

The Minimal Approach to Online EFL Classes in a Low-Resourced School Context

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Abstract

Objectives: The present investigation aims to shed light on the understudied realities of EFL teaching in low-resourced private school contexts.

Methods: Employing a phenomenological case study design, we collected in-depth semi-structured interview data from six EFL teachers at a low-resourced private school in Bangladesh over a period of four months. Additionally, recorded video classes and relevant documents were utilized to supplement the interview data. By employing interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), the data was analyzed.

Results: The findings of the study highlight that some items of freeware and open sources including Open Broadcaster Software (OBS), Facebook LIVE, PowerPoint, PDF Texts, Wondershare are employable for mediating ad-hoc EFL teaching during an emergency such as COVID-19 necessitating sudden shift of teaching modality from offline to online. The above-mentioned affordable tool-mediated novel EFL pedagogy resulted in remarkable success in the continuation of EFL learning, in EFL teachers' professional development, and in alternative assessments. However, isolation, disconnection, and uncertainty around teacher-student interaction are major challenges of minimal tool-mediated ad-hoc online teaching.

Conclusions: The findings implicate that space-and time-specific minimal tool-mediated online language teaching in low-resourced schools is feasible in navigating emergencies such as COVID-19.

Keywords: COVID-19, EFL, Online Teaching, Low-resourced School, EFL Teacher, Bangladesh.

النهج البسيط لفصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عبر الإنترنت في سياق مدرسي منخفض الموارد

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ملخص

الأهداف: يهدف التحقيق الحالي إلى تسليط الضوء على الواقع غير المدروس لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في سياقات المدارس الخاصة منخفضة الموارد.

الطرق: باستخدام تصميم دراسة الحالة الظاهرية، قمنا بجمع بيانات مقابلات شبه منظمة متعمقة من ستة مدرسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدرسة خاصة ذات موارد محدودة في بنجلاديش على مدى أربعة أشهر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم استخدام دروس الفيديو المسجلة والوثائق ذات الصلة لتكملة بيانات المقابلة. ومن خلال استخدام التحليل الظاهري التفسيري، قمنا بتحليل البيانات.

النتائج: تسلط نتائج الدراسة الضوء على أن بعض عناصر البرامج المجانية ومفتوحة المصدر بما في ذلك برنامج البث المفتوح والبيث المباشر على فيسبوك والعروض التقديمية والنصوص المقروءة بصيغة بي دي إف وأداة ووندرشير يمكن استخدامها للتوسط في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في أثناء حالة الطوارئ مثل كوفيد-19. مما يستلزم تحولاً مفاجئاً في طريقة التدريس من غير متصل بالإنترنت إلى متصل بالإنترنت. لقد أسفرت طريقة التدريس الجديدة المذكورة أعلاه والتي تعتمد على الأدوات وبأسعار معقولة عن نجاح ملحوظ في استمرار تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وفي التطوير المهني لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وفي التقييمات البديلة. ومع ذلك، فإن العزلة والانفصال وعدم اليقين بشأن تفاعل المعلم والطالب هي التحديات الرئيسية للتدريس عبر الإنترنت الذي يعتمد على الأدوات البسيطة.

الخلاصة: تشير النتائج إلى أن التدريس عبر الإنترنت الذي يعتمد على الأدوات البسيطة والمحدد بالمكان والزمان في المدارس ذات الموارد المنخفضة أمر ممكن في التعامل مع حالات الطوارئ مثل كوفيد-19.

الكلمات الدالة: كوفيد-19، تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التدريس عبر الإنترنت، المدرسة ذات الموارد المنخفضة، مدرس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بنجلاديش.



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INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching and information and communications technology (ICT)-based instruction have emerged as the predominant alternative to traditional face-to-face teaching worldwide, according to the reports of multiple research findings from different parts of the world (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2023; Lee et al., 2022; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Rayyan et al., 2024; Abusalim et al., 2024). Now, generally speaking, EFL teaching is a complex endeavor, distinct from other subjects, because it involves theories of language acquisition (Freeman & Freeman, 1998), instructional approaches (Chlopek, 2008), and cultural considerations (Alptekin, 1993), among other things. Given this complexity, teaching foreign language skills to EFL students through online instruction in the absence of prior preparation during the sudden shift to online education has presented significant challenges.

As a result, the attention given to online EFL teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in extensive research on various aspects such as innovation (Cui et al., 2023), students' and teachers' perceptions (Yüce & Çetin Koroğlu, 2023), preparedness (Li, 2022), challenges (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020), along with other dimensions. Noticeably, existing literature predominantly captures the scenario of online EFL teaching in well-resourced contexts and public institutions where EdTech facilities are abundant and remote EFL teaching practices are commonplace. Practically, there are disparities between high-resourced and low-resourced school contexts in developed and developing countries (Su et al., 2021). Although high-resourced schools are normally more successful in implementing virtual learning during COVID-19, their low-resourced counterparts face challenges (Walters, 2020). Therefore, the responses of low-resourced contexts are critical to understanding the diverse realities of EFL teaching from global perspectives, which are underexplored.

Limited studies have investigated online EFL teaching in low-income countries, such as Afghanistan (Rahim & Sandaran, 2020), Bangladesh (Huda & Eiten, 2022; Mahapatra, 2021), Ghana (Ire et al., 2022), India (Mahapatra, 2021; Kundu & Betal, 2022), Indonesia (Nawir & Tsuraya, 2021), Nepal (Mahapatra, 2021; Saud, 2021), and Tanzania (Upor, 2021) and elsewhere (e.g., Rayyan et al., 2024; Abusalim et al., 2024). The problem with these studies is that they have primarily focused on public institutions, with low-resourced private schools largely overlooked. Practically speaking, the uptick of private schools in low-income schools is now a big reality (Kingdon, 2020; Alderman et al., 2001). Private schools, for instance, constitute more than half of the total primary schools in Bangladesh (Roy et al., 2020) and heavily rely on students' tuition fees, necessitating their continued operation even during the pandemic. Moreover, parents prefer these schools for their extra emphasis on English language education (Suppramaniam et al., 2019). This reality also makes private schools more likely to transition to online EFL teaching activities, even with minimal resources and options, in times of crisis such as the pandemic. Minimalism in EdTech-mediated online teaching refers to making an educational shift to an online modality with freeware and other open tool sources within a school's low-financial capacity.

Consequently, EFL teachers in low-resourced private schools may have different experiences to share, which makes it important to investigate and inform the EFL education community. However, no studies have captured this significant stakeholder in EFL education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this research gap by investigating EFL teachers' minimal approach to online activities, innovation, tools, pedagogies, successes, and challenges in low-resourced school contexts. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the ELT world's knowledge base, inform EFL practitioners, and facilitate the development of effective strategies for online EFL teaching in such contexts.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research objectives of the study are to investigate the minimal approach taken by EFL teachers to online EFL teaching tools in low-resourced school contexts, to identify the pedagogies employed by EFL teachers in low-resourced contexts for online EFL teaching, and to understand the successes and challenges faced by EFL teachers in low-resourced contexts for EFL online teaching. To achieve these goals, the study is guided by the following three specific research questions:

1. What online tools do EFL teachers use for online EFL teaching in low-resourced school contexts with a minimalist approach?

