Resilience to withstand COVID-19 crisis: Lessons from a Foreign Language Institution in Vietnam

Uyen N. T. Nguyen
University of Foreign Language Studies, University of Danang, Vietnam

Long V. Nguyen (nvlong@ufl.udn.vn)[*]
University of Foreign Language Studies, University of Danang, Vietnam

Abstract

The rapid switch to online teaching due to COVID-19 pandemic has caused major setbacks in the education sector worldwide. This paper explored the responses of a Foreign Language University in Vietnam amid this transition from a holistic approach, moving from the institution's policies to realising such policies via administrative, supporting, and teaching staff's implementation. It further examined high-experienced teachers' use of technologies in their online teaching. Using semi-structured interviews with two administrative and supporting staff members and five English Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers, the study revealed critical themes in administrative and EFL teaching aspects. Regarding administration, the institution developed coherent policies, established the Response Team, and utilised ICT sustainably in their education system. The teaching practice includes thoughtful lesson design, constant support to students, and proactive coping with challenges. Initiatives taken at the institution and individual levels are also discussed. This study would provide practical and relevant lessons to global practitioners and to online education development in EFL programmes during and after COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: EFL programmes, highly-experienced teachers, initiatives, online teaching, policies

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic struck the globe in early 2020, with a rapidly increasing number of infected cases day by day. In Vietnam, the first case was confirmed on January 23rd, 2020, marking the onset of a fierce battle to alleviate its damaging impacts on almost every aspect of society. The Vietnamese government has promptly enacted stringent measures, including border closure and entry prohibition, comprehensive testing, contact tracing and quarantining, capacity enhancement of health care services, launching information campaigns, and so forth (Tran, Le, Nguyen, & Hoang, 2020). Notwithstanding

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[*] Corresponding author

its limited resources and technological capacities, Vietnam managed to keep the situation under control with only 25 cases on the 25th of February. The second wave occurred on March 3rd with a sharp increase of up to 263 cases. The government again managed to control the circumstance, limiting it to 270 cases, with no local transmission and no deaths since 15 April (Todd et al., 2020). However, Vietnam did not enjoy this achievement for long due to the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Danang on the 25th of July, ending a 99-day-streak of zero community infections and the first COVID death reported on July 31st (Le & Tran, 2021). Since the pandemic has complicated and unpredictable happenings, tight regulations have been enforced across the country to ensure Vietnamese citizens' safety.

In the education sector, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam announced the closure of nationwide educational institutions on February 2nd, with the motto that "campuses can close, but learning must continue." In its Official Dispatch 795/BGDĐT-GDĐH dated March 13th on *implementing distance education in response to COVID-19 pandemic*, MOET encouraged universities to conduct online distance teaching for full-time and in-service students. On March 23rd, MOET issued specific guidelines on ensuring online teaching quality for higher education institutions in the official dispatch– 988/BGDĐT-GDĐH on *quality assurance of online distance teaching during COVID-19 outbreak*. In line with MOET's instructions, The University of Danang (UD) issued two important documents: (1) 958/ĐHĐN–ĐT dated 18 March on *applying online distance teaching for face-to-face courses* and (2) 1222/ĐHĐN–ĐBCLDGD dated April 6th on *ensuring the quality of online teaching at UD* with comprehensive instructions for its member universities.

Specifically, the latter stipulates that member universities have to guarantee technological reliability, train teachers to use new technologies, enable learners to access online learning via many devices, instruct them to study online effectively, ensure achieving course learning outcomes, assist teachers and students in solving technological problems, and maintain various communication channels with learners. The document additionally specifies detailed instructions for teachers – including modifying syllabus and lesson plans and adjusting assessing methods to suit online teaching environment, following course learning outcomes, employing student-centered methods, enhancing access to online learning materials for learners, using additional technologies if required, supporting learners, and giving them timely feedback.

