, IEEC Explore, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Directory of Open Access Journals, SAGE Journals, and Thoreau Multi-database Search.

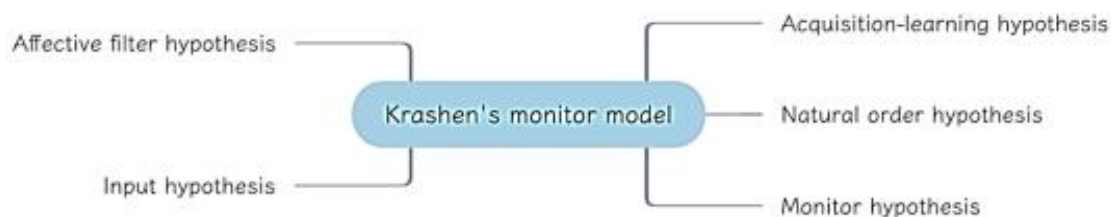
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that was used in this study was KMM, published by Krashen (1982). KMM consists of five hypotheses that focus on the acquisition of a second language: the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the natural order hypothesis (Lai & Wei,

2019; Schütz, 2007). The acquisition-learning hypothesis and the monitor hypothesis were specifically helpful in the present study. Figure 1 presents a summary of KMM:

Figure 1

Krashen's Monitor Model



Note. From “A Case Study of the EFL Learner’s Needs Analysis Based on Krashen’s Monitor Theory,” by Y. Huang and Y. Zhang, 2019, *International Journal of Research—GRANTHAALAYAH*, 7(8), p. 266

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The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis proposes that language acquisition and learning differ (Huang & Zhang, 2019). During language acquisition, the learner unconsciously obtains language. On the other hand, language learning occurs when a student consciously discovers and learns about a given language's rules and grammatical structures (Huang & Zhang, 2019; Lai & Wei, 2019). The understanding between acquisition and learning of language led to the development of the "learned system" and the "acquired system." The acquired system results from a subconscious process that requires meaningful interaction in the target language (Lai & Wei, 2019). On the other

hand, the learned system results from a conscious process that leads to conscious knowledge.

The Monitor Hypothesis

The monitor hypothesis involves the dynamic relationship between language acquisition and language learning (Chen, 2022). According to Bahrudina and Febriani (2020), language acquisition produces a creative construction system, which is considered to be a naturally acquired competency. On the other hand, language learning involves monitoring (Bahrudina & Febriani, 2020). The monitoring process involves the process of editing and correcting learners. Krashen proposed that monitoring is critical in learning a second language because it can contribute to the accuracy of the utterances (Huang & Zhang, 2020). Chen (2022) stated that three conditions must be met for effective monitoring: There must be sufficient time; the focus should be on the form of language; and language used in teaching should follow grammatical rules. However, the monitoring should be moderate, as it can be an impediment to language acquisition.

The Input Hypothesis

The input hypothesis proposes that the language input should be of an appropriate level of difficulty (Chen, 2022). According to Chen (2022), the appropriate level of difficulty should be slightly beyond the level at which the learners are currently. The input hypothesis also proposes that learners must comprehend the target language to learn (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). For learners to comprehend the language, there must be a period that allows them to process input without pressure and produce output (Alahmadi, 2019).

Krashen also emphasized the quantity and quality of input that learners obtain. An input of insufficient or inappropriate quality and quantity causes fossilization (Alahmadi,

2019). The input hypothesis also proposes that input needs to be compelling (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). According to Krashen, compelling input makes language acquirers more attentive (Krashen & Mason, 2021). Krashen argued that a compelling input makes a given language so interesting that the learner forgets another language (Chen, 2022; Krashen & Mason, 2021).

The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis is concerned with the affective factors that prevent acquisition of second language (Chen, 2022). This hypothesis proposes that a sufficient amount of comprehensible input is required for learners to acquire a second language. However, the proficiency of learners is not carried due to the role of emotional factors (Chen, 2022). In the affective hypothesis, Krashen argued that emotional factors such as anxiety, boredom, and self-doubt can affect the process of language acquisition (Bailey & Fahad, 2021). According to Bahruddina and Febriani (2020), successful creation of a fear-free and fresh classroom environment leads to the input information being absorbed deeper by the learners due to their increased willingness to take risks. On the other hand, an environment that creates anxiety and fear and is tiresome decreases the absorption of input (Bahruddina & Febriani, 2020). Therefore, the impacts of emotional factors can be reduced by making the language interesting, bolstering learners' self-esteem, and creating a low-anxiety environment (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018).

The Natural Order Hypothesis

The natural order hypothesis focuses on the learning of grammatical structures of a given language. According to Bahruddina and Febriani (2020), the natural order hypothesis is concerned with the universal mastery of grammatical structure. It proposes

that second language students learn grammatical items in a specific order (Chen, 2022). Bahruddina and Febriani (2020) suggested that the sequence of acquiring linguistic items occurs naturally and that learners obtain them simultaneously. Therefore, according to the natural order hypothesis, learning a second language takes place in a specific and predictable manner.

Application to the Present Study

In delivering instructions, teachers perform the role of the learned system, whereas the students perform the role of the acquired system. According to Krashen, the relationship between these two systems is critical to effectively acquiring a second language. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this relationship (Engzell et al., 2021; Goodrich et al., 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). In an attempt to restore the relationship between the two systems, learning institutions developed different strategies. For example, most learning institutions and teachers embraced online learning (Marshall et al., 2020; Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021). These changes required several modifications in the syllabus, including the redefinition of subject matter, the role and needs of teachers, the role and needs of learners, assessment methods, and context, all of which resulted in changes in instructional practices.

Krashen's monitor model provided the foundation for exploring the relationship and roles of ESL students and teachers. The interview questions were designed using the constructs of the KMM conceptual framework. Krashen's monitor model helped to define collected data about teachers' perspectives in instructing ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the KMM conceptual framework helped me to identify codes and themes from the collected data from the interviews.

Literature Review on COVID-19 Pandemic

The Outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was reported in December 2019 in China. This was preceded by many cases of patients with atypical pneumonia symptoms in some local hospitals in the Wuhan province. Most of the patients from this province were linked to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale market (Kumar et al., 2021; She et al., 2020). Initially, the clinical management of the disease was limited to infection prevention (Dos Santos, 2020). According to Dos Santos (2020), the control measures of the disease during its initial stages focused on supportive care such as mechanical ventilation and supplemental oxygen.

Attempts to control the disease in China were futile as it spread across the globe quickly (Kumar et al., 2021). The first case of the disease in the United States was reported in Washington on January 20, 2020 (Holshue et al., 2020). According to Holshue et al. (2020), the first case in the United States involved a middle-aged man who had traveled to Wuhan, China, to visit family members. After the initial case was reported, the infections spread rapidly across the United States and established themselves in communities. By March 20, 2020, the United States was leading in the number of reported COVID-19 cases globally (Carter & May, 2020)

Despite the lack of identification of a reservoir, scientists classified the COVID-19 pandemic as a zoonotic disease, implying that was transmitted from animals to human beings (Haider et al., 2020). Although the COVID-19 pandemic was spreading rapidly and had reached more than 100 countries by early March, the WHO was initially reluctant to declare it a pandemic (Green, 2020). The reluctance by the WHO to declare

COVID-19 a pandemic caused anxiety among different stakeholders (Green, 2020; Wan, 2020). According to Green (2020), epidemics are usually considered pandemics when they spread to vast geographical areas. One rationale for the hesitation by the WHO to declare COVID-19 a pandemic during the initial stages was to avoid creating fear and inciting panic among the global population (Wan, 2020). However, the alarming spread and severity of the disease led to the WHO declaring it a pandemic in March 2020 (Mahase, 2020; Wan, 2020).

Interventions

The declaration of the COVID-19 infection as a pandemic initiated a cascade of global public health interventions. Brauner et al. (2020) found that most public health interventions were nonpharmaceutical. In the United States, the interventions varied from state to state. However, the most common interventions included school closures, gathering bans, wearing of masks, promotion of personal hygiene, stay-at-home policies, closure of nonessential businesses, travel restrictions, quarantine and isolation of infected individuals, and social distancing (Hartley & Perencevich, Liu et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021).

Impact of School Closure

The prolonged closure of schools is considered one of the most disruptive forces during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hoffman & Miller, 2020). According to Hoffman and Miller (2020), the closure of schools forced educators to determine how to facilitate students' learning. Data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022) indicated that closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic led to the loss of two-thirds of an academic year worldwide. UNESCO (2022)

also estimated that the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic affected 1.5 billion students and youths, with vulnerable learners being most impacted. The closure of schools had several impacts on learning and teaching.

In a simulation of the impacts of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic using data from 157 countries, Azevedo et al. (2020) found that the global level of schooling and learning would drop. The researchers estimated that the school closures would result in a loss of between 0.3 and 0.9 years of schooling when adjusted for quality. The researchers expected such loss of schooling to bring down the effective years of schooling that learners achieve in their lifetime to between 7.0 and 7.6 years from its current value of 7.9 years. The researchers also found that school closures would exacerbate the school dropout rates. According to the researchers, up to 7 million learners in primary and secondary school could drop out due to the economic shock associated with the pandemic.

Research has also shown that closure of schools affects the skills of learners. From the analysis of data from five low- and middle-income countries, Conto et al. (2021) found that missing school leads to a reduction in foundational skills of learners. Children at all levels who were out of schools were less likely to acquire foundational reading skills than those children who remained in schools. Foundational skills are critical for developing learners' competences and subsequent lifelong opportunities. Therefore, challenges in developing foundational skills would affect students' ability to learn and succeed.

In a study of the effect of the closure of primary schools in the Netherlands, Engzell et al. (2021) found that the closure of schools led to learning loss across the

globe, with the loss being more pronounced among disadvantaged students. Additionally, the researchers found that the effect reflects the cumulative impact of knowledge learned. The findings led to the researchers concluding that learners made little progress while learning from home. The researchers suggested that learning losses could be higher in countries that experience more extended school closures and those with weaker infrastructures (Engzell et al., 2021).

In another study, Goodrich et al. (2022) found that the closure of schools affected the delivery of instructions. Although optimum delivery of instructions requires teachers to deploy direct and indirect strategies (Garita & Sánchez, 2020), the closure of schools only promoted the use of one strategy (Goodrich et al., 2022). In their study, Goodrich et al. (2022) found that school closure restricted teachers to indirect instructions. As a result, optimum delivery of instructions was not achieved (Garita & Sánchez, 2020).

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2020) classified the impacts of school closures into temporary and long-term. Temporary impacts of school closures include loss of learning. However, long-term impacts include challenges related to employment (OCED, 2020).

The closure of schools also negatively impacted participation in learning and social interactions. Participatory learning is considered advantageous in a classroom as it allows students to understand others' experiences better while at the same time expressing themselves (Guy & Arthur, 2021). Social interaction has also been significant in teaching because it allows learners to organize their thoughts and understand different perspectives on issues, which improves learning (Okita, 2012). However, the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic restricted both participatory learning and social interactions

(Kainama & Hendriks, 2021). As a result, students were not able to understand other's experiences and express themselves well.

The closure of schools also created issues related to curriculum. According to a study by Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021), the closure of schools created challenges related to lesson planning and schedules. This implied that the goals and objectives of a given curriculum were affected. The negative impacts of the school closure on the curriculum can be seen through the loss of pronounced learning loss during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Engzell et al., 2021).

Scholars have also shown that the closure of schools increased learning inequalities. Azevedo et al. (2020) posit that school closures could exacerbate exclusion and inequalities. According to Azevedo et al. (2020), exclusion and inequalities would increase if marginalized and vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, girls, and persons with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by school closures. While studying inequalities during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Russia, Bekova et al. (2021) found significant differences in the obstacles faced by learners from different backgrounds. According to Bekova et al. (2021), learners from low-income backgrounds were more likely to experience technical and self-regulation problems than those from high-income backgrounds. The study also indicated that learners from low-income backgrounds were more likely to lack the skills required for remote learning (Bekova et al., 2021). In another study on inequalities during the Pandemic, Engzell et al. (2021) found that COVID-19 Pandemic had an uneven toll on learners and families. According to Engzell et al. (2021), learning losses concentrate on students with less-educated income. In a study on the effects of the pandemic on student achievement, Hammerstein

et al. (2021) found that the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the inequalities in the education sector. The researchers also found that the impacts on academic achievement varied among learners. For example, younger learners, and those from low socioeconomic status were found to experience more negative impacts from school closures (Hammerstein et al., 2021). Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to disparities in education by influencing accessibility and accessibility.

Studies have also shown that the closure of schools led to the violation of children's rights. In a study that focused on children's experiences during the lockdown and closure of schools, Munir (2021) found that many mitigation measures neglected children's rights. In particular, lockdowns, and school closures impacted children's right to develop and learn. Munir (2021) also found that the lockdown, and school closure has aggravated the risk of maltreatment and poor nutrition.

The effectiveness of school closure in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, however, has remained debatable (Walsh et al., 2021). In a systematic study on the effectiveness of school closure in mitigating COVID-19 pandemic, Walsh et al. (2021) found mixed results. Six out of the 14 studies reviewed found no association between school closures and reduction in transmission. Additionally, six studies indicated that school closures reduced the transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only two studies had mixed findings on the association between school closure and reduction in transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some researchers have also examined the impacts of school closure on behaviors and health of learners. In a study by Amran and Jamaluddin (2021), the researchers

explored the impacts of school closure on adolescent behavioral health. According to the researchers, prolonged closure of schools would affect the behavioral health of adolescents due to disruption in their routine. Analysis of data from the interviews with adolescents revealed that school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in alteration of sleep patterns, change in eating patterns, reduced physical activities and stress-related fatigue (Amran & Jamaluddin, 2021). In their study, Viner et al. (2021) found that school closures were associated with emotional and behavioral problems. The researchers also found that school closures contributed to an increased problem of restlessness and inattention. Another notable finding was the reduction in child protection referrals by between 27 and 39 percent (Viner et al., 2021). In another study, Monnier et al (2021) examined the impacts of school closure on children's mental health in France. Children between the ages of 8 and 9 participated in the study. The researchers found an association between school closures and sleep difficulties and abnormal hyperactivity/inattention (Monnier et al., 2021).

