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The digital turn in EAP: teachers' perspectives on transitioning to blended or hybrid teaching post-Covid-19

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Abstract

This small-scale empirical study investigates English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioners' perspectives on transitioning to blended or hybrid teaching after teaching online during the Covid-19 pandemic period in UK universities. The study aims to understand what this transition required of teachers, and how the adoption of the digital mode of teaching in EAP influenced their perspectives concerning the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching.

The study draws on the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) theoretical framework, which focuses on technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK), to explore the dilemmas and challenges teachers faced when transitioning between different modes of teaching as part of the digital transformation which took place during Covid-19 which forced the UK Higher (HE) institutions to make drastic changes to the delivery of EAP courses. Moreover, it helps to clarify how the technology they chose to integrate into their online courses communicated the content and supported their pedagogy so that their students could continue their learning experience without disruption.

The study suggests that, although transitioning to blended or hybrid modes may bring about certain challenges for teachers, in terms of pedagogy and technology,

the experiences gained through such transitions may equip teachers with a new set of skills and new knowledge of online teaching, affording them opportunities to develop new ways of teaching.

As the phenomenon investigated in this study is recent, the findings produced offer new insights to develop the field.

1. Introduction

I first explored aspects of online teaching during the pandemic, and the problems associated with teaching EAP online in my first autoethnographic study (Hudson, 2022), which was conducted during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic as part of my PhD research. As part of that study, I reflected on my own experiences of becoming an online EAP teacher at the beginning of the pandemic. The study, as well as my professional journey throughout the pandemic, inspired me to look at the problem again through the eyes of other professionals. This paper, therefore, continues my investigation into aspects of teaching EAP online during the Covid-19 era, focusing on the challenges of transition from fully online to blended or hybrid teaching in order to understand how the transition process has influenced and continues to influence teaching.

The shift to online learning as a result of the pandemic forced lecturers, including myself, to develop a range of digital skills (from basic to more advanced ones) to deliver EAP courses. Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, higher education institutions in the UK delivering pre-sessional EAP courses had to immediately switch from face-to-face to fully online courses (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021) to enable students to continue with their studies (Rapanta et al., 2020). In many cases, this required educators to adapt content that would normally have been taught on campus to a format that suited either blended or fully online learning (Shin and Hickey, 2020). This was the beginning of the digital transformation in EAP that I and many EAP teachers across the UK had to face.

Once the pandemic restrictions were eased, EAP teachers were able to continue offering their students either face-to-face or hybrid or blended learning options. While blended teaching involves incorporating online activities to complement face-to-face lessons (Hua & Wang, 2023), hybrid teaching refers to a combination of face-to-face and online sessions to ensure all students can access their course whether on campus or working from home (Lee, 2023). This new turn brought new changes to the way EAP courses were offered as well as new challenges as the lecturers and the

institutions had to make either new drastic changes to the way the courses were taught or make certain adjustments to enable both teachers and students fully participate in and succeed in the transition.

However, the transition from fully online to mixed-mode teaching, whether blended or hybrid, may have different meanings for different EAP teachers because of their various experiences in online teaching, the skills, whether existing, new or both, they had to use when transitioning to blended or hybrid teaching and the decisions they had to make about their teaching.

Therefore, such a transition might have impacted their teaching and how they think about their teaching. It also brought certain pedagogical and technological challenges for teachers, in particular, concerns regarding teaching hybrid/Hyflex classes as meeting their students in two different groups, online and face-to-face, may result in an inability to equally and fully support their learning. However, the transition may also give the teachers opportunities to develop new skills and ways of teaching online courses which they may find useful when planning and teaching future online classes.

This study examines EAP teachers' perspectives on transitioning from online to hybrid or blended teaching, aiming to clarify what this transition meant for EAP teachers and how the digital transformation influenced their perspectives on the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching, and how they used their experience and technical skills to deliver lessons in a blended or hybrid mode, using a range of digital tools and/or skills.

This inquiry is further guided by the following research questions:

- RQ: What are EAP teachers' perspectives on transitioning from online to blended or hybrid teaching in the post-Covid-19 era?

 1. How has the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching influenced their teaching?
 2. What particular skills and experiences did teachers find useful when transitioning from online to blended or hybrid teaching, and what challenges did they have to face during the transition?
 3. What does it mean for teachers to teach EAP in the more digitised post-Covid-19-era?

Although studies have been conducted recently on aspects of teaching EAP with technology during the pandemic as well as issues associated with remote teaching in HE,

the problem of transitioning from online to blended EAP or implementing hybrid teaching in the EAP classroom is still very recent. As the resources that could provide insight into aspects of switching between different modes of teaching, selecting appropriate technologies, and making the right pedagogical choices for EAP students are still very limited, this study based on teachers' observations and reflections, and with reference to recent publications on teaching throughout and after the Covid-19 pandemic, intends to illuminate this topic further to contribute to the body of knowledge in this research area.

