A survey of instances of, and attitudes to,

Hybrid Learning

in Language Teaching Organisations
around the world as a response to
the Covid-19 pandemic

Authors: Thom Kiddle, Chris Farrell, John Glew-O'Leary, Sophia Mavridi

On behalf of:

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Manchester

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A. Introduction

The global educational response to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has been remarkable and transformational in many respects, from the nature of learning, learning environments and roles of teacher and learners, through to fundamental changes in approaches, responsibilities and structures at organisational and classroom level. In the world of language education, whether in private language teaching organisations (LTOs), further and higher educational establishments, or the state school sector, we have observed a shift through distinct phases which can be broadly categorised as:

- Emergency Response: A move to remote and online learning, in many cases overnight, largely facilitated through synchronous online platforms (e.g. Zoom).

- Creativity and Innovation: As teachers and institutions became more familiar with the basic functionality, we saw broader ranges of tools and platforms being incorporated and blending of asynchronous content with synchronous sessions.

- Consolidation and Future-proofing: Reflective considerations of what has worked well, what will be retained with a return to face-to-face classroom settings, challenges of the socially-distanced classroom, and new models combining online and face-to-face delivery, from blends to hybrids.

It is this third phase which we find ourselves in at the current time, and consideration of the last topic which has driven the creation, dissemination and analysis of this survey.

The intended focus of the survey was to look at the instances, insights and implications of the Hybrid Learning model in language education settings globally. To this end, we provided an adapted definition of Hybrid Learning as "an instructional approach that combines face-to-face (F2F) and online learning. Each class session and learning activity is offered in-person and synchronously online" (Educause 2020). This is also known as Hybrid-Flexible (Hy-Flex) and co-modality learning. We did not intend to include a more traditional use of the term 'Hybrid' which reflects a type of blended learning, i.e. a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning in certain proportions. Nor did we intend to include variations on the model in which the learners are physically present in the same learning space, but the teacher (and possibly other learners) is connected remotely.

Consequently, we have tried to focus our analysis of the data on responses which reflect the Hybrid Learning model of a *live teaching event* simultaneously combining the teacher + some learners in the same physical space *plus* other learners connecting remotely.

Respondents were asked an initial series of questions for organisational profiling, and then a Hybrid-Learning-orientation question, which guided the subsequent set of questions for them to answer:

Is your institution currently offering, or considering offering, hybrid learning?

☐ **Yes, already running hybrid courses.**
☐ **Yes, considering running hybrid courses in the near future.**

The structure of the data analysis in this report also follows this pattern. Authors focused on different sections of the data gathered and consequently different sections of this report. Chris Farrell of CES and John Glew-O'Leary of International House Manchester focused on those LTOs who are already running hybrid learning courses from their perspective within teaching centres with current hybrid offerings (see section C). Sophia Mavridi of De Montfort University, Centre for English Language Learning (CELL) focused on those institutions considering future implementation of a hybrid approach, from her perspective in working with teachers around the world on the principles and challenges of this mode (see sections D & E). Thom Kiddle of NILE, focused on the reservations and resistance to Hybrid Learning (see sections F & G).

B. Respondent profiles and overview

There were 154 responses to the online survey, distributed through the social media and contact networks of the four coordinating authors and their institutions, and the supporting associations' networks. The survey was open between 18th September and 19th October 2020.

Respondents' teaching organisations were located in 31 countries, with four countries providing the most respondents: United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Spain.

Algeria	Hungary	Russia
Argentina	Ireland	Serbia
Australia	Italy	South Africa
Brazil	Japan	South Korea
Bulgaria	Malta	Switzerland
China	Northern Cyprus	Ukraine
Croatia	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Czech Republic	Poland	United Kingdom
France	Portugal	Tanzania
Germany	Romania	Turkey
Greece		

A significant majority (73%) of institutions represented teach both intensive short-course programmes and extensive year-round programmes, with 20% teaching only on an extensive basis, and 7% teaching only short courses.

A broad spectrum of learner ages is also represented in the results, with almost all (96%) involved in teaching of adults, 70% also involved in courses for teenagers, and around half (53%) teaching younger learners. This reflects the large number of respondents from the private language school sector, which is to be expected from the distribution networks mentioned above. Other types of learner covered within the respondents' operations are HE students, teacher training, business and specific vocational training, and courses for senior citizens.

C. Respondents who are already running Hybrid Learning courses

Introduction

Just under 40% of respondents to the survey said they were already running hybrid lessons, and of these almost half provided answers to subsequent questions. The number of respondents varied slightly from question to question, possibly as some may have fallen outside of the responder's remit. Responses detailed schools' thoughts and experiences on issues such as the difference between a hybrid and a socially-distanced class; changes in practice and best-practice models; teacher training; technology used; feedback from students, teachers and stakeholders; and school management concerns.

Major Differences between Socially-Distanced Classrooms and Hybrid Classrooms from the Students' Perspective

The responses given in this section were surprisingly focused on the negatives of all aspects of online learning, rather than a comprehensive comparison between a Socially-Distanced and a Hybrid Learning context.

Issues raised around Hybrid Learning seem to be applicable to any sort of education context which utilises, or especially relies upon, technology. Audio problems, lag issues, Wi-Fi and engagement issues were all mentioned.

Issues were shared surrounding communication and the fact that with Hybrid Learning the distance between learners was more pronounced and difficult to bridge. There were also issues with sound quality cited as barriers to effective communication. There is a perceived lack of flexibility in peer-to-peer interaction patterns. Learner perceptions are often led by the belief that real communication is only achieved in a face-to-face context.

Mental health was mentioned with a focus on the isolation of learners in the online context. In addition, there was the difficulty learners may have in focusing for a full day online: maintaining attention through the lesson is a challenge. The mental health of the teacher is also crucial and respondents highlighted that the cognitive load on the teacher is increased in a hybrid context. The role of the students is also fundamentally shifted.

From the teachers' perspective it was mentioned that the hybrid context typically only features a few learners in class, with a majority online. The teacher is required to provide more support for online students than the students physically in the classroom. The initial scepticism that learners feel about using online learning is also important to note. The hybrid classroom lends itself to an increase in 'teacher talking time' and to a lot of "unobserved student-to-student conversation". There are issues with the teachers' ability to monitor and get feedback in a hybrid context.

In terms of the context of learning, there is seen to be a problem with the distinction between synchronous and asynchronous learning, although this is not elaborated upon in the responses. However, it was noted that the online medium is necessary and convenient.

For the school, the hybrid context makes effective communication with the learner less effective.

