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Article

A Study on the Teachers' Perception of the Online Language Learning Mode during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China

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Abstract: This study critically reviews the situation of Language teachers in China, who transited from on-campus face-to-face teaching to online teaching within one week of the official school opening dates, which were postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Presently, the study is located in an interpretive research paradigm, and hence, it takes the human experiences within educational setups to be subjective and complex. In so doing, to elude this educational transition and its complex dynamics, the research uses such qualitative research methods as document analysis and interviews. Painting a picture of great variety in individual experiences and challenges, strategies, and outcomes not only across these two specific institutions but, certainly, more broadly through the lens of previous case studies. First, it values depth over breadth and tries to unearth the varied experiences, challenges, innovations, and achievements faculty made during their transition into online Language Teaching. The results of the study are believed to be able to contribute quite a rich, detailed, and multi-faceted perspective to the pool of knowledge for the complexities of online Language education in China, which may be of interest to educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Keywords: online education; language; instruction; COVID-19 pandemic; educational innovation; teacher experience; learner engagement; qualitative analysis

1. Introduction

The coming of the COVID-19 pandemic, indeed, shook the world based on education. It was high time that the set norms of pedagogy and the learning environment had to be adopted. During the time the world was grappling with the pandemic, learning institutions at all levels, ranging from basic schools to universities all over the world, had to adjust to a change never realized before. It was the sudden shift from the known physical traditional classrooms to the uncharted space of virtual learning platforms that became an obligatory mode [1]. Over this transformational period, educators in every field were pushed into a more digital-first approach to their teaching methodologies, and indeed, that was true. Big data and artificial intelligence were emerging as the dawn of a new horizon. It will attempt to concentrate with greater precision on the experiences and perceptions of these teachers during the new transition to online education. It seeks to draw out multi-faceted challenges, adaptations, and innovations that marked this journey, with a keen eye on the realm of Language teaching. The march was pandemic-goaded, forced into digitalization—against a canvass of pedagogical uncertainty and pragmatic challenges that, while unwanted, richly textured this context for examining the resilience and creativity of educators.

1.1. Research Background

Late in 2019, the emergence of COVID-19 was an important milestone in modern history because its effect is felt to quite an extent in the educational sector, not least in China. The pandemic, through abrupt departure from traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms, which were such a constituent part of the building block in educational systems across the globe, not least a cornerstone of Chinese educational practices. A measure that could never be avoided in combating the pandemic was closing down such traditional learning spaces [2]. Such a drastic measure led to a situation where millions of students were uprooted from their normal educative surroundings to an extent whereby there was a need to make an absolute reconceptualization of how best the administration of the education could be handled.

It is an urgent issue, and therefore China is like most countries all over the world, taking up online learning as a quick and convenient solution. Digital learning platforms had been only part of a complement to the traditional teaching ecosystem pre-COVID-19. In the COVID-19 world, all of a sudden, digital learning platforms have become at the forefront of education, if only for a while [3]. This rapid and unprecedented shift was not without teething problems. The shift to online learning platforms unearthed issues key to technical infrastructure, digital accessibility, and the stability of these platforms in an urban-to-rural migrating highly diverse China of urban and rural dwellers. The serious challenge raised was equitable access and technical readiness, which pointed to the great need for sound digital infrastructure to support and sustain a far more extensive level of online education.

The pivot to online teaching required educators to adapt quickly to a new mode of delivery. Although the teachers were fairly experienced—most of them had been practising for a long time in face-to-face settings—very little time was given to assisting them in understanding how to sail through the convoluted digital platform [4]. Further adaptation was needed for delivering only the content; they had to rephrase the dynamics from the physical classrooms to the virtual setup. Continuity was to be developed in the ways of engaging and providing effective teaching through new methods and fluency in technology. It meant encouraging students to participate and interact in a scene where none of the traditional instincts associated with classroom and instantaneity were at home.

Equally central in the modality is to maintain student involvement. Besides motivation, attention was easy to be defocused in the home environment due to no physical classroom structures and manifold distractions [5]. It meant that the educators would develop interesting and interactive online content through a variety of multimedia tools and innovative teaching strategies, in order to grab the interest of the students and retain it.

The change also necessitated a reconsideration of the methods of assessment. The conventional examination mode, highly dependent on the controlled, supervised environment for its execution, found both practical and moral challenges in translation into the virtual space [6]. In an equal measure, schools with their teachers had to look for alternatives in terms of an assessment that would be as rigorous and yet allow for flexibility in such an environment. The structures and processes from face-to-face instruction will be borrowed. This included moving towards open-book examinations, assessment of projects, and other means of evaluation that would, in a way, bring about academic integrity in the new order of learning through distance.

However, a move toward digital education also presented unique opportunities that were not strictly defined by any geographical boundaries and in fact could greatly increase access to quality education from large sections of society. At the same time, it has made the general digital divide starker between haves and have-nots of technology and internet users at their behest and those who do not [7]. The key challenge is due to digital literacy, defined as "the ability to use digital technology, communications tools, or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to function in an unprepared, all students, teachers, and staff for the shift, and transit to this new paradigm of linking all software, hardware, and personnel data without glitches. This further underscores the pressing need for comprehensive support systems and precise interventions, as these gaps need to be bridged. It will, however, seek to delve into these complex dynamics, offering insights

into how the pandemic is changing online Language education in China, and chart a way forward through the lessons that have to be drawn in response.

1.2. Problem Statement

COVID-19 has set a new chapter in the history of an art-oriented education sector, which essentially has rich human interaction, communication, and real-time feedback loops at its core, ripe for disruption. The present educational landscape has undergone radical disruption, as teachers around the world are reverting to available online platforms. Some of the key questions that keep arising include whether the virtual world can offer at least the interactive, if not even the better, aspect of traditional Language instruction. The change would also have to cover studies on the readiness of the educators to deliver their education under the new style of educating. How are they measuring the teaching strategies' efficiency, which is used in the cybernetic realm of pedagogy? What pedagogical innovations are sensed as pertinent to maintaining the quality standards of online education? Above adaptation, the shift is to prompt the question of whether, indeed, such innovations in the curriculum have done enough to bring about progress in language proficiency and offer the anticipated successful learning outcomes among students. Against this background, it is clear that the problem targets and appreciates the need for the following aspects in explaining fully the layered experiences and evolving perspectives of Language teachers in a changed, transformed digital educational landscape brought about by COVID-19 in China.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study is driven by the aspiration to:

- Find out the perception of Language teachers toward the adaptation and effectiveness of methodologies of online teaching at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Highlight the challenges that educators face during the effective transition of online Language teaching and discuss some of the strategies used in resolving such challenges.
- Develop recommendations that would make it possible to implement efficiency and quality in the online teaching of the Language in crisis settings.

1.4. Research Questions

The research seeks to address the following critical questions:

1. How effective do the Language teachers perceive the online teaching methodologies in the perspective of Language education during the COVID-19 pandemic period?
2. What problems do language teachers have to face in the process of turning to online teaching, and which solution, to their mind, was the most effective for them in resolving these problems?
3. Based on the findings, what recommendations can be offered to optimize online Language teaching practices during times of crisis?

1.5. Significance of the Research

The scope of the implication for this research is that educators, policymakers, and educational institutions, especially in the current situation of COVID-19 and its implications on educational disruption, can be equipped with the knowledge to cope. Most important, Language teachers need to understand that attitudes and approaches taken in an online learning context [8]. Such perceptions empower the stakeholders in education with the ability to make decisions that will be informed in ways that can make the quality of online instruction much better. The results of this study may, therefore, serve in the development of tailor-made teacher-training programs, equipped with competencies that enable professionals to negotiate disruptions effectively and facilitate a smooth

transition between teaching modalities [9]. Education leaders can use such data in their forerunning role in the development of online learning tools and resources that will optimally engage the learners in creating an interactive and supportive learning environment. This will make a clear understanding of the teachers' experience so as not to follow this way to make sure that the solutions developed make a head-on meeting with teachers' digital needs and challenges.