2. What tool-mediated pedagogies do EFL teachers employ in low-resourced contexts for online EFL teaching?

3. What are the successes and challenges faced by EFL teachers in low-resourced contexts while online EFL teaching using their adopted tools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Making sense of ad hoc pedagogy during the COVID-19:

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 'ad hoc' means "arranged or happening when necessary and not planned". That is, the principal driver of an 'ad hoc' thing is a contextual 'necessity' in time or place that does not leave any room for pre-planning or pre-preparation. The COVID-19 pandemic may be considered as an epitome of such a context. The term has been used over the decades in various fields of education to mean any kind of necessity-driven "efforts" to handle an educational situation (e.g., Kasiske et al., 1996; Baum, 1999; Dierking et al., 2003; Peled, 2007; Holleran et al., 2023; Álvarez-Herrero, 2024). Online teaching during the COVID-19 is such an educational effort situated in the pandemic-caused emergency. Ad hoc pedagogy during the pandemic may be understood partly as what Duhn (2012) identifies 'assemblages between place and pedagogy' wherein there is assemblage potential between new elements and existing ones. Furthermore, ad hoc pedagogy may be understood as ad hoc instructional tasks designed to meet pedagogical needs (Peled, 2007). During the COVID-19 pandemic, ad hoc pedagogy took a new dimension and commonly made sense of 'ad hoc transitioning' measures from traditional, face-to-face classroom teaching to unplanned online teaching (Tanjga, 2021). The situation that did not allow global educational institutions to prepare for online pedagogy was the sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the prompt transitioning to online teaching as a place of pedagogy essentially led to what Hertrampf et al. (2022) call the "ad hoc digitalization" (p. 2) of available tools. The ad hoc pedagogy as such in the context characterized as "low-resourced" with EdTech (Lufungulo et al., 2023, p. 327) during COVID-19 is subject to the availability of and access to EdTech tools and many other contextual factors. The assemblages between the old teachers and old students of low-resourced schools (place) and new online pedagogy are similarly subject to the 'factor-influenced' compelling tool adoption (Sangeeta & Tandon, 2021) and 'minimalism approach' (Lufungulo et al., 2023) to tools availability, which should result in success and challenges of ad hoc online pedagogy during COVID-19 pandemic. The present study, thus, situates its research questions around some serious orientations of ad hoc online pedagogy, minimal tool adoption, successes and challenges that EFL teachers of low-resourced schools experienced during the pandemic time.

Minimalist Approach to Low-Resourced Schools and Online Learning:

The present study considers the minimalist approach relevant to online instruction, especially during the pandemic. According to Butterfill (2016), minimalism towards online teaching is the idea of starting with the bare essentials (e.g., Zoom or Facebook, internet connection, laptops, smartphones, etc.) and only adding what is necessary while also avoiding anything that would require additional abilities (e.g., a big financial investment) or resources (e.g., a full-fledged VLE). The minimalist approach can be a valuable tool in the design and implementation of distance learning programs that are accessible, effective, and equitable for all learners (Moore et al., 2011). A minimalist approach also refers to a management philosophy that emphasizes simplicity, efficiency, and a focus on core tasks or functions (e.g., continuity of education through online instructions) during a less-rigid, less bureaucratic, and more flexible situation e.g., a pandemic (Carragher et al., 2019).

Studies on the pandemic of online teaching admit that minimalism promotes using limited online resources and has proven to foster creative behavior, making it easier for teachers and students to interact with minimal tools and resources (Lufungulo et al., 2023; Chingara et al., 2021). A minimalist approach can be helpful in low-resourced EdTech institutions, such as those in developing countries, where there are competing needs, priorities, and financial constraints (Lufungulo et al., 2023). While laptops may be expensive and not accessible to many students, smartphones are often more affordable and widely available. many students in developing countries already use smartphones as their primary device devices for accessing the Internet and communicating with others (Chingara et al., 2021; Mwila et al., 2021). In a low-resourced context, optimized online learning on the small screens of mobile phones and slower internet speeds could happen during a pandemic (Lufungulo et al., 2023). A minimalist approach to online teaching in low-resourced institutions during the pandemic identifies teachers and students as untrained and self-literate in EdTech, and they take part in emergency online

teaching with (minimal) EdTech components as follows (TRUCANO, 2014; Ambrose et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2021; Khiat, 2017): The cost-effective use of "old" technologies such as radio and television in new ways; strategically sharing one device (e.g., a computer, a tablet, a mobile phone) with lots of people in areas with limited resources; strategically caching and downloading online content for offline use in areas with limited internet access or unreliable connectivity; promoting literacy and learning through various methods, including providing access to books and reading materials, creating reading programs and clubs, and engaging in storytelling and other cultural activities; supporting teachers with mobile phones to access educational resources, communicate with students and parents, and collaborate with other teachers; creating, sharing and accessing culturally appropriate and low-cost videos to support peer learning, self-directed learning, and other forms of learning.

The minimalist approach also involves creating short educational videos that can be easily shared and accessed by learners (Khiat, 2017; Wang et al., 2021). Using a simple application of free video conferencing and real-time interactive online tools like Google Meet can be a great option for ensuring that students do not get left behind, especially during times of remote learning or distance education in low-resourced contexts (Rahman et al., 2021). Overall, the success of online learning in low-resourced contexts in an abrupt situation such as a pandemic depends on the effectiveness of online platforms such as Google Meet. Effectiveness is ensured by factors such as ease of use, usefulness, perceived value, and enjoyment of online learning, as well as access to appropriate EdTech devices and platforms in low-resourced contexts (Eman, 2021; Al-Marroof et al., 2021).

Activity Theory for Analyzing Online Teaching Activities:

This study is underpinned by Activity Theory, a theoretical framework proposed by Engeström (1999) based on the process concept expounded by Lektorsky (1999). This theory has been highlighted as an indispensable tool for scrutinizing teaching activities due to its coherence with the fundamental principles of teaching (Wang et al., 2019). According to this theory, the psyche and actions of individuals are closely intertwined, and teaching activities, like other activities, are geared towards enhancing students' cognitive (psyche) abilities (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Hence, activity theory has become a prominent analytical tool in the teaching context (Wang et al., 2019). Wang et al. (ibid) describe activity theory as a framework that directs the examination of people's activities in a particular context, with a specific focus on three core elements, namely 'subject', 'object', and 'tool'. The 'subject' refers to the individual or group of individuals (e.g., EFL teachers) involved in the activity (e.g., online teaching), while the 'object' represents the goal or purpose (e.g., students' learning, continuation of education, sustaining of school, etc.) of the activity. The 'tool' encompasses all tangible and intangible resources utilized in the activity, including technologies, teaching methods, and other implements (e.g., Facebook, Zoom, laptops, mobile phones, OBS, internet, etc.). In essence, an activity (e.g., online teaching EFL) is molded by the intricate interplay between subject, object, and tool, as well as the broader sociocultural context (e.g., low-resourced school context) in which the activity occurs (Engeström, 2001). In the current study, the minimalism of online teaching activities in a low-resourced school context is explored in light of Activity Theory.