2. Literature review

Many research studies have discussed aspects of online EAP teaching in blended settings and the use of technology in the EAP classroom, but few researchers have investigated aspects of the transition from online to blended teaching from the perspective of EAP teachers who were working under exceptional conditions during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Below are the key themes that emerged from the literature, which correspond with themes identified during the analysis of the interview data.

2.1 Transitioning to blended teaching after the pandemic

2.1.1 Pedagogical and technological implications

The scholarship on transitioning to blended teaching after the full lockdown in the UK and worldwide suggests that HE institutions had to make appropriate arrangements to enable a smooth transition from fully online remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020; Golden, 2020) to face-to-face or blended learning, or, in some cases, hybrid and HyFlex learning (Penrod, 2022) to enable students to continue their studies without unnecessary disruption. Both hybrid and HyFlex modes combine face-to-face and online learning.

A hybrid mode refers to a combination of face-to-face and online sessions (Meydanlioglu and Arikan, 2014) so that those students who are not able to physically attend their session can join their classes remotely (Lee, 2023) while the blended mode refers to combining traditional contact teaching with online activities to complement face-to-face learning (Hua & Wang, 2023). Some institutions may offer a more flexible type of hybrid learning known as 'hyFlex'

which gives students more flexibility as they can choose the mode that is more suitable for them (Beatty, 2019; Miller et al., 2021), e.g., they can engage in online activities at their own pace and can switch between online and offline modes. The opportunity to use a variety of online, face-to-face or combined modes of learning as well as relevant digital tools enabled the institutions to continue offering their courses via different, available and/or affordable modes of learning.

The transition occurred in stages, over which students were gradually introduced to new modes of learning to ensure more contact time and opportunities for face-to-face interaction were included in their timetables. However, as observed by Bashir et al. (2021, p. 2), "many universities had already adopted practices to make their education delivery flexible and accessible to meet student needs". This indicates that some institutions might have started planning and adapting their courses before the move, allowing teachers to plan their lessons and explore technologies and pedagogies to deliver their courses in a mixed-mode manner, while some might have developed the necessary skills and knowledge of online teaching (Golden, 2020; Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020) much earlier, during the first or second year of the pandemic, meaning they might have had more time to gain the necessary experience and skills in online teaching.

While remote teaching was put in place as an emergency response to the crisis, according to Kohnke and Zhou (2021), it has remained since the pandemic period, which may also imply that some institutions or teachers might not have been fully pedagogically and/or technologically prepared for the transition to blended teaching.

2.1.2 Choosing and implementing technologies in lessons

Among many challenges university teachers faced was choosing the right technology to deliver their courses, then gaining the necessary technical skills and skills in online teaching through appropriate training, and adapting their materials accordingly. However, in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as defined by Hodges et al. (2020, np.) as a "temporary shift of instructional delivery due to crisis circumstances", one of the biggest constraints to gaining the essential skills was a lack of time. As reported in many studies (Kessler and Plakans, 2008; Marcelo & Yot-Dominguez, 2019; Liu & Kleinsasser, 2015), gaining appropriate training is crucial as it enables teachers to gain confidence in using new technology, familiarity with the new software and skills to incorporate these digital tools into their lessons. What is more, as emphasised by Gilbert (2013), time for practice is equally important, as teachers need to practice the new skills and apply what they have learned.

In addition, according to some studies, teachers tend to rely on their previous experiences with using certain technologies (Sang et al., 2010; Ertmer et al., 2015) when selecting them for their lessons, and consider whether the digital tools align with their pedagogical perspectives (Davies, 2013), which may inform their overall approach to language education (Ertmer et al., 2010).

2.1.3 Debates about different models of teaching

The most popular approach used in universities was blended learning, which involves elements of online learning and where both synchronous and asynchronous activities are included in the course. Another approach is the hybrid model, which combines online with face-to-face sessions (Meydanlioglu and Arikan, 2014). This is designed for cases where students are not able to participate in face-to-face sessions, offering them access to live sessions via the internet, for example using Zoom or Teams, which means those sessions need to be live-streamed by the teacher.

Another recently adopted approach is the HyFlex model, which is a combination of face-to-face and online learning; this offers students a degree of flexibility, as they can choose which sessions, face-to-face or online, they want to attend (Beatty, 2019, p. 22).

This new model has been highly popular and saw increased use during the pandemic, as it allowed students to continue their studies (Romero-Hall & Ripine, 2021) in their groups either face-to-face or online where, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, participating in face-to-face classes was not always possible. However, as Bashir et al. (2021) point out, the HyFlex model, although it allows students to choose which mode of teaching they prefer, may create a disparity in their experiences and impact the sense of belonging to one class, or may increase loneliness among online students due to limited physical contact and social interaction with the group (Chakraborty & Victor, 2004). These issues may be true about those students who either choose to study at their own pace as they are not able to follow the same timetable as their peers or they choose online classes only and as a result do now have opportunities for face-to-face interactions. In both cases, the inability to participate in the same classroom activities as their peers or not always being able to be part of the same experience may affect the way students interact and feel about the group.