The present study adds further to the distinctive chance given to Language teachers to critically be part of, evaluate, and contribute to the new landscape of online teaching practices. Given the particular dynamism that must be insisted upon in instruction, especially in a digital environment, what modern pedagogical methodologies educators come up with to adjust and prosper in this new paradigm is of particular concern in this research [10]. This research is poised exactly on the nexus of scholarly inquiry and practical application that documents, analyzes, and sheds light on the ongoing transformation in Language education as teachers navigate this new era in education.

2. Literature Review

It was the COVID-19 pandemic that created a situation where pedagogical practices around the world needed reassessment and a sharp turn toward the use of virtual classrooms had to be made. Such an emergency perspective of unprecedented regard by teachers becomes essential to be aware of and thus ameliorates a noble approach to the knowledge of online learning and thereby improves online teaching, especially online teaching [11]. This literature review, therefore, seeks to bring together data from various research carried out in China to provide data about the perception of teachers regarding challenges arising from online instruction during an epidemic and how they cope with those challenges.

With the emergence of such online learning environments, the traditional ways of assessment have transformed quite considerably. A study conducted by Zhang, Yan, and Wang (2021) on teachers also found that the teachers' assessment strategies were increasingly formative assessment tools in online quizzes and peer assessments [12]. The only issue that remained open in the quality assessment was the very pressing one with regard to the capacity to offer quick feedback to the student and adapt to the virtual environment. The findings, therefore, underscore the adaptability of assessment methods within the digital context, where they play a fundamental role in ensuring sound learning outcomes [13]. This kind of change suggests a deep, pedagogical evolution that puts a heavy emphasis on the change required to constantly innovate within the demands given by the digital environment. It clearly states the value of the assessment practices not only as a measure but also as a mechanism to strengthen learning through the active involvement of the students.

The outbreak of the pandemic forced online teaching establishments to introduce novel teaching strategies. Studies have shown that K-12 teachers in China are changing their teaching methods to have effective contact with students and be more efficient in their studies through online media [14]. The focus of this included interactive activities, instantaneous feedback, and multi-media information in order for learners to be directed with the material all the time and can make learning easy. The reimagination in the pedagogic approaches hence denoted transfiguration as educators moved from the traditional didactic approaches to dynamic, participatory strategies [15]. So, this made the considered learning approach to apply for distance learning not only fruitful in itself but interactive elements were able to create even deeper involvement from students, as the designed form of teaching caters to varied styles and preferences. This adaptability shows the commitment of teachers to give quality education even in very tough circumstances.

Teachers' willingness or readiness for such an approach that would turn out to be virtual became a critical issue in this rapid shift towards online-based teaching. This was an emphasis by Zou et al. (2021) on the readiness of teachers for such an end [16]. The teachers were confronted with a lot of challenges: on the one hand, regarding technologies and a lack of practice with a wide palette of e-tools, and on the other, they very quickly adapted to the changed digital environment. However, as Li (2022) asserted, though it is apparently a bumpy road that the schools have to go through in the beginning, the teachers in these schools are amazingly resistant and flexible in training themselves for digital literacy and developing tech-savviness, showing resilience towards the use of technology

for learning [10]. Such a paradox of challenges and flexibility conveys a story of professional development in the midst of ambiguity. It is paramount that the teacher's commitment to his or her role as the facilitator of learning should involve the continuous search for ways of improving digital competence and pedagogic efficiency.

The student-teacher relationship is also a major challenge in online learning. According to Jin et al. (2021), it was found that students appreciate online learning for its flexibility but would rather have traditional face-to-face communications with their teachers [17]. It is clear that the major problems of online environments were to sustain student participation and effective communication [18]. The power relations in these student-teacher relations are shifting, carefully balancing convenience and some semblance of closeness in the mediated learning environment. Educators have to be very innovative in navigating the landscape so that they can find ways through which they are able to make the learners feel they have a sense of belongingness, support tailor-made to them, and bridge the emotional distance that comes along with physical separation.

Another response to this trend in online learning was the adoption of student-centred teaching strategies. Gao et al. (2022) point out that teachers of Chinese science and technology universities started adopting methods of teaching where they instigate active learning with collaborative projects having self-regulated exercises [19]. It is mainly designed with the help of the dogmas of student-centred learning so that the capability of the students in the power of independence and critical thinking improves [20]. The turn towards student-centred approaches stands for a pedagogical shift from the teacher-centred model toward one that should empower the learners. It empowers the student with the demanded scenarios of a changing world, a commitment from teachers on the development of skills, and making learners for life.

In such a varied country as China, it most definitely was a big problem to make sure everybody had equivalent accesses to educational possibilities online. These results are in a line with the conclusions of the research by Zhu et al. (2022), who pointed out the difficulties of rural children and their parents' relatedness to more necessity for access to modern technologies [21]. This gap in digitization emphasizes how important it is to address equity concerns in online education and make sure every student is at par with the other in learning [22]. In this respect, the important role that inclusion plays may be emphasized through the duties, which teachers are able to assume at one and the same time: the role of advocates for equal access to education and the role of 'transmitters' of the information. It will take innovation and cooperative efforts to work together for the bridging to bring about equal opportunity even with respect to the location and socioeconomic standing of the students.

The need of professional development, while viewing the COVID 19 epidemic, increased in several approaches to online instruction. The research underlines the need to prepare teachers and support them so that they successfully proceed with the environment for online instruction [23]. Accordingly, the model of teachers' professional development involves the development of the following basic components for competencies in online pedagogical activity, production of digital educational materials, and effective use of technology [24]. The demand for continuous professional development seems to highlight a teacher's professional growth and improvement of teaching skills. This connotes that teaching in the digital age is changing in such a way that teachers have to develop themselves through lifelong learning to provide education that meets current demands.

Equally important is that the online context somewhat changed the dynamics between the instructor and the students. According to Wang et al. (2020), this brings forth the very relevance that this party—students and instructors—is able to keep and build [25]. They postulate that he makes the teacher-student relationships effective through openness, approachability, and emotional support to the learners. This underscores the point that from its traditional form to now, the teacher-student relationship has become a virtual one and thus it needs more of teachers' emotional intelligence and communication abilities. But as teaching extends beyond the borders of the body, building rapport and trust become some of the crucial conditions for effecting learning outcomes.

This cultural background and such history have both influenced the attitudes among instructors in a big way concerning teaching Language in an online platform in China. Very recently, Xu et al.

(2022) also compared and contrasted students' online teaching experiences in China with those in the United States and Lebanon [26]. While the identified cultural influences seem to have some effects on students' preference regarding a type of teaching style and communication style of the instructor, teachers need to be culturally aware of their approach in online education [27]. Cultural sensitivity in online instruction underlines the role of educators as cultural mediators, adapting teaching to the ways of diverse backgrounds and making learning universally inclusive.

The epidemic sparked a reassessment of teachers' roles in maintaining their health and identity. They used text mining to collect and evaluate data on many instructors' questioning of digital world roles and identities during the epidemic. A study carried out by Zhang and Hwang (2023) on instructors regarding their perception of identities during the epidemic, and subsequently collecting and analyzing the data through text mining, showed that the majority of instructors seriously questioned their role and identity in the digital world [28]. This only underscored the fact that continuous professional and emotional support was needed, as most teachers were struggling not only in the performance of their roles but also in their identity within the digital space [29]. The reflection the pandemic imposed on teaching reveals so much about being a vocation. He insists that to realize quality in education, the psychological and emotional being of an educator must be attended to without any compromise.

The proliferation of online teaching paved the way for investigating newly developed technologies. Zhang and Hwang (2023) established that open education resource (OER) adoption allowed students coming from far locations to accomplish self-study in a very easy manner and also enabled instructors an easy way for the customized service of their course content to meet the varied nature of their learners' needs [28]. The work of Li (2022) also underscores the role of teacher preparation programs in effective online teaching [30]. These findings have thus raised the need for comprehensive training programs that can properly prepare teachers to use the technology needed to facilitate effective instruction. The faculty also becomes more imaginative and flexible in technological use and new teaching tools for a better learning experience [24]. The research on OERs points out the prospects that educational equality can be obtained while at the same time enabling more student populations to gain access to quality learning materials.

