Becoming an online EAP teacher: An autoethnographic reflection on teaching remotely during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Abstract

In this autoethnographic study, which was crafted during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, I reflect on my experience of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) remotely, as a result of the UK University closures during the pandemic, providing a first-hand view of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT).

I detail my feelings about both my professional and personal situation during the crisis, analysing the challenges and factors that re-shaped me professionally into an online EAP teacher. Furthermore, I reflect on the impact that remote teaching experience had on my perception of the role of an online EAP teacher.

The autoethnographic method is used in this study, whereby I am simultaneously the researcher and the person at the centre of the research. The data is collected via my reflections and recollections, some having been inspired by my interactions with students, colleagues, and relatives.

Based on the results of the literature review and my knowledge in this area, and considering that the situation is very recent, I believe my reflection on my teaching experience during the pandemic will contribute to research within this area by offering unique experiences and perspectives to reveal the complexity of this phenomenon.

Keywords: EAP, emergency remote teaching (ERT), online, COVID-19, TELT.

1. Introduction

I have been teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in-sessional courses for international graduate students since 2016, when I started my career in higher education. I have since taught multiple groups of students, incorporating various technologies into my EAP classroom to provide my students with opportunities to engage in online interaction and asynchronous learning. Additionally, since 2017, I have supported colleagues in my capacity as the school's Technology-Enhanced Learning and Teaching (TELT) Officer and provided support and staff training on the use of educational technologies. Through my experience using various technologies, e.g., Zoom, MS Teams for learning and teaching, I have effectively incorporated online activities into my EAP lessons. Through my TELT responsibilities I have further accessed a range of relevant technical skills that have benefitted my delivery of EAP lessons in a blended mode. Nevertheless, my training did not fully prepare me for what I faced in March 2020 when we were told to deliver our classes

remotely with no opportunities for face-to-face interaction. This marked the starting point for my emergency remote teaching (ERT) experience.

Following the announcement made in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation (2020) declaring the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic, the vast majority of the universities, colleges and schools around the world closed their doors to students (UNESCO, 2020). According to the BALEAP report (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021, p.7), 'the Covid-19 pandemic prompted an emergency response from EAP providers with many having to move their provision online within a short space of time, sometimes even over a weekend'. In my case, I had one night to come to terms with the requirement to teach online, as all the classes at my university were suddenly cancelled (Rapanta et al., 2020).

As a result of this sudden closure, I had to rapidly adapt all the learning and teaching materials for online use, so that my EAP students could continue their studies with minimum disruption. Not knowing how long the situation was going to last, I had to accept the situation as the new normal and adjust by making drastic changes to both my professional and personal life with minimal time to reflect on these adaptions. This prompted me to conduct this study to explore how the transition from being a classroom- to an online EAP teacher affected my self-perception and shaped me professionally.

This paper reflects on my experience of teaching EAP remotely during COVID-19, covering aspects such as how this new experience as well as personal factors such as my TELT background influenced my teaching. My reflections are based on my observations of the transition from classroom to online EAP teacher, my observations of the students in my online classes and are also inspired by my interactions with colleagues.

As the situation has occurred recently there is limited research available to explain the bigger picture including the problems and complexities associated with this phenomenon. As the topic of this research is related to my own teaching experiences and self-perception, I felt that an autoethnographic approach would be the most appropriate method to use to gain the insights and the individual experience that is relevant and necessary for this study. Therefore, this study will be mainly based on personal reflections and observations, with reference to very recent publications on remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

The section begins by defining the terms ERT and online teaching. It then investigates how higher education institutions around the world have responded to the crisis, and how EAP teachers adapted to the new environment. Finally, it considers how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted EAP delivery at UK institutions.

Below are the key themes that emerged from the literature which also correspond with the themes identified during the data analysis of my narrative.