2.2 Teaching EAP in the post Covid-19 era

Although there has been an increased demand for online courses in higher education in recent years generally, the

pandemic has undoubtedly forced universities around the world to explore new technologies, innovative practices, and pedagogical solutions to provide teachers with the necessary tools, knowledge and skills to teach online when it was not possible to do this face-to-face.

2.2.1 Implementing new ways of teaching

Teaching during the pandemic enabled teachers to explore new technologies, methods and approaches to teaching online and combining face-to-face with online teaching, giving them opportunities to develop new ways of teaching and providing flexibility in teaching (Doo et al., 2020). However, as pointed out by Cowden et al. (2020), learning involves an appropriate balance of teacher-directed, group, and individual work that includes both synchronous and asynchronous activities. This means that implementing new ways of teaching might have been particularly challenging for EAP teachers when designing their courses and planning their lessons, considering some students were not able to participate in some or any of the face-to-face sessions.

2.2.2 Incorporating new technologies into the EAP classroom

The experience also required teachers to consider new technologies (Starkey, 2019), giving them opportunities to try, test, and incorporate new digital tools and technologies into their lessons. However, being able to appropriately and successfully integrate technology into teaching practice requires digital competency (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). In practice, this requires time, preparation, skills and knowledge; thus, the TPACK model may offer an appropriate theoretical framework to investigate the integration of teaching and technology. However, as the problem of switching from online to blended or hybrid learning within EAP is relatively new, this empirical study will investigate how EAP teachers made the transition and how this experience influenced their practice.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework

I decided to use this framework based on its appropriateness for this type of enquiry, as it captures the skills and knowledge often expected from professionals teaching in the digital era (Turnbull et al., 2021). The framework is used in this study to show how EAP teachers addressed pedagogical, content, and technological pedagogical

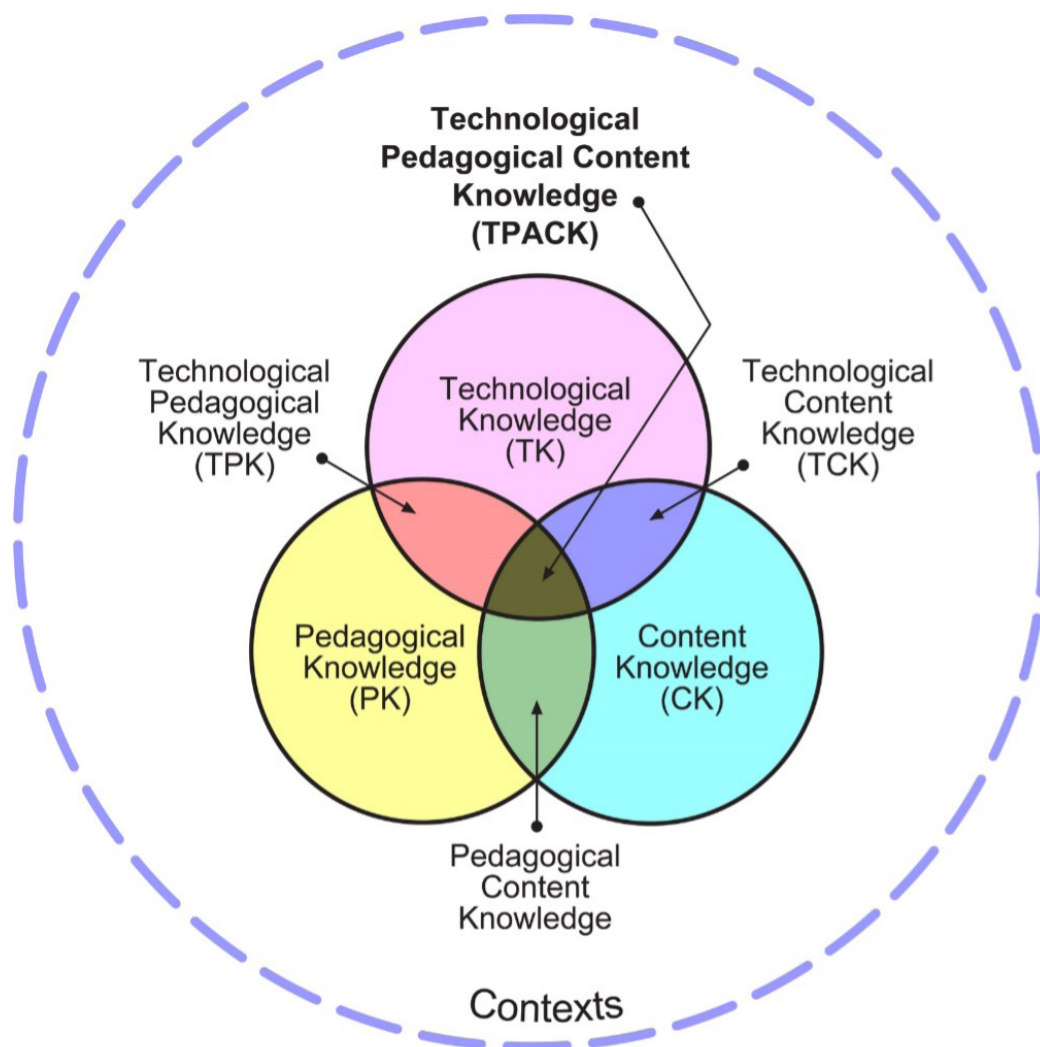
knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) when transitioning between different modes of teaching, whether by preparing, designing, and adapting their courses on their own and educating themselves during the process or by making the decisions collectively as a team effort, sharing their knowledge and experience with others through induction and training sessions. The study also addresses how the chosen technology communicated the content and supported the pedagogy and what problems arose from sharing knowledge and skills collectively (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) or doing this in isolation.