Hanushek and Woessmann (2020) focused on the economic effects of school closures. According to Hanushek and Woessmann, learning losses from school closures would have lasting economic impacts on both students and nations. The researchers estimated that students in grade 1-12 might experience a decrease in their lifetime income by three percent. The researchers also posited that countries would experience a decreased growth in their GDP due to school closures. Among the different classes, the researchers found that disadvantaged learners will experience higher economic losses. Azevedo et al. (2020) also explored the economic impacts of school closures on future earnings of learners. According to Azevedo et al. (2020), global closure of schools for

only five months generated learning losses that are valued at \$10 trillion. Governments are also expected to lose 16 percent of the investments made on basic education (Azevedo et al., 2020). On expected income, the researchers estimated that learners would experience a reduction in their yearly learnings. Accordingly, the learners are expected to experience a reduction in their yearly income by between \$355 and \$1,408 (Azevedo et al., 2020). Garcia and Cowan (2022) explored the impacts of school closure on the labor market during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the study, the researchers found that the labor market was disrupted by school closures. According to the researchers, parents of school going children showed reduced work hours. The researchers also found that the likelihood of working full-time was reduced during the school closures (Garcia & Cowan, 2022).

Online Learning

One solution implemented due to school closings was the transition to online learning. Turnbull et al. (2021) opined that transitioning to online learning was the only viable option for preventing the total closure of all learning institutions. The transition to online learning was also viewed as supporting the continuity of learning and teaching (Izhar et al., 2021). However, the transition to online learning was not ordinary as it was unanticipated (Marshall et al., 2020). This explains why the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is sometimes described as "emergency remote teaching" (Marshall et al., 2020). Despite the benefits, an examination of available scholarly work indicated that transitioning to online learning was challenging for teachers and learners.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

According to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), the abrupt transitioning to online learning contributed to the widespread synchronous, and asynchronous learning and teaching. In their study focusing on online teaching of the English language during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021) found that the rapid change to online teaching was a significant concern for both learners and educators. Additionally, the transition to online learning involved trial, and error due to a lack of guidelines, or framework (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021).

Technological Challenges

Another challenge was related to access to technology. Online learning in its entirety is dependent on technology: technological devices and internet connectivity (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). According to Turnbull et al. (2021), some ESL learners could not access the technologies required for online learning. Turnbull et al. (2021) stated that the success of online learning depended on various factors, including the quality of communication infrastructure, software availability and access, and hardware platforms. In their study that focused on transitioning to E-Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, Turnbull et al. (2021) found that learners and educators faced various technical issues online. One of the main technical issues that learners and educators faced online was internet connectivity. According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), educators and learners with poor internet connections are at a significant disadvantage when accessing online learning.

Variation in internet connectivity impacts online learning (Cullinan et al., 2021). Available studies indicated that internet connectivity was the biggest challenge facing

online learning. In a study by Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021), it was found that internet access varied from one educational setting to another. For instance, compared to students from urban centers, learners from rural areas have limited or no internet connection (Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021; Cullinan et al., 2021).

A study by Cullinan et al. (2021) on disparities in access to quality broadband during the COVID-19 pandemic found that students from areas with poor broadband coverage are socioeconomically disadvantaged. While studying learners' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, Means and Neisler (2020) found that internet connectivity issues were severe during the COVID-19 Pandemic. They interfered with the learners' ability to attend or participate in online classes. In the study, 46% of the participants were found to have experienced challenges related to internet connectivity (Means & Neisler, 2020).

Poor internet connectivity has also been shown to harm learning. For example, in their study, Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021) found that learners with poor internet connectivity tended to be less motivated to participate in online learning. Learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds had challenges accessing some of these requirements, and good internet connectivity was a problem for some ESL learners (Turnbull et al., 2021). Teachers also faced challenges related to technology. In a study by Means and Neisler (2020), hardware or software problems were common during the COVID-19 pandemic. Technical challenges related to software or hardware impacted the ability of learners to attend and participate in online learning (Means & Neisler, 2020).

Inappropriate Internet Use

In addition to internet connectivity, teachers faced the challenge of promoting correct internet utilization. According to Ma et al. (2021), learners and teachers need to be equipped with technological skills for online learning to succeed. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the dependency on technological equipment was the biggest challenge for learners, educators, and institutions.

In their study, Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021) found that most learners used the internet for other functions rather than learning. For instance, some learners were found to use the internet to play games rather than learn. Another challenge related to technology that educators and learners faced was rapid technological change. According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), educators and learners using outdated technological devices found it hard to meet the technical requirement of online teaching and learning.

Lack of Skills

Studies have also shown that lack of skills is another challenge in online learning. According to Adedoyin and Soykan, learners and educators must develop digital competence to use online learning or teaching successfully. However, not all teachers and learners possessed the digital competence required for online learning and teaching (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). In a study on the experience of EFL teachers online during COVID-19, Atmojo (2021) found that most educators lacked the skills necessary to teach online. In particular, teachers needed to improve their pedagogical, design, technological, content, social, and communication skills, and management and institutional skills. Additionally, Atmojo (2021) found that teachers must improve more than one skill to be an effective virtual teacher.

While examining teachers' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, Sahito et al. (2022) found that most teachers lacked the information communication technology (ICT) skills necessary to teach online. Similar results were reflected by Coman et al. (2020) when they examined online learning and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, unlike other scholars, Coman et al. (2020) found that most teachers were reluctant to improve their technical skills. Additionally, Coman et al. (2020) found that students lacked the skills to learn online.

Teachers and learners with low digital competence are often disadvantaged in online learning (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Ferri et al. (2020) also found that lack of skills was the main barrier to online learning. While examining the opportunities and challenges in online learning and remote emergency teachings, Ferri et al. (2020) found that many learners and educators lacked the digital skills required for online learning. Therefore, the lack of skills, especially in digital technologies, was one of the most significant impediments to online learning.

Lack of Experience

Scholars have also shown that lack of experience in teaching online is another challenge that educators faced during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Coman et al. (2021) stated that the success of online learning depended on the knowledge and experience of learners and educators. This implies that a lack of experience or knowledge can influence the outcome of online learning. According to Marshall et al. (2020), teachers with experience in online teaching find online instructions to be rewarding. However, new educators in online teaching tend to experience challenges related to increased workloads, communication, technology, and delivering content (Marshall et al., 2020).

In their study, Marshall et al. (2020) found that most teachers had no experience with online teaching. According to their study, 92.4% of teachers that participated in the study had not taught online before the abrupt transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, very few teachers were found to have received meaningful training from their schools or school districts. Teachers also rated all their job functions as more challenging remotely. Ma et al. (2021) also explored the issue of teachers' experience in online teaching. While examining online teaching self-efficacy during the pandemic, Ma et al. found that most teachers had not participated in online teaching. According to the study, only a few teachers had the experience of recording and sending videos to learners via the internet. This lack of experience in online teaching affected educators' self-efficacy (Ma et al., 2021).

Learning Environment

Another challenge that scholars have identified in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is the learning environment. The learning environment has been shown to play a critical role in teaching. According to a study by Aschenberger et al. (2022), it was found that learners were more motivated when they perceived their physical learning environment facilitated their needs. Additionally, the study revealed that learners' experience improved when they have a separate and fixed learning place. However, creating such a physical environment during the COVID-19 pandemic was difficult.

According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), online learners are frequently interrupted by family members, friends, or pets. Such interruptions have implications for the effectiveness of online learning because they make it difficult for learners to

concentrate on the learning process. Like learners, teachers can also experience interruptions due to interference by family members or pets. In another study, Ferri et al. (2020) found a lack of conducive experience for learning at home. Additionally, some parents did not provide enough support to the students to learn online (Ferri et al., 2020).

Mental and Wellness Issues

Learners' mental health plays a critical role in determining their academic performance (Alam et al., 2021). Chu and Li (2022) considered the transition to online learning as a disruption. According to Chu and Li (2022), the transition to online learning forces teachers and students to adjust their lifestyles. Present studies have demonstrated that the abrupt transition to online learning affected the mental well-being of learners. In their study, Chu and Li (2022) found that online learning reduced physical activity. However, the changes in physical activities were found to vary according to gender. Specifically, Chu and Li (2022) found that male learners were likelier to experience insufficient participation in online learning than their female counterparts. In a study on the mental health status of students engaged in online learning during the pandemic, Chang et al. (2021) found an increase in depression, stress, and anxiety symptoms. Additionally, Chang et al. found that learners' mental health was influenced by the length of schooling, grade, family environment, online learning environment, and gender. Similar results were found by Alam et al. (2021). However, these researchers emphasized the critical role of emotional intelligence and burnout.

Studies have shown that the transition to online learning affected the motivation of learners and teachers. In their study, Means and Neisler (2020) found that learners and educators faced the challenge of remaining motivated online. Similar results were found

in a study conducted by Teodorescu et al. (2021). However, Teodorescu et al. (2021) attributed the challenges in motivation to various factors, including perceived course quality, technological issues, and instructors' use of effective online instructional practices.

Increased Workload

Transitioning to online learning has been shown to increase the workload for teachers. In a study involving 141 ESL teachers, Nuss (2021) found that the transition to online learning increased the number of hours teachers worked. The long hours were attributed to various activities, including researching, preparation, connecting with families and students, delivering content, self-evaluation, and improving instructions. Similar results were found by See et al. (2020). According to their study, See et al. found that teachers were spending many hours on administrative tasks and planning and preparing lessons. The problem of increased workload affected mostly teachers with school-going children. According to See et al. (2020), teachers with children had to balance attending to learners online and homeschooling their children.

Vulnerable Learners

Most children are vulnerable due to environmental, social, and educational factors (Whitley et al., 2021). According to Whitley et al. , vulnerable learners are more likely to be affected by disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic than other learners. Several scholars have explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable learners. In their study on learning loss among vulnerable grades: three to five in the Netherlands, Schuurman et al. (2021) found that the closure of schools caused the discontinuity in learners' achievement growth. An examination of different subjects revealed that the

average learning loss among vulnerable learners in mathematics was 2.47 months (Schuurman et al., 2021). The average learning loss in comprehension was 2.35 months. The researchers also found that the closure of schools led to increased educational inequalities. The researchers concluded by calling for increased support for vulnerable learners (Schuurman et al., 2020).

In a study focusing on the impacts of the pandemic on the learning and achievement of vulnerable learners in Canada, Whitley et al. (2021) found that vulnerable learners were affected more by the COVID-19 pandemic than their non-vulnerable counterparts. Specifically, the researchers found that vulnerable learners experienced more disengagement in learning activities, attendance problems, decreased credit attainment, and declines in academic achievement. As a result, the researchers recommended the implementation of inclusive learning spaces.

Crane et al. (2021) also explored the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable learners. According to Crane et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly impacted learners with special educational needs and disabilities. An examination of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the majority of research was focused on students in the mainstream schools while ignoring learners with special needs (Crane et al., 2021).

Layachi and Schuelka (2022) explored the impacts of school closures on learners with special needs. In particular, the researchers focused on the impacts of school closures on mental health and well-being learners with special needs and their parents. Analysis of data revealed that learners with special needs and parents experienced mental and socio-emotional challenges during the school closures (Layachi & Schuelka, 2022).

Kawaoka et al. (2021) examined the impact of school closures on children with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) in Japan during the COVID-19 pandemic using a Child Behavior Checklist. From the study, the researchers found that school closures increased externalizing and aggressive behavior among NDDs. Additionally, children with intellectual disorders (ID) demonstrated elevated levels of anxiety and depression during school closures (Kawaoka et al., 2021).

Cameron et al. (2022) examined the perception of teachers and students with special educational needs (SEN) during school closures in Norway. One finding from the study was that teachers and learners were concerned about the social and emotional consequences of school closures. Teachers and learners also perceived distance learning as less effective in teaching SENs: leading to differential intervention, where SENs were retained in school while other learners remained at home.

Impacts on English as Second Language Learners

English as a second language (ESL) learners are considered vulnerable in educational setups (Blagg et al., 2020). Learners' needs differ, and ESL learners differ from those of other groups. For instance, unlike other learners, ESL students require support in speaking English. As a result, ESL teachers need to facilitate the unique needs of ESL learners to promote positive academic outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent closure of schools had negative impacts on ESL learners. Blagg et al. (2022) stated that ESL learners, from households with limited use of the English language, faced higher barriers in completing classwork during remote teaching. According to Ying et al. (2021), the closure of schools created various learning challenges for ESLs. Khreisat (2022) pointed out that during COVID-19, most ESL learners missed participating in

learning activities, duties, and assignments. Additionally, the closure of schools led to reduced communication between ESLs (Khreisat, 2022). As a result, the performance of ESL learners was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Bonal & González, 2020; Huang, 2021; Khreisat, 2022).