The outbreak had indeed made the teaching online more imperative than ever to keep its flexibility in pedagogy. Lei and Medwell (2021) carried out their study in China and on its impact with the student instructors. According to the reviewed literature, the transition to online collaborative learning impacts future ways of teaching and learning experiences. This is evidenced in its study of the effects of the pandemic on student instructors in China and underscores open-mindedness in practice [31]. The teachers also exhibit resilience in the changes in teaching approaches and in their ability to adjust, even if new challenges arise. It focuses on inculcating a growth mindset since that is what makes them improvise or adapt and come up with new ways against changing conditions, all passed down to them.

In addition, because of the difficulties attached to e-learning, hybrid models for education were to be explored. The choice of the hybrid model displays the flexibility with which educators approach the changeable educational environment [14]. This serves to verify the capacity to extract the best from the two modes—traditional and online—finding the balance point between the strengths or benefits of the live classroom experience and the flexibility of the virtual classroom.

Besides, the concern that was significantly exhibited was inclusiveness in online instructions. Kamal and Illiyan (2021) conducted an econometric study of school teachers' perceptions regarding online teaching in India [32]. Their study has emphasized this issue: access to online education must be guaranteed even for children from minority groups who are usually found at the edge of society. Similarly, the same problem was raised within the Chinese context, with studies pointing to the fact that education should be made possible for all students [33]. To appeal to inclusivity shows educators who are dedicated to the ideals of social justice and equality. It suggests their role as change agents towards the eradication of educational barriers and the provision of equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their situations and contexts.

2.1. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK)

The prompt and smooth transition to online educational setups, necessitated all over the world by the COVID-19 pandemic, squarely put an imperative value upon the integration of technology with pedagogy and content knowledge—the sort of synthesis in the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. Mishra and Koehler (2006) conceptualized TPACK as a sweet spot at the centre of a Venn diagram in which "understanding of technologies in the context of teaching matches with pedagogical strategies and content expertise to provide effective teaching in digitally mediated environments [34].

The framework befits Language teaching, where subtlety is required to adopt technology along with pedagogic approaches that take care of the skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Out of Chinese educational contexts, several exercises researched during the period of COVID-19 pointed out the multifarious challenges facing English language teachers, ranging from the sudden need for digital literacy to transitioning pedagogical strategies that align with online platforms [9]. The studies reveal a range of responses from educators: while many have described innovative uses of multimedia tools to provide engaging and interactive learning experiences, they are quite sure about how to provide the kind of nuanced feedback necessary for language acquisition within the context of teaching and learning in virtual classrooms.

The TPACK framework provides a lens into all those efforts to see the areas of growth and development for educators, who, in this case, are to practice online teaching in an optimum way. TPACK among China's English language teachers developed dynamically and progressively, from the initial adaptations to higher levels of pedagogical innovations. Teachers had to manoeuvre a landscape full of challenges—the differential access of students to technology, which was already at varying levels, the need for upskilling fast in digital tools, and changing long-held teaching pedagogies for languages to befit the online mode.

The major change that this journey represents is the continual development of professionals and support structures in place, rather than increasing TPACK among teachers so that the digital divide does not further promote the advancement of educational inequalities.

2.2. Emotional and Psychological Well-being:

Herein arises the severe problem of motivation, engagement, and overall educational experience in an online learning environment due to the non-physical presence of both the instructors and students. In reality, the COVID-19 pandemic, through its extremely rapid emergence of online education, has brought to the forefront a whole array of pre-existing-related issues that have resulted in increased stress, anxiety, and isolation before the pandemic [35]. The virtual classroom is commonly impersonal, whereby it can, therefore, compound feelings to a great degree, hence calling for emotional and psychological considerations as part of the educational process. The above issues require educators to come up with the following strategies in order to build community and make the students engaged in China.

Among them could be synchronous video sessions reproducing face-to-face meetings, using collaborative online tools that would be indispensable for group working and peer interaction, and developing a check-in in the routine that would be supportive of the emotional needs of the students. "The strategies do not only work towards reducing the feeling of isolation but also ensure a good learning environment, thus drawing attention to the importance of emotional intelligence and empathetic teaching approaches for the digital realm.

And neither should the psychological impact of the pandemic on educators themselves be overlooked. Teachers had to face their own sets of challenges ranging from new technologies and pedagogies to managing work-life balance, not to forget the stresses of a very uncertain globe. These facts highlight the necessity of comprehensive support mechanisms, including professional opportunities in the area of emotional well-being and stress management, to remain able to sustain the capacities for high-quality teaching. Therefore, consideration of emotional and psychological well-being in the context of online English language teaching can never be an adjunct to educational strategies; in fact, they form the bedrock for efficacy in teaching and learning. TPACK continues to

take new developments in the educational landscape, where heightened concern is given to emotional and psychological health as important pillars equaled in helping shift into effective and fair online education.

The literature review reveals what happened in relation to teachers in China and many perspectives of the teachers in the process of implanting their online English instruction and what they found difficult. It should be added that these studies give full sets of information about the complexity of online education, including all sorts of details in reference to pedagogical adjustments, problems, issues of equality, and the incorporation of technology [36]. These findings will guide future strategies in bettering online English education and successful interaction between teachers and students in the digital era. These studies will be helpful and beneficial to provide light to give guidance in shaping up future strategies regarding bettering online education with an emerging education environment. This study was, therefore, important support that enabled a service provider to continuously be innovative and refine practices in online teaching.

3. Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

The study is supported by an elaborative philosophical framework directed at discovering the complex experiences when the transition to online learning was unexpectedly introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic in China. At its base, this investigation is rooted in a blend of philosophical approaches that marry positivism with interpretivism, all within the slim boundaries of pragmatism. This hybrid orientation is instrumentally disposed toward dissecting the multifaceted realities of online English language education, wherein it fits the dual objectives of identifying the overarching patterns and appraising the subjective depths of individual experiences [37]. The pragmatism of this approach allows for dynamism in an investigation, making it possible to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under consideration with the use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

As such, in this research, the research philosophy assumes a quantitative nature in that it actively engages with quantitative methodologies to unearth broad trends and patterns in educator perceptions through the instrumentality of surveys, questionnaires, and structured interviews. In this backdrop, these methodologies stand to become a rich, measurable data source in the offering of a macroscopic view in the teaching landscape in a pandemic [38]. The interpretive dimension, however, realizes that human experience is subjective and rich. In other words, this was the context in which such perceptions were embedded: the personal journey, emotions, and beliefs of the teachers—subtle issues that would require the methodological openness of the research to be captured. Further, this balanced philosophy approach greatly extends the research scope that can provide an objective to subjective good investigation and hence give actionable insights that could see improved improvement in online English language teaching practices.

3.2. Research Approach

Consistent with its philosophical underpinnings, this inductive study is designed to use a research methodology that carefully gathers and analyzes data so themes, patterns, and theories emerge from the data. The approach befits the purpose of this study very well because it allows for the systematic exploration of the teachers' experiences and, in addition, enables me to draw insights and conclusions guided by the data itself [39]. This is an inherently flexible approach, open enough, that could admit space for an in-depth inquiry into the complexities and nuances of experiences of online teaching without preconceiving any research question. The research journey starts with problem identification, and in this case, this is manifested in the context of online English language teaching during the pandemic, as identified through an intensive secondary source review. At this early exploratory stage, the present research is grounded through the resources of academic literature, governmental reports, and analyses from the institutions and media to outline a preliminary landscape of the issue [30].

This situated the study within the larger discourse on online education, noting a focus that answers the more specific questions about new media and open educational resources. After this, the

stage of data collection follows, whereby a rich tapestry of secondary data is amassed. This is to feature empirical studies, survey findings, and academic articles that all come together to birth a list of complete and detailed case studies that have made visible the multifarious effects of the pandemic on the domain of online English education. This evidence gives further insight into what strategies were used and the barriers experienced by the educators within this period of transition [40].