Changes in Practice Posed by Hybrid Learning

There are a number of areas cited as major changes for the teacher in this context. Chief among them is a mindset change and a removal from their comfort zones.

There are also practical issues such as:

- Classroom management issues like classroom control have to be more pronounced than before; sharing materials between learners is also an issue.
- Teacher talk is a big issue with more paused speech, student reflection, and the monitoring of break-out rooms.
- Inclusion of all learners is important. How do we bring two groups together rather than teaching two distinct groups? Respondents suggested that there must be a focus on integration and group dynamics by the teacher.
- With the context being new to many teachers, planning lessons with appropriate timings and achievable outcomes is a significant consideration.
- Key teacher-student contact points (such as collecting feedback) need to be rethought. While the survey responses offer no elaboration on this area, it is clear that this falls under the category of a redefinition of the role of the teacher and an adaptation to the context in terms of classroom management.
- Although a minor consideration in the responses, there is reference to the need to encourage learners to speak more loudly as the cohort of learners joining in the online context are reliant on microphones for engaging with audio from the physically present students. If this isn't managed properly then a disconnect is easily created between the two student locations.
- Coping with simultaneous tasks, the need for multi-tasking and keeping all learners engaged, and balancing the split of teacher attention need training and develop with experience.
- Issues with technology during lessons and anticipating such issues requires careful consideration and implies a focus on teacher technical competency and lesson contingency.

- Teacher position in the classroom and identifying who to focus on during the lesson emerged as important considerations. There are also issues with getting used to the video camera and what the learners can see.
- Teachers must consider their choice of materials and their adaptation for both types of learners, and allow more time for preparation.
- In terms of available materials, replacing real-world and print material with digital parallels often causes extra work.

Best Practice Models Adopted or Created

No institution responded with claims of any firm best practice models in place. A number of respondents are trialling different approaches and ideas, with a range of focus areas.

A. **Teacher**: The teacher is expected to create more dynamic tasks and to encourage more cooperative tasks between the learners. Both the lesson planning and classroom management must consistently involve collaborative tasks between the online and face-to-face modalities. Teacher talk is also mentioned as in need of revision in this new context, with an emphasis on clarity and speed. Teacher sharing groups are seen as an important factor in helping to develop models of best practice.
B. **Technology**: There is movement from some respondents towards the use of mobile technology in some way in the hybrid classroom, to make it possible for movement around the room. It is unclear what this may look like. There is the need to create safe environments with the use of technology before it can be exploited fully. Some sort of guidance on what the best tech products to use is also seen as a necessity.
C. **Students**: There is an emphasis on learner independence and the need for students to take control of their own learning in this context. There was talk of promoting a more team-based approach to studying. Getting regular learner feedback is seen as very important.

Initial Teacher Training Necessary to Prepare Teachers for the Hybrid Context

Training is mentioned as an essential step in the implementation of hybrid learning. Some institutions are focusing on building a community of learners, while some are encouraging their teachers to practice and reflect in order to build a model of best practice. The main issue is the fact that most people are new to this context so training options and expertise can be quite limited. However, three areas were highlighted:

A. **Classroom Management:** There has been practice in managing both groups of learners. Practice involves teaching colleagues first, then with volunteer students. There has also been focus on setting up tasks; dealing with 'dead time'; getting learners to work together; how to develop group work; managing student expectations; and adapting to slower reaction times.
B. **Lesson Planning**: Focuses are on utilisation of materials and the use of tech "where no student…feels penalized". Most of this training seems to be through INSET sessions for teachers.
C. **IT Skills**: Training focuses have been on identifying transferable skills from Zoom lessons; getting used to the technology and developing confidence in using it; and the

integration of other tools. Training needs are reported in IT skills to maximise the potential of the video platforms used. Respondents also mentioned that having IT support available for the teacher is essential.

Ongoing Teacher Training Necessary

The ongoing support for teachers is taking and will take a number of forms in the institutions that responded to the survey. Some topics which are discussed as essential include:

- Activities to help with class dynamics between the student groups
- Training in troubleshooting
- Training in the technology to be used.
- Developing digital competences.
- Training on group cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging.
- Training in ICT tools with demonstration activities, including training on audio and video options.
- When and how to integrate a Flipped Learning approach.

In addition to these, one respondent noted the need for "Familiarisation and training in CEFR Descriptors on Online interaction and collaboration" in order to identify "skills and competencies - articulating them into scales & descriptors".

In terms of the forms this ongoing training may take there was an emphasis on 'sharing sessions' and sharing ideas and activities. This exchange of best practice within and across institutions is seen as crucial. There was also a stated need for schools to focus on the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) model and a change in teacher mindset. This context provides an opportunity to explore different methodologies that may better suit the context.

In addition, respondents stated a need to involve the students and to get solid student feedback, and to foreground learner training. From the institutional perspective, there need to be allowances for peer observation.

Teacher Feedback

There has been a mixed reaction to Hybrid Learning from respondents, with a number of positives and a number of negatives. The latter tended to be elaborated upon more, and some of the details included:

- Help with planning is needed
- Help with audio is needed. This is in terms of the technology and access to certain audio files.
- Help with monitoring is also an issue. There is part of a bigger issue of the changing nature of the role of the teacher in terms of classroom management in this context.
- Some teachers are reportedly stressed by the changes involved, hope they won't have to teach 'hybrid', and think it is too demanding for them. This, in a way, is understandable giving the lack of preparation and training in some contexts.

- Some respondents state that they need more time for preparation and feel greater levels of stress during the lesson.
- Some say that it is more exhausting and that changing live activities and print material to online is a burden.
- The stress of coping with two audiences is noted.

On the positive side some respondents stated that teachers do enjoy Hybrid Learning approaches and are keen to accommodate students, some teachers are glad to be back with their students and are dealing with the context while others are enthusiastic about the novelty of the situation.

Technology provision

The respondents listed a range of digital technology solutions for the challenges raised when delivering hybrid lessons. These covered areas such as how to ensure the students and the teacher can see and hear each other, how to share materials and teaching tools such as whiteboards with the class, and how to enhance learning using a range of mainly online resources, platforms and applications.

In terms of managing the audio and the video, there are two broad setups being used:

- Approximately 40% of respondents listed some combination of external cameras and microphones. These were used in a variety of ways with projectors, interactive whiteboards, additional computer monitors, TVs, speakers, programmes to mix sound inputs from two microphones, Bluetooth keyboards and mouses, laptops and mobile phones. There was little consistency in descriptions of set-up across respondents.

