

The Lived Experiences of Senior High School Teachers in Teaching English and Language Arts during Pandemic Times

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ABSTRACT

This transcendental or psychological phenomenological study aimed to unravel the lived experiences of senior high school teachers teaching English and Language Arts during pandemic times. Utilizing in-depth interviews, several themes emerged, encompassing effective online engagement strategies, innovative teaching approaches, empathetic teaching practices, student engagement challenges, technological and connectivity issues, and curriculum implementation struggles. The results imply that despite the teachers' challenges, they still see the silver lining in the advent of the new mode of teaching and learning, viewing it as a means of personal and professional growth. Additionally, this study contributes valuable insights that can pave the way for educational sectors to identify both progress and deficiencies in the educational process during these unprecedented times.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Online platforms undoubtedly have been utilized across all educational sectors to teach students, necessitating significant adjustments to adapt to the new mode of teaching and learning. One critical aspect of this broader adjustment pertains to how teachers cope with the new normal setup, particularly in teaching English and Language Arts. This adjustment underscores the substantial impact of the transition from face-to-face to online on how teachers deliver instructions, influencing their performance as educators and students' learning experiences.

In a study conducted by Paras et al., [19], the abrupt changes caused by the unprecedented situation led to the reconstruction of the curriculum, pedagogy, and the evaluation of students' performance while striving to maintain the quality of teaching and learner engagement. They noted that teachers faced significant challenges related to the lack of resources, student management, and increased workloads, contributing to stress and burnout as also supported by Macintyre et al., [14]. The negative experiences stemmed from needing to be psychologically or skillfully prepared for the sudden shift in learning models [25]. Despite encountering various challenges, teachers reported positive experiences such as passion, building relationships, and fulfilling duty [19].

While there have been relatively few publications [2], [3], [16] addressing teachers' lived experiences in teaching English during pandemic times, there needs to be more studies focusing on senior high school teachers. This study addresses this gap by highlighting positive and negative lived experiences, providing a comprehensive perspective. Undoubtedly, this study is instrumental in capturing teachers' experiences during pandemic times, offering insights that can guide the provision of attention and support, both physically and psychologically. Implementing these findings can enhance teachers' efficacy and quality of life, fostering a sense of connection that promotes perseverance and optimism, thereby making their experiences during the pandemic times more meaningful.

This transcendental or psychological phenomenological study aimed to extract reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences in teaching English and Language Arts, providing in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon. Specifically, the study aimed to uncover both the positive and negative lived experiences of teachers.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This descriptive qualitative research employed a transcendental or psychological phenomenological study. Phenomenology, as a research method, aims to understand human experience and investigate phenomena, exploring how people interpret and engage with them [11]. The selection of the design as a transcendental or psychological phenomenological study was based on the idea that investigators set aside their experiences toward the phenomenon under examination [17], focusing solely on the interpretation of the researchers and describing the experiences of the participants.

In the data analysis phase, the study utilized Colaizzi's strategy, a method within phenomenological research involving seven key procedures: familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structure, and verification. This systematic approach ensured a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of the participants in the context of teaching English and Language Arts during the pandemic.

2.2 Research Participants

The participants were seven senior high school teachers, aged 22-40, encompassing both males and females who taught English and Language Arts during the pandemic since 2020. The choice of the number of participants aligns with Polkinghorne's [21] recommendation that 5-25 individuals are required for interviews. Purposive sampling was employed, where the identification and selection of participants were based on the criterion that they possessed specific knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon of interest [6].

2.3 Data Collection

The researchers obtained detailed information through interviews to support the ongoing study. Due to the prohibition of face-to-face interactions and physical contact during the pandemic, data collection was conducted online. The process included obtaining consent forms and other necessary letters requesting participation in the research. Once accepted, the interviews officially commenced. During the data gathering phase, the researchers opted for semi-structured interviews, wherein a set of consistent questions were prepared for all participants, allowing for open-ended discussions to clarify and expand on certain issues. Additionally, it was advisable for researchers to establish a relationship with participants at the beginning of each interview session, creating a comfortable atmosphere for the participants to share their insights.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived Experiences of Senior High School Teachers in Teaching English and Language Arts

Based on the conducted analysis, several themes have emerged as shown in Table 1. The lived experiences include Effective Online Engagement Strategies, Innovative Teaching Approaches, Empathetic Teaching Practices, Student Engagement Challenges, Technological and Connectivity Issues, and Curriculum Implementation Struggles. They are discussed below:

Table 1
Lived Experiences of Senior High School Teachers in Teaching English and Language Arts