Pandemic-time Online EFL Teaching in Low-Resourced Settings: Pedagogies, Tools, Success, and Challenges

The literature suggests that various low-resourced contexts have successfully implemented different online teaching tools for EFL instruction during COVID-19. A study by Ire et al. (2022) reports that Ghanaian EFL teachers found ICT platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, and other ICT platforms to be effective, simpler, and more enjoyable for teaching and learning activities. These tools helped teachers and students adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic and continue their language learning and teaching activities. On the other hand, a study by Upor (2021) in Tanzania found that radio broadcasting and teaching through television were not widely accepted among teachers and students, while mobile-facilitated EFL teaching resulted in increased outcomes. The study highlights the importance of web resources and social networking sites (SNS) and their applications for students learning English in foreign language contexts and for supporting Swahili language teaching and learning. Additionally, the development of an e-learning library

by the Tanzania Institute of Education is considered a positive step towards expanding access to language learning resources and improving the quality of language education in the country. Although the cited studies report that the use of ICT platforms, web resources, Zoom, Google Meet, and mobile-facilitated EFL teaching was successful in different low-resourced contexts, they do not provide a detailed account of the process of selecting these tools or the trial-and-error approach used by EFL teachers. As contexts are diverse and schools are also of different categories, EFL teachers should likely have varying experiences with different types of tools and techniques before finding the ones that work best for their students and their specific context. The present study considers this point.

The body of literature on the pedagogical aspects of the EFL teachers of the low-resourced contexts who have taught EFL during and post-pandemic is rather limited and is still growing. The study by Huda and Eiten (2022) finds that university monitoring and feedback supported tertiary-level EFL teachers while teaching online during the pandemic. Mahapatra's (2021) study on the online EFL assessment and feedback practices of tertiary-level teachers in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal shows that teachers used a variety of formative assessment practices to engage students in different aspects of language learning. The use of rubrics allowed for a more structured evaluation of presentation skills, while informal self- and peer assessment helped students reflect on their progress and provided opportunities for peer feedback. Quizzes, on the other hand, allow for the assessment of explicit knowledge of writing and reading, which can be beneficial for language acquisition. Furthermore, the use of self- and peer assessment during discussions on conversation skills, grammar, and pronunciation highlights the importance of integrating formative assessment into classroom activities beyond just formal evaluations. The informal questions were often used to raise students' level of accuracy in language use. Self-assessment, rubrics, and checklists were further used in academic writing and speaking classes. Frequently asking students to self-assess their speaking and writing performance, especially their accuracy in grammar and pronunciation, led to the use of 'correct English'. A more detailed examination of the pedagogical aspect of online EFL teaching during the pandemic could help provide insights into the most effective approaches and techniques for using these tools. This could also be useful in improving the quality of EFL instruction both during and after the pandemic. However, there is an obvious lack of literature, which the present study takes into account.

Success and Challenges:

Research conducted on online EFL teaching in low-resourced contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted both successful outcomes and challenges. For example, Upor's (2021) study in Tanzania reveals that mobile-facilitated EFL teaching led to improved results, while radio and television-based methods were not well-received. The lack of face-to-face instruction and access to learning materials were identified as significant obstacles that impacted students' learning and teachers' ability to provide support. The study emphasized the importance of e-learning tools and the creation of an e-learning library by the Tanzania Institute of Education to aid the integration of technology in language learning. Similarly, Ire et al. (2022) found that ICT platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp were effective and enjoyable for teaching and learning activities in Ghana. However, Ghanaian EFL teachers faced challenges in adopting ICT-based EFL teaching due to their lack of training that aligns with the curriculum's expectations. Nawir and Tsuraya's (2021) study in Indonesia identifies complex challenges due to the country's limited experience with online teaching methods and inadequate access to internet facilities. Kundu and Betal's (2022) study in India reveals that EFL teachers faced several challenges in the sudden shift to online teaching, such as technical problems, lack of resources, and learner motivation and participation. Nevertheless, the participants demonstrated resilience and found impromptu solutions, such as collaboration and school policies, to improve their online teaching and learning. In Afghanistan, Rahim and Sandaran (2020) found that infrastructure challenges, including the lack of computer labs, poor internet connections, and irregular electricity supply hindered the implementation of e-learning in EFL classrooms at universities. Saud's (2021) study in Nepal indicated that most secondary school-level English teachers acquired the necessary technological skills during the pandemic-time lockdown for online instruction, although this preparation was self-driven as schools had no provision for this teaching mode.

The Context of the Study:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the education systems of low- and middle-income countries worldwide. Bangladesh, a country with limited resources, is among those affected (Rahman & Siddik, 2022). Bangladesh is one of the world's lowest education budget providers, allocating only 1.9% of its GDP to education. In comparison, the World Education Forum 2015 urged countries to increase the allocation to at least 4-6% of GDP (Rahman et al., 2016). Consequently, Bangladesh faced significant challenges in the education sector during the pandemic. Educational institutions remained closed for extended periods, comparable to only three other countries in the world: Panama, El Salvador, and Bolivia (The Daily Star, cited in Alam et al., 2022). While the promotion of English education in Bangladesh has been steadily encouraged by external donations and state policy for the country's economic development (Chowdhury, 2022), the COVID-19 outbreak halted teaching English and other subjects, especially in public institutions. Only private universities, particularly at the tertiary level, have been reported to have implemented online EFL teaching with some success (Huda & Eiten, 2022; Khan et al., 2022). Bangladesh has 68,618 private primary schools (Roy et al., 2020), and these schools cannot afford to close for an extended period as they are heavily reliant on student tuition fees for financial support. Thus, online teaching has become a viable alternative for these schools, albeit with minimal resources. To ensure the continuity of education, it is crucial to examine the experiences of private school educators who adopted a minimalist approach to online teaching in the low-resourced school context. Thus, the present phenomenological case study delves into the experiences of EFL teachers in a private primary school in Bangladesh.

METHODS

The Case and Participants

The present study involved six educators of English as a foreign language (EFL) from the case school, which came into being in 2017 and was confronted by the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. The institution was established by four pedagogues affiliated with the domain of education. The four pedagogues included two college lecturers, a primary school teacher, and a private tutor. The institution aspires to attain eminence in its district. Student admission to the school is determined by a stringent admission test with a strong focus on the English language. At the time of the research, the school had already garnered significant popularity amongst parents and students as a prominent private school. The participants in this study had 2 to 5 years of experience in offline EFL instruction at the school level, with no prior experience in online teaching. All six participants had obtained a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in English, specializing in literature, from renowned public universities and belonged to the age bracket of 30 to 35 years. Online teaching was utilized by the school for a prolonged period of 17 months, spanning from April 2020 to September 2021. The participants involved in this educational modality comprised both male and female educators, with a ratio of 4:2 respectively.

Research Philosophy

The current investigation is based on ontological and epistemological assumptions. It is also grounded in the interpretivist paradigm of Alharahsheh and Pius (2020). The study argues that the experiences of EFL teachers of online teaching are multifaceted and subjective, especially in high-resourced versus low-resourced contexts. To understand their realities and experiences, it is necessary to interpret and construct meaning from the perspective of individual EFL teachers in their specific contexts. Specifically, this study aims to examine how EFL teachers in low-resourced school contexts perceive and make sense of their experiences with online EFL teaching. Due to the nuanced and context-dependent nature of the research questions (Alam & Asmawi, 2024; Asmawi & Alam, 2024), a qualitative research design was chosen.