    Interactive whiteboard, laptop, wall speakers, dangling microphone, small webcam on small stand.

    Laptops, 360 degree cameras, Zoom, large screens. We also need to set up more microphones in the rooms.

    We are using a video camera on a tripod connected by wire to the teacher's laptop which is connected by Chromecast to a big TV screen set in painted blackboard. Remote student is connected through Zoom.

- About 20% seemed to be using laptops, Chromebooks, or tablets (sometimes supplemented with a microphone, TVs or monitors) in the physical classroom to allow online students to see and interact with F2F students. The cameras on these devices were either used to view the entire class or each individual student in the physical classroom had use of a connected device.

    We encourage students to bring their own laptops into the classroom as we no longer provide paper handouts.

    If the group is small (2-4 students); enough to have a notebook to film class students, ipad to focus on teachers and wall mounted TV to show online

students to the students sitting in class. If the group is larger, a stand-alone microphone is needed in class.

About 40% did not indicate how audio and video were shared between the physical and remote learners.

Just over 70% use Zoom for online students to connect to the classroom. Other applications mentioned for this purpose were Abode Connect and Microsoft Teams.

Other platforms and applications reported in use are Google Drive and Docs, Moodle, whiteboard and coursebook software, Padlet, Flipgrid, Quizlet, Kahoot, and Sensei Wordpress.

Scheduling changes

Just under 60% in this category indicated there had been no change to timetabling as a result of implementing hybrid classes. From those that did, reasons mentioned were:

- changes due to Covid-19 safety protocols e.g. maintaining social distance including the use of 'bubbles' and split timetables where students are in class or online on alternate days.
- taking into account (presumably increased) travel times
- changes to assessment schedules
- changes to accommodate students in different geographical locations
- the shortening of class lengths e.g. "All of our classes are now 60 minutes rather than 90 minutes"

Changes in management structure

Approximately 40% reported no changes to management structure. Of those that did, relatively few respondents discussed specific changes in management structure per se but many reported changes to the working conditions of school and academic managers in the new environment. These changes include working more hours; management being more hands on and doing more multitasking. For example, Directors of Studies now teaching classes, whereas previously they hadn't. One said this was being done to *"implement and sustain changes".* In some cases this was because of reduced staffing due to lower student numbers.

Directors, Directors of Studies and Assistant Directors of Studies are now spending more time providing tech support, be that responding to live issues or helping students with initial set up. Many schools operating hybrid lessons had put support teams in place to help with tech issues for students and staff, some with new hires and others with redeployment of resources, although these changes may have been put in place with a move to online learning earlier in the pandemic.

Some schools were also assigning support for the development of online materials and teaching aids and organising further teacher training, as one put it, *"...*to make it different from 100% online or software-based learning".

Changes in pricing

The majority of respondents (75%) reported no pricing differences between online and face-to-face learning in hybrid lessons. Some noted this was because hybrid lessons are being used primarily as stopgaps during quarantine periods.

> *For now, we run face-to-face classes with hybrid when students go into lockdown"* and "*they are the same: we only offer live classes, but students can join the live classes from quarantine.*

In one case the fact that students' timetables were a mix of online and face to face provision meant there was no difference in pricing. This also seems to be a Covid-19 response measure.

Other perspectives stated the comparability of Hybrid Learning with face-to-face offerings.

> *The product is the same. The teachers' salaries are the same. The quality is the same.*

> *Hybrid is more complicated on many levels and doesn't warrant a reduction.*

For those that said there was a difference, all confirmed their online students paid less than face-to-face students.

Promotion to students

15% were unaware or unsure of how hybrid lessons were being promoted to students while approximately 25% said there had been no particular promotion.

> *We haven´t done so yet, we're working this way not because we voluntarily chose to do so but because we were forced by the COVID pandemic.*

> *Our main thrust is still face to face.*

A number of those that reported Hybrid Learning promotional activity stated that the main focus of their promotion was in relation to dealing with the pandemic; for example, reassuring students and stakeholders that their classes can continue in the event of lockdown or allowing those choosing not to come to school for classes, presumably for precautionary reasons, the option of continuing their programme. This possibly suggests that schools are operating hybrid lessons at this stage primarily as a firefighting response to the pandemic.

A minority of institutions were actively promoting hybrid lessons on websites, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, through search engine marketing and optimisation, webinars, blogs, workshops and promoting it amongst agents. One was also promoting "to companies that need to train their employees, (and) to people with busy schedules"

Changes in Student Support Necessary to Support Hybrid Learning

A major theme was increased contact and communication, with 40% mentioning it in their responses. Schools were providing "permanent availability" and collecting "even more regular

feedback" to stay "in touch with students and understand their concerns". Examples of how this was being facilitated are:

- arranging regular class visits by academic managers and welfare officers
- making daily calls to absent students
- increased contact with students in quarantine
- starting mentor groups on WhatsApp
- instigating a virtual Reception area, again on WhatsApp

Another prominent theme is technical support, with 27% citing it as a change implemented. For half of this group, the support was explicitly for online students. For the other half, it was impossible to identify how support applied to either online or face-to-face students. Specific items detailed included:

- help with device set-up
- help with cameras and poor w-fi
- help with formatting and scanning

Other instances of additional support given were:

- providing tablets and materials to students
- providing information before students arrive about Covid-19 testing, quarantine, etc.
- increased use of online learning platforms such as Moodle and OLS (Online Linguistic Support by Erasmus+)

Two institutions said that support offered was a continuation of that put in place when they went online following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Student Feedback

Over half of the respondents (53%) reported positive feedback although some did qualify their responses. For example, for 17% of all respondents it is more about people understanding the situation with the pandemic rather than being enthused by the Hybrid Learning model specifically.

Positive so far. Students understand this is a new normal.

Other caveats are:

- issues with sound quality and connectivity
- parents wanting a price reduction or wanting higher numbers in the physical classroom (despite government rules)
- Face-to-face students in lower-level classes complaining the teacher spent more time with the online students.

Reasons reported for positivity regarding the Hybrid Learning model are:

- smaller numbers F2F meaning there was a feeling these students received more individual attention
- less transport time required for online students

- students with medical concerns still being able to participate in class

From those reporting negative feedback, the biggest causes of concern were technical, especially sound issues and connectivity, or attitudinal:

> *Students prefer by far face to face teaching.*

Feedback from Individuals, Sponsors, and Agents

Just over 40% of respondents in this area either hadn't received feedback or were unaware of what, if any, had been received. Of those that had received feedback, it had been generally positive.

Some had provisos.