2.1 Emergency remote vs online teaching

ERT is a new phenomenon in the educational context. Unlike the very well-known online distance learning mode that provides an alternative to classroom-based learning, ERT has been seen as a temporary solution to an immediate problem (Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

The main differences between what is known as 'online' and 'emergency remote learning' seem to concern planning, timing, flexibility, design and student and staff involvement. While online learning is often associated with developing a course or a set of activities involving careful planning (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Golden, 2020), typically undertaken by a team of experienced teachers or TELT specialists over a longer period (Golden, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020) and developed as 'intentional support for other people's learning, mediated by the Internet' (Rapanta et al., 2020, p. 924), ERT seems to be an obligation, as is the necessary approach that institutions in crisis need to take to continue the delivery of their courses (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). This means that different strategies and approaches to learning and teaching need to be employed to provide the required support and instruction to students without re-inventing the wheel.

2.2 Responding to current issues in higher education: moving to remote learning and teaching

Since March 2020, many radical changes have occurred in higher education and EAP, mainly as a consequence of implementing online courses rapidly (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021; Rapanta et al., 2020) to enable students to continue their courses. However, due to the nature of the situation, education institutions around the world mainly focused on addressing the immediate needs of both learners and teachers, exchanging ideas on how to respond to this new mode of teaching swiftly and effectively, while simultaneously trying to 'reduce isolation and restore a sense of learning community' (Prevatt-Goldstein et al., 2020, p.7) through 'continued conversation' (Ni She et al., 2019, p. 33) between students and teachers. However, the shift to remote learning with effective teaching was a significant transition; as Bakogiannis (2021) points out 'learning environments had to be reinvented, with digitalisation being expanded and online learning becoming the dominant mode' (p. 48). This shift from face-to-face to online learning forced the universities to take immediate action to adapt to this new context.

This sudden shift from face-to-face to remote learning and teaching brought about challenges for many, with minimal (or a lack of) 'proper institutional direction' (Antoniou, 2021, p.68), appropriate resources, or training and technical support required for the movement to be successful (Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

2.3 The changing role of the EAP teacher: adapting to remote teaching

To quickly adapt to remote teaching, the vast majority of institutions adopted an ERT approach, and the EAP practitioners forced to follow this approach found themselves in an unusual situation wherein they had to 'explore ways of supporting students through this process' (Antoniou, 2021, p.68). This was made particularly challenging because the exam period was imminent; therefore, they had to make swift decisions about appropriate online course design and learning materials. Moreover, a significant number of teachers were unfamiliar with the new online tools (Rapanta et al., 2020), and had to undertake appropriate TELT training to deliver their courses at the required standards (Antoniou, 2021). According to the BALEAP report (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021), many teachers 'felt they lacked the relevant expertise and training to perform their new role and this impacted their confidence' (p.32). In addition, others, as reported by Antoniou (2021) needed a longer transition period to feel more comfortable teaching online, which may suggest that in some cases, teachers' identities and self-esteem might have been affected.

It appears that many EAP practitioners employed similar approaches to teaching EAP online; e.g. using the flipped lesson approach, peer feedback, and popular learning and communication platforms such as Moodle, MS Teams, Zoom and Blackboard (Bakogiannis, 2021; Antoniou, 2021, Golden, 2020) to either offer classes in a blended or distance mode combining synchronous and asynchronous teaching (Nordman et al., 2020). This response to ERT seems to be consistent across the EAP sector.

Undoubtedly, the sudden closure of face-to-face teaching due to the pandemic, gave EAP teachers opportunities to learn how to adapt to this type of scenario, develop new online teaching skills (Bruce & Staukonis, 2021), create links with other professionals and institutions (Hendrie & Tibbetts, 2021), support colleagues and students by helping less experienced colleagues quickly adjust to the new situation which often resulted in a 'multitude of emotions due to the pace of the change' (Cameron-Standerford et al., 2020, np.).

2.4 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the EAP delivery

Similar to other HE sectors in the UK, EAP has been affected uniquely in the past two years as EAP students have not only had to develop their academic English skills to fit a distance learning mode, but in many cases, students were either not able to travel to the UK to study academic English due to travel restrictions, or were isolated in their accommodation without any opportunity to explore British culture or participate in various events normally offered by universities. Therefore, this lack of face-to-face interaction raised several concerns, including the question of whether ERT can 'successfully support meaningful teaching and learning to promote and enhance the student experience' (Bakogiannis, 2021, p. 49).