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model, which focuses on technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK), was developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), who built on Shulman’s (1986) concept of the pedagogical

content knowledge (PCK) (Polly, 2010). The model is shown in Figure 1.

Technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) describes the relationships and interactions between technological tools and certain pedagogical practices (Kurt, 2019; Mishra and Koehler, 2006). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is similar to Shulman’s (1986) idea of knowledge of pedagogy that applies to the teaching of specific content (Mishra and Koehler, 2006), which describes the relationship and interactions between pedagogical practices and specific learning objectives (Kurt, 2019). Technological content knowledge (TCK) is knowledge about how technology and content are reciprocally related (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). In other words, it concerns “relationships and intersections among technologies and learning objectives” (Kurt, 2019, np).

Figure 1. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, © 2012 by tpack.org



According to Kurt (2019, n.d.), the framework “offers a productive approach to many of the dilemmas that teachers face in implementing educational technology (edtech) in their classrooms”, because, “the TPACK framework outlines how content (what is being taught) and pedagogy (how the teacher imparts that content) must form the foundation for any effective edtech integration”. This indicates that the TPACK model was created to show that all its components are interconnected and that the technology should not be seen as a set of knowledge and skills that are not related to content and pedagogy, while in fact, as Hamer and Smith point out (2021, p. 25) technologies commonly come with their imperatives that constrain both content and pedagogical decisions. Similarly, Mishra and Koehler (2006, p. 1025) claim it is “inappropriate to see knowledge of technology as being isolated from knowledge of pedagogy and content”.

According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), TPACK goes beyond content, pedagogy and technology. Therefore, as pointed out by Hamer and Smith (2021, p. 26), the fundamentals of good teaching with technology require teachers to have “strong subject-specific knowledge and a solid understanding of effective pedagogy and different methods of teaching and learning.” However, as Polly et al. (2010, p. 867) argue that even if teachers have adequate knowledge in all areas of TPACK “there is no guarantee technology will be used effectively” (ibid.). This may be because it is unclear

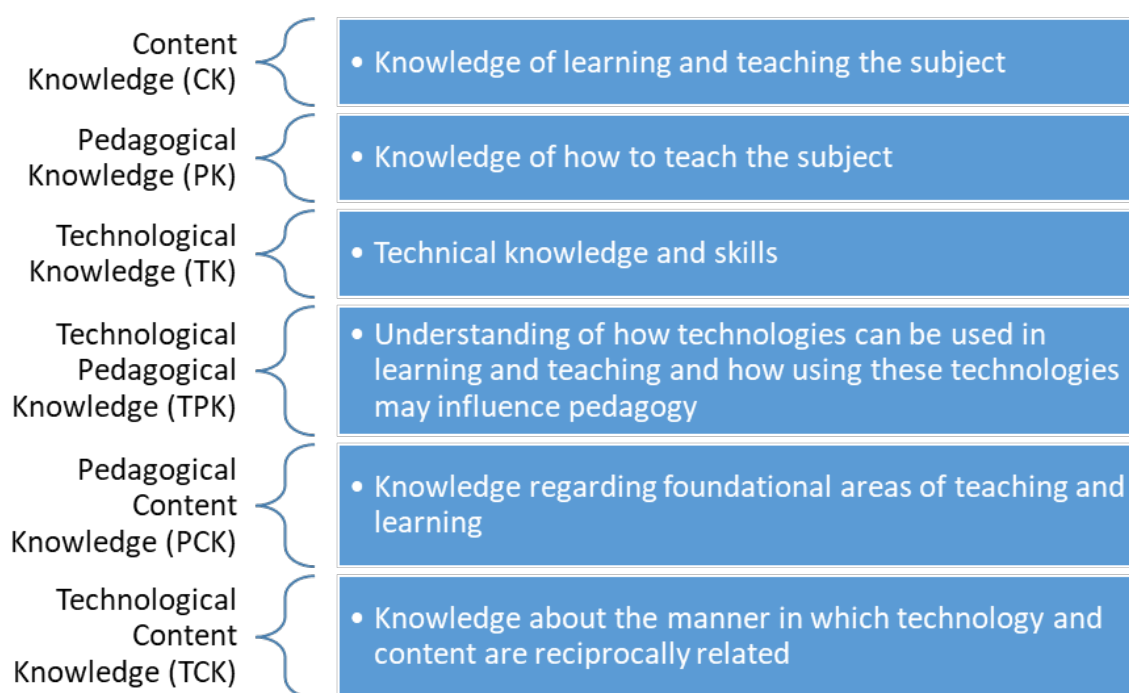
which aspects of TPACK would be the most essential for teachers to develop in to deliver a ‘technology-rich lesson’ and what “learning experiences facilitate the development of the various components of TPACK” (ibid).