The paper's key objective is to examine how the University of Foreign Language Studies (UFLs) - a member of the UD responded to the rapid shift to online teaching during COVID-19 outbreak. Particularly, it offers insights into how UFLs' administrative, supporting and EFL teaching staff implemented UD's policies. Of note is that the research investigated the practice of EFL teachers who have rich experience in utilising technologies in their professional practice, named as 'highly-experienced' teachers in this paper. Therefore, the study would provide practical implications, grounded on stakeholders' and teachers' views, in areas of policy planning and EFL teacher training to relevant global contexts during and after COVID-19 pandemic. It might also benefit less-experienced teachers seeking applicable methods to better their online teaching practice.

Literature Review

Prior to COVID-19's occurrence, extensive research has documented some of the benefits of online language education such as promoting language learning and centering on learners' needs (Pourhossein Gilakjani, 2014; Wang & Vasquez, 2012), enhancing classroom engagement and communication skills for students (Melor, Salehi, & Chenzi, 2012; Halim & Hashim, 2019), to name a few. Importantly, previous studies stated the essential components of good online language education. They include "backwards" instructional design strategy, i.e., starting from the course's expected learning outcomes (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Florence, Albert, Swapna & Kiran, 2019), which involves learners' needs consideration (Florence et al., 2019). Good online teaching practices comprise staying visible and engaging with students (Meskill & Anthony, 2015; White, 2006), promoting students' motivation via fun and engaging online learning activities (Morat, Shaari, & Abidin, 2016), using individualised and authentic learning materials such as videos, multimedia resources or tools to enrich learning experience (Gavin, 2019; Goertler, 2019) and establishing rules for online communication (Mintu-Wimsatt, Kernek, & Lozada, 2010). Regarding assessments, several forms are suggested such as asynchronous assignments for providing immediate and meaningful feedback for learners (Chapelle & Voss, 2016), project-based assessment for language components, or integrated performance (Link & Li, 2018), authentic assessments with rubrics (Florence et al, 2019). Finally, learners need to be instructed with strategies for successful online studying (Reinders & White, 2016).

Notwithstanding being valuable references for developing quality online language courses, most of these above-mentioned studies were conducted in carefully planned online courses in normal conditions, which possibly involves different practice from "crisis-prompted remote language teaching" (Gacs, Goertler, & Spasova, 2020, p. 380) with the major goal of ensuring continuity of learning. This calls for research into how different global contexts implement online teaching in response to the rapid switch to remote teaching while still ensuring realistic and achievable outcomes.

After the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, considerable research has investigated students' perspectives, perceptions, and expectations of online learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020; Maier, Alexa, & Craciunescu, 2020), and into institutions' readiness level of conducting online education and challenges faced by universities, teachers and students (Ali, 2020; Baticulon et al., 2020; Khan, 2020; Toquero, 2020) across different contexts. Noticeably, Bailey & Lee (2020) examined the challenges, benefits, and strategies of conducting online EFL courses at universities in South Korea. Forty-three native teachers of three groups of online teaching experience (highly-experienced, minimally-experienced and unexperienced) completed a survey with 68 items, divided into six themes, such as expected benefits for instructors and students, expected challenges for instructors and students, expected communication channels, and expected assignment type choices. The results showed that high-experienced teachers employed a broader array of online teaching activities and communication channels and encountered fewer challenges in online teaching. This research depicted a general picture of the transition into online education, however; it has not looked thoroughly into teachers' practice such as how they organised their online classes.

Little has been done to explore extensively how local institutions addressed the sudden transformation to a fully online delivery mode. Only one study has been found so far, investigating the innovations that Monash university in Australia has taken in their teacher education programmes in response to COVID-19 challenges (Scull, Phillips, Sharma, & Garnier, 2020). Using interviews, the study postulated a framework for online engagement for teacher educators, comprising three elements: access, participation, and engagement. The research offered profound pedagogical insights into teachers' innovations to enhance interaction with learners. Nevertheless, it has not discussed how to utilise technological tools to achieve interaction or key content in a course.

With the motives of enriching literature in the domain of online teaching in times of COVID-19 crisis and contributing ideas to the development of online education post-COVID-19, the study explores online teaching implementation from a more holistic perspective, moving from the institution' policies to realising such policies via administrative, supporting and teaching staff's practice. Since the study is conducted at a university with considerable prestige in applying Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into their training programmes and with high-experienced EFL teachers' participation, it would draw beneficial lessons for practitioners in global settings.