COVID-19 had an impact not only on the students but also their teachers, many of whom were greatly affected by the sudden shift to online teaching, which resulted in the

requirement to spend long hours redesigning classroom materials and communicating with students and colleagues to complete various admin tasks (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021). As Bruce and Staukonis (2021) report, 'this was a time of great stress' (p. 30) for many EAP teachers and may have had a long-term impact on their well-being. Although this undoubtedly challenging experience had an impact on all those involved; in the future, these new experiences may be seen as something positive (Bruce & Staukonis, 2021; Golden, 2020), e.g. teachers may find that trying new technologies may open up more possibilities, and students may view this new way of learning as a unique opportunity to learn something about themselves.

3. Methodology

In this section, I explain the methods used and the data obtained. I also describe the data analysis procedure. The research questions that underpin the study are:

RQ 1: How has teaching remotely during the pandemic re-shaped me professionally as an online EAP teacher?

RQ 2: How have my teaching practices been altered by the pandemic?

RQ 3: What are the key factors that have contributed to those changes in my teaching practice?

RQ 4: What impact has my remote teaching experience had on my perceptions as an online EAP teacher?

3.1 Research methods

To conduct this study, I designed an autoethnographic approach. This is a qualitative research method that facilitates analysis of one's life (Mendez, 2013) and experiences during the study period. According to Ellis, et al. (2011) 'autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)' (p.1). In this autoethnographic study, I critically reflect on my own experience of becoming an exclusively online teacher, required to teach remotely due to the pandemic, and how this unique experience shaped me as a teacher. I reflect on my teaching situation in order to understand the problem from my perspective, at the centre of a cultural analysis. Chang (2008) asserts that autoethnography 'transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation' (p. 43).

The autoethnographic method enabled me to conduct qualitative research as both the researcher and the subject of the research.

3.2 Data collection

The data was comprised of a number of personal stories about my teaching experience from the beginning of the study in March 2020 until September 2021. I revisited the past to

recreate my experiences in a narrative, reflexive way (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and by doing so I wanted to connect to the readers, help them to find their inner selves and reflect on their own experiences (Mendez, 2013).

I used an evocative style (Ellis et al. 2010) and vignettes (Pitard, 2015) to reflect and express my feelings (Bohner, 2006; Ellis et al. 2010)), however, the study also included analytic and interpretative (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008) elements.

I focused on key aspects of my academic and personal life during the pandemic that influenced my teaching and myself as a person. I also reflected on how my prior TELT experience influenced my remote teaching. I included the transformative moments and emotional struggles (Lee, 2020) I experienced during this period.

My study drew on my past and current reflections, and recollections of key situations that pertain to the research questions, I also revisited my internal appraisal of events and my role at the start of the pandemic. My reflections were triggered by my interactions with students, as I did not want to question my perceptions of learning and teaching without considering their position (Trahar, 2013), making the autoethnographic approach ideal.

I assured the trustworthiness of my study by depicting authentic facts related to my professional practice, my involvement and work over the required period, my honest feelings and my own opinions about my teaching experiences.
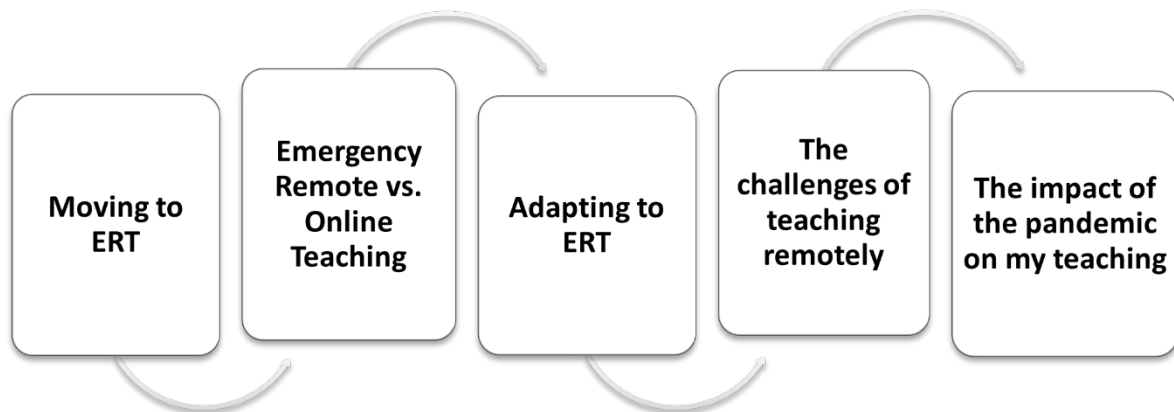
3.3 Data Analysis