The issues show that more variables play a role in the successful integration of technology in learning and teaching and that developing within all areas of TPACK may not be sufficient to ensure effective integration of technology in teaching without a more critical and deeper understanding of the extent of knowledge required from teachers and the impact of learning experiences on the development of TPACK.

As the TPACK acronym, which consists of various intersections and relationships, implies, the framework can be adapted to different settings (Kurt, 2019). To reflect the circumstances of this research project, the descriptors in Figure 2 will be used to analyse the data.

Through the TPACK lens, this study will explore the relevant literature that discusses the transition to blended or hybrid teaching during the final stage of the Covid-19 period in HE settings and will analyse the data generated from the EAP practitioners who were involved in this transition in their HE institutions through a three-way (pedagogy, content, and technology) lens.

Figure 2. Adapted from Kurt (2019) and Mishra and Koehler (2006), descriptors of TPACK were used to analyse the data



4. Methodology

In this section, I will present the research methods adopted in this study. I will describe the methods used and explain the kind of data that was obtained. I will then explain the data analysis procedure.

4.1 Research design

To generate qualitative data for this small-scale empirical study, which enabled me to look at the problem from the perspective of teachers, I conducted semi-structured interviews to investigate EAP teachers' perspectives on transitioning to blended or hybrid teaching after the Covid-19 pandemic through the TPACK lens.

4.2 Area of study

The study involved EAP practitioners from across the UK who were based in and worked at a UK HE institution during the time of the study and who taught EAP courses remotely during and after the pandemic. The area of the study includes practitioners from various Scottish and English universities.

4.3 Positionality

In this research, I took the position of an insider to study my teaching practice (Herr and Anderson, 2014) through the eyes of other practitioners who might have been in a similar situation or had similar teaching experiences during the pandemic, thus giving me opportunities to access valuable insights into this problem. I believe that having the lived experience of a research insider enabled me to better understand the experiences of the participants.

4.4 The participants

The participants were recruited via BALEAP, which is a global forum for EAP practitioners.

The eight EAP practitioners who volunteered to take part in the study taught EAP courses remotely during and after the pandemic in a UK university based in either England or Scotland.

Of the participants, four were male and four were female; they represented different age groups. All participants were experienced in teaching pre-sessional and in-sessional EAP in the UK context; therefore, they were likely to have a similar teaching background and/or teaching experience, al-

though their institutions were likely to have used a different approach to transitioning to blended or face-to-face teaching after the pandemic and to have used different technologies and pedagogies to aid these transitions.

4.5 Instruments design

I conducted semi-structured interviews to give the participants more time and space to reflect on their experience of the transition from online to blended teaching, the teaching and technical knowledge they gained and used during the transition, and to allow them to share their ideas about the topic (Silverman, 2010). In particular, I was interested in how the EAP pedagogy and technology changed and/or influenced their teaching.

Due to the nature of the study which aimed to involve EAP practitioners from across the UK, the interviews were intended to take place online via Zoom. This was to enable me to speak to a wider and more diverse group of participants.

To obtain these insights, I needed to ask additional questions (Bell, 2010, p. 161) so that participants could expand on their responses; therefore, I designed an interview that contained open-ended questions, which enabled me to obtain qualitative data.

4.6 Data collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the practitioners. The data collected from the interviews helped me to understand more about the transition in teaching EAP from online to hybrid or blended teaching in the post-Covid-19 era. The core and additional questions I asked the teachers helped me to answer the research questions and address constructs from the theoretical framework, as the data enabled me to learn about their experience of transitioning from online to blended or hybrid teaching and their perspectives on this transition, specifically regarding:

1. the new technical knowledge (TK) and skills they gained before and during the transition, how they used these skills to make the transition, and how these skills influenced their teaching (TPK);
2. the pedagogical challenges they faced during the transition and how they used the existing (CK) and new knowledge (PK) that they gained during the transition, and how the new PK influenced their teaching;

3. their understanding of how technology and content can influence each other (TCK) and how EAP can be communicated.