Instructional Practice

Instructional practices are understood as the techniques that educators use to empower students to become both independent and strategic learners (Francisco & Celon, 2020). It is also understood as the actions that are performed by teachers to create and maintain a conducive learning environment. According to Francisco and Celon (2020), instructional practices encompass planning, delivery channels, assessment, and learning strategies. Due to their role in learning, instructional practices are important in the effectiveness of teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the instructional practices deployed by educators (Bozkurt et al., 2022). In a study by Bozkurt et al. (2022), it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a “great reset” in the education sector. According to the researchers, COVID-19 has reshaped the educational system globally including the way education is delivered and the pedagogical approaches. The researchers cited the widespread use of digital technologies as evidence of the changes in instructional practices.

In another study, Shaked (2022) identified three ways in which different principals performed their instructional leadership roles: abandoned their instructional leadership, changed instructional leadership to fit the conditions of COVID-19 pandemic, and uncompromisingly continued to demonstrate instructional leaders. In the education

sector, instructional leadership is considered a very important role of principals (Shaked et al., 2020). According to Shaked et al. (2020), instructional leadership contributes to the effectiveness of principals by facilitating school improvements. Therefore, by affecting instructional practice, the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the teaching outcomes of educators.

Instructional Practices of English as Second Language Teachers

English as second language teachers rely on instructional practices to deliver content to their learners. Several scholars have explored the best instructional practices for ESL learners. A study by Cho et al. (2021), found that the reading abilities of ESL learners can be improved by deployment of appropriate reading interventions. The researchers also found that strategy-embedded interventions significantly reduced the risks of reading disabilities in ESL learners. The study also found that the design of effective instructions for ESL must consider many factors. The identified factors that teachers must consider when designing and selecting instructions include class size, instruction types, and available resources.

Instructional practices have been shown to differ according to educators' cultural background. In a study that focused on lived experiences of Chinese language teacher, Fan and De Jong (2019) found that professional identities are constructed in discourse. Additionally, the researchers found that native speaker's ideologies influenced the professional identity of the teacher. In another study, Ledger and Montero (2022) found that teachers' background influenced learning and their sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, teachers' attitudes were found to play a role in the transition from one instructional practice to another (Ledger & Montero, 2022).

Scholars have also explored the role of plurilingual instructions. In a quasi-experimental study, Galante et al. (2020) explored the use of plurilingual instruction in learning. The study involved two groups of participants: one group received English-only instructions while the other group receive plurilingual directions. From the study, the researchers found that the use of plurilingual instructions was more effective in learning than the use of unilingual instructions. According to the study, plurilingual instructions were effective in advancing agentic power and engaging learners in language learning. Additionally, the researchers found that plurilingual instructions create a safe space, where learners can freely engage in learning. Another important finding in their study was that teachers prefer plurilingual instruction.

The instructional practices of ESL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic were also explored by Farrell and Stanclik (2021). In their qualitative study, the researchers identified several practices and principles that guide ESL teachers' activities. Some of the identified principles and practices included rapport building, using humor, being receptive, considering learners' needs, engaging in ongoing learning, providing corrective feedback, promoting conscious understanding, and learning discrete skills. The researchers also found that the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for teachers to utilize these principles and practices.

Instructional practices have also changed due to changes in learning and teaching priorities. According to a study by Hartshorn and McMurry (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the teaching and learning priorities of both students and learners. The researchers associated the changes in priorities of both teachers and learners to the emergence of one stressor in their lives. The researchers also found that the transition to

online instructions was more challenging for learners than educators. Therefore, the changes in instructional practices can be attributed more to the challenges experienced by learners than educators.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature on various concepts identified on instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature search strategy involved the use of semi-systematic approach, where themes, theoretical perspectives and other qualitative information related to the topic are explored (Synder, 2019). I also specified the inclusion and exclusion strategies in the search. The articles were derived from various databases including EBSCO, Walden Online Library, Google Scholar, ERIC, Education Source, JSTOR, Science Direct, IEEC Explore, PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Directory of Open Access Journals, SAGE Journals, and Thoreau Multi-database Search. The Krashen's Monitor Model guided the search strategy. In the review of literature, I started by examining the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent spread. I also examined the interventions that were implemented including closure of schools. Thereafter, I examined the impacts of closure of schools, the transition to online learning, and instructional practices.

The literature review revealed that many scholars have explored the impacts of COVID-19 on education. Most researchers examined the impacts of online learning on the educational set up. Researchers have also identified the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on instructional practices. The literature review also demonstrated that COVID-19 and the transition to online learning have impacted ESL learners and teachers. However, teachers' perspectives on the changes in instructional practices have been given

little attention. Additionally, the available literature does not specify the best instructional practices for teaching ESL learners. My study could fill these gaps in literature and practice by exploring teachers' perspectives on instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chapter 3, I explored the research methods that I used in this study. Specifically, I described the study methodology and design including the rationale for selecting them. I provided insight into the recruitment of participants, data collection instrument and methodology, and the analysis of data. I also explored my role as a researcher and issues related to ethics and trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore ESL teachers' perspectives on the change of instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. I focused specifically on teachers' experiences in online teaching. Previous studies had shown that teachers and learners experienced challenges transitioning to online learning, which affected their abilities to perform their roles (Bekova et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021). My study was guided by the acquisition learning hypothesis and monitor hypothesis from KMM.

In Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth discussion of the methodology used in the study. I present key information on the research method and design and the rationale for choosing them. I also provide information about my role as the researcher, participant selection, the sampling process, the data collection instrument, and the data analysis process. Finally, I offer insight into ethical and trustworthiness issues.

Research Methodology

In this study, I used a qualitative methodology to explore ESL teachers' perspectives on instructional practices for English language learners implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rationale for using a qualitative methodology was that it enables one to gain a meaningful understanding of participants' attitudes, emotions, thoughts, and lived reality (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Reay et al., 2021). The qualitative methodology was also ideal for my study because it allowed for illustrative information to be gathered that can facilitate the understanding of different dimensions of ESL teachers' instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic (Queirós et al., 2017). I have also chosen to use the qualitative methodology to obtain rich in-depth data on ESL

teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic (Queirós et al., 2017; Rashid et al., 2019; Reay et al., 2021). Another rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology was that it facilitates the study of subject matter in its natural setting (Aspers & Corte, 2019). This implied that the findings of my study could be applicable to real-life situations. Despite its advantages, qualitative research has a few limitations. For example, it is difficult to generalize the findings of a qualitative study as they are subjective rather than objective (Queirós et al., 2017). It has also been suggested that qualitative studies lack an acceptable level of rigor and are susceptible to researcher bias (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Queirós et al., 2017). I also took into consideration the quantitative and mixed methodologies. However, I did not choose either of these two methodologies due to their limitations. Additionally, the purpose of my study made it difficult to use the other two methods. For example, a quantitative study was not suitable for studying the ESL teachers' experiences because it would not have ascertained deeper underlying meanings or explanations (Rahman, 2017). Moreover, the positivism approach of quantitative research does not account for the interpretation of participants' actions (Rahman, 2017). However, quantitative methodology can be beneficial in future research because of its objectivity in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Pietilä et al., 2020).

I also did not use the mixed methodology because it requires experienced researchers to effectively collect, analyze and interpret data (Pietilä et al., 2020). Additionally, the mixed methodology would have been time consuming as it involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. However, the mixed methodology was a viable option as it addressed the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research Design

In this study, I used a basic qualitative research design with interviews. The rationale for using a basic qualitative methodology was it facilitates the exploration of how participants make sense of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, a basic qualitative study was ideal for my study as it is direct and less time consuming. The basic qualitative research design was also ideal for answering my research questions and achieving the purpose of my study. While deciding on the research design, I took into consideration other designs. I rejected the ethnography research design because the need to immerse myself into others' social worlds would have been too time consuming (Aspers & Cortee, 2019). Additionally, ethnography research would have been costly due to the increased expenses relating to staying with the population of study (Aspers & Cortee, 2019). I also rejected the grounded theory design because it focuses on the development of theory (Pietilä et al., 2020), which was not the purpose of my study. Another rationale for overlooking the grounded theory design involved its complexity (Tie et al., 2019). According to Tie et al. (2019), grounded theory design requires application of theoretical sensitivity, which can be achieved only by experienced researchers.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher differs in quantitative and qualitative studies. According to Simon (2011), researchers in qualitative studies are actively involved in the research process. However, in quantitative studies, the role of researchers is nonexistent. In other words, participants in quantitative studies act independent of the researchers (Simon, 2011). In this study, I was the sole researcher. I performed all the research

activities, including participant identification and recruitment, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Additionally, I was responsible for ensuring that the study met all requirements, including issues of ethics and trustworthiness.

Population and Sample

The target population in my study was ESL teachers with remote teaching experience during the COVID-19 pandemic era. ESL teachers were the most suitable participants for this study because they had a better understanding of the changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. I used purposive sampling to recruit 12 ESL teachers from two local districts to participate in the study. According to Morgan and Gast (2018), purposeful sampling involves identifying and choosing participants based on their knowledge and experience. The rationale for using purposeful sampling was that it enables the researcher to select only information-rich participants (Morgan & Gast, 2018). In my study, information-rich ESL teachers would facilitate the understanding of the changes in instructional practice. However, purposeful sampling has its drawbacks. For example, the transferability of the findings of the study may be low, owing to potential biases of the researcher during the recruitment of the participants (Paliankas et al., 2015). While recruiting the participants, I addressed the issue of bias by disqualifying participants with whom I had a professional and/or personal relationship.

Data Collection Instrument

To establish content validity in the interview protocol, several steps were taken. First, the interview questions were developed based on a thorough review of the available literature on the topic of ESL teaching and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on instruction. This ensured that the questions were relevant and comprehensive, covering

essential aspects of the teachers' perspectives. Second, the interview protocol was reviewed and refined by experts in the field of ESL teaching and research. This review process involved seeking feedback from experienced educators and researchers to ensure that the questions effectively captured the relevant dimensions of the topic. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure that the interview questions were neutral and unbiased, avoiding any leading or suggestive language that could influence the responses of the participants. This approach aimed to minimize potential researcher-induced biases.

The data collection instrument that I used to collect data from the participants was an interview protocol. Interviews were ideal for the present study because they provided deeper insights into the subjective experiences, motivations, and opinions of ESL teachers (Busetto et al., 2020). Among the different types of interviews, I selected a semistructured technique for my study. One of the rationales for choosing semistructured interviews was that it allowed for clarification seeking (Busetto et al., 2020). Additionally, according to Busetto et al. (2020), semistructured interviews allow for the emergence of unexpected issues, which eliminates provider or researcher-centered bias. I created the interview questions based on the available literature. I created an interview protocol to guide the data collection process (see Appendix A). The interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Due to health concerns associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic and the need to promote flexibility, the semistructured interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Study Procedures

Prior to implementing my research study, I received the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by following four stipulated steps: completing Form A,

providing requested documents, closing the loop for proposal, and confirming study procedures and documents. Upon receiving IRB approval (01-20-23-1055258), I began the process of recruiting the participants from the two local districts. In total, I identified approximately 90+ ESL teachers who were teaching remotely between March 2020 and April 2022 and requested that they participate in the study. Seventeen teachers responded to my request, Then, the number dropped to 10 because seven participants cancelled. I interviewed 10 participants over a 2-week period over Zoom. Each interview took about 30–45 minutes. I recorded the interviews automatically using the Zoom-recording features for future reference and later transcribed the data. Participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They received a consent form that outlined their voluntary participation in the study. The informed consent process took place before any data collection activities began. Participants were given ample time to read and understand the consent form and ask any questions they had. They could either provide their consent in writing (physical or electronic signature) or verbally, depending on the preferred method and study requirements.

The interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable setting to ensure confidentiality and encourage open communication through Zoom. Each participant was interviewed once, and each interview was approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews were scheduled at times mutually agreed upon with the participants to accommodate their availability. After they had completed their participation in the study, participants were debriefed about the overall purpose and findings of the research. The debriefing session allowed participants to ask any remaining questions and seek

clarification on study-related matters. They were also provided with my contact information in case they had any follow-up questions. I collected their contact information in case I needed any of their responses clarified.

Finally, participants were thanked for their valuable contribution to the research. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and any personal identifying information was removed or pseudonymized in the final research report to protect their privacy. Participants were informed about the expected timeline for the publication or dissemination of the study's results.

Data Analysis Plan

Thematic analysis is one of the most common data analyses in qualitative studies. The technique is used in healthcare, psychology, and sports (Xu & Zammit, 2020). According to Xu and Zammit (2020), thematic analysis involves examining repeated patterns in each set of data. The rationale for choosing thematic analysis is that it is flexible and provides deeper insight into the collected data (Nowell et al., 2017). However, the limitation of using thematic analysis is that the process is inconsistent and often lacks coherence (Nowell et al., 2017).

In my study, the thematic analysis I used followed the six phases suggested by Labrat et al. (2020): familiarizing oneself with the collected data, generating initial codes from the data, searching for themes, reviewing the obtained themes, defining and naming the generated themes, and presenting and discussing the themes. The process of familiarization with the collected data involves critical examination of the collected data. Open coding is the process of examining collected data, which involves reading and comprehending the responses from participants. After I had familiarized myself with the

data, the next process involved generating the initial codes. Generating the initial codes involved revising the collected data. The process of generating the initial codes is important because it simplifies the data while enabling the researcher to focus on specific features. When generating the codes, I identified the important sections of the text and then attached label indexes. Searching for themes involved examining the codes and categorizing them (Labrat et al., 2020). The process of searching for the themes resulted in identification of main themes and subthemes. These identified themes were then reviewed to ensure that they appeared in a coherent pattern. Reviewing themes also helped in ensuring that they reflect the intended meaning. The definition and naming of themes were the next steps and involved determining the aspects of the data captured (Labrat et al., 2020). The process of thematic analysis ends with the presentation of the results of the study.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is one of the most important aspects of qualitative studies. According to Nowell et al. (2017), trustworthiness makes qualitative studies convincing. In my study, I established trustworthiness by focusing on four issues: confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility in basic qualitative research involves ensuring that the results are believable from the participants' point of view (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), credibility establishes whether the results of a study represent the information obtained from the participants. I established credibility by engaging participants in audio recordings of the interviews and took notes during each interview to ensure that every detail, including my interpretations, was accurately captured. I allowed the participants to

member-check a two-page interview summary to ensure that the data were valid and that I correctly interpreted and portrayed their points of view.