> *Due to the situation currently one of the best options.*

> *Generally positive although some companies still believe in face-to-face training as the best type of training.*

The novelty of the offering was also reflected with statements like "some have never heard of hybrid and are definitely impressed/interested". This may also explain some contradictory data. One UK based school stated, "agents are pleased that there is a route into face-to-face study for the few who are still prepared to travel" while a school based in France said "agents less keen".

Other comments on current Hybrid Learning provision

In terms of any general comments from the survey respondents in this segment, there are some clear themes:

- There is a desire to understand what other institutions are doing and how they view best practice in hybrid learning.

- Concerns over the learner experience: Some said that they wouldn't like it if they were a student.

- Teacher training, and understanding what is needed in order to implement Hybrid Learning successfully.
- Technology and equipment: considerations and choices from the range of options available.

Overall, the issue of logistics and budgeting are a concern. These two topics cover a wide area but they reflect the current context for many schools and the fact that many are not currently in a position to implement large-scale changes.

Some respondents indicated that they would prefer if they did not have to engage with Hybrid Learning. This reflects a feeling among several respondents that this approach is a necessity

rather than a choice. On the other hand, there is a recognition that this is a potential area of growth. It is not clear if this view reflects a commercial or academic perspective.

Summary and discussion of responses from schools already implementing Hybrid Learning

The disparate nature of the tech set-ups described by those already running Hybrid Learning possibly speaks to the newness of the mode and, consequently, the lack of clear guidance for schools offering hybrid lessons. Another reason for the disparity is that providers were probably constructing their hybrid classrooms around existing set-ups rather than kitting out bespoke rooms. This is most likely to reduce costs and because Hybrid Learning is currently seen as a solution to a temporary challenge instead of a long-term strategy. However, to make Hybrid Learning a success, the industry as a whole would undoubtedly benefit from dependable advice on how to set up a hybrid classroom, especially for audio and video. This advice should take into account different budget ranges and expertise. Guidance should aim to make setups as user-friendly as possible to help teachers and reduce student technical issues.

That Hybrid Learning is seen as another step in schools' evolving responses to the current global pandemic was regularly evidenced in the data. Student and stakeholder feedback described people being understanding, and it is difficult to gauge what their feelings would be were it not for the public health crisis. When promoting to potential students or stakeholders, institutions were frequently selling hybrid lessons in terms of the benefits it provides during the pandemic. Support offered to students was often put in place following the suspension of face-to-face teaching during lockdowns. Similarly, scheduling or management structure changes, and changes in pricing had broadly not been implemented as a result of an adoption of a Hybrid Learning approach. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, there was little or no call for Hybrid Learning in this sector, as can be inferred from the lack of guidance on best practice or tech setups. Face-to-face and online were considered distinct modalities for distinct markets. There was very little promotion in the data of any intrinsic advantages for hybrid as a mode, but this may change over time as practitioners and schools develop expertise and good practice, and students become accustomed to it. It still remains to be seen, however, if the approach will outlive the current crisis.

In terms of the differences between the Hybrid Learning context and a typical language classroom, it must be noted that the responses were in general focused on issues and potential issues. There was a concerned tone to some of the responses with areas such as mental health for teachers and students being covered, as well as certain barriers to communication created by the hybrid model. In addition to these, there is the redefinition of the role of the teacher in a Hybrid Learning context, and which areas this may cover. Classroom management considerations seem to be at the forefront, with areas such as inclusivity in the classroom, teacher talking time, and materials creation all warranting comment.

With the initial and further training of teachers, there are clearly some areas which should be prioritised. Classroom Management, Lesson Planning, and IT Skills should be the focus for any institution wishing to implement Hybrid Learning and ensure that their academic staff are capable of providing quality education in this context. Interestingly, there is little difference

between the initial and the ongoing training stated as required, which is perhaps a reflection of the newness of the model for most people. Teacher feedback on the hybrid context only serves to reinforce the type of support and training needed. There is a desire from some teachers to understand and gain a degree of mastery in this area, while some are quite hesitant to go further into Hybrid Learning. There is an understandable degree of reticence among teachers, especially considering many may have already had to 'become online teachers' in the past 12 months.

D. Respondents who are considering running hybrid courses in the near future.

Almost a quarter of the respondents who took part in this survey (24%) are considering running hybrid learning courses in the near future. This group seems to perceive Hybrid Learning as an extra service worth having as it will allow students to continue to be present even during difficult Covid-19 measures. More than half of them (54%) provided details about their expectations, concerns, technology provision and teacher training. It is unknown why the rest of the participants who belong to this group (46%) skipped these questions but it might be assumed that this was due to uncertainty or reluctance. As a result, any percentages mentioned refer to those who have answered the particular questions.

The following sections look at technology and teacher training perceived needs, teacher and students' feedback as well as anticipated changes with regards to management, student support, timetable and pricing.

Technology provision

Zoom and microphones seem to be the predominant technologies that most participants within this group (79%) will be using to run hybrid learning courses. Extra cameras and smart speakers (a type of speaker and voice command device which integrates with a virtual assistant that performs hands-free actions) are also mentioned. Additional technologies cited include projectors, Google docs, the school or publisher's LMS, digital coursebooks, Teams and Google Meet. However, not much detail was given with regards to how any of these technologies will be used.

Interestingly, a small part of this respondent group (16%) had already tried technology setups in their institutions and provided the following insights, challenges and solutions:

1. Microphones need Bluetooth otherwise there are sound issues; additionally, the online students need to be able to see the students who are physically in the classroom, and the technology provision should cater for this as well.
2. To provide context for remote students, a Zoom connection and two laptops are needed; one facing the whiteboard with a headset attached for the teacher. Another facing the whole room and the physically-present students. However, this solution did not seem to work for another school which is now looking into more sophisticated solutions:

> *We are now looking into using the Owl 360 pro, but with an additional mic. A "Jabra" mic has been suggested to us but we are very concerned about the quality of the audio, given that some learners would be lower level.*

3. There needs to be more guidance with regards to where the camera and microphones should be placed. A camera fixed to the wall and a mic either on a table in front of the students or being passed around did not work in one school because the sound was poor and the teacher had to keep remembering to talk towards the camera, while simultaneously turning their back on the students in the physical classroom. The audio was reported to be of poor quality when headset mics for all the face-to-face students were tried.

Additionally, some concerns about technology costs are raised and whether Hybrid Learning can be applied successfully despite the potential lack of expensive or sophisticated hardware / software solutions.