The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How did the administrative and support staff at UFLs implement UD's instructions on online teaching in response to COVID-19 crisis?
2. How did the highly-experienced EFL teachers conduct online teaching in accordance with UD's instructions?

Methodology

The research employed a case study qualitative design, using the semi-structured interview to explore in-depth the participants' experiences.

Sampling

The research was conducted at UFLs, one of the five regional centres appointed by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, and National Foreign Language Project to undertake the task of applying ICT in teaching and learning foreign languages. The study used purposeful sampling for the interview (Robinson, 2014). Participants included one administrative staff member, one support staff member, and five EFL lecturers. The administrative and support staff were chosen due to their regular and intense involvement in online teaching execution at UFLs. Furthermore, they held managerial positions and undertook important responsibilities at the institution. The administrative official is one of the UFLs' Management Board members and the Head of the Academic Affairs Department. The support staff member is the senior and chief technician at UFLs.

For the teaching staff, we invited five lecturers with considerable experience in blended and online teaching. These lecturers achieved good scores of students' engagement reflected through a high level of students' participation and of assignment completion as recorded on the Learning Management System (LMS), developed on Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle). Three of them have published peer-reviewed articles in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). An exploration of these teachers' online practices could provide transferable lessons for EFL teachers in other contexts.

Data collection

For the interviewees to raise their opinions, this study used a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, which resemble conversations (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were guided by the researchers with participants responding to open-ended questions related to research questions (See Appendix A for the interview questions). The researchers asked follow-up questions where relevant. The interviews were conducted individually, either in face-to-face or via Zoom. Each lasted from 30 to 45 minutes and was recorded with participants' permission.

Data analysis

The study employed a thematic analysis technique (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017), consisting of six stages: familiarization, coding, developing themes, reviewing, defining themes, and producing the report. NVivo 12 was used to support the coding and analysis. Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper to protect participants' confidentiality.

Results

Research Question 1

Four themes were particularly evident in interviews with the administrative and support staff when they reflected on how they implemented UD's policies at UFLs: coherent policies, the establishment of Response Team, and sustainable applications of ICT.

*Coherent Policies. T*he staff indicated that UFLs complied with UD's policies and further developed internal guidelines to maintain consistency and systematic execution of online teaching. The university adopted a policy on strict supervision of online teaching activities of all faculties and on recognising teachers' hard work for conducting online classes by financial motivation.

Hai: Beside UD's instruction documents, we provided teachers with further specific instructions on setting up courses, enrolling students into courses, designing and uploading learning content on LMS, and creating classes, and conducting online classes on Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). Similarly, we instructed students on how to study on these two systems. (….) UFLs set up an account for the Technical Team and one account for officers in the

Department of Inspection and Legislation[†] for all courses on LMS and all online classes on MS Teams. This Department could access and monitor all teaching and learning activities of teachers and students.

Hai: (….) For online classes, teachers are paid 1.2 times the regular hourly wage.

Establishment of Response Team. UFLs founded a Response Team, consisting of a Technical Team to handle emerging issues during the transition from face-to-face to online teaching. The Team organised training workshops for teachers and students on using the two parallel systems: LMS and MS Teams. The chief technician described his duties as follow:

Phong: The Technical Team provided training to teachers in each Faculty on using LMS and MS Teams. For LMS, we instructed them on how to upload lessons, create assignments and quizzes, which will be used simultaneously with online classes via MS Teams.

Another duty that the Team performed was seeking appropriate technological tools and making necessary modifications to these tools to suit the local context's conditions, as indicated below:

Phong: As a UD member, UFLs got the full-license package from Microsoft, including MS Teams. However, we didn't use that tool before. As the chief technician, I carefully researched the functions of MS Teams and then made suggestions to the Management Board about using this platform consistently across the university to replace other previously used video conferencing platforms like Zoom. During the first wave of COVID outbreak, the university didn't require teachers to use the same video conferencing platforms. (….) We researched thoroughly and developed a new tool to integrate into the MS Teams' system, allowing adding a list of users into one class instead of a one-by-one student.