Research Design:

In light of the philosophical underpinnings discussed above, we chose to employ a phenomenological case study design for our current research endeavor. According to Bonyadi (2023), "using phenomenology in EFL research can broaden teachers' understanding of pedagogical issues by learning from teachers' and students' experiences, prompting them to re-

evaluate their presuppositions on numerous educational issues” (p.1). More specifically, we chose to employ a hermeneutic phenomenology for our research, which endeavors to explicate the commonalities in how diverse individuals experience a particular phenomenon (e.g., online EFL teaching), as explained by Creswell (2007). As no other similar case was available in the district, the study is limited to a ‘unique case’ (Flyvbjerg, 2011) of an emerging private primary school in the district of Jhenaidah, Bangladesh. The school authority sought anonymity.

Data and Data Collection:

In accordance with the research inquiries at hand, our investigation involved an interview-based study of six English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators from the sole school engaged in online EFL teaching throughout the period of pandemic-induced lockdown and school closures. Supplementary to these interviews, we collected recorded video classes and pertinent documents as data sources, which shed light on the first research question. In hermeneutic phenomenology, such data are commonly used to triangulate different human behaviors or experiences (Gadamer, 2013). The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2022 and April 2023, only after acquiring consent from both the school authority and participants. The interviews spanned over seven hours and were focused on (a) the minimalist approach to online tools adopted for EFL teaching, (b) the tool-facilitated pedagogical approaches taken for online EFL instruction, and (c) the successes and challenges faced. The interviews were recorded with the participants’ agreement, but they opted for anonymity. All the interviews were conducted on-site at the school campus. Additionally, we collected 30 video class recordings from the six participants, as well as 30 class slides, 5 PDF textbooks, 30 sets of weekly exam questions, 100 Facebook comments, and 50 student writing samples in the form of Facebook comments posted on the respective Facebook class groups. Both document data and interview data were used to gain insights into EFL teachers’ pedagogy, tools, challenges, and successes in online teaching.

Data Analysis:

To conduct a thorough analysis of the interview data, the researchers used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is a method that explores personal lived experiences and investigates how participants make sense of them (Smith, 2011). IPA draws from phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography and aims to remain close to the individual experience rather than detached from it. In this study, the researchers carefully examined the data, engaging in multiple stages of interpretation, with the second author reviewing the first interpretation until consensus was reached on the final version of the teachers’ lived experiences of online EFL teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The IPA process used a “double hermeneutic” approach, making sense of participants’ attempts to make sense of the phenomenon under investigation. The IPA process involved a detailed analytic treatment of each participant, leading to the identification of patterns across the data. During data analysis, the IPA method aimed to balance convergence and divergence within the sample, presenting both shared themes and highlighting the unique ways in which these themes manifested in individual participants’ experiences. The shared essence of the themes and patterns helped answer the research questions presented in the paper’s findings and discussion section. In addition to the IPA process, the researchers conducted document analysis, which involved both superficial examination (skimming) and thorough examination (reading) of the data, followed by interpretation. The researchers used thematic analysis, as Bowen (2009) recommended, to identify data patterns. Emerging themes became the categories for analysis, with the researchers carefully re-reading and reviewing the data coding and category construction process based on the data’s characteristics. Through this process, the researchers uncovered themes relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

FINDINGS

Research question 1: What online tools do EFL teachers use for online EFL teaching in low-resourced school contexts with a minimalist approach? In the low-resourced private school context, sudden ‘digital transition’ was attempted. However, this transition was backed up by ‘unprepared pedagogy’. The switching to the new mode of teaching had an

absolute reliance on less or no EdTech literacy, and it was motivated by the school's urgent need to ensure its continued viability:

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| -Sudden digital transition -unprepared pedagogy -reliance on self-literacy on EdTech | None of us here of all the English teachers had online teaching training or experiences before" (T5). In our context online teaching (during Covid) was the first of its kind (T1). We were self-literate in some of the EdTech like YouTube, Google etc. for our own need, not for online teaching (T5). |
|--|---|

Given the cited context above, the 'subject-based tech aptitude' of the science teachers' tool selection for the collective teaching cohort of the school followed for ad-hoc digital EFL pedagogy. The process quickly headed towards the try-outs of 'OBS software' and 'Facebook LIVE':

| | |
|---|---|
| -Science teachers lead in tool adaptation -Science teachers' ICT aptitude as the driver - Collegial collective literacy for starting ad hoc pedagogy - digital tryouts | Our Subas Sir and Saidur Sir- they understand well about different software (T6). Both Sirs are science teachers and therefore they know more about ICT than we the Arts teachers (T3). Before we discovered OBS we tried to take classes using Facebook Live on a mobile phone (T1). |
|---|---|

Limitations and challenges of Facebook and lesser outcome prospects of Zoom for the school context prompted the exploration, evaluation, and ultimate strategic adoption of the platforms of OBS in combination with Facebook as a more efficient option for teaching a larger group of EFL students:

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| -feasibility, and experience-based integrated approach to tool adoption | Given the problems of teaching through Facebook Live, we were reviewing the ins and outs of it and at the same time we were searching for a better alternative (T4) We compared and contrasted between Zoom and OBS and we went for OBS for some advantages, given our context of large classes of young students." "So we shifted to OBS plus Facebook (T5). Practically thinking, when I am teaching an online class of 100 students, I cannot give every student to speak up. That's why we opted for OBS (which does not give students a speaking option) instead of Zoom (which gives) (T2). |
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For further effectiveness, the adoption of OBS and Facebook Live soon led to the extended integration of PowerPoint as an auxiliary aid to facilitate slide-based EFL lessons, the utilization of PDF English texts for presentation purposes, and the exploration and utilization of Wondershare software to enhance interactivity by highlighting the text and providing bilingual meanings:

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| -Optimal effectiveness and more digital adoption | We needed PowerPoint also to make slides. So, we adopted it as an aiding tool that we did not use before (T3). We needed to show the text, so we used the PDF English texts of the National Curriculum and screen showed through OBS (T1). To make the PDF more interactive, we found out Wondershare to highlight texts and overwrite bilingual meaning (T5). |
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Research Question 2: What tool-mediated pedagogies do EFL teachers employ in resourced-low-resourced contexts for online EFL teaching?