Confirmability is another issue that I addressed to help promote the trustworthiness of my study. According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), confirmability involves establishing the degree to which the findings of a study can be confirmed by other scholars. One strategy that I used to ensure the confirmability of my study was the use of an audit trail, which involved providing a transparent description of the research steps (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Transferability addresses the issue of trustworthiness by promoting the generalizability of a study. According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a given study can be transferred to another setting. In my study, I promoted transferability by providing a comprehensive and detailed description of the research methodology, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. I informed the participants that their insights and experiences would contribute to broader knowledge and understanding in their field or related contexts.

Dependability is concerned with the stability of the findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). According to Korstjens and Moser (2017), dependability involves the evaluation of the results, interpretation, and recommendations by the participants. In my study, I achieved dependability by providing a logical and traceable description of the research process (Nowell et al., 2017). I also documented every research step to enable future readers to evaluate the findings and recommendations of the study.

Ethical Issues

According to Resnick (2020), ethical norms of research facilitate accountability, the sharing of knowledge, avoidance of error, and collaboration. In this study, I strove to abide by ethical standards by seeking approval from the IRB, seeking the consent of participants, and observing the ethical research principles. The approval by the IRB ensured that my study met the required ethical standards and federal requirements. The following are the ethical research principles that I observed:

1. *Autonomy*: I emphasized voluntary participation in the study. I also avoided coercing or inducing the participants. Additionally, I focused on respecting the rights, dignity, and autonomy of the participants.
2. *Beneficence and nonmaleficence*: While carrying out the study, I focused on maximizing the benefits of the study while eliminating or reducing the risk of harm.
3. *Justice*: I avoided discriminating against any of the participants during the study process.
4. *Confidentiality and data protection*: Prior to studying the interviews and after receiving the consent forms from the participants, I assured participants of their confidentiality in the handling of their data. One way in which I achieved confidentiality of collected data was by maintaining the anonymity of the participants.
5. *Integrity*: I ensured that only factual data were collected and used. I also sought continuous review by professionals and avoided misrepresentation of data.

Summary and Transition

In Chapter 3, I explained the methodology that I used in this study. A qualitative methodology was selected because it could facilitate a deeper understanding of ESL teachers' perspectives, lived realities, thoughts, and experiences on instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Reay et al., 2021). I also used a basic qualitative design because it made it possible to explore how the ESL teachers made sense of their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the sole researcher in this study, my role involved identification and recruitment of participants, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I was also responsible for ensuring that the study met all requirements. The target population for my study was ESL teachers with remote experiences in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve ESL teachers were recruited from three local districts using purposeful sampling. I used semistructured interviews to collect data from the participants. I recorded, transcribed, and downloaded the interviews. Thematic analysis was the chosen method for data analysis. The process of thematic analysis follows six processes: familiarization with the collected data, generation of initial codes, searching of generated themes, reviewing of themes, definition and naming of the themes, and presentation and discussion of the results (Labrat et al., 2020). I established trustworthiness by focusing on four issues: confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017). In my study, I strived to abide by ethical standards by seeking approval from the university's ethical committee, seeking the consent of participants, and observing ethical research principles, which include autonomy, beneficence and nonmaleficence, justice,

confidentiality and data protection, and integrity. In Chapter 4, I provide the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

In this study, I focused on understanding the ESL teachers' perspectives on instructional practices during the pandemic. In particular, I examined ESL teachers' experiences in transitioning to online learning. Available scholarly work indicated that transitioning to online learning posed many challenges to teachers and learners (Bekova et al., 2021; Engzell et al., 2021; Ma'rufa & Mustofa, 2021). Additionally, available literature indicated that vulnerable learners and their teachers were affected the most by the transition to online learning (Schuurman et al., 2021; Whitley et al., 2021). English language learners are considered a vulnerable group according to scholars (Blagg et al., 2020). My study was guided by the conceptual framework of KMM's acquisition learning hypothesis and monitor hypothesis.

This chapter contains the results of my basic qualitative study, which I conducted to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

In Chapter 4, I provide the results of the study. In particular, I provide key findings from the interviews with 10 ESL teachers from two local school districts. I organize the themes from the interviews according to the research questions.

Additionally, in this chapter, I discuss the process used to analyze the transcripts from the interviews to identify codes and themes.

Setting of the Study

I conducted semistructured interviews with 10 ESL teachers from two local school districts through Zoom. The teachers were recruited using purposeful sampling to ensure that only individuals who were knowledgeable about the subject matter were involved. On average, the interviews took 36 minutes over a 10-day period. The rationale for exceeding the expected 5-day period involved participants' busy schedules. Each of the participants had experience teaching remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were recorded automatically using Zoom recording features and then transcribed verbatim. The transcribed interviews were then downloaded and proofread to ensure that they were correctly captured. Information from the interviews was then used as the primary source of data for the study.

Demographics

Ten ESL teachers from two local school districts in the Southeastern United States participated in this study. All participants were experienced and certified in teaching English language learners, with their experience ranging from 6 years to 34 years. The average teaching experience before the pandemic was 16.3 years. Ninety percent of the participants had no experience teaching remotely before the pandemic. The participants also taught different educational levels during the pandemic, ranging from preschool to Grade 11. To protect the identity of the participants, I assigned each participant an identification code from T1–T10. Table 1 provides a summary of participants' demographics, including pseudonyms, teaching experience before the pandemic, grades taught during the pandemic, and experience teaching remotely before the pandemic.

Table 1*Summary of Demographics*

Teacher	Teacher experience before the pandemic	Teaching grades	Experience teaching online before the pandemic
T1	14 years	K to Grade 8	None
T2	34 years	Preschool	None
T3	20 years	Grades 9, 10, and 11	Yes
T4	10 years	Pre-k	No
T5	12 years	Grade 2	None
T6	6 years	Grade 4	No
T7	22 years	Grades 1 and 2	No
T8	12 years	Grades 1, 2, and 3	None
T9	18 years	Preschool	No
T10	15 years	Grade 2	No

As shown in Table 1, all participants had experience of more than 5 years teaching ESL learners among the students in their classrooms. The average teaching experience of the participants was 16.3 years. Most participants (90%) had no experience teaching online before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Collection

I started the data collection process immediately after I received approval from the Walden University IRB. I interviewed individual participants through Zoom. The data collection process started with the recruitment of 10 ESL teachers from two local school districts through purposeful sampling. The process of recruitment of the participants was done systematically. After I had identified the potential participants, the participants were recruited from two local school districts and the Walden Participant Pool. The process of recruitment was done by identifying the potential participants who met the requirements for the study. For example, the participants had to be teaching ESL learners. After

identifying the potential participants, I contacted them with the request to participate in the study. A follow-up request was sent to the ESL teachers who responded to my initial request. The 17 participants who agreed were further filtered for eligibility to participate in the study. In particular, the screening aimed at ensuring that the participants were involved in teaching activities during the pandemic. The screening resulted in 17 qualified candidates (I sent a recruitment flyer that explained the eligibility characteristics to participate: must be an ESL certified teacher, must have been involved in teaching ESL during COVID, must know how to use Zoom services). I sent consent forms to the 17 candidates, but four did not return the consent forms. As a result, 13 remained participants for the study. Three further participants dropped out of the study before the interview, leaving 10 participants in the study.

I developed the interview schedule with the help of the participants. In particular, the participants provided me with appropriate times for their interviews. I used semistructured interview questions to collect data from the participants. Prior to starting the interview, I assured each participant of the confidentiality of the information they provided. I also reminded the participants of their rights, the study objective, and the expectations. The data collection process was guided by the interview protocol (Appendix A), which I had created before starting the interviews. The interviews were done through Zoom. On average, each interview took 36 minutes, and I completed interviewing my participants in a 5-day period. The interviews were recorded automatically using the Zoom-recording features. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim using the Transcribe Me transcription service and downloaded.

After completing each interview, I debriefed the participants on the next steps of the study. I also encouraged them to check my summary of the interviews and adjust their responses accordingly, if necessary. I also exchanged my contact information with the participants in case of any necessary communication in the future. I finished the interviews by thanking the participants and explained that I would send the transcription of their interview back to them for their review to assure accuracy. I also promised to provide participants with a 2-page summary of the results of the study and explain the purpose of the two-page summary of the results. The collected data will be securely maintained for 5 years beyond the conclusion of my study in a password-protected folder on a secure computer. After this retention period, any physical copies of the data (if applicable) will be securely shredded, and any digital data will be permanently deleted using industry-standard data erasure methods to ensure complete and irreversible disposal. During the interviews, I experienced several notable challenges. For example, some of the participants were inaudible such that I had to seek clarification of the information they provided. At times, there were echoes that interfered with the interview process. We also experienced connection issues due to lagging Zoom connections. Another common challenge was related to the transcription of data. During data collection, I used the transcription service offered by Zoom. However, at times, the participants would use terms that were difficult for Zoom to transcribe. Additionally, there were errors during the transcription. Participants were able to review their interview transcripts for errors and accuracy. Despite these challenges, the interviews were successful, as I was able to collect the information I required for the study.

Data Analysis

The information from the semistructured interviews formed the primary source of data for this study. After completion of the interviews, I prepared the data for analysis. The first step in data preparation was collecting the transcripts and placing them in a password-protected folder on my laptop. The audio recordings were also placed in the folder. I then examined the transcripts and assigned them unique identification codes. The identification codes for the 10 participants ranged from T1–T10. I also examined the transcripts for accuracy by comparing them to the audio recordings. I corrected any discrepancies between the transcripts and the audio recordings. I also asked the participants to review their interview transcripts. The interview data were then ready for analysis.

I analyzed the collected data using thematic analysis. As defined by Xu and Zammit (2020), the process of thematic analysis entails examining repeated patterns in each set of data. During thematic analysis, I followed the six steps proposed by Labrat et al. (2020):

1. Become familiar with the collected data.
2. Generate initial codes from the data.
3. Search for themes.
4. Review the obtained themes.
5. Define and name the generated themes.
6. Present and discuss the themes.

Step 1: Become Familiar With the Collected Data

During this step, I took a broad and high-level view of the collected data while noting my first impressions. I critically examined the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings to familiarize myself with the collected data. I took notes in my reflexive journal. Through this process, I could understand and comprehend the responses from the participants.

Step 2: Generate Initial Codes

After familiarization, I started coding notable features of the data methodically. I started this process by revisiting the collected data and highlighting portions of the text and labeling them.

During open coding, I broke the data into distinct parts and labeled them with codes. Table 2 provides some of the open codes generated from the transcripts.

Table 2*Open Codes*

RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Code	Participant	Excerpt	
Disruption of teaching methods	T1	"It did get difficult when I was teaching at the elementary school."	
	T2	"I had to come up with new ways to engage with the children and find ways to still teach them."	
	T4	"Definitely. I changed everything."	
	T5	"Yeah. I think it affected"	
	T7	"Yes, I had to come up with new ways to engage with the children and find ways to still teach them."	
	T8	"Yes, it greatly affected my teaching methods"	
	T9	"Yes, it definitely affected."	
	T10	"Yes, the transitioning to online teaching affected my teaching methods."	
	Tailored teaching methods	T2	"Language modeling, stopping to make sure new vocabulary is understood."
		T3	"try to you know make connections with my students."
T4		"I incorporated more visuals."	
T5		"I started using recorded videos and audios to teach."	
T6		"For engagement, and then also I had to ensure that there was a program we used where we could actually see their computer screens during the lesson."	
T7		"I incorporated more visuals."	
T8			

		“I had to develop new ways of teaching as in-person teaching was not possible.”	
	T9		
		“I focused more on the use of virtual aids and singing to help children understand the use of words.”	
	T10	“I tailored my teaching methods to meet the needs of English language learners”	
Remote teaching has some advantages	T2	“I think the only advantage is to provide a continuous learning opportunity.”	
	T3	“Yeah. I think it's appropriate for some students.”	
	T4	“Yes, as mentioned above, I was able to have more family engagement during the virtual sessions.”	
	T5	“Yes, I think it has some advantages over the traditional teaching methods.”	
	T6	“Yes, I think that you're able to reach a lot more children from one location.”	
	T7	“Yes, as mentioned above, I was able to have more family engagement during the virtual sessions.”	
	T8	“Yes, it has some advantages”	
	T10	“Definitely, it has some advantages over traditional teaching”	
	Lack of experience teaching remotely	T1	“Not at all.”
		T2	“None.”
T4		“I never did it.”	
T5		“I did not have any experience teaching online”	
T6		“No.”	
T7		“I never had an experience before.”	
T8		“one”	
T9		“No, I had never taught remotely before”	

Unpreparedness	T1	“So not knowing what I was going to be doing from moment to moment was made it more difficult.”
	T2	“We did not know what the expectations were, with teaching and evaluating the students’ progress.”
	T6	“My district was not prepared for the pandemic and my district was not prepared for interactive learning virtually.”
	T10	“The closure of school was especially unexpected.”

RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

Code	Participant	Excerpt
Transitioning to online was challenging	T2	“The challenge I faced was engaging the children with IEP’s.”
	T3	“Working from home was challenging because I felt like I was always working the day never ended.”
	T5	“Yes, I experienced a lot of challenges.”
	T6	“the county did not have enough devices prepared for the transition.”
	T8	“some learners were unavailable most of the time, which made it difficult to teach.”
	T9	“Yes, I experienced a lot of challenges.”
Challenges not unique to ESL teachers	T10	“My main challenge in using online learner was the use of technology.”
	T3	“I think for all teachers, yeah. Yeah”
	T4	“No”
	T5	“No, I don’t think these challenges were unique to English language learners. Some of my colleagues also experienced them.”
		“I don't think that it was just specifically unique to English language learners.”

	T6	“I think these challenges also affected other learners”
	T8	“I don’t know, but I think these challenges were not unique for ELLs teachers.”
	T9	“No, I don’t think these challenges were unique to English language learners.”
	T10	
Challenges were unavoidable	T5	“I don’t think”
	T6	“No. Again, English language learners that are already struggling to speak English when they're not in the classroom setting”
	T8	“I don’t think these challenges were avoidable”
Challenges affected performance	T3	“I think it definitely did.”
	T6	“Yes, I do believe that the COVID-19 pandemic and the instruction affected the performance of English language learners because also they were missing the language communication in English with their peers and teacher.”
	T5	“I think these challenges made it difficult to engage and deliver instructions to ELLs.”
	T9	“Yes, it definitely affected the performance of students.”
	T10	“Yes, I think it affected the performance of my learners.”
Varying level of support from administration	T2	“I think more support was needed.”
	T3	“so I feel like they were fairly supportive.”
	T4	“I would have to say that I had very little support.”
	T5	“I think I received enough support from the administration.”
	T6	“No. I think the expectations were very high.”
	T7	

		“I would have to say that I had very little support but it was good enough to start with because it was a new situation for all our education systems.”
	T8	
		“I feel that we were not provided with enough support.”
	T9	
		“Yes, I think our administration really tried to support us.”
	T10	
		“... although the administration tried, I think the support was not enough.”
Additional training needed	T2	“I think the administration could have provided insight and training.”
	T4	“Teachers needed a proper training on how to implement the virtual platforms and on activities and lessons to provide to their students.”
	T5	“I also think that we need to be trained on online teaching and the use of technology.”
	T6	“I believe that during the COVID pandemic and the teachers should have been spending maybe an hour a day working on that and being trained on that.”
	T7	“Teachers needed a proper training on how to implement the virtual platforms and on activities and lessons to provide to their students.”
	T8	“I think teachers needed to be trained and be provided with the resources for online learning”
	T10	“I think teachers only need to be trained on the use of Zoom and managing of online classes.”

In relation to research question 1, the open codes from the transcripts are: disruption of teaching methods, tailored teaching methods, remote teaching methods, unpreparedness, lack of teaching experience remotely, and remote teaching has some advantages. In relation to research question 2, the open codes identified are: transitioning

to online was challenging, challenge not unique to ESL teachers, challenges were unavoidable, challenges affected performance, varying level of support from administration, and additional training needed. I used the results of the open coding to develop axial coding. During the axial coding process, I tried to establish connections between emerging themes. To establish connections, I read the codes several times and the underlying data to find codes that could be categorized together. I created the categories based either on existing codes or new abstract categories that encompassed several different codes. Table 3 provides the results of axial coding including categories and relevant open codes.

Table 3*Axial Coding*

RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Category	Code	Participant	Excerpt
Interference with the learning and acquisition systems	Disruption of teaching methods	T4	“Definitely. I changed everything.”
	Unpreparedness	T1	“So not knowing what I was going to be doing from moment to moment was made it more difficult.”
	Challenges affected performance	T3	When asked whether the challenges affected performance, T3, pointed out that it affected: “I think it definitely did.”
Challenges with remote teaching	Unpreparedness	T6	“My district was not prepared for the pandemic and my district was

not prepared for interactive
learning virtually.”

Lack of experience T4

“I never did it.”

RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

Challenges	Transitioning to	T3	“Working from home was
transitioning	online was		challenging because I felt like I
online	challenging		was always working the day never
			ended.”

Challenges not	T6	“I don't think that it was just
unique to ESL		specifically unique to English
teachers		language learners.”

Challenges	Unpreparedness	T6	“My district was not prepared for
were			the pandemic and my district was
unavoidable			not prepared for interactive
			learning virtually.”

Challenges were		
unavoidable	T8	“I don't think these challenges
		were avoidable”

Need for administration support	Varying level of support from administration	T2	“I think more support was needed.”
	Additional training needed	T4	“Teachers needed a proper training on how to implement the virtual platforms and on activities and lessons to provide to their students.”

Summary statement: In relation to research question 1, axial coding resulted in several categories of codes, including *interference with the learning and acquisition systems* and *challenges with remote teaching*. For research question 2, the categories of codes from axial coding are *challenges transitioning online*, *challenges were unavoidable*, and *need for administration support*.

Step 3: Search for Themes

During this phase, I sorted and collated the coded data into themes. The searching for themes was guided by the understanding that themes are patterns forming data sets that can answer research questions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). I searched for themes by bringing together components that seemed similar or codes that demonstrated similar ideologies or similar experiences of participants. The process of searching for themes was done manually. I started the process with few predefined codes. I prepared the list of codes in a word document and then organized them into themes that reflected the

relationship between codes and themes. I had to return and re-read the transcripts from the research interviews before clustering the codes into different themes. The process of re-reading the transcripts was to improve understanding of collected data, which facilitates establishment of relationship between different codes. Additionally, re-reading of data ensures that all the relevant information is captured while irrelevant data are disregarded. Some of the initial codes formed the main themes while others form the subthemes. Emerging themes were then organized according to the research question they answered.

During this phase of thematic analysis I identified five major themes related to the research questions: 1) teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students; 2) teachers were not prepared for a change in teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic; 3) teachers felt the transition to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers; 4) teachers felt that the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic were unavoidable; 5) teachers felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges related to COVID-19 pandemic. Table 4 provides a summary of the emerging themes that align with the research questions.

Table 4*Emerging Themes and Their Categories*

RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Category/Codes	Theme
Interference with the learning and acquisition systems, teaching methods, unpreparedness	The COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students
Challenges with remote teaching, lack of experience, and unpreparedness	Teachers were not prepared for a change in teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

Categories/codes	Theme
Challenges with remote teaching, transitioning to online learning was challenging	Transitioning to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers
Challenges were unavoidable	Teachers felt that the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic were unavoidable

As shown by Table 4, the process of searching for themes resulted in five major themes: two for research question 1 and three for research question 2.

Step 4: Review the Obtained Themes

Once the themes were determined, I started to review and refine them. During this phase, I reviewed the coded data extracts for individual themes to ensure that they were coherent. The review also ensured that the collected data was valid and accurately reflected the meaning from the data set. Inadequacies in the initial coding and themes were identified and changed as required. Additionally, some themes appeared to have insufficient data to support them. For example, the theme “Teachers felt that the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic were unavoidable” was insufficiently supported by data. Such themes were discarded. After reviewing and refining the themes, I remained with four major themes as presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5*Defining and Naming Generated Themes*

RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Category/Codes	Theme
Interference with the learning and acquisition systems, teaching methods, unpreparedness	Teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students
Challenges with remote teaching, lack of experience, and unpreparedness	Teachers felt that they were not prepared for the disruption of teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

Categories/codes	Theme
Challenges with remote teaching, transitioning to online learning was challenging	Transitioning to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers
Challenges were unavoidable	Teachers felt that the challenges they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic were unavoidable

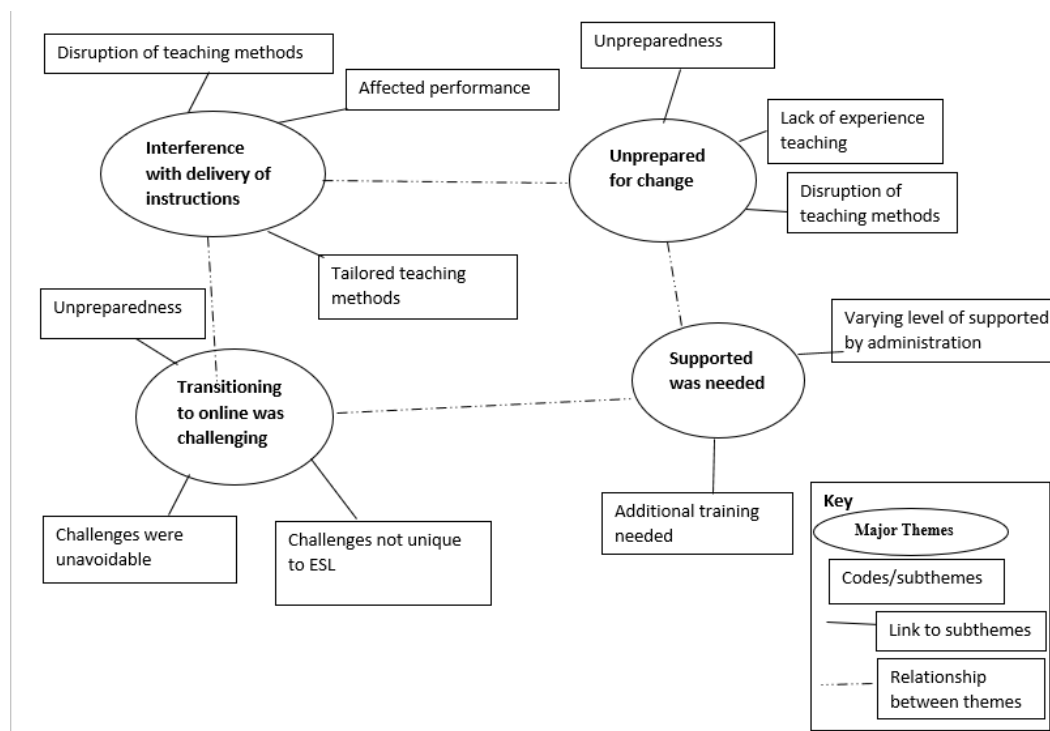
As shown by Table 5, the continued reviewing of themes resulted in the reduction of themes to four: two for each research question.

Step 5: Define and Name Generated Themes

In the fifth step, I formulated what each theme meant and tried to figure out how each theme helped in understanding the data. The process of naming themes involved coming up with a name that is understandable for each theme. To define the themes, I constructed a thematic map. Figure 2 presents the thematic map I constructed to help define the themes:

Figure 2

Thematic Map



The thematic map shows that each theme is supported by a minimum of two themes.

Step 6: Present and Discuss the Themes

The last phase involved presenting and discussing the themes with the participants. This was to ensure that the themes captured the information corrected from the participants. I reached the participants through email communication. The themes were summarized in a word document and emailed to them. I asked the participants for their views on the themes. The participants approved the themes.

In summary, the six steps were critical for generating and understanding the themes. The familiarization step entailed examining the transcripts and listening to audio recordings of the data. Generating open codes involved revisiting the data and then hand-labeling portions of the text; I combined categories with similarities to search for emerging themes based on the categories' characteristics. In step three, I sorted and collated the coded data into themes. Five themes were generated during the search of themes. Reviewing the obtained themes involved focusing on their coherence. The fourth step also entailed checking the level of support that each theme received. Themes with insufficient support were discarded. The review of themes resulted in their reduction from five to four. In step five, themes were defined and named. Thematic maps helped in the process of defining and naming themes. The last step involved presenting and discussing themes with the participants to ensure that the these captured the information they provided in the study.

Trustworthiness of the Data

In this study, I took several steps to ensure that the collected data were trustworthy. In particular, I ensured that the collected data was trustworthy by focusing on the issues of confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability. The results

achieved the credibility status through my prolonged engagement with the study participants. I also achieved credibility of the interview data by engaging participants in audio recordings of the interviews and took notes during each interview to ensure that every detail, including my interpretations, was accurately captured. I allowed the participants to member-check a two-page interview summary to ensure that the data was valid and that I correctly interpreted and portrayed their points of view. The study was also trustworthy because it met the criterion for confirmability. I ensured that the data achieved the confirmability requirement by providing a transparent description of the research steps such that other researchers can confirm the findings of the study.

Transferability of the research findings was achieved by clearly providing a comprehensive and detailed description of the research methodology, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. I Informed the participants that their insights and experiences will contribute to broader knowledge and understanding in their field or related contexts.. Lastly, I achieved the dependability of the result by providing a logical and traceable description of the whole research process. Additionally, I ensured that the results were dependable by documenting every research process to enable the participants to examine and evaluate the research results and recommendations.

Results of the Study

In this basic qualitative study, I explored teacher perspectives on the changes in delivery of instruction to ESL students in their classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I examined the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19

pandemic to meet the unique needs of ESL students. The data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 ESL teachers recruited from local schools and the Walden Participant Pool. The interviews were conducted using Zoom. The interviews were guided by my Interview Protocol (Appendix A).

The first research question examined the ESL teachers' perspective about how the delivery of instructions to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interview questions one to 11 addressed the first research question. Thematic analysis of the collected data related to the first research question which resulted in two themes: a) teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students b) teachers felt that they were not prepared for the disruption of teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second research question focused on teachers' perspectives on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of ESL learners. Interview questions 11 to 15 addressed the second research question. Thematic analysis related to the second research question yielded two major themes: c) teachers felt that the transition to online teaching was challenging; d) teachers felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the following section, I provided further exploration of the themes obtained from thematic analysis.

