

## ELT in New Normal Era: A Case Study of Select English Language Teachers of Purulia

**Ramanth Mahato**

Ph.D Research Scholar

Department of English

Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University

Purulia, W.B.

### Abstract

In 2019, the globe once again suffered a pandemic, which had a significant influence on people's lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused profound changes in all facets of life. Even the education system is shaken by it. Online education has replaced the offline learning. But following the pandemic, there are still signs of the educational paradigm shifts. ELT has witnessed an unusual phenomenon in the new normal period. More or less, instructional strategies, tactics, and resources have shifted. Ten English teachers from different colleges in Purulia, West Bengal, were questioned by the researcher to gain insight into that situation. A questionnaire with ten questions was handed to them. Offline mode was used for the interview. The outcome showed that there has been a change in how English is taught and learned in and outside of the classroom. The instructional materials are transformed from hard copies to soft versions. Reading habits also saw a noticeable alteration. The way that was taught also altered in some way. ICT trespassed into every classroom. Internet and mobile phone use are crucial to the teaching and learning process. It is reasonable to infer that researchers should consider novel teaching and learning methods for ELT.

**Key Words:** Covid-19 Pandemic, ELT, Classroom, Teachers, Students, Teaching and Learning process

### Introduction

Education like all other sectors is an important pillar of any nation. It is a necessary part to contribute in any nation building. It is a basic need for every human being and should be free as well as compulsory to all. Education helps us to break all the norms and taboos of society which plays the role of a barrier to lead our life independently. As Tagore says "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high/ where knowledge is free..." (Tagore, 2015), poet wrote these lines in the backdrop of Indian independence to aware the

people about the glory of the independence of India. Education can enlighten people, liberates human being, brings consciousness of freedom, so mind will be without fear, head will hold high and knowledge and reason can overpower. So, in any circumstances every child should be educated in a conventional way or unconventionally. Whatever happens pupil should take education. Since Covid-19 pandemic outbreaks, it affected almost all aspects of life, educational field also not remain untouched. Undoubtedly, like all other countries Indian government also took some necessary steps to face this frightening situation in which normal way of life has been locked down, schools, colleges, markets, offices have been suspended, daily life of the people has been regulated to maintain distance with each other. A new way of life adopted with sanitizer, face mask and social distance. This way of life became a new normal. Now, People is habituated with this kind of life. However, in the educational field physical teaching and learning process has been halted and shifted to virtual classroom. Electronic gadgets, media, applications and internet became prominent source of teaching and learning activities.

Learning a language is as essential as wings to a bird may it be acquired naturally or learned with conscious effort. As researchers pointed out SLA require a deliberate effort, proper exposure etc. and in India it is available only in the classroom. There are teachers who have to constantly help students to learn and to be proficient in acquiring English as second language in and outside the classroom. Except the metropolitan cities like Delhi and Kolkata where child acquired naturally more than two languages simultaneously. And this process of teaching and learning of English language was moving forward considerably in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in India. But Covid-19 pandemic came as a speed breaker in the teaching and learning process. Though, it shifted to virtual classroom, is it able to do with the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing) that question remained doubtful. The researcher tries to find out the alteration occurred during and after the Covid-19 and the issues regarding the methods, methodologies, teaching materials, attitude of reading habits of students, the intervention of ICT and others. In order to do this, he interviewed ten English teachers from different colleges and the result revealed that all in all an unusual phenomenon came into light that there is a slight change in teaching and learning activities, intrusion of ICT which leads to student centric education, teaching materials turns into soft copies from hard copies

which is democratic in nature, issues of changing reading habits which effects in cognitive process and others.

### **Literature Review**

During and after the Covid – 19 pandemic there is a considerable bulk of research has been done on the issues regarding English Language Teaching faced in the new normal era.

Husain, Kofia, et.al. (2020) in their study “parent’s perception on implementing e-learning during new normal era at rural school” found focused on the parent’s perception on implementing e-learning during new normal era at rural school. The researchers used qualitative research design with thirteen items open ended questions. The number of interviewees were twenty parents of those students who study at SMP Cucumare school. The data was analyzed through descriptive mode. The result revealed that there were mixed opinions to the usage of e-learning during Covid-19 pandemic era.