Interpretation of data would be the crucial next step, whereby the collected data is analyzed in depth in order to be able to derive patterns or common themes in the data. This is an all-inclusive phase that includes an elaboration of both qualitative and quantitative findings to give an all-rounded view of the experiences that educators underwent during the pandemic. This finally is modelled towards the development of conclusions and recommendations. This synthesis final stage of the findings reviewed the developed insight by applying rigorous analysis and dependence on real-life examples and documented experience to propose actionable strategies of how the online English Language Teaching context could be enhanced.

The conclusions drawn will be evidence-based in a manner such that they are relevant and applicable to the field. This framework describes the study methodologically, epistemologically, and theoretically grounded in empirical reality, therefore allowing for it to follow through both logically and systematically.

This reflects an authentic undertaking of the findings since this portrays the voice and experiences of the true educators; therefore, it contributes invaluable knowledge in the area of online English language education and provides practical recommendations for practitioners and policymakers.

3.3. Research Strategy

The research design strategy adhered to in this work conforms to the only-exclusively qualitative paradigm exclusively tailored to unfold the intricate dynamics at play in "Teacher Perceptions of Online English Learning During Pandemic." This research approach is extremely important, as it is important in disentangling the plethora of factors—psychological, social, or environmental—that affect the lived experience of educators in this unprecedented shift to online teaching.

Such an approach is not quantitative in nature, focusing on the statistical outcomes of the research; instead, the approach seeks to explore the quality of experience that teachers gain with the aim of bringing to the fore the reasons, attitudes, and challenges underlying the perceptions [41]. This seeks to unpack the "why" and the "how" behind what is observed, as well as issue a relatively rich contextual account of the subjects' views so as to fit flawlessly with the mapping of aims of the multidimensional nature of teacher attitudes and uncovering the foundational reasons behind their viewpoints [26]. Besides harnessing a qualitative framework, document analysis is part of the methodological research that borrows from broader contextualization for its findings.

This will include extensive research of the educational materials, periodical articles, and case studies, all together offering a panoptic view of the evolving challenges and insights that make an impact on teacher stances towards online English education. This dimension of the methodology ensures that the study of the perception of teachers is not closed within the boundaries of abstract data; instead, it is freed by a well-understood understanding of the educational scenario, or what policy change and pedagogical innovation, improved technology, among other things, that have characterized the pandemic period. Secondary Data Sources The foundation of this study's data collection lies in an extensive array of secondary data sources. An inherent strategic choice underpinning such methodological decision is the rich repository that it draws upon for its evidence, consisting of existing knowledge—conventions and, prior research findings, survey analysis, journalistic accounts, and comprehensive case studies—that delineate the trajectory of online learning and English language instruction amidst the pandemic.

They also enable research that transcends the current time-bound limitation and gives a continuum of experiences and insight from scholarly works to develop a layered understanding of the current perceptions of teachers [38]. The position of this study is, therefore, to dissect a spectrum of critical themes—from pedagogical strategies to technological integrations to student engagements

to educator morale—towards giving an analysis that is nuanced on both the victories and challenges experienced therein in the domain of online English education [42]. The use of secondary data sources in such works enriches research with historical depth, literally allowing a dialogue between past insights and contemporary observation. So, this approach to the methodology broadens the analysis and ensures that the subject matter is never left out, allowing the temporal dimensions to merge when describing one flowing story of teacher experiences and perceptions.

3.4. Synthesis of Methodological Approaches

The methodological approaches represent the confluence in the study framework, but each offers a kind of contribution to the whole aim that comprises understanding teachers' perceptions regarding online English learning during the pandemic. The philosophical base of pragmatism, coupled with the positive and interpretive, in actuality lays a multi-perspectival foundation for exploration with respect of the multi-dimensions and realities of the teaching and learning environments.

Essentially, the research will be qualitative, and it will be carried out strategically with the help of document analysis of the affective, cognitive, and contextual dimensions of educators' perceptions using secondary data sources. It is not just a data-collecting and analyzing method but rather an interpretative expedition in search of an understanding of the essence of teachers' experiences, adaptive strategies, triumphs, and trials in the shift to online education. Woven together with insights from varied secondary sources, it tries to present readers with a 360-degree picture of the online teaching scene in China vis-a-vis the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing into focus resilience, ingenuity, and challenges confronted by educators in the country. Finally, research strategies aim at rich and textured understandings of the phenomena under study. It is poised to make valuable contributions to discussions of online English language teaching and the work itself will be a great value to the field, providing perspectives that may very well influence policy, practice, and future research in the field. This comprehensive and in-depth study will try to reflect the reality of teachers' experience during the pandemic; thus, this will contribute as a basis for both effectiveness and quality in online English education.

3.5. Sampling Strategy

In this regard, purposive sampling was used to inform the research question at the center of teachers' perception of the online transition in English learning following the COVID-19 pandemic in China. This method has made sure that we only consider documents and participants who provided rich and relevant insights into the phenomenon under study.

Instrumental to this was the sampling strategy that cut across different perspectives, hence letting the understanding emerge with due nuance regarding the challenges, adaptations, and innovations experienced by educators. This is well explained, though includes the criteria of adding variety of materials that would shed light on the educational shifts brought out by the pandemic. These comprise peer-reviewed academic articles, official government reports on pandemic educational policies, and institutional reports from schools and universities on how they transformed their teaching and learning. These included peer-reviewed academic articles, official government reports on pandemic educational policies, and institutional reports from schools and universities on how they renovated their education and learning. Despite, of course, with due importance, the preference was given to documents that had bearing directly on the realm of English Language Teaching even though broader analysis regarding the strategies of online education was surely invaluable for contextual understanding. These include documents giving a background of understanding the actual experiences of teachers as provided through their interviews.

3.6. Criteria for Participants' Selection:

The criteria that have guided the following selection of the interviewees were meant to make sure that the identified interviewees were the most representative and would give the best possible

diversified and comprehensive insights. Participants in the present study were English teachers working in public and private schools, colleges and universities, and language institutes across China. In this way, this diversity of educational settings will be important to be able to acquire a good cross-sectional insight into pedagogical approaches and challenges encountered in such varied contexts. Second, the consideration was on the institutional geographical location in urban and rural as a way of looking at the effect on teaching and learning online.

Criteria included:

Teaching Experience: The teaching experience that is to be presented in this paper is the one that involves both novice and veteran teachers, aimed at comparing how each of them adapts to online teaching differently.

Technological Prof, or Proficient: The purpose of the study was to involve teachers with a profile of eclectic technology proficiency to be able to assess how digital literacy affected the classes being shifted to online.

Type of Institution and Location: The type of institution and location ensure that experiences and participation come from a sufficiently wide range of institutions and from a sufficiently broad geographic locality base to make them representative of the diversity present in China's educational landscape.

Contribution to Understanding the Phenomenon: Purposive sampling of documents and participants was done to derive light on the many faces of transitioning the practice of English Language Teaching during the pandemic to the online mode. The documents provided a macro-level overview of educational shifts, policy responses and institutional strategies deployed in managing the crisis. It was possible to look in depth in the broader context of what affects the experiences of teachers, the systemic challenges, and opportunities.

With this in view, in-depth interviews were carried out with a purposive sample of 30 teachers who could furnish insights from a micro-level perspective of the lived realities of online teaching. The study tried to find from their stories the personal and professional effects of the transition that pointed toward innovative practices in teaching, emotional, and psychological challenges of students and instructors, and strategies that teachers employed for their students to be engaged and motivated in a virtual learning context. The evidence of that documentary, along with the testimonies from the interviews, gives a holistic picture of the phenomenon that managed to show how policy and practice bridged the revelation of complexity in teaching English online during the times of an unparalleled global health crisis. This means that it was this sampling method that enabled this research to be so comprehensive in views regarding online transition to English language teaching in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. With a careful selection of documents and participants whose views can ensure a plurality and relevance to the research intended, it is poised to give meaningful insights into challenges and innovations that define online education at this point in time.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures: The procedures of data collection had been thoroughly designed and implemented to ensure that the findings were reliable and valid. These two mainly applied means of data collection were through document analysis and interviews with English teachers in China. Each of the actions required in them a specific set of actions designed to capture the information from transition to online English teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in its depth and width.