The proactive EFL teachers, with adaptability and less EdTech literacy, initiated the novel pedagogical teaching of English through the Facebook live platform by creating dedicated Facebook groups and disseminating invitations to the

students and their parents to join the new learning setup:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent involvement - Teachers' flexibility in online teaching - Community approach/climate | <p>We had to be flexible to adapt easy alternatives to get started with online teaching (T1).</p> <p>So, we opened Facebook groups. We have call lists of all students. So, we phoned to all students' guardians and let them know that we were going to start online classes and called upon them to add to our Facebook groups (T4).</p> |
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The online EFL classes were well-structured with a preliminary instructional briefing that suggests preparing the class for the lesson:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Instructional design has a pre-teaching instructional briefing -Instructional briefing includes cultural greetings, good wishes for everyone's well-being, and a resolution message for continuing education - caring pedagogy: empathy, community concern for safety, inclusive language | <p>We started classes with the teacher's descriptions (T2).</p> <p>Who is taking classes is briefed first before we go into the further things (T3).</p> |
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The interview data of teachers was found to be consistent with the content of their video classes. A detailed examination of the recorded video sessions indicated a consistent pattern among all teachers, wherein each class commences with a specific briefing. This briefing encompasses cultural greetings, emphasis on the prevailing COVID-19 circumstances necessitating online classes, and expressions of goodwill towards students' well-being. Notably, the teachers employ inclusive language, fostering a sense of community by incorporating the pronoun "we."

" us slamu walay kum, welcome to the online classes of X college. You the class Four, please accept my sincere greetings of the day. I hope that you all are safe and sound. I am also fine by the grace of almighty Allah. Uhh, you know, we are all stuck in homes because of the pandemic. We can not hold classes in the school which is causing unhappiness for us. So, we have to do classes online, alright? We will do the online classes sincerely, ok? It's better continuing our education than passing time idly doing nothing at home" (Video class: T-2, posted on May 31, 2021).

By crafted exploitation of the chosen tools, EFL teachers aimed at 'interactive screen mirroring' and 'multi-media annotation' during the lessons. It wanted to enhance the teaching and learning experience of both their students and themselves by using OBS software and PDF English texts to make them more interactive, and to translate word meanings through translanguaging:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Real-time interactive screen mirroring - Multi-media annotation - Interactive pedagogy: tool integration and student engagement | <p>So, whatever we open on the "laptop screen" it is seen on the OBS. We had an option to mark and highlight on the textbooks. For this, we used another software which is wandershare PDF. Lines can be underlined and highlighted by this. Even an important word, the meaning of it can be written over it. Like Bengali meaning could be written over it (T5).</p> <p>I highlighted an important word and then put the Bengali meaning of the word (T3).</p> |
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The video lectures complemented the interview data. Presented below is a screenshot extracted from a representative recorded video class, showcasing the laptop screen captured through OBS and streamed via Facebook Live.

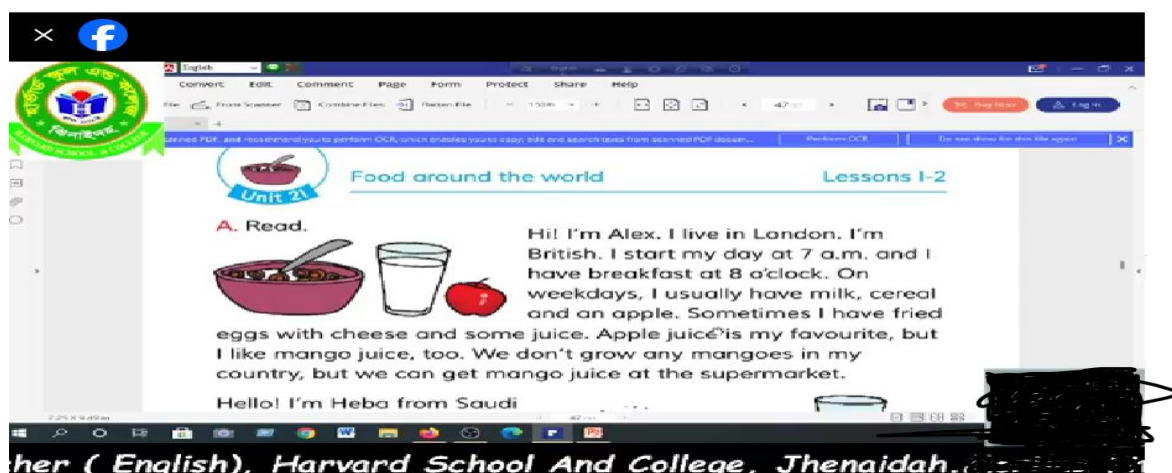


Figure 1: Screenshot of recorded video lecture through OBS, PDF text, and Facebook Live (Video class: T-2, posted on May 31, 2021)

Tool-mediated EFL lessons also reflected EFL teachers' activities of 'outcome-centric previewing' of the lessons and their 'focused success endeavor':

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -outcome-centric previewing - focused success endeavor -Goal-oriented learning pedagogy -OBE pedagogy: success commitment, goal-oriented (course learning outcome) | <p>Then before getting into the text, we describe and show the learning outcomes of the lessons in a slide (T2).</p> <p>We created the slides according to the learning outcomes (T4).</p> <p>Actually our utmost efforts were to take good classes and be successful in online teaching. We had no option for failing (T6).</p> |
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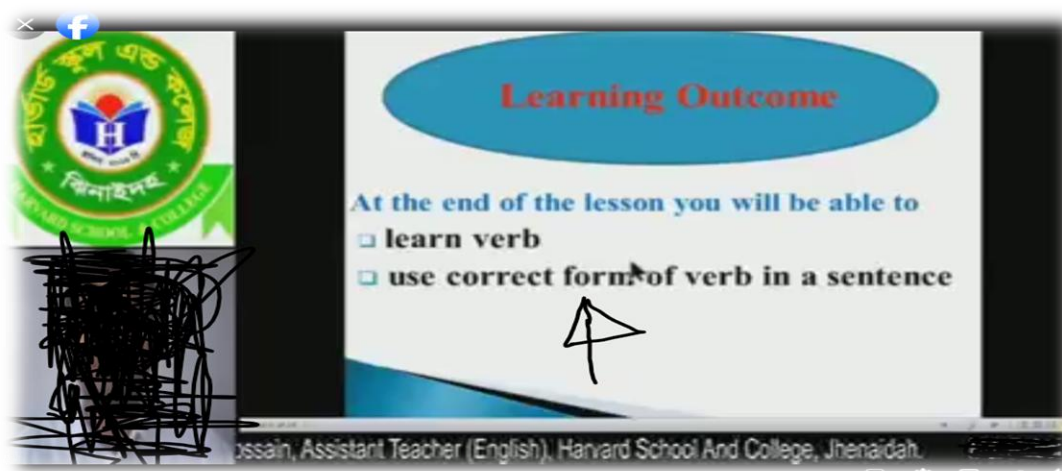


Figure 2: The screenshot of a sample PDF lesson plan shown off on the OBS in the Facebook Live class (Video class: T5, June 6, 2021)

Employing the distinctive capabilities inherent to the Facebook-OBS integration ‘guided text engagement’ and ‘structured student engagement’ were made sure. The instructors of EFL adroitly impart lessons in the domains of reading and writing through a phase of teacher-led input that prioritizes the techniques of skimming and scanning. Simultaneously, they craft opportunities for students to actively engage and partake in the subsequent phase of task-based activities, thus fortifying their learning experience:

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| -guided text engagement | It might involve displaying the text, reading a text line by line (T-1). |
| -structured student engagement | Teachers cannot see the students and the students cannot speak through the OBS but can comment on the Facebook Live (T-5). |
| -technology-mediated optimal active learning | When a task started, all the students got active. Other times during the teaching (input), students got distracted a bit, but when the task started, they became active in commenting (T-1). |