> *We are technology poor (no IWBs interactive screens) but use projectors and laptops. We are interested in understanding if hybrid is possible without an IWB or similar.*

Teacher training & support

Institutions have not yet implemented teacher training specific to Hybrid Learning and it is not clear whether they will do so before they start offering this option. A significant segment of this respondent group (48%) seem to suggest that teachers' familiarity with remote teaching since the beginning of the pandemic may be a good background for hybrid learning.

> *No actual training yet. All teachers have already been teaching their classes online when the schools closed though and have received some training & done peer observations.*

On the other hand, most participants (81%) seem to believe that ongoing training and academic support will be needed while implementing hybrid learning. Some respondents (38%) state that this can be delivered internally either by more tech-savvy teachers or Directors of Studies. They also refer to peer training and reflection as CPD options e.g. teachers observing one another and reflecting on the experience; and sharing best practice at staff meetings. Some respondents are considering the possibility of seeking external, expert training (25%) while others (19%) believe that IT support will be necessary when hybrid lessons are happening.

Mentoring & conference attendance have been highlighted as developmental options, although it is not clear whether this would be coordinated by the institution or be left to the teachers' own initiative.

> *Teachers can mentor or do buddy research and present to peers. They can attend conferences.*

Supporting teachers by providing the extra materials that remote students may need (e.g. ready-made multimedia) was also thought to be beneficial for the teacher i.e. it will reduce

teachers' workload as they will not have to prepare materials for both modalities (iface-to-face & online learners).

Finally, a small proportion of the respondents (12%) said that they have not thought about teacher training yet because they are currently focusing on resolving other issues.

> *Where to start? Where to stop? Really hard to say as we are still at the tech and academic management testing phase*

Teacher feedback

The institutions which have already communicated their plans to the teachers (71%) have mainly received mixed feedback on the prospect of implementing a Hybrid Learning approach. This, according to the respondents, can be attributed to teachers' perceptions of Hybrid Learning as well as lack of advanced digital skills and competences.

> *There is apprehension that the quality of lessons will suffer as a result.*

> *It's a mixed feedback. Teachers who are not very digitally literate see it as a real challenge.*

Those who received positive feedback from the teachers (21%) believe that this is because the hybrid option will keep the school in business and consequently the teachers in a job.

The remainder of the respondents in this segment (29%) have not explicitly announced their plans to the teachers yet and thus have not received feedback. However, they expect that there will be some resistance from some teachers, and curiosity and willingness to experiment from others.

Changes in student support

A significant majority of this group of respondents (78%) have not yet promoted Hybrid Learning to future students while those who have (22%), report receiving positive feedback about the option. They believe that this will allow students to continue their studies even if they need to self-isolate or social distance.

When asked what changes in student support they are planning in order to facilitate Hybrid Learning, respondents mentioned the following:

- Scheduling one-to-one student meetings with members of the academic team; organising focus groups and regular check-ins
- Providing IT support
- Raising awareness of the rationale behind Hybrid Learning in order to manage expectations
- Providing an asynchronous repository of materials on the school LMS
- Helping students to develop a new set of skills

Students need more self-awareness, time management skills and self-regulation - it might be a good idea to introduce these topics as part of the introduction to a course like this

Interestingly, a proportion of the participants (19%) say that they do not intend to offer any additional support to remote students because the students have already been used to working remotely since the first lockdown and do not see how this will be different. However, they are happy to reconsider should they identify such a need.

We don't think they'll need support in terms of connecting to the lesson (as they're already used to doing lessons online via Zoom) but we will be in regular contact with students and parents, and conducting informal assessment to determine whether or not extra support will be required.

Scheduling changes

More than half of the respondents (53%) do not plan on making scheduling changes specific to Hybrid Learning; they argue that they have already made adjustments to fit the requirements of online teaching (shorter lessons) and hope that going hybrid will not necessitate further ones.

Individual respondents mention the following potential changes:

We need to see whether our current lessons lengths of 80-90 minutes are suitable in a hybrid situation.

1 teacher per group rather than 2-3.

We are open to further scheduling changes based on the student population and pedagogical best practice

Shorter lessons.

Changes in pricing

No pricing differences between learning online and learning in the classroom will be applied in most institutions (62%). This is because:

- The costs to the company are the same.

- Hybrid Learning is a temporary solution for students who are unable to attend for a limited period of time due to illness or quarantine. As a result they will offer the option and leave the students to choose which one suits them better.

However, 34% of the respondents state that there will probably be a difference in fees between those attending in-person and those remotely but that it has not yet been decided how great this difference will be. Institutions will need clear insights into the market and student expectations before they decide on their Hybrid Learning prices even when they already offer lower prices for their remote options.

Currently online learning is priced lower than F2F: we have not agreed a pricing structure for hybrid and need to understand the market and what it is acceptable to learners and agents.

Changes in management

The development of Hybrid Learning will sit with the existing management team for more than half of the respondents (57%) - e.g. DoS, ADOS, Director of Marketing - and therefore no changes in management structure are anticipated or planned. A smaller number (19%) believes that significant changes will need to be made but they are not aware of them yet while an even smaller segment (13%) is considering hiring additional digital learning and ICT support staff.

Models of good practice

The overwhelming majority of the participants (93%) report that they have not identified solid models of good practice yet, and so a model that might address constraints on interaction, facilitation, scaffolding, correction and feedback would help immensely at this stage.

This is new territory (again!) and I would love to learn what others are doing and how we could arrive at a principled consensus on best practice.

However, some sources of useful information and inspiration for the participants have been:

- What other schools in their network are doing at the moment
- Webinars on hybrid learning
- British Council accreditation of online courses with a potential extension to hybrid learning
- Publications and research

Summary and discussion of responses from schools considering implementing Hybrid Learning in the near future

Almost a quarter of the respondents who took part in this survey (24%) are considering running Hybrid Learning courses in the near future. They perceive Hybrid Learning as an extra service worth having as it will allow students to continue to be present even during difficult Covid-19 measures. The analysis of the data captures a state of uncertainty around optimal preparation, technology provision and teacher training as well as mixed feelings about whether Hybrid Learning can be as educationally effective as an either face-to face or remote mode in isolation. These findings are summarised and discussed below:

Most of the respondents had a rough idea about the technology setup (Zoom, microphones, cameras) but seem to have not worked out important details yet - e.g. where the camera would be placed, how sound can be optimised for both physically-present and online students and so on. A similar approach seems to have been followed with regards to teacher training. All the respondents admit that they have not yet implemented teacher training specific to Hybrid Learning and it is not clear whether they will do so <u>before</u> they start offering this mode of learning. However, they seem to agree that teachers will need ongoing support and training <u>while</u> implementing Hybrid Learning mainly in the form of mentoring, peer training and

observations. This seems to suggest that both the technology and teachers' preparation will be closely looked at *in real time* while hybrid classes are running and students are on board. Regarding students, the findings also demonstrate that institutions do not have solid plans about student support but they would like to provide one-to-one meetings, regular check-ins and technology support to those attending remotely.