Theme A: Teachers Felt That the COVID-19 Pandemic Interfered With the Delivery of Instructions to ESL Students

Disruption of Teaching Methods

All 10 participants agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the delivery of instructions. Teachers pointed out that they had to change their teaching methods to suit the changing situations. Many of the participants described how they had to change and tailor their teaching methods. For example, T2 explained that she had to tailor her teaching methods to meet the needs of the learners: “I had to come up with new ways to engage with the children and find ways to still teach them.”

T1, T4, T5, T7, T8, T9, and T10 all agreed with the view that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the delivery of instructions. T4 pointed out that she had to change everything while T1 pointed out that teaching became more difficult for educators in elementary schools.

Affected Performance

The changes interfered with delivery in instructions is also clear from the change in performance of the learners. Most of the participants pointed out that the performance of learners was affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. T3 explained that the transitioning affected the performance of learners as they were not ready for online teaching: “I think it definitely did. Because even with a lot of. I know the school was pretty encouraging to not be too tough on the kids and that kind of thing. They weren't into it.” T6 pointed out that the change in instructions affected performance of ESLs learners: “Yes, I do believe that the COVID-19 pandemic and the instruction affected the

performance of English language learners because also they were missing the language communication in English with their peers and teacher.”

T5 also hinted at the impact of changes in instructions on the performance of ELLs learners. According to T5, the challenges affected performance by making it difficult to engage and deliver instructions to ESLs: “I think these challenges made it difficult to engage and deliver instructions to ELLs.”

T3, T8, T9, and T10 agreed that the performance of learners changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. T8 pointed out that difficulties to deliver instructions and challenges controlling learners affected learners’ performance: “I think it made it difficult to deliver instructions in particular, controlling learners was difficult, I think it affected their performance.”

Theme B: Teachers Felt That They Were Not Prepared for the Disruption of Teaching Instructions During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Unpreparedness

Almost all the participants pointed out that they were not prepared for the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. T1 pointed out that they were not aware of what to do during the COVID-19 pandemic: “So not knowing what I was going to be doing from moment to moment was made it more difficult.”

T2 pointed out that they did not know what was expected of them during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, she pointed out that they had difficulties teaching and evaluating learners during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic: “We did not know what the expectations were, with teaching and evaluating the students’ progress.” T5 agreed hinted at the unpreparedness of teachers when she pointed out that the COVID-19 and the

closure of schools caught them off guard. She had to familiarize herself with teaching online and using videos and audios in teaching:

Yeah. I think it affected. Like other teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools got us off guard. We were not prepared for the online teaching.

I had to get used to teaching online and using videos and audios in teaching.

Changing from in-person teaching to online teaching was really difficult.

T6 hinted at the unpreparedness of the district during the COVID-19 pandemic. He pointed out that they were not prepared for interactive learning virtually: “My district was not prepared for the pandemic and my district was not prepared for interactive learning virtually.”

T7 hints at lack of preparedness when he pointed at lack of a plan during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to him, the lack of a plan was responsible for the challenges that they faced at the begin of the pandemic. However, with support from the administration, they were able to develop a plan and address the challenges.

At the beginning it was a little bit challenging since we didn't have a previous plan in place but little by little and due to some support provided by the office, we were able to plan and teach the students all the academics needed remotely.

T10 pointed out that they were unprepared for the closure of the school: “The closure of school was especially unexpected.”

Lack of Experience

Lack of experience was also another issue that most of the participants raised. In particular, most of the participants pointed out that they were inexperienced with remote

teaching. T1 pointed that she did not know what she was going to do: “So not knowing what I was going to be doing from moment to moment was made it more difficult.”

T2 hinted at lack of experience when she pointed out that she did not know what was expected of her as a teacher. She also did not know how to teach and evaluate learners remotely: “We did not know what the expectations were, with teaching and evaluating the students’ progress.”

T5 pointed out that lack of experience was responsible for her challenges. According to her, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the first opportunity to teach remotely. She did not know how to use online technologies and tools, including zoom. She attributes her challenges to lack of experience in teaching remotely: “We were not prepared for the online teaching. I had to get used to teaching online and using videos and audios in teaching. Changing from in-person teaching to online teaching was really difficult.”

Disruptions of Teaching Methods

The participants’ unpreparedness is also demonstrated by the disruption in the teaching methods. For instance, T1 explained how she did not know what was going to happen, and this affected her lesson planning: “But one big thing was that sort of we never knew from one moment to the next, what was going to happen? So, am I going to you know how I am going to be delivering my lesson today?”

T5 also hinted at how lack of preparedness disrupted her teaching method. According to T5, she only started to use recorded videos and audios after the COVID-19 pandemic: “We were not prepared for the online teaching. I had to get used to teaching

online and using videos and audios in teaching. Changing from in-person teaching to online teaching was difficult.”

Theme C: Teachers Felt That the Transition to Online Teaching Was Challenging

The participants pointed at various challenges that they faced when transitioning to online teaching. T3 was able to list various challenges that she faced when transitioning to online teaching. She raised challenges related to the use of technology, increased workload, long-working hours, and reduced engagement in physical activities.

Definitely. I was you know the learning curve for all the technology took a lot of time ... Working from home was challenging because I felt like I was always working the day never ended. Part of me was curious and kind of you know into trying up a new technology. So, I would just keep going and spending hours and hours and hours and looking at the screen all the time was challenging and yeah... Also sitting all day long in front of the screen and not moving because in my classroom I can move quite a bit. That was challenging.

T3 also hinted at challenges in setting expectations and learning goals:

The expectations were set, and they were higher than they had been, but it was kind of almost too late. So, it was always kind of a struggle. But I don't really have this, I mean, it was all just sort of like, we just had to do what we had to do, basically. That's how everybody was administration teachers, students, just sort of get through it.

T3 also raised issues related to mental health. According to her, she had to focus on managing her mental health and wellbeing as teaching online and for long hours was stressful:

I would just bundle up and go for a long walk and just be outside. And I learned that that really helped my mental health and my well-being. So that's something that I've continued, so generally, it used to be, I would just sort of stay at school to like four, four 30, and do my work. But now I just, I still sometimes do that, but usually now, I'll try to leave by like three 30, three 45, make sure I get home and get outside before it gets dark ... That's something you try to work on for your good. Even before the pandemic, or it was just with the pandemic. Now I've always tried to pay attention to those things, but during the pandemic, it got more intense And it was very stressful. So, I had to be more aware and make myself even if I didn't feel like it. Get outside for that walk. And I know that that helps me. All right.

T5 suggested that she experienced various challenges that affected engagement with learners and delivery of instructions. She also suggested that using technology was challenging while also hinting at the difficulties created by problems related to the use of English language:

Yes, I experienced a lot of challenges. I think these challenges made it difficult to engage and deliver instructions to ELLs ... as you know, these group of students have problems grasping English language ... interacting through the use of technology made the problem worse.

T6 was also able to highlight challenges he experienced while transitioning to online learning. In particular, he raised issues related to the availability of devices, inequality between learners, internet accessibility and reliability, technological use, and lack of training and experience:

One was devices, the county did not have enough devices prepared for the transition. So as more students enrolled, some of them had devices ... the student may have a device, but where they're at, their Internet might lag, where they can't keep their camera on because their Internet won't work and the bandwidth ... some students devices aren't going to work right with their camera on have never taught virtually before ... We are expected to push out effective content when we've never been trained. We actually you know have less experience than me with technology and don't even know how to use zoom, don't even how to use any of these interactive programs.

T8 highlighted various challenges that she faced while moving to an online teaching platform during the pandemic. Her challenges revolved around the use of zoom, controlling learners, attendance problems, and class coordination:

Yes, I experienced a lot of challenges while transitioning to online learning. Using zoom and ensuring that the children remained focus throughout. Additionally, some learners were unavailable most of the time, which made it difficult to teach. I had to call the parents...and sometimes, the students would be engaging in other activities...it was really challenging.

T9 listed several challenges that she faced. According to her, the challenges were mainly due to the age of the learners. She experienced challenges related to concentration and technology:

Yes, I experienced a lot of challenges. The first challenge is related to the age of the learners. I had difficulties getting the learners to concentrate on online

platforms. They would engage in playing with or touching other things. Secondly, technology was unreliable. At times, zooming would freeze or have challenges related to audio. Learners were also easily distracted.

T10 pointed out that the main challenge she faced was the use of technology. She experienced challenges using zoom camera and adjusting the audio. Other challenges she faced include challenges in coordinating classes, and frequent disruption:

Yes, I experienced some challenges. My main challenge in using online learner was the use of technology. Initially, it was difficult to focus the zoom camera and adjust the audio. However, with time, it became easier. It was also difficult to coordinate classes. Some of the students missed classes while others were late. Again, disruptions were frequent.

Unpreparedness

The unpreparedness of the teachers was one of the key obstacles for successful transitioning to online learning. The contribution of unpreparedness to the challenges in transitioning to online teaching was captured by various study participants. For example, T1 pointed out that not knowing what to do contributed to problems transitioning to online: “How am I going to be delivering my lesson today? So not knowing what I was going to be doing from moment to moment was made it more difficult, I would say.”

T2 also attributed the challenges that she experienced while transitioning to online teaching to unpreparedness. According to T2, teaching remotely was a new experience for her. They did not know what was expected of them: “I think more support was needed. This was a whole new experience for me and my colleagues. We did not know what the expectations were, with teaching and evaluating the students’ progress.” T2 also

hinted at challenges coordinating online classes. In particular, she hinted at the unpreparedness for online learning by parents. Parents' unpreparedness was demonstrated by their lack of involvement or low collaboration level in online learning: "The only negative issue was some parents did not stay near their child. If there were technical issues like unmuting, the child was on their own. In addition, the children whose parents were at their side were more focused."

T3 suggested that the transition to online learning was due to unpreparedness of both teachers and learners. In particular, she explained that learners were not ready for online learning: "You know the school was pretty encouraging to you know not be too tough on the kids and that kind of thing. They weren't into it."

T6 felt that the challenges were due to lack of preparedness and inexperience. According to him, the administrators and teachers had no clue of what to do:

we're pushing out and rolling out when they themselves didn't even know how to use the programming or work the equipment or, I mean, I really do feel that they had very, very high expectations for what we should be doing in the classrooms when they themselves had no clue how to do what we were doing.

T6 also pointed at lack of preparedness, training, and experience as responsible for the challenges that they faced while transitioning to online: With training being the biggest challenge:

The teachers weren't prepared. So, we have never taught virtually before. We are expected to push out effective content when we've never been trained. We are you know have less experience than me with technology and don't even know how to

use zoom, don't even how to use any of these interactive programs. So, I think not being trained was a big challenge.

Challenges Were Unavoidable

T5 felt that the challenges in transitioning to online learning were unavoidable. According to her, the transition to online was likely to pose challenges: “I don’t think. I believe the closure of schools and transitioning to online learning was bound to have repercussions. So, I don’t think we could have avoided these challenges.”

T6 opined that the challenges were unavoidable. According to her, ESL learners were already struggling in the use of English language. The transitioning to online learning was likely to worsen the situation due to limited contact: “No. Again, English language learners that are already struggling to speak English when they're not in the classroom setting, they're even having more limited contact and use of the language skills.”

T8 felt that the challenges were unavoidable. She cited challenges related to technology as unavoidable: “I don’t think these challenges were avoidable ... things like technology were beyond our reach.”

Despite this general view, T7 felt that the challenges were avoidable. However, he did not provide an explanation of how the challenges could have been avoided.

Challenges Not Unique to ESL

T5 felt that all teachers faced were not unique as some of her colleagues also experienced them: “No, I don’t think these challenges were unique to English language learners. Some of my colleagues also experienced them.”

T6 also opined that the challenges were not unique to ESL learners. According to him, other learners were already facing other challenges. However, he acknowledges the uniqueness of the challenges faced by ESL. For example, he points at the challenges in involving parents of ESL learners due to language barriers:

I don't think that it was just specifically unique to English Language learners, students were as equally impacted because they additional challenges that come with in general with reading and writing and with cognitive development as far as it goes with them speaking a different language and then of course the parents in addition don't have as much availability to support them because they themselves may not speak the language or I mean if the assignment is just an English and there's not that teacher support there there's an additional struggle.

T8 thinks that other learners also experienced these challenges: “Although my focus was on ELLs, I think these challenges also affected other learners ... I don’t think they were unique to ELLs.”

T9 also considered that the challenges that ESL teachers were not unique: “I don’t know, but I think these challenges were not unique for ELLS teachers.”

Theme D: Teachers Felt That They Required Support in Dealing With the Challenges Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Varying Level of Support

The participants received different levels of support. According to T2, pointed out that she needed more support to transition to online learning: “I think more support was needed. This was a whole new experience for me and my colleagues. We did not know what the expectations were, with teaching and evaluating the students’ progress.” T2 also

explains that school administrations needed to support teachers by providing training and providing them with critical information about teaching remotely: “I think the administration could have provided insight and training.”

T3 explained that the administration was fairly supportive during the transition to online teaching: “Because we nobody knew, so I feel like they were fairly supportive. I'd say fairly supportive.”

T4 felt that she received insufficient support from the school administration: “I would have to say that I had very little support.”

T6 also suggested that the level of support from the administration was not enough. However, he attributed the insufficient support due to the high expectations of teachers and administrators:

No. I think the expectations were very high. For things that they were pushing out and rolling out when they themselves didn't even know how to use the programming or work the equipment or, I mean, I really do feel that they had very, very high expectations for what we should be doing in the classrooms when they themselves had no clue how to do what we were doing.

T7 suggested that he received little support from the administration. However, he thought that the support was understandable owing to the unexpected nature of the situation: “I would have to say that I had very little support, but it was good enough to start with because it was a new situation for all our education systems.”

T8 felt that teachers were not provided with enough support by the administration. She cited the lack of training on the use of technology and challenges related to technology as evidence for lack of support.