Ryn and Sandaran (2020) in their article “Teacher’s practices and perceptions of the use of ICT in ELT classroom in the pre-Covid-19 pandemic era and suggestions for the new normal” found concentrated on the teacher’s practices and perceptions regarding the usefulness of ICT in ELT classroom in the pre-Covid-19 period and the new normal era. The researchers used sixty items questionnaire to collect the data. They selected eighteen teachers from a premier school. The result found that lack of literacy in using ICT is obstacle in implementing ICT in ELT classroom.

Hidayah and Prihantoro (2022) in their study “ICT based learning in new normal era: viewed from practice and impact in ELT classroom” found focused on the practice and impact of ICT based learning in new normal era. The respondents were eleven ELT teachers from the State Islamic Institute of Curup. The data was collected through mixed methods like questionnaires, observations and interviews. The result revealed that ICT is beneficial in ELT classroom for Lesson Plan, Teaching-Learning Materials giving feedback as well as in the assessment process.

Rahmawati (2021) in his study “Challenges of using Technologies in teaching and learning process of Maritime English Studies in New Normal Era.” Found inquired to know the problems facing in using technologies on teaching learning process of Maritime English

Institute. The researcher adopted a case study method to know the struggle faced by the teachers of Maritime English Institute. She used Google Form to collect the data. The result revealed that economy, internet connectivity, intervention of the social life was the main hindrance behind it.

Aprianai, Supardan and Umami (2020) in their research “Independent learning: English teacher’s problem in designing a good lesson plan in new normal era at MAN Rejang Lebong” found focused on the problem faced by the ELT teachers in preparing good lesson plan at MAN Rejang Lebong. The data was collected through interview of two English teachers MAN Rejang Lebong. The result revealed that there are many issues like limited time, lack of method, strategies to prepare good lesson plan in new normal era.

Bawawa, Leba (2021) in their study “Teaching method used by English teachers during Covid-19 pandemic and new normal era” found as the use of teaching methods used by English teachers of senior high school district Merauke. A qualitative descriptive method was adopted by the researcher to analyze the data. The result revealed that Blended Mode of learning is beneficial for English teachers and students during Covid-19 pandemic and the new normal era.

Nashir and Laili (2021) in the study “Hybrid learning as an effective learning solution on intensive English program in the new normal era” found focused on the effectiveness of hybrid learning as an alternative intensive English program in the new normal era. They used qualitative descriptive method. The number of samples were 113 students who were selected purposively. They used observation and interview technique as the tool for data collection. The result revealed that hybrid learning is more effective than fully online and offline learning.

Sirait, Harahap, et. al. (2021) in their article “The use of YouTube based interactive learning media in learning English in the new normal era” tried to focus on the usefulness of YouTube based interactive learning in the new normal era. The researchers used interview and observation method to collect the data. They selected 7<sup>th</sup> semester students as sample. The outcome was of mixed views in which there was positive and negative sentiments towards it but it also revealed that YouTube can be an alternative tool to learn English.

Suryana, Hidantikarnillah, et. al. (2021) in their investigation “A narrative inquiry of language teachers’ perceptions and experiences in using WhatsApp during new normal post Covid – 19 era” found focused on the perceptions and experiences of language teachers towards the usefulness of WhatsApp as a helpful tool during the new normal post Covid - 19 era. 2 language teachers were selected as sample. The online interview is adopted as data collection tool using Google Form. The findings indicate that WhatsApp is an effective learning media during the post Covid – 19 era.

Maru, Pikirang, et al. (2021) in their research work “The integration of ICT in ELT practices: the study on teachers’ perspective in new normal era” found investigated on the integration of ICT in ELT practices in new normal era. A mixed method was employed to collect the data. 32 EFL teachers were selected as sample with 33 items of questionnaires. The result showed that there is a positive effectiveness of the integration of ICT but lack of literacy, infrastructure, motivation was the barrier behind it.

## Methodology

This study is a qualitative one that aims to describe and analyze the phenomena. The researcher seeks to find the changes and issues in English Language Teaching during and after the Covid – 19 pandemics in the new normal era. In order to do this, he adopted case study method. “A case study is an in-depth study of a single unit such as one individual, one group, one organization, one program, and so on.” (Ary, 2002, p. 27) The respondents were given ten items of questionnaire in order find the phenomena. The interview was held physically. The data is analyzed through descriptive method.