Document Analysis, Identification and Selection:

With the above sampling criteria in mind, a rigorous search for documents was sought from a range of databases, including academic journals, government and educational institution websites, and digital archives. Documents published during the period of the pandemic are prioritized so that the most immediate responses and strategies are captured.

Organisation: Some of the selected documents were organized and catalogued in a digital database complete with annotations summarizing their relevance and the key findings. In this way, the documents related to the objectives of the study, which made them easy for retrieval and referencing during the research process.

Analytical Reading: Documents were read with concentration to derive data relevant to online English language teaching practices, challenges in the face of educators, pedagogical innovations, and policy implications. Taking notes with important points and quotes to be used for later analysis.

Coding and Synthesis: Data elements from the documents were coded to the emerging themes that were being developed for the research questions. This form of analysis helped in synthesizing insights across many sources to make a coherent understanding of the experiences that were documented.

Interviews:

Recruitment of participants:

Potential respondents for this research are teachers who meet the set criteria. They were identified from education networks, social media, and other referrals. An invitation to participate was forwarded, together with a notice and consent to email.

Consent and Scheduling:

After being satisfied that the participants fully understood the study's objectives, it was their right to participate, and confidentiality of the information given would be observed, the willing participants gave informed consent. All interview schedules were done at times best for the participant.

Interview Protocol:

A semi-structured interview guide was prepared that included open-ended questions to elaborate on the participants' perceptions, experiences, and strategies regarding online teaching. The guide also incorporated some space for the researchers to pursue further questions based on the answers of the participants.

Conducting Interviews:

The conduct of all the interviews was helped by video conferencing tools due to the spread of the geographical areas and the restricting nature brought by the pandemic. Every interview had a window period of 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded, with permission from the interviewees.

Transcription and First Analysis:

The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The first analysis incorporated reading through the transcriptions to identify emerging themes, discrepancies, or any other unique insights on the focus areas of the study. Such a rigid approach to collecting data ensures that the data acquired are rich and multidimensional; they merge the broadest contextual insights derived from document analysis with the subtler, more personally oriented perspectives given by participants in interviews. Taken together, these methods point toward a complete basic of analysis of the impact of the pandemic on online English language teaching in China.

3.7. Data Analysis

The process was essential at the stage of data analysis, whereby a large amount of qualitative data was summarized into comprehensible and meaningful findings reflecting research objectives. The process was composed of several steps aimed at making sure that the analysis was systematic and rigorous.

Thematic Coding: At the beginning, open coding was carried out on all the data, including transcription of interviews, and major excerpts from documents. This involved scrutinizing the data for segments that related to the themes, ideas, or concepts about the research questions, and then coding those segments.

This iterative process allowed for the emergence of patterns and themes directly from the data.

Coding Framework Development: The development of a coding framework was developed to include data in a systematic manner as themes sprouted in the research development. This structuring of data included major themes, sub-themes, and categories that eased the flow of analysis.

Constant Comparative Method: The constant comparative method entailed the continuous comparison of data both within and between categories, in search of similarities and differences, in this study. The process of comparison sharpened the categories and themes in a manner to make the represented data credible.

Integration and Synthesis: Following thematic coding and comparison, the data integrated and synthesized were carried out to come up with a comprehensive narrative that would address all the research objectives. This involved relating findings to document analysis with those from interviews, hence triangulation of the data to firm up the validity of the study.

In the last step, the results were interpreted in light of the available literature on the subject of online education and English language teaching. As such, such an interpretive analysis aimed at providing depth to the study's contributions by placing its findings within the bigger academic and practical discourse.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

To do qualitative research always involves a deep commitment to considerations of an ethical nature, especially where human subjects are concerned. This study has followed several key ethical considerations, in due regard to safeguarding the rights and well-being of the participants, in addition to maintaining ethical conduct and integrity of the research process.

Informed Consent: The participants had been informed about the purpose of the study, interviewing procedures that apply to them, and the potential risks and benefits involved. Informed written consent from each participant was taken for voluntary participation in the study and the nature of the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: In this study, privacy was highly maintained for the subjects, and their identity in the documentation and publication was either changed or not indicated. Examples from interviews were quoted using different pseudonyms. The data were kept with maximum security, whereby no infiltration was meant to access the file except for the research team.

The Right to Withdraw: Participants had been informed about their possibility to withdraw from the study without any explanation and any penalty or repercussion at any point. This assurance was an important aspect of protecting voluntarism throughout the research phase.

Transparency and Honesty: The research was conducted at the possible best levels of transparency and honesty. Changes that occurred in the process of the research were communicated to the respondents; findings reporting did not have any fabricating or omitting of the data.

Debriefing: After the interview process, all participants were debriefed regarding the major objectives of the study and any questions or concerns arising related to their responses or identity. This was important in closing the communication loop in which participants knew their involvement was valued and respected. The study has observed such ethical considerations that keep up the best of research ethics, focusing on the welfare of the participants and their rights, while at the same time ensuring the findings of the research.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The document analysis and interviews with teachers of English in China provided rich data. In this paper, it briefly outlines the key types of data collected and highlights some of the major themes that have emerged from the analysis of the data.

Secondary data was based on very careful examination of over 60 documents, amongst which there were peer-reviewed academic papers, government reports, and institutional guidelines and case studies.

Documents covered from the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 to the latter part of 2023 and therefore were able to provide a holistic and comprehensive view of the dynamism experienced within the educational landscape. A critical reflection from the analyzed document included:

Shift in policies and guidelines: The documents of education authorities articulated immediate policy shifts in their response to the pandemic, which underscored rapid digital transformation, taking the deployment of their platforms for online teaching as paramount.

Pedagogical strategies: From the case studies, together with the academic articles, they point out that the pedagogical strategies of the teaching and learning process were both synchronous and asynchronous methods that prompt online engagement by the learners.

Challenges and Solutions: It was common to identify documents that brought forth an attempt to identify where challenges occur, such as the digital divide, engagement of students, or integrity of assessment, with innovative solutions that institutions or educators were coming up with.

Interviews: 104 English language teachers from a wide range of education and professional backgrounds took part in semi-structured interviews. This sort of dialogical exchange provided a rich insight into individual experiences and collective experiences that would be claimed as relevant to the condition of moving from face-to-face to online education. Table 1 showed the variable labels and descriptive statistics.

Table 1. Variable Label and Descriptive Statistics of Interview.

Variable Label	Percentage	Total Participants
Gender	15% Male 85% Female	104
Age Range	5% 22 - 29 years 9% 29 - 34 years 38% 35 - 42 years 32% 43 - 50 years 16% over 51 years	104
Level of Education	50% Bachelor degree 47% Master degree 3% Doctorate degree	104
Teaching experience	8.5% 0 - 5 years 15% 6 - 10 years 26% 11 - 15 years 50.5 over 16 years	104
Platform used	40% MS Teams 40% Zoom 15% Google classroom and meet 5% Others, such as Wechat or Whatsapp	104

Table 2, 3 & 4 in Appendices showed the calculation of central tendency of perceived usefulness item, perceive ease of use item, and behavioral intention items. The interview questions were designed by using a Likert Scale of Five items: Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly agree (SA).

Table 2. The calculation of Central Tendency of Perceived Usefulness Items.

No.	Perceived Usefulness	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Total Participants	CT	Interpretation
1	E-learning system improves my teaching performance	7.9	39.1	13.6	34.2	5.2	104	60%	Enough
2	E-learning system is useful for teaching.		9.9	9.9	76.3	3.9	104	75.5%	Enough
3	E-learning system makes me convenient in teaching	4.5	45.2	19.0	26.5	4.9	104	58%	Enough
							Average	64.5%	Enough

Table 3. The calculation of Central Tendency of Perceive Ease of Use Items.