For most institutions the development of Hybrid Learning will sit with the existing management team and no changes in management structure are anticipated. Similarly, there will be no pricing differences between learning online and learning in the classroom for most institutions, and neither do they plan on making scheduling changes specific to Hybrid Learning. This is because most institutions have already made adjustments to fit the requirements of online teaching (shorter lessons) and hope that going hybrid will not necessitate further ones. It can be assumed however that they will be open to further scheduling changes based on the student population and pedagogical best practice.

The findings show that while most academic managers are in favour of the plans, teachers have mixed feelings about them; their main concerns seem to be a potential drop in the quality of the lessons and a lack of the digital skills required. Even those few who received positive feedback from the teachers believe that it mainly reflects survival needs (institutions will remain in business, teachers will have a job) rather than educational ones.

Finally, the overwhelming majority of the participants report that they have not identified solid models of good practice yet, and so a model that could address constraints on interaction, facilitation, scaffolding, correction and feedback would help immensely at this stage.

Arguably, the state of uncertainty described above may not be surprising for the education sector because innovation is inherently associated with risk and ambiguity. However, venturing into the unknown to set up a completely new instructional approach during a pandemic and testing it in real time with actual participants (students & academic staff) while keeping existing operations running, may entail a higher level of uncertainty and risk. It could be argued that certain anticipated constraints with regards to technological and pedagogical challenges would be eased if the institutions could seek specialised consultation *before* they start delivering Hybrid Learning courses. By doing so, teachers and managers may feel better prepared and informed. At this stage of understanding, however, it can be assumed that part of the reason why institutions may not be able to invest in Hybrid Learning more systematically may be a lack of adequate financial resources.

E. Respondents who are considering experimenting with hybrid courses at some point in the future

Less than a quarter of the survey respondents (21%) are considering the possibility of applying Hybrid Learning at some point in the future but have not committed to solid plans yet. Unlike the previous group in which almost half of the respondents skipped questions, the majority of those who identified themselves in this group answered questions and provided more details about their perceptions and concerns.

Concerns that seem to be holding them back can be categorised into four main areas, namely:

1. Technological concerns and associated costs (57%)
2. Pedagogical concerns (43%)
3. Teacher training (29%)
4. Administrative concerns (10%)

Below is a summary of these concerns along with what information they may need before they proceed to further decisions.

Concerns

1. Technological concerns

- Audio quality or camera issues e.g. remote students will not be able to see or hear well enough
- Expensive hardware
- Getting the right IT set-up
- Tech support for the teacher and the remote students.

Information needed

To address these concerns, they will need further information on the following:

- Step-by-step guidance on how the technology works

I'd love to see it in action, as I can't even picture it. Where does the camera go? Is it with laptops? Can online students interact with live students?

- What technological equipment they will need to invest in e.g. both in terms of hardware and software
- Whether Hybrid Learning is possible with 'cheaper' hardware options or more affordable alternatives to the technology required.

One participant needs to know whether the following set-up will effectively tackle sound and POV (Point of View) issues:

At least 2 cameras should be in use, one towards the board and one towards the class. The lesson contents had better be on a ppt. This will make it easier to share them. Audio should be streamed from the same computer that manages the broadcast, in order to have a crisp sound for remote listeners.

2. Pedagogical concerns

A great number of respondents in this group raised pedagogical concerns mainly related to the potential difficulty for the teacher to manage two different modalities (face-to-face and remote) at the same time. They argue that the pedagogy aimed at facilitating online discussion (e.g. checking the chat feature, waiting for students' responses) will annoy students in class; and the pedagogy aimed at the in-person students (e.g. writing on the white board or calling on a student out of the microphone's range) will annoy the remote students. It is feared that teachers will need to multitask in order to address the needs of both groups and this may affect class dynamics, management, and students' learning.

Difficult! I feel like the teacher will have to divide themselves in two to be able to really teach with integrity.

Worried about how the teacher will manage the students online and in the class at the same time. It seems like it would require a great deal of multitasking and that students' experience would be affected by this.

The difficulty with any "hybrid" approach is that teachers have to simultaneously appeal to two very different groups of students: those who are in-person, and those who are online. At any given time, half the class will feel neglected.

Problems with classroom management, especially for online students missing out on aspects of the class.

How to keep it interactive and communicative for both audiences.

Information needed

To address these concerns, the respondents identified the need for further information on the following:

- Whether it can work successfully i.e. from robust research and practitioners
- Step-by-step guidance on how Hybrid Learning can be properly applied
- Tips and tricks for teachers working with hybrid classes e.g how to adapt classroom procedures to hybrid format; ideas for classroom activities involving both in-person & remote students
- Full practical lessons from successful hybrid courses
- Sample lesson plans
- How a teacher can easily manage running a class online and face-to-face at the same time

3. Teacher training concerns

Because of the nature of the pandemic, respondents seem to believe that there is very little time for piloting or teacher training and thus solutions should be easy to apply especially for less technologically-savvy teachers.

How to make it as simple as possible for non-techy teachers.

Training teachers on the job, considering there is little or no opportunity for experimentation or training. We would be willing to activate dual modality or hybrid immediately if it weren't for this issue.

Information needed

To address these concerns, the respondents would like further information on the following:

- What teacher training specific to Hybrid Learning is needed
- How teachers can make students' learning more straightforward
- How to get teachers on board for another survival challenge

- How managers can support teachers when they are not experienced in this kind of teaching.

4. Administrative concerns

Finally, a proportion of the respondents reported that administrative procedures need to be in place for it to work effectively. These include monitoring who is attending in-person and who online, and administrating large cohorts of students.

> *If the student is self-isolated/ill, they call the office and inform us that they're going to be in Zoom, and we need the process to be organized smoothly.*

> *The numbers of students. We provide compulsory courses and that means students will attend in huge numbers, and right now we are sticking to the online mode.*

Feedback expected

The above concerns are also reflected in the data that the respondents provide with regards to the feedback they expect to receive from teachers and students. Overall, they anticipate that both teachers and students will have mixed feelings about the implementation of Hybrid Learning mainly due to class management, workload and quality of learning. Below are their teacher and student feedback expectations and the reasons cited for these.