To analyse the data, I first read my reflections to identify recurring themes (Bell, 2005; Creswell, 2014).

I read the narrative several times, often back and forth, and each time I read the text, I analysed the data to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon I was focusing on (Creswell, 2014). I then divided the text into segments of information and searched out connections between self and other which are fundamental to autoethnographic interpretation (Austin, 1996). I then 'trimmed redundant and less important data' and expanded on the more 'meaningful and significant data' related to my study (Chang, 2016, p.119).

My memories are presented here in chronological order. The aim of presenting the paper in this way was to unfold both my personal and professional stories at the same time to show how these experiences re-shaped me professionally over time.

Five main themes emerged during the data analysis:

Figure 1: The five main themes

I then divided some of these themes into subthemes to better understand my feelings and what I had been experiencing.

The themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis included stories about my experiences of becoming an online EAP teacher during the pandemic as told by a teacher and analysed by a researcher. I also highlighted, in bold, some of the key terms to make them more explicit.

3.4 Ethical considerations
I ensured the identities of those colleagues and students I refer to in this study were anonymised and no sensitive data was shared.

4. Findings
This section presents the findings comprised of my former reflections and recollections of my experiences and the feelings I had during the study period.

4.1 Moving to the ERT environment
Monday 16 March. An internal communications email has just arrived stating that all **face-to-face teaching** on all campuses will end and that the **course materials** will be placed **online**.

'So, it's official', I said to myself. 'It was coming anyway', I thought.

'It's going to be fine. I'm fully prepared for this. I did my Microsoft Trainer training back in February, explored **Zoom** and other apps and I can do **Moodle** with my eyes closed. I am the school's **TELT Officer** after all. This is my time.'

I somehow felt confident. But then I thought more about my students and realised that they were halfway through their course and needed lots of practice to prepare for their speaking assessments. 'How am I going to do that?', I asked myself. 'Zoom, **Teams** or what?'. 'I will figure it out', I reassured myself.

4.2 Emergency vs Online Teaching

'Suddenly, I'm feeling a bit anxious about this **ERT** that I am about to begin as I have never done this before. Yes, I have been using Moodle for years and have done lots of online learning with my students but is this going to be enough? How am I going to check whether they understand the new concepts or that they have developed some of the **academic skills** they are going to practice?'

'And what about learning materials? I can't just give them an electronic copy of the coursebook. I need to **adapt** everything for online use, and I have little time to do that. I'm feeling worried.'

4.3 Adapting to ERT

4.3.1 Finding my students in a virtual world
I flipped my first lesson via Teams. I know how to flip a lesson. I had done it before, but this time it was in the context of an emergency.
I was feeling as though I had lost contact with my students. 'How am I going to **coordinate** this course?'

'HELP!'

'At last! A few students have responded to my email! I'm feeling relieved. Some are still in their **student accommodation**, some are on their way home, some are yet to reply.'

4.3.2 Managing workload
Initially, I began spending my day developing online materials for my EAP class, but I received a request to organise **staff training** on Teams and Zoom and write a couple of tech guides to be ready asap. My **EAP class** would maybe need to wait for new material. 'No, they can't. They need it tomorrow', I reminded myself.