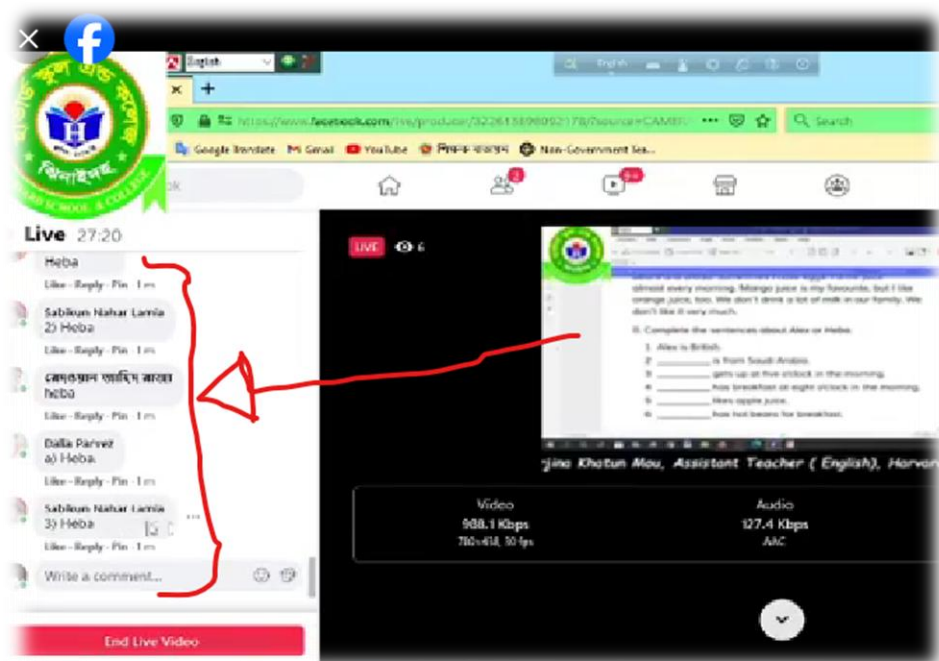


Figure 3: The screenshot of a sample task and students’ comments in an English class on the OBS-Facebook integrated platform (Video class: T3, June 5, 2021).

In their design of materials and activities., the EFL teachers conscientiously took into account linguistic and cultural factors. Thus, their tool-mediated minimalist approach to COVID-19-time EFL teaching adopted ‘bilingual instruction’ and prioritized ‘stakeholder-empowered, and friendly adaptation’:

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| -bilingual instruction | I mean in some cases Bilingual approach was adopted. Like for students’ understanding, I would give bilingual meanings (English and Bangla) of the vocabulary (T1). |
| - stakeholder-driven adaptation | Initially, we tried to use only English in the slides but we received negative reactions from the guardians and students. They voiced concern that only English is not working for the students’ understanding; so, the guardians requested us to give bilingual slides (T4). |
| -guardian and student-empowerment | Guardians’ and students’ priorities were prime to us and we revised many things as they suggested and demanded (T2). |
| -guardian-friendly adaptation | |

Upon analysis of the recorded video classes, it was observed that each English teacher initiates the instructional session by systematically reading the text, whether from a PDF English textbook or Grammar rules, presented in the slides. The reading is done sentence by sentence in English, followed by providing oral explanations of the meanings of the read-out sentences in Bengali. Additionally, the instructional materials include the integration of Bengali language in the slides to further support of comprehension.



Figure 4: The screenshot of a slide of a recorded video class that shows the bilingual text (Video class: T3, October 14, 2020.

Two aspects of the minimal tool-mediated EFL teaching are ‘text-induced engagement’ and ‘competitive participation’:

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| -Text-induced engagement | There was one thing in-class activities that I was happy about. When a task started, all the students got active. Other time during the teaching (input) students got distracted a bit, but when the task started, they became active in commenting on the Facebook Live class (T1). |
| -competitive participation | There was a competition among the students about who could comment first (T2). Sometimes, as they hurried so much to comment and they sometimes got their answer wrong (T6). |

Upon examination of the Facebook comments, it was determined that the comments on different kinds of tasks were rapidly submitted in succession. The comments predominantly consisted of brief responses, typically comprising one to two words. These responses encompassed a varied array of answer options, such as A, B, C, True, False, or other content options. The comments were written in bilingually:

Heba (Comment by student named Dlia, video class of 31 May 2021)

Alex (Comment by student named Mamun, video class of 31 May 2021)

A) Heba (Comment by student named Sabikun, video class of 31 May 2021)

A+iii (Comment by the student Shahin, Video class of July 2, 2021)

The minimal tool-mediated pedagogy was also further characterized by ‘selective comment acknowledgment’ and ‘balanced feedback delivery’:

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| -Online Feedback | Oral | For the students who would not yet comment, we waited one or two more minutes for them to comment (T4). |
| - Try-before-reveal type of feedback | | So, it was difficult for us to read every comment (short answers) and give feedback instantly (T2). In this case (short answer-question) I would provide an answer on the slide but I just tried to get them to give it a try. A few would try before I gave them the answer most of the time (T6). When the comments start coming, I start calling out their names as have commented. I would not give the correct answer. I just said who has commented and who has not (T1). |

The examination of class videos discloses that instructors provide verbal feedback to selected comments. While students can listen to the feedback, the system constraints prohibit them from responding orally; instead, they are limited to written comments.

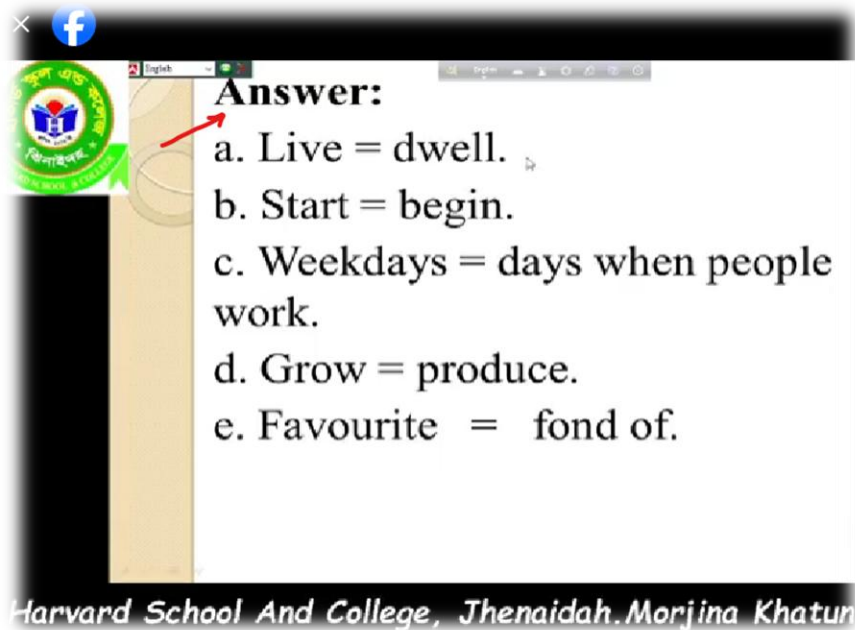


Figure 5: The screenshot of a sample try-before-reveal feedback on the slide (Video class: T4, July 2, 2021)

Some other dimensions of the minimal tool-mediated EFL pedagogy included ‘archiving lessons’, ‘flexible learning playback’, and ‘catch-up learning convenience’:

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| -Flexible learning playback | It is not that we set an unknown subject to write on (T4). |
| -Catch-up learning convenience | It is not just we are teaching them with those slides but it is all remaining in the videos of the live classes saved in the Facebook groups. This means that students have access to recorded classes and can rewatch them as often as they need to (T4). |
| -achieving lessons | Students can re-watch the recorded classes over and over again (T1). Moreover, even if students miss a class, they can catch up by watching the saved videos (T3) Even if they have missed any classes, they can watch them getting into the group where the missed classes are saved (T5) |

The researcher gained access to the groups, found the videos in them, and analyzed the videos based on the research questions.