The Team's most significant responsibility was offering 24/7 support in technological aspects for teachers and students via a hotline number and emails. They also made short instruction videos on solving frequently occurred problems and answering frequently asked questions. Noticeably, the interviewed teachers greatly appreciated the dedicated and timely support from the Team.

Sustainable applications of ICT. The data revealed that UFLs only encountered minor challenges when moving to a fully online delivery mode since they had upgraded their digital infrastructure and continuously maintained technological applications in their practice. This also sets a solid and favourable foundation for the rapid transition to online teaching, if required, in the future. Two participants reported:

Hai: Currently, all classes and courses are active on Moodle and MS Teams.

Phong: We upgraded the software and hardware systems with ten servers. We used these servers for the LMS (Moodle). (…) UFLs maintain two parallel systems and all teachers have online courses on LMS. (…) We are doing face-to-face teaching now, yet we are ready to switch to fully online teaching if necessary.

Research Question 2

[†] The Department of Inspection and Legislation is in charge of implementing internal inspection activities in the field of school activities to prevent and detect violations of law.

Overall, the high-experienced EFL teachers closely followed UD's instructions and exercised their own initiatives to address the arising challenges. Key themes emerging from their responses are thoughtful lesson design, constant support, and proactive coping with challenges.

Thoughtful lesson design. All participants revealed their experiences in diversifying study activities on LMS and MS Teams. They stored learning resources and materials, created assignments and quizzes, organised discussion forums, and provided feedback to students on Moodle; and MS Teams was mainly used for real-time online classes.

To illustrate, two teachers described their combined use of two platforms and their use of additional technological tools:

Dat: In my Integrated-Skill Course, I uploaded audio listening files and the instructions about Moodle functions and subject-related instructions. When meeting on MS Teams, I asked questions to make sure that the students listened to the files I posted. (….) For Speaking skill, I organised follow-up activities related to the listening content. I assigned students into pairs or groups. They discussed via online tools, recorded their interactions and posted these videos on the class's LMS. I further introduced them with applications or software for pronunciation practice and improvement. For Writing skill, I asked students to write on word documents and posted on LMS. (….) I did online peer assessment. According to rubrics with clear criteria that I set, one student marked the writing assignments of five to six other students.

Hoa: I used iSpring Suite software to create various types of quizzes such as fill-in, multiple-choice (….) For Speaking skill, instead of organising activities as written in the textbooks, I uploaded videos from TedTalks or Youlish into LMS and asked students to discuss the videos' contents on MS Teams' classes.

Consistently the teaching staff commented on the significance of organising interactive activities. One interviewee emphasised:

Mai: I used an amazing feature of Break-out rooms in Zoom, which allowed me to assign students into groups of four or five in my Interpreting class. (….) Furthermore, students had to interact outside the online class sessions to work on a big assignment - organising an online mock conference. Students act as online interpreters. (….) My students said that they had the feeling that they are doing real interaction with their friends and with their teachers.

The teachers also found it essential to enhance students' understandability by simplifying instructions, adding further explanations, highlighting and focusing on the key content points, adding glossary into online materials, and accommodating different learning styles, as exemplified by the following quotes:

Dat: Some students learn best by reading. Others are kinaesthetic, auditory or visual. Thus, I applied the technique of dividing the lessons into smaller parts, consisting of activities targeting at a specific learning style in each part.

Van: I put all important content on slides and shared with them on screen on MS Teams.

Finally, these academics frequently modified studying tasks to suit online teaching as follows:

Tuan: In my Semantics course, some tasks were very time-consuming since it took students much longer time to do the analysis, explanation, and evaluation in real-time online

classes. So, I provided them with detailed instructions and asked them to complete such exercises at home.

Constant support. All teachers expressed their strong and continuing support to students by enhancing teachers' presence, providing immediate feedback, and adopting new roles. To improve teachers' presence, the respondents stressed the necessity of turning on their cameras for students to see, using various communication channels and interestingly dressing and behaving well:

Van: I turned on my camera so that students could feel my presence and see my expressions. I also encouraged my students to turn on their cameras. Besides, I interacted with students using emails, LMS tools, mobile contact, or social networking sites to keep students updated and solve their issues.