The interviews took place between 28 March and 11 April 2022. The interviews took place on Zoom, lasted an average of 20 minutes and were video recorded and transcribed via Zoom.

4.7 Data analysis

To analyse the qualitative data, I used the thematic analysis method (Anney, 2014; Braun and Clark, 2006), which enabled me to organise the data according to themes and sub-themes, ensuring the themes were linked to the research and interview questions. I found the method useful as it gave me the flexibility (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) that I needed to interpret the data and link and analyse it through the TPACK lens.

I first read the transcripts to identify provisional themes and anonymise the participants. Then, I re-read the scripts one by one to further familiarise myself with and interpret the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013), generating codes that could be linked to the themes. I then organised the data into smaller chunks, revised the themes, and linked the codes to the themes and subthemes adding relevant TPACK types of knowledge acronyms to each theme as appropriate. In the few instances where data was unclear, I watched the video recordings to ensure data validity and gain a better understanding of the feelings and/or experiences of the teachers who participated in the interviews.

4.8 Ethical considerations

To conduct the study, which involved adult participants, I applied for and was granted ethical approval by the module tutor under the rules of the Lancaster University programme. Upon receiving approval, I sent the Participation Information Sheet (PIS) to the participants by email. The participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that the data would be kept in a secure location. Before the interviews, written consent to be video recorded was obtained from the participants. The recordings were stored on Zoom (in the cloud) and protected with a password. Then, the transcripts generated by Zoom were downloaded to the researcher's computer and kept securely in a password-protected account.

The participants who took part in this study were anonymised to protect their identity; they are referred to in this paper as: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8.

All transcripts were anonymised and stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act (GDPR, 2018). No personal or sensitive data was shared.

5. Findings

In this section, I will present the results obtained from the analysis of the qualitative data, in other words, the findings from the interviews. The main themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis contain are presented in turn, along with selected extracts from the interviews. The elements of TPACK are highlighted within each theme, providing links to the data generated from the interviews.

5.1 The pedagogical and technological challenges before the transition

5.1.1 Online teaching experience

All participants had sufficient *CK* as they all were experienced EAP teachers, and most of them had a level of *TK* and/or *TPK* in teaching EAP with technology, either from the previous teaching or that they gained during the lockdown when teaching remotely.

| “I was teaching solely online for 18 months.” (P1)

Some teachers had a broader *TPK* on how to use various digital tools and platforms to enhance learning in their classrooms:

| “I felt relatively confident with the tech because I’ve done a lot of distance learning myself.” (P5)

5.1.2 Familiarity with the new digital tools

The most popular learning platforms used by the teachers were Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle, and Teams. They also used Zoom or Teams to deliver live sessions.

Many of them had to transition from one platform to another, often not having enough time to familiarise themselves with the new piece of software, its features, and what it could offer in terms of learning and teaching.

5.1.3 Pedagogical and technological challenges

In many cases, teachers had to develop their online resources and appropriate technical guides from scratch and train other colleagues who were less familiar with certain

technologies on how to use these technologies to teach EAP remotely:

“We had to work out how to create pages so that’s what, essentially, I was spending a lot of time doing...[and] on training other people, helping others, providing guides for students.” (P1)

However, for some teachers, not being able to be involved in the initial material design was inconvenient, as it meant that they did not have the opportunity to use their existing *CK* and *PCK* and/or further develop their *TK* and/or *TPK*.

“The materials were made by a couple of people a kind of online-ready, and then they were distributed to the students, so we didn’t have any control over it.” (P5)

One teacher was concerned that, when designing online lessons too much attention was paid to technology and developing *TK* and not enough to *PK*, thus compromising the latter.

“I was so focused on the technology I almost did not think about the content because I was so worried about how I was going to send this person to this room. I had to go back to basics and write a really structured lesson plan, like ‘now press this’, ‘send this today’ until I got used to it. It was like a technical guide.” (P7)

5.2 Transitioning from online to blended teaching

5.2.1 Adapting to blended teaching

The experience of transitioning from online to blended or hybrid teaching seemed similar among the participants, although some teachers were reluctant to adapt to more complex and, in some cases, more challenging teaching that would involve teaching synchronously and asynchronously, thus further developing their *TK*:

“I was sceptical about the whole online teaching, but after a while, I could see that it was productive, so I went in with the same approach to hybrid. I think a lot of teaching staff were reluctant to adapt to that.” (P3)

To facilitate learning and teaching, and considering the logistical and other constraints, some institutions decided to provide their students with all possible options to participate in their classes, whether online, face-to-face or a combination of both, offering either Hybrid or HyFlex learning.

However, the ways of flexible learning seemed very new to one teacher who found the classroom dynamics varied between groups depending on the teaching mode.