No.	Perceived Usefulness	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Total Participants	CT	Interpretation
1	Easy to use e-learning system		2.6	21.4	49.0	1.5	104	66%	Enough
2	Interaction with e-learning system is clear and underable.	3.5	44.1	18.3	33.5	0.7	104	58.5	Enough
3	E-learning is flexible to use.	4.0	35.6	10.9	40.6	7	104	64%	Enough
Average								62.8%	Enough

Table 4. The calculation of Central Tendency of Behavioral Intention Items.

No.	Perceived Usefulness	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Total Participants	CT	Interpretation
1	I will use e-learning system	1.5	2.0	26	42	6	104	67%	Enough
2	I recommend to use e-learning system		18.8	26.7	49.0	5.5	104	69%	Enough
3	Encourage students in the e-learning system		4	11.9	77.0	7.1	104	78.5%	Enough
4	Continue to use the e-learning system after Covid-19		8.9	16.8	65.3	8.9	104	77%	Enough
Average								72.9	Enough

The following are the main themes identified from the interview transcripts: Personal and professional challenges: Most teachers talked much about how they were both shocked and anxious when going online, thinking about technical expertise, keeping students engaged, and making teaching materials ready for the classroom. Innovative Teaching Practices: Finally, these stories of innovation and creativity could be spotted amidst all these challenges. The teachers experimented with new digital tools, platforms, and teaching methods, along with interactive gaming, breakout rooms for group discussion, and multimedia resources, keeping the focus on helping students learn languages better.

Change in Student-Teacher Relationship: Most of the interviewed teachers claimed that there is a huge change in the student-teacher relationship. They gave examples of new patterns in communication in which students need more empathy and supportiveness. Even during the period of online learning, they developed new strategies in order for students to have that sense of being together.

Professional Development: Fast movement towards online education was even more urgent for continuous professional development, as teachers in the previous survey had demanded training on digital tools, online pedagogy, and mechanisms for student and self-emotional support. Reflecting on the future of education, some of the effects that the pandemic may bring and which are likely to be part and parcel of education include the possible models of blended learning and totally newfound interest in some of the opportunities and challenges that come with online education. In combination, the data from document analysis and interviews conducted build a rather intricate web of transition to online English language teaching in China.

These outcomes underscore the characteristics of educators: resilience and adaptability to digital technology like never before; an ever-continuing need for support and resources to adjust the teaching landscape effectively; and finally, a commitment to their students to encourage and assure success. This contributes immense value in understanding a multifaceted impact on education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and hence builds a base for further exploration of strategies that enhance online learning in future times.

4.2. Challenges Faced by Teachers

Data from interviews and document analysis have all pointed out that the transition brought a myriad of difficulties to Chinese educators. They were technical, pedagogical, and even emotional difficulties. Some of the teachers and students were technically illiterate, and accessing reliable internet and digital devices was a great challenge. One of the teachers, referred to as "Teacher A," was quoted: "The abrupt shift was quite overwhelming. Not all of us and not all our students had the required gadgets or connectivity, which would enhance a smooth running of the classes." Even a government report had pointed out to the inequities in digital access, especially in rural areas, which was making the challenge for equity in service provision much more challenging.

Engaging Students. The first challenge was engaging students in a virtual setup. "The screen acts as a barrier. It's hard for me to even gauge their understanding or keep them attentive as I could in a physical classroom," Teacher B said. This echoed findings from the literature review, particularly bringing to light an academic paper that discussed problems that may occur when trying to replicate the same kind of interactive and dynamic quality of classroom discussions and activities within the online environment.

Adapting Teaching Materials: Adapting existing teaching materials for online delivery was another challenge identified.

Teacher C said, "In fact, transforming my lesson plans to an online format really required a complete overhaul of my teaching materials." Such transformation is rather painful and really time-consuming, requiring a lot of creativity, as is demonstrated by many case studies reporting teacher efforts to digitize teaching and to make it engaging for students learning online. **Integrity:** They even assured assessment integrity in an online environment. Teacher D asked, "How do you ensure the work submitted is their own?"—pointing at one of the common challenges encountered while trying to do exams and quizzes online.

Documents from educational institutions brought forward various strategies to the issue, right from open book exams to project-based assessment, but academic standards became a major area of concern.

Emotional and Psychological Strain: Above the challenging times with material challenges, teachers had to deal with emotional and psychological strain.

The isolation, the blurred lines between work and home—it's been too overwhelming," Teacher E opened up to me. Academic journals have now placed their focus on the effects of long-term online teaching on educator mental health and have included this as one of the most critical areas needing further support and research.

4.3. Pedagogical Innovations and Strategies

Among all the challenges educators grappled with during the virtual shift, apparently all sorts of innovative approaches and strategies, of course, began to bring a tide of attaining educational continuity and engagement. One of the innovative strategies was the use of interactive digital tools.

Teacher F said, "I started using live quiz platforms, like Kahoot! and Quizlet online; these had enhanced interaction from the learners and indeed instant feedback." Tools with features of live-time student engagement and assessment, therefore, made the learning process for the learners extremely dynamic and fun. Another significant strategy was the use of breakout rooms in video conferencing platforms.

According to Teacher G, "The breakout rooms are the game-changers of the activities done by the groups. It's simulating our small group discussions in class and allowing the students to put heads

together and deal meaningfully with the material." The approach of letting peers interact among themselves becomes very important for the community and collaborative learning environment one experiences online. Flipped classroom models also gained traction, as explained by Teacher H: "For example, we used to have lecture materials studied at home such that in class, we were having discussions and problem-solving, therefore maximizing student-teacher interaction." This approach guaranteed that the learners really did learn and, at the same time, made the teacher have more time in addressing individual student needs during synchronous sessions. However, these new strategies brought challenges. Teachers reported problems in making judgments regarding the engagement of the students in activities and in participating in things that are not synchronous.

Teacher, I said, "It's hard to gauge who's genuinely engaging with the material and who's just going through the motions." To further action, I needed to make some of the self-directed learning impactful and ensure in all cases academic integrity while taking the assessments.

4.4. Teacher and Student Adaptation

The sudden shift to online teaching required huge adaptability on the part of teachers and, in addition, made students more responsible for their study process. They had to upskill in digital tools and platforms more through a trial and error process and in a very short time. Teacher J shared, "The first weeks were just like the adjustment period for the technology. It was a very steep learning curve, but it had to be done so I could deliver my lessons well." Professional development sessions and peer support networks were key to this adaptation, sharing resources and tips on teaching.

In adapting their teaching styles, educators became more flexible and empathetic. Teacher K said, "I had to be more lenient with deadlines and provide them with more one-on-one support. With this flexibility, there comes another kind of flexibility—the assessment can be done taking the alternatives, many educators are now moving towards, finding a better fit online and for their circumstances. On their part, students adapted to the new ways of learning and communication. Many students initially had a problem whereby there was no face-to-face action; hence, they needed more self-discipline in managing their study schedules. However, they also found new ways to engage with the material and each other. Student L observed, "Online learning pushed me to be more proactive in asking questions and seeking help through emails and chat forums." As such, the digital environment facilitated a wholly new ground for participation, such that it enabled the students to open up towards the contribution to the discussion, either written or facilitated by virtual platforms.

The relationship between the teacher and the student was also affected, in that the teachers had become more into the communication that was happening outside the class hours, which had been pre-arranged.

"I used to receive much of the students' emails, either wanting clarity on the assignments or feedback on their work," teacher M said. One interesting change that revealed the reality of the case was that, for this amount of interaction to have been in place, there must have been quite well-open and transparent lines of communication. Even the feedback mechanisms were changed from the traditional form, and teachers were giving feedback through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous approaches to facilitate constructive feedback. According to Teacher N, "I made personalized feedback videos for the different assignments, which the learners are finding quite helpful, as it gives them a clearer sense of how to improve." This helped to ensure that the quality of feedback students get was at its best, an aspect that is of great importance in guaranteeing effective learning.