'Oh well, it seems I will have to work till late tonight', I thought. 'I'm sure my husband won't mind taking care of our child. He knows that I'm an **emergency worker** now and that what I do is important'

That week, I received several requests for TELT support, all colleagues need **ad hoc training** or help with Zoom, Moodle and Teams. They were all feeling stressed and worried. Some found the Zoom settings too overwhelming to grasp. They informed me: 'I don't get this app!' or 'This is too much to take'. I heard these comments repeated multiple times.

4.3. 3 Personal struggles

Friday 20 March. An email from my child's school has just arrived saying that all schools and nurseries are to close on Friday due to **COVID-19**.

Obviously, I realised 'This is not helpful', and I felt worried. How would I juggle my **childcare duties** and **work commitments** with no plan as to how to adapt all the learning and **assessment materials**? Additionally, I must coordinate all **TELT activities**, oversee the school Moodle, and provide advice, guidance, and support to my colleagues. I realised that I may need a month or two to prepare myself, but there was no prep time in this situation.

4.4 The challenges of teaching EAP remotely

4.4.1 Meeting via Zoom

I began anxiously when waiting for my first **zoom session**.

'Who is going to be there?' I'm crossing my fingers. I want to see all my students. I hope they are fine.

'Will I succeed or fail as a teacher?', I asked myself as I had never done this before.

'Are they going to like it?' Are they going to like this new online teaching?', I started to wonder. They only have three 60-minute **live sessions** a week. The rest is flipped.

'Is this going to be enough?' How am I going to make sure they will work when I'm not there?', I suddenly got scared imagining their **end of course feedback**. 'This is going to be a disaster', I felt a shiver down my spine.

The Zoom session went well, but they were very quiet. 'I wonder why?'. I wonder if this is something to do with the new **Zoom environment**. It's not the same as in class. I can only see their faces and I have to ask them to switch their cameras on, as it seems some prefer to remain invisible.

4.4.2 Not slowing down

It's mid-April and **exams** are now approaching. I'm up to my eyes, teaching, providing **TELT support** around the clock, responding to tonnes of emails, not **home-schooling** my child at all. My husband is taking care of it.

May 2020. I have come to know many IT specialists and learning technologists since the lockdown, which is great! I even volunteered to provide **helpdesk support** to others. 'What was I thinking? I have enough on my plate', I reprimanded myself.

Summer 2020 and I am not teaching as my **TELT experience** seemed more needed, and I have never been busier writing tech guides, running workshops and dealing with the TELT queries that I receive daily. The list is endless. 'I am a **very important person now**', I realised.

Meanwhile, at home, my husband is a full-time dad. I have little time for my family as there is always something urgent to do online. I'm fed up with Zoom and have **frequent headaches**. I am feeling unwell.

4.5 The impact of the pandemic on my teaching

4.5.1 Did I get it right?

December 2020. The **end of course student feedback** has finally arrived. I'm afraid to open it, as I'm expecting many negative comments from my students whose classes were disrupted, as their teacher was available to meet in Zoom only and the materials were developed in a hurry.

The survey shows that only 17% found the course materials useful and stimulating. 'It was the lowest I have ever received in this category', I was shocked.

'What a disaster!', I thought, although the results show that most of them found my feedback on their coursework useful and the online materials accessible and felt that they had **opportunities to interact**, especially via Zoom. However, some did not seem to be happy with the number of **learning platforms** used. I thought they would like the idea of being offered different opportunities to interact, but their responses made sense, as they had other courses to attend.

4.5.2 Learning from own experience and building resilience

January 2021. COVID- 19 is not going anywhere. The number of cases is increasing, and the Scottish government had chosen to close all schools until further notice.

Semester 2 started and nothing had really changed. I was doing the same things, only I chose to do certain things differently this time. **Redevelop EAP** materials, focus on Moodle and create more **interactive tasks** online.

September 2021. I met my new class. They were the same size as my previous one and lovely students. I hoped they would like the updated learning materials. I had worked so hard to make them more interactive, but still could not do more for them due to a complete lack of time.