“I found that very strange to have one group on campus twice and then the final session being online felt very strange. It felt like a completely different dynamic.” (P4)

However, this new way of teaching in a hybrid class seemed challenging for one teacher who was concerned that students who took the class online might not have the same learning experience as those physically present in the classroom. Therefore, using their *PCK* the teacher decided to split the class and introduced the HyFlex mode to address this, in this way implementing their *TCK*.

“I had to juggle hybrid teaching, which I found quite stressful, where I had some [students] in the classroom and some at home, which wasn’t sustainable. On a few occasions, I would say, ‘You know what, because I’m just worried that you’re not going to get the same experience online as the people in the classroom,’ I would say, ‘I’m just going to do a separate class for you.’ I couldn’t always do it, with time constraints.” (P7)

Other challenges involved using the available technology effectively in the hybrid classroom, thus using *TK* to ensure all students had access to the learning resources. One teacher pointed out that certain adjustments had to be made to ensure those students who were in the classroom could see the online resources that were shared with the online group.

“We were using Teams in the hybrid classroom, but it was a different way of using Teams. For example, I would just take the laptop and point at it on the screen rather than share the screen. I had to be aware of where I was standing.” (P7)

5.2.2 Pedagogy-related issues

In some cases, teachers were not given the necessary training that would help them to familiarise themselves with the new mode (e.g., the Hybrid or HyFlex), adjust their teaching and further develop their *TK* and *PK*, though the institutions would normally provide the teachers with the required equipment for their classes.

“I wanted to learn how to do it even though, as I said, there wasn’t any training on how it should be done.” (P3)

The hybrid model seemed problematic for some teachers, who found teaching two groups of the same class challenging, as while one group was in the classroom the other was online which raised concerns related to the effectiveness of teaching both groups simultaneously and possible implications for further developing their TK and TPK.

“I don’t think it can be done effectively for both groups of students, in person, in the classroom and online. I think there has to be a compromise there.” (P3)

5.2.3 Technology-related issues

The technology also came with challenges, as teachers were not always in full control of their teaching as they had to adapt their teaching to what the technology offered at the time (*TPK*). This means that they may not always have been able to fully plan the activities, or had to consider alternative ones:

“It’s tricky sometimes and, as this technology is being installed, it sort of feels... almost every time you walk into the classroom there’s something new, the technology has been updated in some way, and you have to just adapt to that, you know, in real-time.” (P3)

As pointed out by one teacher, to effectively implement hybrid teaching the institution would need to invest in the appropriate equipment to enable all teachers and students to teach and learn in such a mode:

“I think the University has invested in putting technology into some rooms, to make this possible.” (P8)

This shows the teacher’s understanding of how technology and content can both influence and interact with each other and how EAP can be communicated (*TCK*).

5.3 Teaching in the post covid-19 era

5.3.1 Making adjustments to teaching EAP

Several participants reported that the experience they gained during and after the pandemic made them think differently about their teaching (*PK*) and changed the way they taught (*TPK*), by offering their students both face-to-face and online sessions:

“One-to-one support sessions, which were always on campus, are now both – so they’ll do a support session on campus and then they’ll repeat it later on in the day

online as well, so it’s more blended now than it ever was.” (P1)

“I think I’m more resilient and more creative now. Practising forced me to be more creative about things and the way that I think about different activities and, obviously, using new tools that I didn’t use before.” (P7)

Some institutions made adjustments to the way certain sessions are offered. For example, in two institutions, one-to-one tutorials are offered online based on the teachers’ experience and the *TPK* and *TCK* gained during the pandemic, as they felt that these sessions were much more productive, and it was easier to share resources and communicate using online features, such as the option to screen share.

“Consultations would have been face-to-face in the classroom before, whereas now we’ve seen actually they work better online. You can share screens and it’s a lot easier when done online.” (P6)

5.3.2 Pedagogical and technological implications

Teaching online gave the teachers opportunities to develop, not only in terms of online teaching (*TPK*) but also develop their technical skills and learn how to use technologies to enhance learning (*TCK*):

“It’s been an enormously beneficial time for me, for my development, because what might have taken us 10 years to do, we just literally had to do overnight. We’ve had to learn so many skills and different software and tools like Mentimeter.” (P7)

It’s now a lot more flipped than it used to be and that’s as a result of the pandemic and everybody getting more used to online platforms.” (P6)

One teacher shared their experience with using a shared document to engage students in a group writing task; according to this teacher, what seemed to work in a face-to-face setting was not as successful in an online environment.

“I would say, I have more or less come back to what I was doing before the pandemic. I don’t think I’m using more technology, arguably I’m using less because before the pandemic I used to get students to work in groups to do some writing in a shared OneDrive document. I never quite felt comfortable with those tasks because I think online it’s very difficult to get students to actually write something together.” (P8)

This example shows how the teacher used their existing *CK* and *PCK* and, based on their experience with using the technology to teach EAP and that particular lesson and group of students, used the *TCK* to consider how EAP can be communicated. This shows how technologies can be used in EAP and how this may influence EAP pedagogy (*TPK*).