The minimal tool-mediated EFL pedagogy was also characterized by its assessment aspects including ‘virtual exam simulation’, ‘educational continuation assessment’, and ‘parent-supported evaluation’:

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| -virtual exam simulation | Besides teaching, we also typewrote questions and sent them to the clerk. He would print it and take a picture of that and post it on the group for students to try it like an exam (T1). |
| -educational continuation assessment | Parents appreciated this weekly exam as a means of continuing education (T4). Parents spontaneously provided the exam scripts, got them written by their children at home, and preserved the scripts for us (T6) |
| -Parent-supported evaluation | |

Physical copies of examination questions and answer scripts were examined. The posed questions align with those utilized in the pre-pandemic era. Furthermore, the scripts exhibit a handwritten format consistent with the traditional mode accustomed to by students during their pre-pandemic school examinations.

Research Question-3: What are the successes and challenges faced by EFL teachers in low-resourced contexts while online EFL teaching using their adopted tools?

Minimalist-tool-based tool selection and EFL pedagogy in the low-resourced private school context during COVID-19 met some successes and challenges.

(a) Success:

The minimal tool-mediated pedagogy during COVID-19 resulted in 'digital learning resilience', 'necessitated digitalization', and 'consisted EFL learning': T-2 explains, "We survived through online teaching". T-5 adds, "There was no alternative but to adopt online teaching for sustaining". T-6, "Students were with us and their English learning continued and they kept learning without any learning loss". T-2 adds, "Our students were learning reading and writing skills for more than one year online."

The minimal tool-mediated EFL pedagogy met with further success by the outcomes of 'parental involvement in access', 'pedagogical relief for parents', and 'online instructional prestige': T-4 says, "Students used their parents' Facebook IDs." T-3 says, "Many parents again praised our online classes. They said our online classes put them at ease because their children remain engaged for some time at least at class time while other times they remain lazy." T-1 says, "They also praised our teaching styles, methods, and all which gave them an impression that we teach better offline."

The minimal tool-mediated approach encouraged 'engagement-driven interaction', 'competitive participation dynamics', and 'motivational peer influence': As T- stated, "the students enjoyed it very much when commenting phase would come." T-4 added, "They locked into a competition to be first in commenting and get a reward from the teachers." T-2 also noted, "This encouraged other students to do the task."

Online teaching ensured the EFL teachers' professional development through their 'skill enrichment through adaptation, cross-teacher pedagogical learning, and 'enhanced presentation proficiency': As T-3 admits, "I have learned PowerPoint work. I have learned many things indeed." Similarly, T-5 says, "I have observed other teacher classes and learned many online pedagogical things from them that I did not know." Furthermore, T-1 says, "So, I developed a good presentation skill that I did not have before."

(b) Challenges

The Facebook-OBS integration-based online EFL teaching posed a challenge to teacher-student interaction because there were 'isolation', 'disconnection' and 'uncertainty': T-6 expressed frustration, stating, "When in an offline class there are, let's say, forty students, they all are in my view and notice face to face while in the type of online classes by OBS it was not possible to have that eye contacts." T-5 also voiced similar concerns, stating, "I can't see anyone online. I just can see the number of the students. I am in the darkness about whether my students are with me or not physically and mentally." T-1 further emphasized this issue, stating, "I just can't know if they are active or not."

There has been a negative impact of online comments on virtual classroom dynamics as represented in dependency, distraction and 'spelling impairment': T-3 points out, "Students have a disadvantage when it comes to online comments because they become dependent on auto-correction and do not learn correct spellings. T-5 adds, "students sometimes make irrelevant comments and post emojis or images, which can be distracting during online classes."

There was a further challenge of long responses, feedback challenges, and time constraints: T-2 confirms, "Some answers to short questions were a few lines long and longer than the comments on True / False and Gap Filling. It made it challenging to give individualized feedback." T-5 adds, "We often had no time in hand to read all the short-answer comments and give them instant feedback".

There was a challenge for 'engagement struggles', 'alternative communication', and 'task-based learning': "T-6 notes, "it was challenging to retain all students in the class." T-1 explains, "Students opened private Facebook groups and chatted there instead of participating in the online class." However, T-3 notes, "Students were back when the task-based stage of

the lessons started.”

Additionally, challenges with ‘text legibility’, ‘technical expertise’, and ‘real-time challenges: T-1 reports: “When trying to increase the size of the text, it became illegible and blurry.” T-5 explains: “They are not experts in the software and rely on default settings, making it challenging to fix issues during ongoing classes.”

DISCUSSION

During the pandemic time, online English teaching by primary and secondary-level teachers in Ghana followed the global trend and used some common tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classrooms, and WhatsApp (Ire et al., 2022). They characterized these tools as simpler, effective, and enjoyable for the continuation of teaching and learning of English. The study by Upor (2021) reports that in Tanzania, high school EFL teachers chose radio broadcasting and teaching through television, which was not widely accepted by the teachers and students. However, the same study further reports that mobile-facilitated teaching using web resources and Social Networking Services (SNS) increased outcomes in English language learning in foreign language contexts.

In contrast to the aforementioned EFL contexts and digital tools, the present study examines a glocalized scenario within a low-resourced private school that underwent an abrupt "digital transition" supported by an unprepared pedagogical approach. This shift towards online teaching relied heavily on the science teachers' existing tech skills and tool choices, reflecting a minimalist approach (Lufungulo et al., 2023) consistent with ad-hoc digital EFL pedagogy.

The school's transition initially centered on experimenting with OBS software and Facebook LIVE, aligned with a minimalist tool selection approach (Lufungulo et al., 2023) and influenced by the core principles of Activity Theory (Wang et al., 2019). Subsequently, the integration expanded to include PowerPoint for slide-based EFL lessons, PDF English texts for presentations, and Wondershare software to enhance interaction through text highlighting and bilingual explanations. This adaptation reflects minimalism in resource-limited contexts (Lufungulo et al., 2023; Chingara et al., 2021; Mwila et al., 2021), utilizing tools for digital transition and ad-hoc online EFL pedagogy to sustain English education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for some pedagogical aspects, Huda and Eiten's (2022) study found that institutional monitoring and feedback systems provide significant support to tertiary-level EFL teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mahapatra's (2020) research revealed that rubric and formative assessments assist tertiary-level educators in performing structured evaluations of students' presentation skills. Additionally, informal self- and peer-assessment techniques enabled students to reflect on their language learning progress, while quizzes allowed EFL instructors to evaluate students' explicit reading and writing knowledge. Furthermore, integrating formative assessments, such as self- and peer-assessments, into classroom activities resulted in positive impacts on conversation skills, grammar, and pronunciation. The use of informal questions, self-assessment rubrics, and checklists in academic writing and speaking, as well as frequently asking students to self-assess their speaking and writing performances, led to improved language accuracy and English proficiency.