## Results and Discussion

The researcher inquired to know whether there are any changes happened in the teaching and learning process during and after the Covid-19 period. The respondents gave similar statements that there is a change in teaching and learning process due to the impending fear of coming another wave, locking down the schools and a discontinuity in physical mode of learning. After that, the research person asked the participants regarding the motivation of students in and outside the classroom. They answered somehow motivation is lacking behind as poor attendance in physical classroom, less affective teacher-student interaction and detachment among the students and peers. One of the respondents mentioned about the classroom environment that it is somehow being poor due to the absence of proper communication among the students thus the relationship among them became dysfunctional. Majority of the interviewee emphasized on the fact that the job scenario is one of the major hindrances behind lacking motivation. The students are taking it for granted that the degree he or she is pursuing is of no work, a mere certificate of eligibility; then why should any students ensnared himself in the bulk of literature and theory. Better he can prepare for other competitive examination which will provide them a better job opportunity and a secure future. Then, the investigator wanted to know the need of alternative methods, strategies, methodologies to cope up with this situation. Some of the interviewees agreed on that fact there is needed some novel, experimental, context sensitive methods, methodologies, and strategies to deal with the issues raised in the new normal era. But some of the interviewees remained neutral in that question and opined that they didn't follow any method. They further added that in such rural colleges they have not proper classroom environment, infrastructure

to follow method. Students usually do not come regularly as they totally dependent on private tuition. One of the interviewees emphasized on the need of the pedagogy that should be local, context specific and student centric. He also says the techniques of rural and urban English Language Teaching classroom should be different, otherwise the development of all the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) would not be possible. Next the researcher wanted to know whether online platform like Zoom, Google Meet, Webinar can be a good subsidiary for a real-life classroom and seminar. The respondents gave mixed views regarding the question. Many of them strongly denied or opposed the online method to be a good subsidiary for the real-life classroom. Though many of the participants shows a negative perception about this online method but they agreed on the fact that this method was the most applicable and unavoidable one during the lockdown period. All of the respondents said that the Blended mode of learning is appropriate for the teaching and learning process and it should be there, so that any student who couldn't attend the classroom or seminar they also can access it through the online mode later. The participants also agreed regarding the usage of the Blended mode in the classroom that is more effective for the teaching and learning outcome among the students. But the problem lies in the unavailability of proper infrastructure in the institutions. It is not the only problem which creates a barrier to access the Blended mode, there are various difficulties to access it. Like the absence of appropriate technical knowledge regarding the usage of ICT in the classroom, proper internet accessibility, advanced electronic gadget etc. After that the research person asked about the change which is observed in the reading habits among the students during the pandemic. As a reply the respondents states that there is a considerable change is observed in the reading habits of the students. The hardcopy of the book is replaced by the softcopy or the Pdf, Wikis, Kindle, and the other reading applications which are accessible from internet in a paid or free website. It is quite helpful for the students as well as the teachers in the teaching and learning process. The e-libraries and the encyclopedias play the role of an alternative to the physical school and college libraries. Five of the respondents also added that this reading habit is not promising because it usually diverts the concentration of the reader through various kind of disturbance, like the notifications, messages, screen light and also the phone calls. The most unexpected reply received from two of the participants that is regarding the cognitive process while reading virtually on the screen of the electronic gadgets impacts negatively on the

readers. This case is not only applicable for the students but the teachers also facing the same problem. Later, when the researcher wanted to know about the role of ICT in ELT classroom there also came a mixed opinion. They opined that in some cases ICT is helpful like the use of projector with power point presentation during the class, preparing lesson plan, Teaching-Learning Materials, sharing of the softcopy of the textbooks, handouts, Pdf notes and so on. The most important outcome from the usage of ICT in English Language Teaching is organizing and participating in national and as well as the international webinars and the lectures of the renowned persona as well as institutes. It became possible to get an easy access in those meetings through the use of ICT in the classroom. They also gave a few negative views regarding the usage of ICT in the classroom. All of them agreed on the fact that the concentration power has been decreased gradually through the use of ICT. Not only the concentration power of the students has been decreased gradually but they also adopted some bad habits while using the internet. In the through going discussion with the participants about all these above-mentioned issues the researcher pointed out the question of changing assessment/evaluation process during the Covid – 19 pandemics. Almost all of the respondents gave negative views of the evaluation process of online examination, they also remarked that the process of evaluation is not the appropriate one because through this assessment the examiner cannot evaluate the students properly. In this process of evaluation, the examiner cannot differentiate the students because the students are copying the answers from internet, books and other available sources and sharing it among them during the examination. Ironically the examiners are also committed to give marks according to their answer sheets. So, the purpose of the evaluation process remains futile. But in the new normal era the revival of offline examination the changing scenario is dying and the so-called right kind of evaluation process is returning. To the question about the difficulties faced during the preparation of lesson plan, the participants proposed that they faced some problems while preparing lesson plan for the students because the current situation is new to all, there is not a proper method, methodologies, strategies, techniques to follow. The participants are attempting to touch the problem but all the efforts are in vain. Last but not the least the question regarding the changing scenario of teaching materials. The teaching materials in that period which were quite new to that context were primarily interesting to the students such as the softcopies of the books and notes. These things gradually become easily