Teacher feedback expectations

Most respondents (81%) expect teachers to be resistant to or have mixed feelings about Hybrid Learning solutions - at least at the beginning. They say that teachers may understand the necessity in the time of COVID-19, but they may still find the approach stressful for the following reasons:

- Lack of digital skills and training
- Concerns about managing their classes
- Planning time will increase substantially
- Fear of new approaches
- Too much focus on the technology
- Perception of Hybrid Learning as an ineffective solution for students

> *They will say that classes are hard to manage, especially when it comes to paying equal attention to all students.*

> *Planning must be digital for everyone to benefit, but this is more time consuming than planning for face to face classes.*

> *I think they will find it stressful and that the tech will preoccupy them. I think it will feel like a juggling act. I think a successful lesson will be defined by everything running smoothly, rather than learning objectives being met.*

The remainder of the respondents in this segment (19%) predict that teachers will welcome the change as it will allow their lessons to be more interesting - compared to solely teaching online - and will give them the opportunity to develop new skills and competences. It is pointed out, however, that this positive attitude will necessitate clear guidance.

> *Positive but only if guidelines are clear*

> *Teacher feedback will be good as this form of teaching will enable them to use modern technologies and skills*

Student feedback expectations

Similar concerns are expressed with regards to students' potential feedback. The majority of this group's respondents (80%) seem to agree that students may be happy to be provided with the option but the actual experience will not live up to their expectations. Both physically-present and online students are predicted to complain about the quality of the lesson, technology issues, poor sound as well as the coordination of the two modalities and group dynamics. They are therefore unsure as to whether students will be comfortable with this mode and be happy to pay for it.

> *I worry that online students will feel like observers rather than participants.*

> *I worry that f2f students will feel that the online component is disrupting their lesson.*

> *Students might complain about the audio quality and the lack of POVs [i.e. Points of View].*

> *Tech problems, disparity between online and f2f provision.*

> *They will say that the teacher's attention is split or that it is hard to feel true class integration and dynamics*

> *Online students who bought an online course may be disappointed. Physical students who bought a real course may be ok when attending in person, but disappointed when attending remotely.*

The rest of the respondents (20%) expect that students will welcome the opportunity and see Hybrid Learning as offering the best of both worlds. They point out, however, that this will also depend on the teacher and whether or not she/he can make it work.

> *I think they may feel it is an exciting opportunity. We are currently enrolling students and many feel strongly about wanting a f2f course, whereas others opt for online as the more convenient choice.*

> *I think they will be fine, they've been very flexible and easygoing so far! As long as the teacher can make it work I think they'll support it.*

All in all, this particular group of respondents may see potential in Hybrid Learning but seem to urgently need clear guidelines on how it works in action as well as how potential issues associated with it can be addressed.

I've read what I can, blogs and information online reporting experiences, looked into hardware and software solutions and listened to [provider's name] webinar which seemed to focus more on the advantages rather than addressing potential problems. All of these things can inform a decision but there's nothing like the real thing and trial and error!

We desperately need clear guidelines on hybrid learning, since the cold season is coming and soon more and more students will need hybrid lessons.

Summary and discussion of responses from schools considering implementing Hybrid Learning at some point in the future

Less than a quarter of the respondents (21%) identified themselves as interested in applying hybrid learning at some point in the future but have not committed to solid plans yet. A significant majority of the participants belonging to this group answered all the questions in the survey and the data provided useful insight into the concerns that are holding them back.

A significant proportion of the respondents who belong to this group are concerned about the technology set up and associated costs. They seem to agree that step-by-step guidance is needed on how the hardware and software work to allow for audio / visual quality and interaction between online and physically-present students.

Equally worrying are pedagogical concerns which were raised by a large percentage of this group and seem mainly related to the potential difficulty for the teacher in managing two different modalities (face-to-face and remote) at the same time. They argue that the pedagogy aimed at facilitating online discussion will annoy students in class and vice versa, and fear that teachers will need to multitask in order to address the needs of both groups. Many of them worry that this may affect class dynamics, class management, and students' learning.

These concerns seem to echo specialists warning that without proper planning and preparation (both with regards to the technology and the pedagogy), Hybrid Learning models may result in poorer quality of learning for the student and exhaustion for the teacher.

Poor audio and video quality is distracting and can have a negative impact on a student's learning ability. Likewise, educators need to be seen and heard as naturally as possible – by every student – in order to keep the whole class engaged (Clark, 2020)

Embracing hybrid learning models without proper planning and preparation may leave the teacher juggling, communicating, troubleshooting, monitoring, multitasking and answering questions at the same time with both in-person and remote students [...]. This is NOT hybrid learning, this is madness (Mavridi, 2020, 00.25).

The above concerns are also reflected in the feedback institutions anticipate receiving from teachers and students. In particular, teachers are expected to have mixed feelings about the application of Hybrid Learning mainly due to potential class management issues, the need for multitasking and an increase in workload. They say that teachers may understand the

necessity in the time of COVID-19, but they may still find the approach stressful, particularly if they lack the required digital skills. Similar concerns are expressed with regards to students' potential feedback with the majority of the participants agreeing that students may be happy to be provided with the option but the actual experience will not live up to their expectations. Both in-person and remote students are expected to complain about the quality of the lesson, technology issues, and poor sound quality, as well as the coordination of the two modalities and group dynamics. They are therefore unsure as to whether students will be comfortable with this mode and be happy to pay for it.

Respondents express the need for both research and practical insights (e.g. how it can be properly applied, lessons from successful hybrid courses, activities involving both physically-present & online students etc) in order to make an informed decision. Also, because of the nature of the pandemic, they fear that there is very little time for piloting or teacher training and thus solutions should be easy to apply especially for non-techy teachers.

Arguably, this group would benefit from the experiences of practitioners who have applied hybrid models successfully as this would help them to understand in practical terms how Hybrid Learning works in action; for example, see the panel discussion of Worthington et al (2020) in the references. None of these solutions, however, seem easy to implement without a relatively high standard of technology. Perhaps, more importantly, the teacher seems to need an advanced set of skills and therefore embarking on HL should involve adequate teacher training and support.

F. Respondents who have not yet considered Hybrid Learning as an option

A small proportion of the respondents who took part in the survey (11%) have not considered running Hybrid Learning courses as an option. This group of respondents was asked what information and resources they would like to have available to help them make decisions about whether a Hybrid Learning approach is a viable option for their context.