The present study introduces a novel online EFL pedagogy distinct from previously explored approaches during COVID-19 (Huda & Eiten, 2022; Mahapatra, 2020). This approach involves structured online classes with preliminary instructional briefings, utilizing tools such as OBS software and PDF texts for interactive screen mirroring and multi-media annotation. The pedagogy emphasizes translanguaging for cultural sensitivity while maintaining a minimalist stance (Lufungulo et al., 2023). EFL teachers strategically engage in outcome-centric lesson previews and focused success efforts. Leveraging Facebook-OBS integration, they ensure guided text engagement and structured student participation. Lessons comprise teacher-led input, focusing on skimming and scanning, followed by task-based activities to strengthen learning.

The pedagogy incorporates linguistic and cultural considerations in material and activity design, employing a bilingual-instruction approach and stakeholder-driven adaptation for crisis-time teaching (Lufungulo et al., 2023). The minimal tool-mediated approach features text-induced engagement, competitive participation, selective comment acknowledgment, and balanced feedback delivery. Further dimensions encompass archiving lessons, flexible learning playback, and catch-up learning to prevent student lag (Rahman et al., 2021). Assessment aspects include virtual exam simulation, educational continuation assessment, and parent-supported evaluation.

The minimalism-based tool selection and the minimalism-tool-based EFL pedagogy in the low-resourced private school context during COVID-19 met both some successes and challenges. As for the success, prior research conducted in low-resourced contexts has demonstrated that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' utilization of commonly available global tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, mobile and web resources, and social networking sites (SNS) has resulted in the greatest success in facilitating English education continuity and promoting students' language acquisition during the pandemic (Upor, 2021; Kundu & Betal, 2022; Nawir & Tsuraya, 2021; Ire et al., 2022; Rahim & Sandaran, 2020). In the Ghanaian context, learning through these tools has been found to be simple, enjoyable, and effective (Ire et al., 2022).

The present study reports that the minimal tool-mediated pedagogy adopted during COVID-19 demonstrated cost-effectiveness, aligning with the fundamental principles of minimalism (Eman, 2021; Al-Marooof et al., 2021). This approach led to the establishment of "digital learning resilience," mandated digitalization, and consistent EFL learning. Notably, the minimal tool-mediated EFL pedagogy achieved success through outcomes such as increased "parental involvement in access," offering "pedagogical relief for parents," and enhancing "online instructional prestige." This approach further facilitated "engagement-driven interaction," promoted dynamics of "competitive participation," and harnessed the motivating influence of peers. The transition to online teaching also contributed to the professional development of EFL instructors, enabling skill enrichment through adaptation, cross-teacher pedagogical learning, and improved presentation proficiency, mirroring the enhanced learning environment for students, which all are supposed to take place in EFL teaching during COVID-19 (Lufungulo et al., 2023).

Despite the positive outcomes observed in online EFL teaching within low-resourced contexts during the pandemic, several studies have identified challenges across various regions, including Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, India, and Ghana (Upor, 2021; Kundu & Betal, 2022; Nawir & Tsuraya, 2021; Ire et al., 2022; Rahim & Sandaran, 2020). These studies have highlighted EFL teacher-related issues such as insufficient training and experience in online teaching. On the learner side, challenges encompass a lack of motivation and participation. Technology and resource-related obstacles involve issues like internet connectivity problems, irregular power supply limited computer lab access, and inadequate learning materials.

The present study also addresses challenges faced by EFL teachers in the context of minimal-tool-mediated EFL teaching. The utilization of Facebook-OBS integration-based online EFL teaching led to challenges in teacher-student interaction due to feelings of 'isolation', 'disconnection', and 'uncertainty'. Negative effects of online comments on virtual classroom dynamics were noted, including dependency, distraction, and 'spelling impairment'. Further challenges encompassed handling long responses, feedback difficulties, and time limitations. Struggles related to 'engagement', 'alternative communication', and 'task-based learning' were also identified. Additionally, challenges were encountered concerning 'text legibility', 'technical expertise', and 'real-time issues'. All these are indemnified as the success conditions of the minimalism approach to crisis time online teaching (Eman, 2021; Al-Marooof et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological case study aims to address a gap in the research on online EFL teaching by exploring how EFL teachers in the low-resourced context take a minimalist approach toward the adoption of affordable tools, ad-hoc EFL pedagogies, and their successes and challenges. Tool selection was trial and error based and took place through three phases: initial transition and additional integration. The initial transition to OBS combined with Facebook Live was motivated by the limitations and challenges posed by other common platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. Additional tools like PowerPoint, PDFs, and Wondershare were integrated for enhanced interactivity and engagement in the online EFL classes.

The above-mentioned affordable tool-mediated pedagogy included creating dedicated Facebook groups, instructional briefings, interactive screen mirroring, multimedia annotation, and bilingual instruction. Teachers employed outcome-centric previewing and focused success endeavors for effective teaching. Facebook-OBS integration facilitated guided text engagement and structured student engagement. A well-structured class structure, including teacher-led input and task-

based activities, enhanced learning experiences. Linguistic and cultural factors were taken into account when designing materials and activities.

The above-described ad-hoc EFL pedagogical approaches met some remarkable successes. The minimal tool-mediated approach led to digital learning resilience, necessitated digitalization, and consistent EFL learning. Parental involvement increased access, provided pedagogical relief, and enhanced online instructional prestige. Engagement-driven interaction, competitive participation dynamics, and motivational peer influence were achieved. Besides, there is some professional development through minimal tool-mediated ad-hoc online EFL teaching during COVID-19. Online teaching contributed to EFL teachers' professional development through skill enrichment, cross-teacher pedagogical learning, and enhanced presentation proficiency. Furthermore, there were some successes, such as virtual exam simulation, educational continuation assessment, and parent-supported evaluation, which were useful as alternative assessments during COVID-19.

However, the minimal tool-mediated EFL teaching in the cited low-resourced private school context also encountered some challenges. Teacher-student interaction faced challenges due to isolation, disconnection, and uncertainty. Negative impacts of online comments included dependency, distraction, and spelling impairment. Challenges with engagement struggles, alternative communication, and task-based learning were present. Technical challenges, text legibility, and real-time issues added to the difficulties.

The implication of the study is that the EFL teachers of the low-resourced private school successfully navigated the challenges posed by COVID-19 by dint of the sudden digital transition using a combination of tools and creative pedagogical approaches. However, there were both successes and challenges in this process. These insights can provide a foundation for further analysis, discussion, and potentially forming recommendations for similar low-resourced contexts in future research.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data may be available upon request from the corresponding author.

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