Emergent Themes		Cluster Themes		Formulated Meanings
Effective Online Engagement Strategies		Using Online Platform		Senior high school teachers adapt online platforms for assessment and learning substantiation through video lectures. [LV: Teacher 1]
				Teachers reach out to students through Google Meet and Zoom applications. [LV: Teacher 7]
		Using Variety of Interactive Activities		Teachers encourage cooperation in blended learning through collaborative activities. [LV: Teacher 2]
Innovative Teaching Approaches	Teaching	Teaching Creativity Building Measure		Emphasizing the advantage of the pandemic in developing critical thinking and creativity in teaching English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 6]
				Increasing creativity in teaching methods. [LV: Teacher 7]
		Using Video Materials		Stressing the usage of audio-visual learning materials in teaching English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 4]
Empathetic Teaching Practices	Teacher Student's Circumstances	Considering Various		Being more patient and understanding, considering students' situations during pandemic times. [LV: Teacher 6]
			Trainings and Webinars for Teacher's Skills Enhancement	Emphasizing the need for teachers to undergo training and webinars to enhance skills for online teaching of English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 1]
				Professional Development for Teachers [LV: Teacher 7]
Student Engagement		Encouragement of Students		Facing difficulties in motivating

Challenges	to learn English Online	demotivated students to learn English online. [LV: Teacher 4]
		Struggling with students not cooperating during discussions. [LV: Teacher 3]
	Teacher's Difficulty in Teaching and Assessment	Challenges in assessing learning and dealing with unmotivated students in teaching English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 5]
		Dilemma in Learning Tasks [LV: Teacher 2]
Technological and Connectivity Issues	Issues of Internet Connectivity	Senior high school teachers express difficulty in connecting with students due to poor internet access. [LV: Teacher 5]
	Lack of Exposure in using Technology	Experiencing difficulties due to a lack of exposure and insufficient technological literacy. [LV: Teacher 3]
Curriculum Implementation Struggles	Assessing Students' Overall Knowledge and Validity of their Works	Facing difficulties in meeting the demands of crafting modules for self-directed learning in English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 7]
	Worriment of the Demands of Online Teaching	Facing difficulties in meeting the demands of crafting modules for self-directed learning in English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 7]
	Problems in the Organization and Selection of Topics	Difficulties in organizing and selecting topics for effective online curriculum in English and Language Arts. [LV: Teacher 5]

Effective Online Engagement Strategies. Effective online learning engagement strategies, rooted in the practical experiences of educators, revolve around adeptly utilizing online platforms and incorporating diverse interactive activities. Li and Lalani's [12] insights underscore the strategic deployment of digital tools for assessment and learning substantiation. The integration of multimedia elements, such as YouTube, aligns with Cardine's [4] recommendations, emphasizing the role of audio-visual stimuli in enhancing student involvement and discussion. Additionally, the emphasis on online videoconferencing platforms like Google Meet and Zoom serves as a vehicle for classroom delivery and fosters communication and connections with students, ensuring a sense of virtual presence and engagement. Moreover, as educators like Teacher 2 highlighted, collaborative tasks align with broader educational principles, promoting active participation and community among students [7]. These well-founded strategies, informed by both practical application and scholarly literature, collectively create a dynamic and enriching online learning environment.

Senior high school teachers adeptly adapt online platforms for assessment and learning substantiation through video lectures (Teacher 1). Simultaneously, educators actively reach out to students, fostering meaningful connections through Google Meet and Zoom applications (Teacher

7). Furthermore, teachers, exemplified by Teacher 2, employ collaborative activities in blended learning settings to encourage student cooperation and active engagement. Integrating various online tools and pedagogical strategies, this holistic approach reflects a comprehensive understanding of effective online learning practices, as both practitioners and scholars contribute to shaping a dynamic educational landscape.

Innovative Teaching Approaches. Amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, educators have seized the opportunity to foster critical thinking and creativity in teaching English and Language Arts, as emphasized by Teacher 6. This aligns with the recognizing that adversity can catalyze innovative educational approaches [24]. Complementing this perspective, Teacher 7 advocates for an increased emphasis on creativity within teaching methods, underlining the importance of dynamic and engaging instructional strategies. Furthermore, Teacher 4 stresses the vital role of audio-visual learning materials in teaching English and Language Arts, aligning with Mayer's [15] principles of multimedia learning and highlighting the efficacy of visual aids in enhancing understanding and retention. These collaborative insights underscore how dedicated educators actively adapt, innovate, and integrate diverse strategies to enhance the teaching and learning experience during challenging times.

Empathetic Teaching Practices. In navigating the challenges of the pandemic, educators, as seen in Teacher 6's responses, embody empathetic teaching approaches by fostering patience and understanding and recognizing the unique situations students face. This empathetic stance aligns with broader themes of accommodating students' additional challenges in non-traditional learning environments [26]. Simultaneously, Teachers 1 and 7 underscore the proactive response of educators through continuous professional development. Teacher 1 emphasizes the importance of training and webinars tailored for online teaching of English and Language Arts, aligning with Guskey and Yoon's [8] notion of ongoing teacher development. Teacher 7 reinforces the significance of professional development for teachers more broadly, highlighting the persistent need for educators to stay informed and enhance their capabilities in dynamic educational landscapes. Together, these responses illustrate interconnected themes of empathy, continuous professional development, and adaptability. This holistic approach addresses immediate challenges and contributes to creating a compassionate and effective educational environment during these challenging times, reflecting the resilience and commitment of educators [5].