However, another teacher found the hybrid model useful for writing activities, as the option to share a document online allowed all students to edit it at the same time. This shows the teacher's *TK* regarding how and which technologies may be useful for certain online tasks.

“For some writing lessons, it can actually work in the hybrid model where students can work on the same documents, at the same time, or just share their text in the same space so they're connected.” (P2)

For some teachers, this experience of the pandemic provided opportunities to develop their *TPACK* by meeting with a wider group of EAP practitioners to exchange ideas and experiences and discuss various EAP and TELT-related issues.

“[It provided] the possibility to meet up with people from around the country, around the world and very easily. We were sharing so much practice. I wouldn't have been able to do that without meeting with people from overseas.” (P5)

“The use of Teams... I mean, we've never used it before, but now even when we're back face-to-face, I still use it in class. So there's almost like a physical class going on, but also an online class going on, so it's much easier now in the physical classroom.” (P6)

6. Discussion

6.1 RQ 1: How has the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching influenced their teaching?

The results of this study suggest that the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching may have had an impact on how teachers teach and how they think about their teaching. Before moving to blended/hybrid teaching, they faced dilemmas regarding how the technology they chose to integrate into their online classes communicated the content and supported their pedagogy. Thus, knowledge of technology seemed closely linked to their knowledge of pedagogy and content (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). Not only did they have to make decisions about their teaching, but

they also had to develop the necessary skill sets and knowledge needed to deliver their courses online, considering both the course content and pedagogy (Hamer and Smith, 2021) of their EAP courses. This in turn helped them to make a successful transition during the digital transformation their institutions were undergoing at the time.

6.2 RQ2: What particular skills and experiences did teachers find useful when transitioning from online to blended or hybrid teaching, and what challenges did they have to face during the transition?

Among the many skills and experiences teachers gained during the pandemic, the ability to quickly adapt classroom materials to online teaching, familiarity with new technologies and digital tools, and the ability to switch between different modes of teaching seemed to play the main role in the transition from online to blended or hybrid teaching, as these enabled the teachers to not only continue teaching but also to incorporate new technologies and approaches into their courses. As Bashir et al. (2021) point out, a number of universities offered their students flexible education by adopting their practices before and during the transition to blended or hybrid modes. Undoubtedly, both teaching and technical skills and experiences as well as pedagogical and technical knowledge enabled the teachers to transform their classrooms and adjust their teaching practices and methods accordingly to transition from fully online to blended or hybrid teaching.

The hybrid and HyFlex models provide a balance of face-to-face and online sessions for students (Penrod, 2022; Romero-Hall & Ripine, 2021). However, teachers may find teaching hybrid/Hyflex classes challenging, as when teaching face-to-face and online groups of students at the same time or at different times, teachers may not be able to offer sufficient support to the students or respond to their various needs, as teaching students in two different groups may create a disparity in their experiences and sense of belonging to one class, as noted by Bashir et al. (2021). This shows that although the various learning modes enabled the teachers to deliver EAP courses to all students which in turn enabled the students to complete their studies it brought certain challenges that might have had an impact on teaching and learning in such modes.

6.3 RQ3: What does it mean for teachers to teach EAP in the more digitised post-Covid-19 era?

Although switching between different modes of teaching may bring certain challenges for teachers, in terms of pedagogy and technology, the experiences gained during such

transitions may equip the teachers with not only a set of new skills and knowledge of online teaching and opportunities to develop new ways of teaching (e.g., developing flexibility in teaching) (Doo et al., 2020), but it may also allow them to try new technologies (Starkey, 2019) and test them in their classrooms.

7. Conclusion

The study aimed to understand how the transition from fully online to hybrid or blended teaching influenced the perspectives of EAP practitioners, who taught EAP courses during the Covid-19 pandemic, on the digital turn in EAP that took place in their institutions as part of the digital transformation their institutions had to implement to continue offering their courses to students.

The theoretical framework that was used to analyse the data and explore the pedagogical and technological choices the teachers had to make in transitioning to blended teaching enabled me to understand how EAP teachers addressed pedagogical, content, and TPK issues when transitioning between different modes of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings from the study suggest that the transition from fully online to blended/hybrid teaching might have impacted their teaching and the way they think about their teaching. It brought certain pedagogical and technological challenges for teachers mainly related to concerns about not effectively supporting their students' learning due to the use of different modes of learning in their classrooms.

However, the study also suggests that the transition in which they took an active part during the digital transformation in their institutions might have given the teachers opportunities to develop new skills and ways of teaching online courses which they may find useful when planning and teaching future online classes.

The major limitation of this study was its small sample and the lack of diversity among the participants, who were all teachers based and teaching in the UK. Nevertheless, the lessons learned from the pandemic can inform future EAP technology-enhanced learning and teaching.

Future studies should engage a larger and more diverse group of teachers from different cultural backgrounds to obtain additional insights into this area.

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