accessible to the students through internet and other new medias. But the problem is, as it can be accessed easily, the students developed a delayed response to access it and it is stored in their electronics gadget as a heap of broken images and not of any use.

## Conclusion

Based on the above discussion it can be concluded that during and after the Covid-19 pandemic the new normal situation may revive the other spheres of life but the loss in the field of education is pathetic along with other social, health and economic sectors. The seriousness of teaching and learning is deteriorating, motivations are lacking behind, teaching-learning materials is subverting, evaluation/assessment process is shaking and ICT in English Language Teaching is overpowering in the new normal era. Furthermore, based on the result of the study, Blended mode of learning came into posterity as it is beneficial for students and teachers both. In suggestion some appropriate methods, methodologies, strategies, techniques should apply in the classroom so that the teachers could cope with this alternative situation of teaching. The problem of cognitive process during the reading of texts in an electronic gadget should also pay heed. Therefore, further scope for the next researchers, they can deal with the role of ICT in ELT, student's problem regarding the motivation, methods, methodologies, strategies, assessment, reading and writing habits of students.

## References

- Apriani, E., Supardan, D., & Umami, M. (2020, November). Independent Learning: English Teachers' Problems in Designing a Good Lesson Plan in New Normal Era at MAN Rejang Lebong. In International Conference on the Teaching English and Literature (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 72-78).
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Irvine, C. K. S., & Walker, D. (2018). *Introduction to research in education*. Cengage Learning.
- Bawawa, M., Leba, S. M. R., & Uspayanti, R. (2021). Teaching method used by english teachers during Covid-19 pandemic and new normal era. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 8(2), 384-389. <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.302>
- Hidayah, J., & Prihantoro, P. (2022). ICT-Based Learning in New Normal Era: Viewed from Practice and Impact in ELT Classroom. *ENGLISH FRANCA: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 6(1), 37-64. 10.29240/ef.v6i1.4116

- Husain, B., Kofia, M. I., Basri, M., & Mahmud, N. (2020). PARENTS' PERCEPTION ON IMPLEMENTING E-LEARNING DURING NEW NORMAL ERA AT RURAL SCHOOL. *Jurnal IKA PGSD (Ikatan Alumni PGSD) UNARS*, 8(2), 429-439. <https://doi.org/10.36841/pgsdunars.v8i2.845>
- Maru, M. G., Pikirang, C. C., Ratu, D. M., & Tuna, J. R. (2021). The Integration of ICT in ELT Practices: The Study on Teachers' Perspective in New Normal Era. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 15(22), 44-67. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v15i22.25533>
- Nashir, M., & Laili, R. N. (2021). Hybrid Learning as an Effective Learning Solution on Intensive English Program in the New Normal Era. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 9(2), 220232. [10.24256/ideas.v9i2.2253](https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v9i2.2253)
- Rahmawati, Y. (2021, April). Challenges of Using Technologies in Teaching and Learning Process of Maritime English Studies in New Normal Era. In *English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings* (Vol. 4, pp. 11-15).
- Ryn, A. S., & Sandaran, S. C. (2020). Teachers' practices and perceptions of the use of ICT in ELT classrooms in the pre-Covid 19 pandemic era and suggestions for the 'new normal'. *LSP International Journal*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.11113/lspi.v7n1.100>
- Sirait, D., Harahap, Y. S., & Handayani, A. T. (2021). The use of youtube-based interactive learning media in learning English in the new normal era. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejel.v6i4.3703>
- Suryana, I., Hidantikarnillah, V., & Murwantono, D. (2021). A narrative inquiry of language teachers' perceptions and experiences in using WhatsApp during New Normal Post-Covid-19 era. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*, 6(1), 55-70. [10.30659/e.6.1.55-70](https://doi.org/10.30659/e.6.1.55-70)
- Tagore, R. (2015). Gitanjali. In *Voices of South Asia* (pp. 128-143). Routledge.