Student Engagement Challenges. Students' engagement challenges in learning English online are multifaceted, encompassing cluster themes such as the encouragement of students to learn online and the difficulties teachers face in teaching and assessment. The negative lived experience of teachers regarding the students' lack of motivation is exemplified by Teacher 4, who faces difficulties motivating demotivated students. The abrupt shift from traditional face-to-face to remote online learning has adversely affected students' willingness to actively participate in the virtual classroom actively, hindering the overall teaching and learning process.

Moreover, the challenges elucidated by Simamora [23] in persuading learners to adapt to online learning, as expressed by Teacher 3's struggles with students' reluctance to cooperate during discussions, underscore the barriers to effective online engagement. These challenges align with Pokhrel and Chhetri's [20] insights into the difficulties teachers encounter in conducting student learning tasks online, as emphasized by Teacher 2 in the dilemma faced in structuring effective learning tasks. Additionally, uncertainties in assessing students' understanding, highlighted by Basinillo et al., [1] and Kearns [10], further compound the intricate nature of students' engagement challenges in learning English online. The experiences shared by Teacher 4, Teacher 3, Teacher 5, and Teacher 2 provide firsthand perspectives on the challenges faced in motivating, cooperating, assessing, and structuring effective learning tasks in the online English learning landscape.

Technological and Connectivity Issues. Technological and connectivity issues in online learning present multifaceted challenges, encapsulated in cluster themes such as issues of internet

connectivity and the lack of exposure to technology. Teachers play a pivotal role in online learning. However, those facing slow internet connections, as expressed by Senior high school teachers (Teacher 5), can impede the effectiveness of teaching delivery. The stark difference between face-to-face and online modalities becomes apparent, particularly when internet access is essential for implementing synchronous classes. Limited internet connectivity not only hampers class interaction but also degrades the quality of English and Language Arts instruction, underscoring the critical role of technology in contemporary education.

Moreover, as elucidated by Khanal [9], teachers' lack of technological knowledge and skills emerges as a significant cluster theme. This is further exemplified by Senior high school teachers (Teacher 3), who express difficulties connecting with students due to poor internet access, indicating a lack of exposure and insufficient technological literacy. Khanal [9] points out that many teachers began online teaching with limited knowledge and experience in using technology, which became a notable weakness. Munastiwi and Puryono [18] further emphasizes the challenges faced by teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that the abrupt transition to online learning required teachers to adapt quickly, even if they lacked the necessary technological mastery. This lack of preparedness and confidence among teachers contributes to insufficient exposure to technology, hindering effective online education delivery.

Curriculum Implementation Struggles. In teachers' lived experiences during the pandemic, many struggles in curriculum implementation come to light, encompassing various cluster themes. Particularly emphasized by Teacher 7, educators express challenges in crafting modules for self-directed English and Language Arts learning. This includes difficulties in organizing and selecting topics and creating an effective online curriculum tailored to the unique needs of language arts education (Teacher 5). These challenges align with the broader difficulties in curriculum design [22], emphasizing the intricate balance required for comprehensive planning while meeting specific learning objectives.

Furthermore, these responses highlight the pivotal role of teachers in navigating and addressing the complex demands of curriculum implementation. Teachers grapple with the intricacies of creating modules for self-directed learning, adapting to the challenges presented by the virtual realm. The difficulties underscored by Teacher 7 resonate with Lukas & and Yunus's [13] observations on the challenges of teaching language skills online. These shared experiences collectively underscore the nature of curriculum planning and implementation during the pandemic, emphasizing the resilience and adaptability of educators amidst multifaceted challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

The study sheds light on the nuanced experiences of Senior High School Teachers in teaching English and Language Arts during the challenging times of the pandemic. Both positive and negative lived experiences emerged, highlighting the adaptive practices and coping mechanisms employed by teachers in the face of the abrupt shift to online teaching. These positive experiences, such as the use of online modalities, increased creativity, and the augmentation of teachers' empathy, serve as valuable insights that can be harnessed and maintained to foster effective teaching in the evolving educational landscape.

Despite the challenges, the negative lived experiences provide essential lessons for educators and administrators, offering opportunities for reflection and improvement in the implementation of online classes. The study underscores the importance of addressing issues such as students' motivation, technological literacy, and curriculum demands to enhance the overall quality of online education. Moreover, the insights from participants emphasize the necessity for ongoing support, particularly in the form of online programs, training, and webinars that focus on technology use, emotional well-being, and strategies for effective online teaching.

Furthermore, the implications for future research suggest a broader exploration of teachers' lived experiences, encompassing primary and secondary school teachers from both private and public institutions. This expansion would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the

challenges and advantages of the new learning system. In conclusion, this research not only provides valuable insights for the benefit of teachers but also calls for sustained attention and support from educational institutions to navigate the complexities of teaching in the current online learning environment, ensuring a positive and conducive learning experience for both educators and students alike.

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