While I don't like to complain or blame anyone, I feel that we were not provided with enough support. In particular, we were not trained in the use of technology.

The administration did not also address issues related to technology.

T5 and T9, unlike other teachers, felt that sufficient support was provided by the administration: "Yes, I think I received enough support from the administration."

According to T9, the administration supported them by providing them with communication gadgets. However, she opined that most of the assistance was directed to senior classes: "Yes, I think our administration really tried to support us. For example, we were provided with communication gadgets for communicating. However, most of the assistance focused on helping senior classes."

Additional Training Needed

Almost all participants agreed that additional training was necessary to address problems they faced when transitioning to online teaching. T2 was of the view that more training would have relieved the challenges that she was facing: "I think more training would have assisted in supporting the challenges I faced."

T4 explained that teachers require proper training. In particular, she suggested that teachers need to be trained on the implementation of virtual platforms. She also suggested that teachers need training on activities and lessons: "Teachers needed a proper training on how to implement the virtual platforms and on activities and lessons to provide to their students."

T5 felt that teachers needed training on the use of technology. According to her, training on the use of technology would lessen the challenges that were related with the

use of technology: “I also think that we need to be trained on online teaching and the use of technology. The administration also needs to facilitate online classes.”

T6 suggested that teachers needed to undergo ongoing training on online teaching. According to him, teachers needed to be trained on management of learners, use of Google Classroom, curriculum, and assessments:

So, we could have effectively taught the kids in the classroom because if we weren't effectively teaching, taking an hour away from that to train us properly on Google Classroom or help us come up with the assessments and the curriculum in the classroom as a school would have been a lot more effective than us, the teachers just trying to figure it out while struggling.

While he agreed with others, T7 pointed at some of the areas that teachers needed training on. According to him, teachers needed training on implementation of virtual platforms and lessons: “Teachers needed a proper training on how to implement the virtual platforms and on activities and lessons to provide to their students.”

T8 suggested that teachers needed training and resources necessary for teaching online. According to her proper training would have addressed some of the challenges that teachers faced: “I think teachers needed to be trained and be provided with the resources for online learning. With proper training, we would have addressed some of these challenges better.”

T9 and T10 agreed with other participants that teachers needed additional training. T9 suggested that teachers required additional support and communication devices: “I think believe teachers need to be trained and provided with the gadgets required for transitioning to online learning.”

T10 was specific on the kind of training required. According to her, teachers only needed training on how to use zoom and other online technologies: “I think teachers only need to be trained on the use of zoom and managing of online classes.”

Summary

In Chapter 4, I explored the results of the study. I provided the results of the study based on the two research questions. The results were based on the feedback obtained from the interviews with 10 participants. I also presented the themes obtained from my thematic analysis of the data. Four major themes and several subthemes emerged from the thematic analysis: two themes for each research question.

The first emergent theme: a) teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students. This theme is related to RQ1 and had two subthemes: disruption of teaching methods and affected performance. All the participants were of the same view that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the teaching methods. Teachers had to adjust to new methods of teaching and engaging learners. The participants also agreed that the disruption of teaching methods and resulting challenges affected the performance of learners.

The second emerging theme: b) teachers were not prepared for a change in teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This theme is related to RQ1 and had three subthemes: unpreparedness, lack of experience, and disruption of teaching methods. Generally, most of the teachers were not prepared for the transition to online teaching. Lack of experience contributed to their unpreparedness. Teachers’ lack of preparedness played a critical role in the disruption to teaching that they experienced.

The third theme that emerged: c) teachers felt that the transition to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers. This theme was related to RQ2 and had three subthemes: unpreparedness, challenges were unavoidable, and challenges not unique to ESL. Teachers highlighted different challenges that they faced. The most common challenges include using technology, coordinating classes, internet unreliability, and managing classes. These challenges were attributed to lack of experience and preparedness. Most participants also considered the challenges as not unique to ESL. However, some participants highlighted the vulnerability of ESL learners.

The fourth theme that emerged: d) teachers felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges related to COVID-19 pandemic. This theme is related to RQ1 and had two subthemes: varying level of support and need for additional training. Most of the participants felt that the support from administration was insufficient while a few of them felt that enough support was provided. Some of the participants associated the insufficient support to lack of preparedness. All participants agreed that teachers needed additional training to transition to online learning. Most of the participants pointed out that teachers needed training on the use of technology and management of online training. In summary, in chapter four I provided the results of the study. I organized the results around four themes from the thematic analysis and the two research questions.

In Chapter 5 I focused on interpreting these findings while exploring the study limitations. I also provided recommendations and the implications of the findings and an in-depth analysis of the four themes while explaining how they answered the two research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this basic qualitative study, I examined ESL teachers' perspectives on the change in instructional practices provided to English language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I explored ESL teachers' perspectives on the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic while modifying their instructional methods to meet the needs of ESL learners. I gathered the data for the study through a semistructured interview with 10 ESL teachers from two local districts and the Walden Participant Pool. The interviews were conducted through Zoom due to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants had experience teaching virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic. I analyzed the data using thematic analysis. From my analysis, four themes emerged:

1. Teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students.
2. Teachers needed to prepare for a change in teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Teachers felt the transition to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers.
4. Teachers felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Understanding the ESL teachers' perspectives helps in addressing issues that ESL learners face. The findings also have implications for policymakers, school administrators, societies, and future research.

In this chapter, I provide a deeper discussion of the findings of this study. The discussion includes interpreting and connecting the research findings with the current research and conceptual framework. I also discuss the limitations and implications of the research findings. In particular, I focus on the implications of the findings for policymaking, societies, future research, and teaching practice. I end the chapter by providing a comprehensive conclusion of the research findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data collection process began after the approval of this study by the Walden University IRB. Semistructured interviews were carried out with 10 ESL teachers from two local districts. The interviews were aimed at answering the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are ESL teachers' perspectives about how the delivery of instruction to ESL students changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: What are the perspectives of ESL teachers on the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the unique needs of the ESL population?

The data obtained from the study were analyzed for themes using thematic analysis. The emergent themes represented my interpretation of the findings of this study. The findings were then interpreted using the current literature and KMM, which was the conceptual framework guiding this study.

Discussion of Research Findings

Theme A: Teachers Felt That the COVID-19 Pandemic Interfered With Delivering Instructions to ESL Students

The closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic had varied impacts on the education sector. The participants in this study felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instruction to ESL students. This finding has been reflected in previous studies. For instance, a study by Goodrich et al. (2022) found that the closure of schools restricted the delivery of instructions. According to Goodrich et al., teachers could not use direct instruction during school closures. The COVID-19 pandemic also interfered with the delivery of instruction to ESL students by negatively affecting participation in learning, social interactions, lesson planning, and schedules (Kainama & Hendriks, 2021; Ma'rufa & Mustafa, 2021).

The changes in teaching methods showed interference with instruction. All the participants indicated that they had changed their teaching methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, T2 explained that she had to tailor her teaching methods to meet the needs of the learners: “I had to devise new ways to engage with the children and find ways to teach them still.”

This finding is reflected in the available literature. For instance, in their study, Bozkurt et al. (2022) found that the COVID-19 pandemic changed how education is delivered. Additionally, it was found that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the pedagogical approaches that teachers use (Bozkurt et al., 2022). Another study indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic forced teachers to abandon their instructional leadership to fit into the new conditions. In another study, Farrell and Stanlik (2021) found that the

COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for ESL teachers to use conventional teaching practices and principles. Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) found that teachers had to modify their teaching priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The changes in learning performance demonstrated interference with the delivery of instruction. Most participants felt that the COVID-19 pandemic affected learners' academic performance. T6 pointed out that the change in instruction affected the performance of ESL learners: “Yes, I do believe that the COVID-19 pandemic and the instruction affected the performance of English language learners because also they were missing the language communication in English with their peers and teacher.”

This finding agrees with available literature. For example, similar findings were reflected in a study by Whitley et al. (2021). According to Whitley et al., vulnerable learners demonstrated a more significant decline in credit attainment and academic achievements. This decline in credit attainment and academic achievement was attributed to attendance problems and decreased engagement in learning activities (Whitley et al., 2021). Schuurman et al. (2021) reflected this finding when they found that the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic led to discontinuity in learners' achievement growth. In another study, Grewenig et al. (2021) found that school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced learning time, which affected learners' performance. However, the effects of a reduction in learning time vary among different learners. According to Grewenig et al., the reduction in daily learning time was significantly higher in low achievers than in higher achievers.

In conclusion, the available literature supports the participants' feeling that the pandemic interfered with the delivery of instruction. I could not identify any scholarly work that contradicted the findings of this study.

Theme B: Teachers Felt They Needed to Prepare for the Disruption of Teaching Instructions During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study participants felt unprepared for the disruption of teaching instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. T1 pointed out that they were not unaware of what to do during the COVID-19 pandemic: "So not knowing what I would be doing momentarily made it more difficult."

Similar findings are reflected in the available scholarly work. According to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), the transition to online learning needed to be more consistent as it involved trial and error due to a lack of guidelines or framework. The utilization of trial-and-error methods in online teaching clearly underscores the lack of preparation among teachers. In another study, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) found that teachers needed to gain the digital competence required for online teaching. Similarly, Coman et al. (2020) and Sahito et al. (2022) found that most teachers needed more information communication technology skills necessary for online teaching. This lack of digital competence indicated that teachers must prepare for online teaching. Similar results were found by Atmojo et al. (2021). According to Atmojo et al., teachers must improve their skills in many areas, including pedagogy, design, content, management, and communication. However, their unpreparedness impacted the development of their skills in these areas. According to Coman et al. (2020), teachers were reluctant to improve their technical skills.

Their lack of experience also showed teachers' unpreparedness for the disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the participants needed to gain experience with online learning. T2 hinted at a lack of experience when she pointed out that she needed to learn what was expected of her as a teacher. She also did not know how to teach and evaluate learners remotely: “We did not know the expectations for teaching and evaluating the student's progress.”

The review of the literature supports this finding on teachers' lack of experience as one of the barriers to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a study by Marshall et al. (2020) found that 92.4% of teachers had yet to experience teaching online before the COVID-19 pandemic. This value was reflected in the present study, where 90% of the participants had yet to experience teaching online prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar results were found by Ma et al. (2021) when they found that most teachers had yet to participate in online training.

The lack of experience in online learning affects the ability of teachers to effectively deliver instruction to learners virtually (Ma et al., 2021). According to Ma et al. (2021), a lack of experience in online teaching affected teachers' self-efficacy. Teachers' lack of experience in online teaching is attributable to a lack of meaningful training on using technologies (Marshall et al., 2020). Teachers' unpreparedness contributed to the disruption of learning methods.

Theme C: Teachers Felt That the Transition to Online Teaching Was Challenging

The participants pointed out various challenges they faced when transitioning to online teaching. For example, T3 highlighted challenges related to the use of technology,

increased workload, long working hours, and reduced engagement in physical activities that she faced during the transition to online learning:

Working from home was challenging because I felt like I was always working.

The day never ended. Part of me was curious and kind of, you know, into trying up new technology. So, I would keep going and spending hours and hours and hours and looking at the screen all the time was challenging, and also, sitting all day long in front of the screen and not moving because, in my classroom, I can move quite a bit. That was challenging.

As other stakeholders have highlighted, these challenges are not unique to the present study. According to Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021), the abrupt closure of schools and the transition to online learning was a significant concern for teachers and learners. Technological issues were the most common challenges highlighted by scholars. In a study by Turnbull et al. (2021), it was found that some ESL learners needed help accessing the technologies needed for online learning. In particular, the researchers found that ESL learners and teachers faced challenges related to communication infrastructure, software availability and access, and hardware platforms.

Internet connectivity is also another challenge that several scholars have highlighted. Means and Neisler (2020) found that internet connectivity issues were severe during the COVID-19 pandemic. In their study, Means and Neisler found that 46% of their participants had issues with internet connectivity. According to Adedoyin and Soykan (2020), educators and learners with poor internet connectivity are disadvantaged when it comes to online learning. However, Ma'rufa and Mustofa (2021) found that internet connectivity varied from one setting to another. For example, learners from rural

areas were found to have more challenges than those from urban areas (Ma'rufa & Mustafa, 2021). Poor internet connectivity has been shown to impact learning outcomes in virtual settings negatively. For example, learners with poor internet connectivity are less motivated to participate in online learning than those with better internet connectivity (Ma'rufa & Mustafa, 2021). From the literature review, it is clear that technological challenges were common because online learning is entirely dependent on technology through technological devices and internet connectivity (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). Another key finding from the study was that the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic were unavoidable. T8 felt that the challenges were unavoidable. She cited challenges related to technology as unavoidable: “I do not think these challenges were avoidable ... things like technology were beyond our reach.”

Available scholarly work supports this finding. For example, according to Parveen et al. (2022), schools had to swiftly modify their operations and organizational structure during the COVID-19 pandemic. This swift modification of operations and organizational structures leads to inevitable challenges (Parveen et al., 2022).

Another key finding from the study was that the challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online learning were common to ESL teachers and learners. As explained by T5, non-ESL teachers and learners also experienced the same challenges: “No, these challenges were not unique to English language learners. Some of my colleagues also experienced them.”

Available literature supports this finding. According to Parker and Alfaro (2022), school closures and interruptions of classes have been detrimental to the academic development of all learners. School closures undermined the role of schools in learners'

social development (Parker & Alfaro, 2022). They also undermined the role of schools in learners' physical and mental well-being (Parker & Alfaro, 2022). In one study, Sharp et al. (2020) found that 98% of all teachers were concerned about the progression of their learners during the pandemic. Additionally, most of the learners were found to be behind in their learning curriculum (Sharp et al., 2020). On average, teachers estimated that their pupils were 3 months behind. Teachers were also behind on the curriculum coverage (Sharp et al., 2020).