4.5.3 Finally slowing down

My workload has slightly **decreased** since last year. I think I know what I am doing now. I have learnt from my mistakes, revamped the learning materials, and trained staff on new technologies. They all seem to be doing fine. I think the big wave of effort is behind me. I can finally breathe and spend more time with my family, even attend yoga sometimes.

An Internal Communication email arrived stating: 'Learning and Teaching remotely will continue for the rest of the academic year,' it says.

'Oh well, I expected this, but I think I will be fine as the worst is behind me', I told myself.

6. Discussion

My experience of teaching EAP remotely during the pandemic influenced both my professional and personal life and altered my perception of what it is to be an online EAP teacher, re-shaping me professionally.

I initially thought it was going to be an 'easy ride' for a TELT specialist like myself with a solid TELT background and years of experience using technology in a language classroom and a passion for experimenting with new applications and platforms. However, the reality was different from the scenario I had envisaged when we were told to close our classrooms and teach remotely.

My teaching practices changed dramatically during the pandemic, as moving to remote teaching altered not only my teaching and my work routines, but also affected my personal life. I had to learn to adapt to the new 'normal' and adjust my life accordingly, and as can be seen in the narrative, I often prioritised my work commitments over my family and personal life.

First, I had to change my timetable to offer my students opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous learning, which, in practice, meant moving from the classroom to virtual learning platforms such as Zoom, Moodle, and Teams (Bakogiannis, 2021; Antoniou, 2021, Golden, 2020). However, as the narrative shows, it soon became apparent that it was not enough to simply move the classroom materials and tasks to a learning platform, such as Moodle or Teams (Antoniou, 2021). Although Zoom could be used for synchronous learning, it was essential to be able to quickly adapt the learning materials, although time was the main constraint (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). As the narrative indicates, I had little time to do this as I was juggling both work and family commitments and was spending long hours adapting and developing learning materials. I was not only redesigning the classroom material but also performing many admin-related tasks (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021), which caused a great deal of stress and anxiety and ultimately had an impact on my family and my well-being (Bruce & Staukonis, 2021).

The narrative reveals that like many EAP practitioners in the UK, I used the flipped approach, so that I could quickly prepare the learning materials for online use, offering my students opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous learning (Bakogiannis, 2021; Nordman et al., 2020). However, I was not sure whether what I was doing would be successful as I was still learning and experimenting with the software, methods, and approaches for use in my online classroom. Some methods worked, and others did not, and I found myself constantly reinventing the online environment for my class (Bakogiannis, 2021; Hodges et al., 2020). However, as the narrative shows, after the big wave and months of stress and uncertainty, I was able to plan and deliver my classes with greater confidence and experience, aligning with what Antoniou (2021) observed in a similar EAP environment, that the first few months

following the start of the pandemic led to a transition period during which teachers would 'become much more comfortable teaching online' (p.73).

As the narrative identifies, in addition to my teaching responsibilities, I had to provide technical support to my colleagues, who were not familiar with the new software (Golden, 2020), so that they could deliver their courses to the required standards (Antoniou, 2021; Bruce & Stakounis, 2021). Those training workshops enabled me and my colleagues to develop new and/or stronger working relationships and to share useful ideas and experiences (Hendrie & Tibbetts, 2021). I think these ideas and resources may be useful in facilitating the transition from online to face-to-face or hybrid teaching currently being implemented in the institution.

ERT has undoubtedly altered my teaching practices, and the key factors that contributed to these changes were:

1) The necessity to make quick decisions due to a lack of time to develop new materials.
2) Providing TELT support to colleagues while engaging in full-time teaching.
3) School closures during the pandemic.
4) Increase in administrative duties.

Swift decisions were usually made regarding choosing the right software for my class to provide my students with both synchronous (e.g., Zoom) and asynchronous (e.g., Moodle) opportunities for learning and interaction (Antoniou, 2021; Golden, 2020), and to support the process of adapting existing learning materials for online use. In addition, I had to help my colleagues adjust to this new situation, which those with less TELT experience was a real challenge, and often a very stressful experience (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021, p. 32), especially among those who were unfamiliar with some of the technologies.