The journey of adaptation was not a series of overcoming obstacles, but rather an eye-opener to different potentials and a revisit of how education may look. Teachers and students have developed new digital literacies in this process, being able to search out resources, platforms, and tools for online communication. The experience assured a culture of creativity and resilience—qualities that would ensure dominance in the future of education.

In summary, the pandemic transition to online English language teaching has been considered a period of massive pedagogical innovation and adaptation. Teachers have introduced new ways and

teaching approaches that actually support learning while offering enjoyment and learning in the world of digital education.

On the contrary, after overcoming the first challenge of how to engage actively in their education, students would embrace new ways of interacting with the content, the teachers, and other students. The teachers and students take on that shared odyssey together, one that illustrates the challenges and successes of this transition—perhaps most lastingly, new educational practices that might extend far beyond the pandemic and into the new.

4.5. Digital Divide and Accessibility Issues

This is quite the contrast to the fresh light—one so stark in effect—that transition to online learning during the time of COVID-19 has thrown on the digital divide, unveiling great disparities in matters of access to technology and internet connectivity between teachers and students. This divide was particularly sharp between urban and rural areas and among various socio-economic strata, presenting great challenges to the deliverance of equitable education. However, teachers from poorer homes had a myriad of challenges that would guarantee inclusion when conducting online classes. As Teacher O, who works in the village, shared: "A number of my students did not have reliable internet at home, if at all. They had to share the same gadget with their siblings." This was, by no means, an isolated case, as reflected when a case study also found similar accessibility problems throughout rural China, where infrastructure was the largest inhibitor to moving onto the digital learning platform. The impact of these disparities on student engagement and learning outcomes was profound. These often lead to interruptions in their learning flow. Teacher P testifies to this when he says, "It was heart-wrenching to see eager students unable to join classes due to factors beyond their control." This unveiled the pressing need for solutions that bridge the digital divide. Efforts to redress these have come in various forms, with some educators and institutions having taken creative steps to reach out to these marginalized students. "We sought the donation of the devices and worked with the local communities to set up internet access points," said Teacher Q. "In response to the government and non-profit organizations launched programs that would help improve access to hardware and connectivity solutions in areas with less. However, the reality hidden behind this alarming digital divide unveils the indispensable necessity: to keep on investing not only in digital infrastructures but also in learning inclusive digital policies. The pandemic showed the world once again the enormous importance of technologies in modern education and the must-fulfill criterion, not less than providing equal access to the learning opportunities for all students from any point of the world and by any social group.

5. Conclusions

The research findings indicate that English language educators in China had to adapt to the sudden change to online teaching overnight, just like their counterparts all over the world. Challenges emerge in the adaptation processes, from technological obstacles to pedagogical pitfalls. Yet, in the face of these challenges, the educators did exhibit remarkable resilience in the use of a plethora of digital tools and resources to continue, at times even amplifying, student engagement and learning outcomes. Thus, the incorporation of these digital tools represents a broader pedagogical shift, one that hints at a migration to a more integrated use of technology in practice.

Indeed, the changes are a mirror of a change in education since the students' findings and feedback go above the traditional spatial barriers to classroom access and reach the point of examining the potential of digital media in learning facilitation. This shift has also prompted rethinking, not just in what is taught but also in how it is delivered. This has pushed educators into new territory in terms of how content can be delivered, how students can be reached, and even how learning can be assessed in an online format.

The findings also illuminate the resilience of educators in the face of such rapid change. This very resilience has been key to pushing through the unending uncertainties that were brought about by the pandemic and thus clearly underscores the critical role educators have amidst adversity in shaping the learning experience.

One such adaptation and innovation strategy was to get educational continuity; it was the adaptation and innovation of providing some sense of normalcy and stability to students amidst an environment fraught with turmoil.

5.2. TPACK Framework Analysis

The implication of adopting the TPACK model reflects deeper insight into the subtle and complex ways that knowing how to use technology, pedagogy, and the teacher's content knowledge has evolved for online teaching environments [34]. Results show that the strategic use of interactive platforms and digital resources by the educators actually did come through during the pandemic, ensuring that online instruction was quickly put in place and raised the quality of teaching and learning among English learners.

The way these instructors were using the digital tools would almost seem to reflect an advanced level of understanding within the TPACK framework: technology is almost comprehensively integrated into the practices of pedagogy that they offer, thus offering opportunities for students to engage in much more interesting and interactive learning. This builds an overlap within the TPACK framework that ends toward a more heuristic and holistic application in teaching for the digital age—quite a contrast from the conventional mode of teaching. However, it has to be mentioned that some TPACK components should be emphasized more; for instance, emphasis should be placed on their online assessment and feedback mechanisms.

The drift of learning to online education is exposing the weaknesses of the traditional means of assessment, hence pointing out the very need for innovative approaches that should be of use and find application online. In these areas, professional development efforts need to be put in to enhance the teachers' competencies in all the domains of the TPACK framework.

It is such an urgent need that an educator looks to empower further with more effective ways to make assessments of student learning and give meaningful feedback in a virtual environment. The key to successful navigation of the complexities of online education lies in this professional development. A more thorough appreciation of the TPACK framework and how it opens the doors for the adoption of even more effective, innovative assessment strategies might be just the thing that helps educators be that much better prepared to face the challenges involved with teaching online.

5.3. Emotional and Psychological Implications

The study's findings echo existing research that highlights the emotional and psychological toll of remote learning. The sense of isolation, increased and unmanaged stress, and anxiety among educators trying to teach engaging online content and students learning from isolated environments is more pronounced now than ever [35]. This might often give a sense of disconnection, in turn alienating this from the sense of community that usually pervades the traditional classroom. Educators have made commendable efforts at creating this sense of community online, using every way possible for building interaction and engagement, though in a virtual world. Teachers have spanned the emotional distance with virtual discussion boards and synchronous video sessions that emulate classroom relations.

The same study indicates that, even though beneficial, these are not able to fulfill the deeper emotional and psychological necessities of the students and educators. It goes ahead to indicate that there is no spontaneous aspect or physical element in an online environment. Hence, the isolation of an individual is felt. This actually highlights the need for educational institutions and stakeholders to devise structured support mechanisms that would better take care of the emotional well-being of all participants in the learning process. Such included mental health resources, counselling services, and well-being workshops that were to be integrated into online learning platforms with well-provided services to those who have to tackle the challenges of remote education. Equally of importance, there should be professional training for educators in easy identification and response to signs of emotional distress in the students, giving them ways of knowing how to help the students at large, other than on an academic basis.

5.4. Reflections on Educational Equity

The research adds much more to this universal problem: the digital divide and how it presents that inequalities in access to technology further increase educational inequality. On this note, therefore, it is an effective argument to bring out the fact that digital platforms would bring democracy into the education sector, seeing as not all students have an equal opportunity to access the required resources for the online learning environment [21]. This gap is not just a logistical issue but points to a serious equity issue that could leave the most marginalized students even further behind. Efforts to address the digital divide require a multifaceted approach that extends beyond temporary fixes.

Investment in digital infrastructure is very key, more so in the less-served areas with the poorest access to good internet connections and digital gadgets. A core policy point of equal importance would be on enhancing digital literacy: students and educators must be well equipped, not only in terms of technological devices but also with skills that would enable efficient application. Resource sharing and support for needy students could, therefore, greatly reduce the constraints to access, thus ensuring that online education becomes a practical alternative for all.

However, the equity in online education calls for re-examining its related teaching practice and the delivery of content. The implication is that even the development of materials and content for online studies equally demands that said materials be purged of barriers and can be equitably accessed by all students. Further, this should recommend ways in which content delivery could ensure that diverse learning styles and needs are fully catered for. These findings thus imply that with the further development of both online and blended learning models, countries can draw lessons from the coronavirus period to guide them in working out strategies that will further strengthen education systems in terms of resilience, inclusiveness, and effectiveness.