Despite this, however, some studies have shown that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic varied among different groups of learners. According to Whitley et al. (2021), vulnerable learners were more likely to be affected by disruptions than others. In their study, Sharp et al. (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic widened the learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their counterparts. On average, this learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their counterparts is estimated to have increased by 46% (Sharp et al., 2020). Similar findings were presented by Parker and Alfaro (2022). According to Parker and Alfaro, learners from low-income households are disproportionately affected by the closure of schools, hence the increase in educational disparities. In their study, Whitley et al. found that vulnerable learners experienced more challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Whitley et al., vulnerable learners were likelier to be disengaged in learning activities.

Additionally, vulnerable learners were found to be more likely to suffer from attendance problems, decreased credit attainment, and a general decline in academic achievement. In another study, Crane et al. (2021) found that schools ignored learners with special needs in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, learners with

special needs were more significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than other groups.

ESL learners are considered vulnerable in educational setups (Blagg et al., 2020). Some scholarly works indicate that ESL learners were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Blagg et al. (2020), ESL learners face more challenges in completing classwork online. Compared to other learners, more ESL learners missed participating in learning activities, duties, and assignments (Khreisat, 2022).

Theme D: Teachers Felt That They Required Support in Dealing With the Challenges Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Teachers required support in dealing with the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. T2 pointed out that she needed more “support to transition to online learning: “I think more support was needed. This was a whole new experience for me and my colleagues. We did not know the expectations for teaching and evaluating the student's progress.”

The available literature supports this finding. According to Pressley and Rangel (2023), teachers needed guidance and support due to the instructional and teaching changes they faced during the pandemic. Administrative support was needed to improve teachers' self-efficacy during the pandemic (Pressley & Rangel, 2023). Inadequate support has been associated with various adverse outcomes. For example, inadequate teacher support is attributed to increased job-related stress, which leads to teacher shortages, declined academic outcomes, and poor mental health among teachers (Robinson et al., 2023).

Another key finding in the present study is the variation in the levels of support the teachers received. The available literature supports this finding. For example, in their study, Nadeem et al. (2023) found that teachers received more support from the schools than the districts. In particular, teachers received school guidance and support in distance learning and student engagement. However, Dayal (2023) found that teachers received insufficient support during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Dayal (2023), teachers had insufficient support and training to adapt to the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers also felt that they needed additional training during the pandemic. The available literature also supports this finding. For example, Dayal (2023) found that teachers needed training on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). According to Dayal (2023), ICTs are vital viability of online education. Information communication technologies were required for adequate curriculum coverage, teachers' professional development, and application of pedagogical practices and assessments (Dayal, 2023). Practical training would improve ESL teachers' abilities to address the rising needs of learners while addressing the challenges that might arise.

Limitations of the Study

While this study successfully answered the research questions and met the objectives, it has some limitations. The limitation of this study is related to the study methodology, participant recruitment, sample size, data collection, and personal bias. These limitations had different impacts on the study, as identified below.

Study Methodology

This study used the basic qualitative study methodology. One limitation of basic qualitative study is the lack of transferability (Sahito et al., 2022). This implies that the findings of this study can only be applied to a very narrow population. The lack of transferability of qualitative study is attributable to its concern with only limited aspects of human experience. The present study only focused on the experiences of ESL teachers. This implies that the findings of this study cannot be expanded and applied to other teachers. The finding of this study also needs more geographical transferability. This lack of geographical transferability can be attributed to the study's limitation to local districts. Accordingly, the study focused on obtaining ESL teachers' perspectives from two local districts and the Walden Participant pool. This implies that the finding of this study can only be applied to the two districts and not others. I solved the issue of transferability by defining the population of interest in detail. Additionally, I tried to reach the saturation point of essential themes and categories during the thematic analysis process.

Participant Recruitment

The research participants were recruited using purposeful sampling from Teacher' Staff Directory list from two local districts and the Walden Participant pool. However, this recruitment method had some limitations. For example, purposeful sampling has limited external validity as the resulting samples might not represent the population at large (Andrade, 2020). In the present study, the participants may only represent some teachers as it was restricted to ESL educators. I addressed this limitation of purposeful sampling by reducing the requirements that the participants must meet. For example, I included ESL teachers that teach different grades. Reducing the requirements increased

the number of individuals who qualified to participate in the study. Another limitation related to the recruitment of participants was the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the COVID-19 restrictions made it difficult to recruit participants physically. Since I understood the health impacts of the condition, I observed all the intervention guidelines. I solved this limitation by recruiting participants online. In particular, I recruited the participants from teachers' staff directory from two local districts and the Walden Participant Pool.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with the study participants. However, using semi-structured interviews to collect data for this study had some limitations. For example, the semi-structured interviews proved to be time-consuming. It took five days to complete all the interviews. I addressed this limitation by developing a schedule for every activity and reducing follow-up questions.

Sample Size

This study involved 10 participants, 9 from two local districts and 1 participant from the Walden Participant Pool. Despite meeting the saturation requirement, this sample size only represents a small representation of ESL teachers' perspectives. This limitation was addressed by ensuring that participants with varied characteristics were recruited. This participant recruitment was achieved through the Walden Participant Pool and teachers from two local districts.

Personal Bias

Personal bias could also have influenced the recruitment of participants and the interpretation of research findings. As an experienced early childhood and ESL teacher,

bias was possible in this study. However, I addressed this limitation by keeping a reflective journal of the research process and interviews.

Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine ESL teachers' perspectives on the change in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges they faced when adapting or modifying their instructional methods during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the needs of ESL learners. The participants in this study felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with delivering instructions to ESL learners. The participants described how they had to change their teaching methods to suit the conditions created by the pandemic. The disruption in teaching methods caused concerns among the participants regarding learners' performance.

The participants also felt that they were unprepared for the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, teachers needed to prepare for the transition to online learning. Participants' unpreparedness was due to a need for more experience in online teaching. The participants also felt that the transition to online teaching was challenging. Common challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic were related to technological changes and the differing needs of learners. Teachers' unpreparedness and lack of experience were also contributing factors to the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges due to the pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants received varying support from school administration and their districts. Teachers required support in the transition to online learning. Most participants cited additional training as critical for transitioning to online learning.

Based on the findings of this study, I have several recommendations. First, a follow-up study needs to be undertaken, focusing on expanding the findings of this study. The follow-up study needs to use participants from more schools and districts. The follow-up study also needs to use a large sample. Another follow-up study needs to focus on different classes of teachers. For instance, a follow-up study needs to focus on the perspectives of teachers of special needs. Another recommendation is for policymakers, school administrators, and local districts to prioritize increasing support for teachers. Additionally, school administrators and local districts also need to support teachers through additional training and the provision of resources.

Implications

The results of this study have various implications. Accordingly, the findings of this study have implications for future research, social, policymakers, and teaching practice.

Implications for Future Research

This research has significant implications for future research. For instance, this research provided a foundation for future research by providing insights into the perspectives of ESL teachers on changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this research also inform future studies by providing insight into areas where more research is required.

Implications for Policy

The findings of this study also have significant implications for policies. Accordingly, policymakers might use the findings of this study to develop policies that can address educational issues that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example,

policymakers can use the findings of this research to address the issue of educational inequalities that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Implications

The findings also have implications for society at large. For example, this study's findings can change communities' perceptions about the role of ESL teachers.

Additionally, the findings can help improve the support that ESL teachers receive from communities. The findings can also increase communities' understanding of the education sector's issues. In particular, societies' understanding of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education may improve. As a result, societies and communities can contribute to addressing the education problems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teaching Practice

The finding of this study could have tremendous implications for teaching practice. For instance, the study's findings can be used to inform the training of teachers. The study's findings show that teachers need training in different areas, including technological use, online teaching, and managing virtual classes. Therefore, teaching practice would focus on integrating technology into training.

Conclusion

The aim of this basic qualitative study was to examine ESL teachers' perspectives on the change in instructional practices provided to English language learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this basic qualitative study, I explored ESL teachers' perspectives on the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic while modifying their instructional methods to meet the needs of ESL learners. The literature

review revealed that more attention needs to be given to teachers' perspectives on changes in instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through my study, I tried to fill the gaps in literature and practice by exploring teachers' perspectives on instructional practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. I collected the data for the study through semi-structured interviews with 10 ESL teachers. Thematic analysis of collected data identified four major themes, including:

1. Teachers felt that the COVID-19 pandemic interfered with the delivery of instructions to ESL students.
2. Teachers were not prepared for a change in teaching instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Teachers felt the transition to online teaching was challenging for ESL teachers.
4. Teachers felt that they required support in dealing with the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These themes answered the two research questions and met the purpose of this study. The findings also filled the gap in the literature by providing insight into ESL teachers' perspectives on the changes in instructional practices and the challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the findings expanded the available literature on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt transition into online learning. The findings also increased our understanding of challenges faced by educators and learners during the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning. In particular, the results of this study provided insight into the experiences and challenges of ESL learners during the COVID-19 pandemic. The finding of this study also supported

positive social change by highlighting the challenges that ESL teachers and learners experience. The limitations of this study related to the study methodology, participant recruitment, sample size, data collection, and personal bias. A follow-up study on the same topic using more participants and a more comprehensive geographical location is recommended. The results of this study have implications for future research, policymaking, teaching practice, and societies.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participant's Name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

School: _____ Grade level: _____

Introduction: Hi. My name is Loubna El bdaoui. Thank you so much for participating in my study. The purpose of this interview is to talk about your experiences teaching remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year. This interview should take approximately 40-60 minutes. As you read in the signed participation and consent form, I will not identify you in my documents and no one will be able to identify you with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. I also need to let you know that this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.

Do you have any questions?

Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions:

Watch for non-verbal queues

Paraphrase as needed

Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in depth

Record and save audio of the interview

1 Section 1: Perspectives on changes in delivery of instructions

1. How many years of teaching experience did you have prior to the 2019/2020 school year?
2. What grades did you teach during the 2019/2020 school year?
3. How did your school respond to closure and restriction of learning during the COVID pandemic?
4. Remote teaching was one of the strategies that learning institutions used to address problems associated with closure of schools. How would you describe your experience teaching remotely during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019-2020 school year?

Follow up:

- a. How did you recreate social experiences in the remote setting? Can you give some specific examples?
- b. How did you facilitate cognitive experiences in the remote setting? Can you give some specific examples?
5. What were your experiences with teaching remotely before the pandemic?
6. Did the transition to online teaching affect your teaching methods? Explain
7. How did you tailor your teaching methods to meet the needs of ELL learners?
8. How effective was the delivery of instructions online?
9. Given an opportunity, will you main the new online teaching methods or revert back to the old ones?

10. Would you recommend the use of remote teaching beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?

11. Do you think remote teaching has advantages over the traditional teaching?

Section 2: Perspective on challenges

12. Did you experience any challenges in transitioning to online challenges?

Follow-up questions

- a. Do you think these challenges were unique to ELLs?
- b. How did the challenges affect the teaching of ELLs? Did they affect their performance?
- c. How did you address these challenges?

13. Do you think the challenges were avoidable?

14. Do you feel that you received enough support from the administration?

15. What support do you believe teachers needed from administration to provide for the transition?

16. What additional experiences or thoughts can you share pertaining to teaching remotely during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019-2020 school year?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by...?

Tell me more about...

You mentioned...

Tell me more...

Can you expand more on ...?

Conclusion: Thank you for your answers and for taking the time to speak with me. I will have the audio I recorded transcribed and will create a two-page summary of the findings. I will share that document with you should you wish to member check it for accuracy or to make any adjustments before I analyze it. I will also share the results of my study with you once the study is completed.

Do you have any questions?

My email is loubna.elbdaoui@waldenu.edu if you think of any questions after the interview.

Thank you again for your time. Goodbye.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Section 1: Perspectives on changes in delivery of instructions

1. How many years of teaching experience did you have prior to the 2019/2020 school year?
2. What grades did you teach during the 2019/2020 school year?
3. How did your school respond to closure and restriction of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. Remote teaching was one of the strategies that learning institutions used to address problems associated with closure of schools. How would you describe your experience teaching remotely during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019-2020 school year?

Follow up:

- c. How did you recreate social experiences in the remote setting? Can you give some specific examples?
- d. How did you facilitate cognitive experiences in the remote setting? Can you give some specific examples?
5. What were your experiences with teaching remotely before the pandemic?
6. Did the transition to online teaching affect your teaching methods? Explain
7. How did you tailor your teaching methods to meet the needs of ELL learners?
8. How effective was the delivery of instructions online?
9. Given an opportunity, would you remain with the new online teaching methods or revert back to the old ones?

10. Would you recommend the use of remote teaching beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?

11. Do you think remote teaching has advantages over the traditional teaching?

Section 2: Perspective on challenges

12. Did you experience any challenges in transitioning to online challenges?

Follow-up questions

d. Do you think these challenges were unique to ELLs?

e. How did the challenges affect the teaching of ELLs? Did they affect their performance?

f. How did you address these challenges?

13. Do you think the challenges were avoidable?

14. Do you feel that you received enough support from the administration?

15. What support do you believe teachers needed from administration to provide for the transition?

16. What additional experiences or thoughts can you share pertaining to teaching remotely during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019-2020 school year?

Possible follow up prompts that I will keep visible as I interview each participant:

What did you mean by...?

Tell me more about...

You mentioned...

Tell me more...

Can you expand more on ...?