Tuan: We need to show our passion to the students by being well-dressed, looking fresh, gay and energetic. We need to show them our energy at the very beginning of the lesson.

Most teachers agreed on the importance of providing students with immediate feedback, as explained by one teacher:

Tuan: We need to give them instant feedback because that's what students are waiting for so that they know how far they have gone, and how much they can understand the lesson.

Finally, the teaching staff expressed their willingness to adopt new roles when teaching online, as one teacher put it:

Mai: Apart from being a teacher, a facilitator, I need to be a technician to support my students in technical issues (….) I also acted as a motivator (….) When technical problems happened, some students felt bad about it and were embarrassed. I kept them calm and said, "it's okay, we understand. It's not your fault, don't worry too much."

Proactive coping with challenges. All interviewed teachers shared their proactiveness in handling arising difficulties in their online teaching practice. Most of the teachers expressed their concern about students' long screen time and tiredness. They developed several techniques to engage and motivate students by splitting the lessons into several parts, asking students to turn on their cameras and storytelling.

Dat: I applied the technique of dividing the lessons into smaller parts. I did not lecture for long (….) During the lessons, I often told jokes, funny stories, used appropriate pauses, expressed friendly attitudes, (….) to elevate students' mood.

Mai: It was compulsory for students to turn on their cameras in my classes. When students saw the teacher and other students and interacted with each other, they felt engaged in the lessons. This also set them in a proper posture to study.

The biggest obstacle all teachers encountered was time pressure. They came up with different solutions such as making use of available technologies to save time, seeking assistance from volunteer native teachers to reduce the amount of workload in preparing and conducting the online lessons or self-teaching and upgrading their ICT skills. Three respondents said:

Hoa: For Writing skill, I uploaded topics on Google Docs and set the time limit for students to write. While students were writing on Google Docs, I instantly marked the writing, so it saved much time. In this way, students also saw my immediate feedback.

Mai: I asked some volunteer native teachers, who live in different countries to help with my Interpreting classes. I sent them the Zoom link to co-teach with me.

Dat: Teaching online is time-consuming and requires hard work. A one-hour online lesson via video conferencing cost more preparation time up to three to five times than a face-to-face one. Marking online assignments also cost more time than direct marking. (….) I think teachers need to do lots of self-study and equip themselves with the essential ICT skills to teach online effectively.

Discussion

The study seeks to scrutinize UFLs' responses to the sudden transition to fully online teaching during COVID-19 pandemic. The most significant finding illuminated from the study was that effective implementation of online teaching requires a harmonious combination of clear directions from the top-level stakeholders, the mutual cooperation between relevant faculties and departments, and the initiatives taken by supporting and teaching staff to suit the local context's conditions in times of crisis, as stated in the United Nations' report that "capacities are needed at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels to withstand emergencies" (United Nations, 2020, p. 22).

Regarding administration, UD in general and UFLs, in particular, developed clear regulations on the rights and responsibilities of relevant staff. For instance, the Department of Inspection and Legislation was in charge of supervising online teaching activities, which helps to maintain a uniform implementation across the university, thereby enhancing students' online learning experiences. While this supervision policy might put teachers under a little pressure, they are also entitled to financial gain. A weakness found in the university's management during the first COVID outbreak is that it allowed teachers to set up their own online classes with the use of different video-conferencing tools, which confused students. A similar challenge was previously reported by an Australian university, "overall the university has successfully migrated to an online environment…, while not yet providing a consistent online experience across all units and courses university-wide" (Clemans, 2020, p. 6). The problem was mitigated by the decision of UFLs to use LMS and MS Teams consistently for all online teaching and learning activities in the second wave of COVID.

A specific measure that the local institution has adopted is establishing the Response Team, which has not been found so far in other international contexts in the literature. From the onset of the pandemic, teachers and students faced a multitude of challenges, especially in training, guidance, or resources. The Team has cooperated with the Faculties to identify areas in which teachers need training when teaching online. They then conducted training workshops and provided reliable support to teachers and students throughout the process. Significantly, their willingness to undertake "additional responsibilities in uncharted territories" (United Nations, 2020, p. 22) (in this case 24/7 assistance) boosted teachers' and students' readiness, facilitating a quick transition to online modality and developing the university' accountability in emergent situations.