Addressing the emotional and psychological implications of online learning and bridging the digital divide have to be considered not just as responses to an ephemeral crisis but, rather, highly relevant parts of the process of future-proofing education systems against unforeseen challenges. In a nutshell, the shift towards online education will throw light on the key areas of development in the digital learning environment. Understanding and meeting the emotional and psychological challenges of remote learning, while trying to bridge the digital divide proactively, will lead to a lot of good for educators and policymakers besides children towards making the educational environment more inclusive, equitable, and supportive, as the case may be. This is a chance for us to reconsider education in a way that it does promote the benefits of the digital platform while taking care of the well-being and success of all learners with the potential for lasting changes in teaching and learning practices.

5.5. Recommendations for Practitioners

Enhance Digital Pedagogical Skills: Teachers should seek to develop, therefore, their digital literacy and pedagogical skills in online teaching. The main goal is to enlighten teachers on the knowledge of modern education technologies and platforms available for their use and understand ways in which the tool can be integrated into English language teaching for more interactive and engaging learning.

Leverage Blended Learning Approach: Teachers and the administration in schools are urged to make use of a blended learning approach to be better placed in handling the challenges when it comes to student engagement and involvement. Such a model combines teaching that is synchronous (live) with that of asynchronous (self-pace) activities, therefore giving room for flexibility and meeting different students' needs with different approaches to learning.

Collaborative Learning Opportunities: Use breakout rooms and discussion forums, along with collaborative projects, which will help in replicating the high interactive forces in a conventional classroom. Educators need to devise tasks in a way that they push peers for interaction and should also provide the students with an opportunity to work collectively toward the accomplishment of those tasks. **Method of assessment:** online teaching will demand a lot of creativity on the side of assessment. This simply means that practitioners should use the formative and summative methods

of assessment they know, like project-based assignments, peer assessments, and digital portfolios, to measure that which they are interested in and, where applicable, give feedback.

Emphasize Emotional and Psychological Support: With the knowledge that indeed virtual learning does come with its emotional package, means need to be devised through which the students and teachers feel they are emotionally and psychologically supported. This can include a series of regular check-ins, virtual office hours, and resources for mental health support.

Building a Professional Community of Support: The teachers need motivation and facilitation in developing a learning culture and being open to each other by sharing resources, strategies of teaching, and experiences. This way, they develop professional learning communities that help teachers come together to share in overcoming the challenges of online teaching ways that spur on innovation and continuous improvement of the practice.

5.6. Recommendation for Policymakers Invest in Digital Infrastructure:

Bridge the Digital Divide: The difference can only be bridged with massive investment in digital infrastructure. Policymakers, in this regard, have an added responsibility to increase the opportunity of every learner from under-resourced areas through deploying high-speed internet and issuance of digital gadgets to students and tutors.

Holistic Teacher Training Programmes: Since teachers play a very important role in the success of online education, there should be holistic professional development programmes developed by policymakers and adequately funded. The general perception includes competencies in both technical skills related to the online teaching platform and digital pedagogy, including competencies to engage and assess students in online environments.

Support Emotional and Psychological Well-being: Policies of concern will have to touch on both the emotional and psychological part of online teaching and learning. This ranges from funding to the mental health resources available to learners and educators, to well-being and self-care being part of the teacher training program.

Promote Educational Equity: Policymakers must implement measures that promote equity in online education. This may involve subsidy-based access to the Internet and digital devices for low-income families, teaching resources that are all-inclusive to the learning of all students, and schools in rural and remote areas to be supported with facilities to effectively be part of online teaching.

Encourage Public-Private Partnerships: Policymakers, therefore, are to encourage public-private partnerships in the form of joint ventures between the government and companies from the private sector for educational institutions. It means that partnerships will more likely enable the emergence and further development of new, innovative educational technologies, will channel financial resources into digital learning initiatives, and will foster investigations in e-learning best practices.

Guidelines and Standards for Online Education: There is a felt need for evolving clear-cut guidelines and standards so that consistency and quality are maintained in all the programmes of online English language teaching. These could include such items as the design of curriculum, qualification of teachers, support for students, and how to complete assessments within the environment of online learning. It is on this premise, therefore, that the paper recommends that practitioners and policy actors work jointly to elevate quality, accessibility, and equity within online English language teaching. These strategic interventions will, therefore, help the stakeholders face some of the challenges that have arisen due to COVID-19, ensure that digital education is taken to its potential, and actually lay the foundation for a more resilient, inclusive, and effective educational landscape.

5.7. Recommendations for Future Research

Longitudinal research is needed to measure the long-term impact of online English language teaching on learning outcomes, or it could even help find any impact vis-à-vis teacher professional development and educational equity. This is expounding how these studies may help identify lasting changes in pedagogical practices and learner engagement, therefore giving insights on sustainability and evolution of innovations adopted during the pandemic.

Comparative Studies Between the Online and Blended Learning Models: Further research may include comparative studies on the effectiveness of either pure online teaching models with blended or hybrid that combine online with face-to-face instruction. This would assist an educator or a policymaker to understand what the optimal mix of the methods of teaching should be in different contexts, subjects, and the learner population.

Impact of Online Education on Teachers' Psychological and Emotional Well-being: However, there is a constant emerging concern related to the psychological and emotional well-being of teachers. Further, longitudinal research is recommended into online teaching and its effects on educators' mental health from the setting up of support systems to practice prevention of damage. Development of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK): The current research looks into determining the extent to which the TPACK framework applies within an online ESL teaching environment. It is, therefore, incumbent on further research in such a respect, trying to understand how teachers get and develop TPACK competencies. Of potential value, this could inform targeted professional development programs by investigating processes and resources that support this professional growth.

Digital Divide and Equitable Access of Education: This was an informed review that brought out the digital divide as one of the most crucial stumbling blocks towards educational equity in online learning. The effectiveness of these interventions, which have been enacted to bridge this divide, about the roles played by the government, community-based organizations, and educational institutions in ensuring equal access to technologies and the internet, needs to be taken up for further research.

Student Perspectives and Experiences: While the present study focused mostly on teachers' experiences and strategies, a very rich vein of research still needs to be conducted revolves around the student perspective of online learning.

In future studies on student engagement, motivation, and online versus face-to-face learning outcomes, this study may also aid through adding to the perceived social interaction and community of students in virtual environments. Cultural and Contextual Influence on Online Learning: These are, therefore, areas of cultural and contextual influence on the effective implementation of online English language teaching, which requires much more to be done. In other words, the research indicated how diverse cultural norms and values existing across different educational environments with varied educational traditions greatly affected the teaching practices that the environment supports.

In conclusion, the movement to online English language education in China, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, is ripe with opportunities for those who will be watching. It explores the challenges, strategies, and innovations that educators and students made during this rare time occurrence. The study, therefore, sought from the experiences insights that may inform prevailing practices and focus on future directions within the field of online education and English language teaching.

The study's findings revealed several key insights: Rapid Adaptation and Resilience: Rapid adaptability and resilience brought out in the manner the teachers were able to move to online forums. Despite several early-stage technical and pedagogical hiccups, the reconfigured system enabled educators to adopt new digital tools and resources fairly rapidly to ensure some form of educational business continued. Innovative Teaching Practices: The need for online learning, therefore, has been a driving force behind quite a lot of pedagogical innovation. Teachers started using new tools like interactive digital tools, new models of flipped classroom, and breakout rooms for exercise so that students could work in groups. Such kinds of practices justified the role of technology in improving the learning experience beyond the setup of conventional classrooms.

The challenges that emerged for educators and learners, as a result of the move online, included emotional and psychological problems; issues such as isolation, stress, and work-life balance were some of the key problems. The research found that educators and students require full-fledged support mechanisms. Digital Divide and Access Gap: The main finding of this phenomenon was

leading towards the widening of the digital divide, where differences in access to technology and the internet affected equity in education.

This, therefore, has particularly been profound amidst urban and rural settings, and it emphasizes the call for dealing with technology access for the sake of education equitability among all learners. Professional Development and Support: The strategy of transition to online instruction showed the key role of constant professional development and support of the teachers in particular, increased digital literacy, pedagogical strategies of online teaching, and emotional resilience.

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