The closure of my child's school for a prolonged time, from January to late April forced me to manage both my own work as well as childcare and home-schooling commitments, which often resulted in working outside office hours and spending time developing learning as well as TELT materials, completing various admin tasks such as coordinating the course and assessment activities, reading, and responding to endless emails (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021), while often not fulfilling my parental duties. Working long hours in front of the computer, often left me with no time for personal health and leisure activities, which led to health-related problems, such as headaches, exhaustion, fatigue, stress, and anxiety.

This new experience of remote teaching has changed my perceptions as an online EAP teacher. What I thought I knew about teaching EAP online was not entirely what I experienced during my ERT experience. As a teacher with a solid TELT background, I was initially confident and believed I was prepared for what was coming. However, I soon realised that teaching online was not the same as teaching remotely in an emergency, as

unlike online learning scenarios that can be planned, discussed and developed over time, ERT scenarios require immediate decisions (Golden, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020) as there was little time for planning, developing learning and teaching materials and selecting online tools.

The narrative shows that although I spent a great deal of time adapting to the ERT environment, including developing appropriate materials, I soon realised that, unlike online teaching, ERT is a temporary solution to a crisis (Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Sharma, 2020), and I needed more time to plan and redesign the course and develop the kinds of materials that would meet my students' academic needs to prepare them for their assessments. For example, I realised that is important to choose appropriate online platforms that students are familiar with, so that they do not feel overwhelmed, particularly those students who are less familiar with new technologies (McRae, 2020). This reveals that to provide students with appropriate learning tools it is not necessary to re-invent the wheel, but rather to make the right decisions on learning and teaching.

Unfortunately, teaching remotely during the pandemic meant dealing with challenges such as the lack of appropriate resources in place (Antoniou, 2021), for example, alternative learning materials, technical guides, and the appropriate level of support and training in place for a successful move to an ERT environment (Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020).

Furthermore, as the narrative indicates, I was also concerned about my student's academic development as they did not have any opportunities to experience British or university culture due to the lockdown. Therefore, I constantly questioned my teaching and my choice of technologies, as I worried about whether the platforms I chose and the approaches I used were appropriate to support their learning and provide sufficient opportunities to communicate and interact (Bakogiannis, 2021, p. 49). However, I believe that there was no such expectation that the online experiences offered to students in remote classrooms would be carefully planned (Hodges et al., 2020) due to the time constraints, working under exceptional conditions with limited resources and/or experience of teaching courses online.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this research was to reflect on my role as an EAP teacher who became a full-time online teacher overnight due to the COVID-19 pandemic; a reality that affected staff at HE institutions around the world. In this study, I aimed to find out how this experience re-shaped me professionally; in particular how it affected my teaching and personal life and how the situation impacted EAP provision in general.

The study described my experiences of teaching EAP remotely, which resembles the situation of many teachers who had to move all their classroom-based lessons online unexpectedly.

This new experience caused disruption in my personal life, increased my workload, and exposed me to stress and tiredness. However, it has allowed me to contribute to the school objectives, enabled me to strengthen my professional relationships and put my knowledge into practice.

I have learnt many things about myself, one of which is my own resilience and my appetite for exploring new technologies and approaches. However, I also learnt about my weaknesses, such as the difficulty in finding the right balance between my personal and professional lives.

The identified strengths and weaknesses may sound familiar to many EAP teachers who like me found themselves in a similar situation during the pandemic. Therefore, I believe my observations of the transition from a classroom to an online EAP teacher and my reflection on that transition and the challenges of online teaching during that period will contribute to research within this area by offering unique experiences and perspectives to show the complexity of this unique situation.

I believe that this study has contributed to a gap in the literature on teaching remotely during the Coronavirus pandemic. The conclusions I formed then are still relevant now because many HE institutions are still in the process of transitioning from online to face-to-face teaching. However, as the study involved one practitioner only, future ethnographic studies that involve a group of teachers and/or students could provide more insights into this aspect of teaching online EAP remotely.

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