One of the important factors that assisted the university in its transition, which was rather smooth, to online teaching was its investment in its digital infrastructure to remove access to barriers and pursue a long-term and sustainable utilisation of technologies in online education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the technical staff at UFLs has looked carefully into its available yet untapped digital resources and made necessary modifications to take full advantage of these resources.

When it comes to teaching online, the study illuminates three critical elements in EFL teaching: thoughtful lesson design, constant support, and proactive coping with challenges. The lesson design with appropriate learning activities is extremely important in online courses as affirmed by Carr-Chellman and Duchastel (2000) that "the essence of an online course is the organization of learning activities that enable the student to reach certain learning outcomes" (p. 233). The study's findings propose that high-experienced EFL teachers frequently employed a wide array of asynchronous and synchronous learning activities and authentic studying materials such as TedTalks or Youlish, which concurs with previous research results (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Gavin, 2019; Goertler, 2019). Regarding the appropriate use of asynchronous and synchronous activities, several practices have been suggested. For instance, Murphy, Rodríguez-Manzanares & Barbour (2011) stated that asynchronous form is more suitable for self-paced online learning and synchronous is a better use for answering questions and troubleshooting. Synchronous online teaching is considered to depend on teacher-rather than student-centered approaches (Benard, 2009; Murphy et al., 2011). Stefan (2008) contended that both forms supported online communication, with asynchronous discussions involving more reflective participation and synchronous for more personal interaction among students. While there is no unique formula, these activities should be based on a mix of both designs and be conducive to local practicalities such as the Internet connection or access to resources.

The interviewed academics also found it essential to enhance interactivity and scaffold understanding by adding further explanations, paring back the lessons to essential contents, or a "more is less approach" (Scull et al., 2020) since students might not study at the same pace compared to the face-to-face setting. The respondents also mentioned the attempt to accommodate students' various learning styles. However, this practice needs to be reconsidered, especially when its effectiveness has not been supported by researchers recently (Hood et al, 2017).

Providing active support is another crucial factor in online teaching (Scull et al., 2020) since quality relationships with and between students in online environments help to mitigate feelings of isolation (Aragon 2003; Linton 2016), especially due to social distancing rules. Main forms of support derived from the findings include increasing teachers' presence, giving timely feedback, and adopting new roles. Turning on cameras, staying visible to students, showing them teachers' facial expressions or gestures, maintain communication via multiple pathways such as emails, LMS tools, social networking sites can get students engaged (Meskill & Anthony, 2015), create a feel of the 'human side' of online classrooms (Gacs et al, 2020), and make up for the lost spontaneous interaction compared to face-to-face setting (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, & Koole, 2020). As part of the teacher's presence, teaching online requires teachers to shift nimbly among a mix of instructional roles such as a facilitator, a motivator, a technician, an orchestrator, etc. (Rapanta et al., 2020).

Additionally, EFL teachers should make use of available technologies to provide immediate and meaningful feedback for students so that they are aware of their progression to reduce their anxiety with this new learning sphere. Asynchronous assignments which can be set up on Moodle or with iSpring Suite software can be employed to provide automated feedback, immediately after students' completion (Chapelle & Voss, 2016). The EFL writing activities usually require individualized feedback, which costs more time and effort. Using rubrics with clear criteria or online peer evaluation can minimise time spent on the assessment tasks (Florence et al, 2019; Gacs et al, 2020). These above-mentioned online practices, namely teachers' presence and availability, timely feedback, and regular communication were reported to be also employed by award-winning teachers (Florence et al, 2019).

Finally, teachers showed their proactiveness in addressing obstacles, which is considered an "effective method for coping with stress load in teacher's profession" (Verešová & Malá, 2012, p. 295(Verešová & Malá, 2012, p. 295). Proactive teachers can accumulate resources and mobilise these resources to tackle stress, thus avoiding burnout (Verešová & Malá, 2012). This is particularly critical in times of COVID crisis when teachers faced enormous time pressure and a decrease in students' engagement due to long screen time as revealed in the findings. The findings highlighted several coping strategies, namely personalizing teaching approaches such as storytelling, showing friendly attitudes, creating pleasant learning environments (Morat, Shaari, & Abidin, 2016), or adopting team teaching (Scull et al., 2020).