Key points mentioned were:

- the need to learn from the experiences of schools, teachers and learners who have followed this approach
- a detailed understanding of the technical requirements for setting up and running hybrid courses
- examples of Hybrid Learning lessons
- examples of materials, tools and platforms used
- an understanding of the differences between Hybrid Learning and blended learning, and the feasibility of moving from one to the other.

G. Respondents who have decided not to engage with Hybrid Learning

The final self-selected respondent group was those who answered: "No, have considered and decided against this.", i.e. they have decided against Hybrid Learning as an option for their teaching context.

This was a significantly smaller subset of the total respondents (4%). However, the reasons given for this decision can be categorised into five areas: **Time, Cost, Technology, Training** and **Perception**.

In terms of the **time** factor, respondents commented that the Hybrid Learning approach is a time-bound response to a short-term problem, and that any solution in this area must be introduced rapidly in order to have an impact. The other demands on their time currently preclude allocating the time needed for an effective consideration of this approach.

Cost was also cited as a prohibitive factor, in terms of the technology set-up costs for introducing this into the physical classroom environments, and the perception that a low-cost tech solution would undermine any possible benefits of the co-modality experience.

Closely related to this factor is the **technology** involved. Respondents reported confusion over the technology options needed and valued, a lack of technology and pedagogical specialists in this area to help make informed choices, and a lack of confidence in the technology available and its effectiveness for this mode.

Another note of concern was voiced over the lack of available **teacher-training** in this area – perhaps understandable given its relative novelty in the language education sector – and the perceived value of self-directed training which current teaching teams would have to undertake: a sense of 'the blind leading the blind'.

Finally, there was a sense of general confusion around the **perceived** benefits in this area, and the feeling that any experimentation would be at clients' expense. One respondent summarised this as follows: "Why do live online when it can be in-person? Use online for what it's good at; use in-person for what it's good at. Maximise the benefits."

H. Conclusion

The breadth and depth of responses to the survey, in the geographical and qualitative perspectives, offer a snapshot of the instances of, and attitudes to, Hybrid Learning among language teaching organisations in September - October 2020, six months after the COVID-19 pandemic forced most teaching organisations to move learning online, and the continued restrictions and limitations which persist at the time of writing.

The data presented, and the summaries in the three main sections, demonstrate that there are similar concerns and attitudinal perspectives from those who had already begun implementing Hybrid Learning and those preparing to, or considering doing so. More concerns were expressed from the teachers' perspective, than the student or management perspective, reflecting perhaps where the weight of responsibility for Hybrid Learning lies in its current

iterations. There is a clear need for models of best practice on the pedagogical side, andoptimal solutions on the technological side, to be developed, tested and shared, and there was little evidence of a greater abundance of these among the early-adopters compared to those considering the approach.

Of course, this is a self-selecting sample and a snapshot at a particular moment in time. Although we have worked hard to analyse and present the results rapidly, we fully acknowledge that attitudes and practices will have developed in the interim, and this is a constantly moving picture, driven by students, teachers, directors, agents, and owners, all against the backdrop of hoped-for developments in vaccines allowing a return to classroom-based teaching.

The continued instances and adoptions of Hybrid Learning models in language teaching organisations will be influenced by the successes and failures observed by all the above stakeholders, and clearly the more formal evidence-based research needs to catch up with the rapid changes of the past six months.

Clearly missing from our survey are the voices of learners in their own words, and this should be a particular feature of future research. However, we hope that this survey and its findings will be of use to all those engaging with Hybrid Learning, and an early step in the necessary sharing of experiences, ideas and innovations in this area among our educational community.

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British Council & IATEFL plenary session, 4 October 2020

The hybrid classroom. Dilemmas, choices and solutions

Speaker: Sophia Mavridi

The lessons learnt during the first phases of Covid-19 have provided school systems with the opportunity to proactively plan and design the next phases. One of the most promising scenarios is moving to a hybrid-learning model which, in general terms, aims to combine face-to-face and remote tuition into a coherent whole. What will the implications be for the teacher and the student? How can we plan and prepare for the hybrid classroom? Informed by digital learning pedagogies, this session looks at effective and practical ways of planning and integrating hybrid-learning models in language education.

Recording https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/hybrid-classroom-dilemmas-choices-solutions

English Australia panel discussion, 24 November 2020

Hybrid teaching insights

Panelists: Lucy Worthington (DoS), Meaveen Sullivan (Senior Teacher) Clare McGrath (ELT Consultant)

This panel session is all about dual delivery teaching (Hybrid or HyFlex delivery), where some students attend a class in person while others do so virtually. Panellists talk about their experiences and advice on delivering hybrid classes and describe in practical terms what they have learned about technical set up, delivery and student inclusion.

Recording https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1egYBmlfHg

About the authors

Sophia Mavridi

Sophia Mavridi is a Digital Learning Specialist and Lecturer in English Language Teaching at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. Her research focuses on online learning and the increasingly important role of digital literacies in language education. She has trained for major organisations around the world and her latest co-edited books are 'English for 21st Century Skills' (Express Publishing, 2020) and 'Digital Innovations and Research in Language Learning' (IATEFL, 2020), both of which reflect her keen interest in innovative pedagogies in language education.

Thom Kiddle

Thom Kiddle is Director at Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), Vice Chair of Eaquals, and a founding director of AQUEDUTO (The Association for Quality Education and Training Online). He has worked in language education for 25 years, and in online teacher education since 2010. His recent publications include *Monitoring and Evaluating the Quality of Online TESOL Teacher Education Courses: Ensuring Quality Assurance Standards*, in Quality in TESOL and Teacher Education (2019), Routledge ESL & Applied Linguistics Series; and *Digital and online approaches to language teacher education* in the Routledge Handbook of English Language Teacher Education (2019).

Chris Farrell

Chris Farrell is the Head of Training and Development with the Centre of English Studies group. He is the course coordinator CES Direct Learning, which focuses on the creation and delivery of tutored online teaching and training courses. He chairs the English UK Teacher Development advisory group and is a guest lecturer at University College Dublin. He is the founder and supervisor of the Irish Research Scheme for Teaching and a committee member with TDSIG. He is a member of the IALC Hybrid Learning working group and a course tutor with NILE. He regularly speaks at academic events on behalf of both CES and Eaquals.

John Glew-O'Leary

John Glew-O'Leary has been involved in language teaching since 2007 and has managed schools in The UK and China. Currently, he is principal and a director at IH Manchester, where he has worked since 2011. At IH Manchester he oversees the academic department including teacher training and development, and course creation and in recent months has helped implement new online and hybrid provision. He has spoken at events for English UK and IH World.

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