Despite some preliminary successes the administrative, supporting, and teaching staff have gained, some shortcomings in their implementation of UD's policies were found. Firstly, meanwhile, UD required member universities to instruct students to study online effectively, UFLs' guidance mainly centered on the use of two learning systems without addressing the strategies to be successful online learners for students (Reinders & White, 2016). Secondly, teachers are instructed to adjust the assessment methods to suit online teaching. The interviewed teachers mentioned their use of online multiple-choice quizzes especially in an unsupervised environment, which often entails a greater possibility of cheating (Styron & Styron, 2010). Suggested alternative forms of assessment are online collaboration, student work projects (Styron & Styron, 2010), and project-based assessment (Link & Li, 2018).

Thirdly, an essential component of developing online teaching courses is considering learners' needs, which has not been implemented in the local context. This can be explained by the sudden switch to remote teaching, giving little time for both administrators and teachers to perform this step. Nevertheless, a survey of student's online learning experience after each course could gather useful information on their needs, which is also beneficial for improving future online courses.

Fourthly, it seemed that most of the teachers attempted to recreate face-to-face learning conditions online to ensure the continuity of learning and have not mentioned their reference to course learning outcomes when they designed their lessons. This shortcoming might be inevitable due to the enormous pressure in time and academic workload that teachers faced at the time. For future courses, the backward instructional design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Florence et al, 2019) should be used to guarantee the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. Finally, one teacher mentioned her rule of requesting students to leave cameras

on in online class to increase their engagement. This practice needs to be used cautiously since it raises concerns about privacy and students' feeling of self-consciousness (Kozar, 2016). Encouraging students to turn on cameras is more feasible and appropriate than forcing them to do so.

Implications and limitations

Following are several implications drawn from the current data. Firstly, it is vital for policymakers at universities to adopt coherent policies on the execution of online teaching to ensure consistency across its faculties and departments. Secondly, a Response Team should be established and be ready to create contingency plans to mitigate any unanticipated crises, might it be COVID-19 or other international crises (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Thirdly, it is recommended for the institutions to exercise their initiatives and creativity to ease the financial burden for infrastructure investment yet still accommodating teaching and learning needs. Fourthly, the application of ICT in online language teaching ought to be maintained regularly to readily cope with emerging crises. Finally, EFL training courses for pre-service teachers and professional development programs for EFL in-service teachers should prepare them with effective pedagogical methods and skills for online teaching.

Conclusion

A core idea underpinned in the responses of UFLs to COVID-19 crisis is the resilience of its education system. This is manifested in its prompt actions from high-level stakeholders in establishing the Response Team, and adopting coherent policies, in the coordinated and consistent implementation of administrative, supporting, and EFL teaching staff and enacting individual capacities at lower levels. The harmonious cooperation among all levels would strengthen the institutions' resilience to handle immediate difficulties and address future crises.

The research has limitations in its scope with seven participants. Future research on a larger scale can generate broader insights into various managing and teaching practices in other contexts. Moreover, interviews with teachers with various levels of experience in online teaching can provide a more complete picture of different practices.

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Appendix

Interview Questions
For Administrative and Supporting Staff

1. What policies and instructions on online teaching did you receive from UFLs in particular and UD in general during the Covid outbreak?
2. How did you implement these policies and instructions?
3. Did the university face any challenges when switching rapidly into online teaching and learning?
4. How about the infrastructure of the university? Did it meet the demand when UFLs switched to online teaching?
5. How did you support teachers and students during that transition?
6. Does the university have any long-term plan for online teaching and learning?

For Teaching Staff

1. How did you adapt from face-to-face to online environment during Covid outbreak? Are there any differences in designing lessons for face-to-face and online teaching?
2. What activities do you often use in your online classes?
3. For what purposes do you use Learning Management System (Moodle)?
4. Did you face any challenges when teaching fully online courses? How did you cope with these challenges?
5. Did you receive any support from the university during that transition?
6. In your opinion, what skills do teachers need to have when teaching online?