



การสอนทางไกลในสถานการณ์ฉุกเฉินสำหรับหลักสูตรที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบเข้มข้นในโรงเรียนไทย:

ความรู้ที่ได้จากการศึกษาครั้งนี้

Joseph Serrani¹

Alexander Chabot Nanni²

บทคัดย่อ

ในช่วงไม่กี่ทศวรรษที่ผ่านมาไม่เคยมีเหตุการณ์ใดที่ส่งผลกระทบไปทั่วทั้งโลกได้เท่ากับปรากฏการณ์โรคระบาด COVID-19 เหตุการณ์โรคระบาดครั้งนี้ส่งผลกระทบเป็นวงกว้างและมีหลาย ๆ กรณีที่กลายเป็นเรื่องราวใหญ่โตเกินความเป็นจริง โดยหนึ่งในนั้นก็คือ เรื่องการศึกษา การระบาดของ COVID-19 ทำให้สถานศึกษาหลาย ๆ แห่งจำเป็นต้องจัดการเรียนการสอนเป็นแบบออนไลน์แทบจะในทันทีทันใด ทั้งครูและนักเรียนจำเป็นต้องปรับตารางเวลาในชีวิตประจำวันของตนเองและปรับวิธีการเรียนการสอนใหม่เพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับสถานการณ์

รายงานฉบับนี้เป็นการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลที่เกิดขึ้นจริงในการเรียนการสอนของหลักสูตรที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบเข้มข้นในมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศไทยในช่วงที่เกิดการระบาดของ COVID-19 โดยเป็นการศึกษาวิเคราะห์ตามแนวทางการสอนทางไกลในสถานการณ์ฉุกเฉินหรือ Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) รายงานฉบับนี้ถือเป็นการแบ่งปันความรู้ที่เกิดจากการจัดการเรียนการสอนจริง ๆ ตามหลัก ERT รายงานฉบับนี้กล่าวถึงการแบ่งเนื้อหาที่ต้องเรียนเป็นหน่วยเล็ก ๆ การประเมินแบบต่อเนื่อง การปรับการจัดการด้านความปลอดภัยในการประเมิน การสร้างชุมชนการเรียนรู้ทางออนไลน์ เนื้อหาในรายงานฉบับนี้อาจเป็นประโยชน์ต่อทั้งบุคลากรในระบบการสอนทางไกลในสถานการณ์ฉุกเฉินและนักวิชาการท่านอื่น ๆ ที่ต้องการพัฒนาวิธีการสอนของตนเอง

คำสำคัญ: การสอนทางไกลในสถานการณ์ฉุกเฉิน (Emergency Remote Teaching; ERT) การเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ (English Language Teaching; ELT) หลักสูตรที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษแบบเข้มข้น (Intensive English) ประเทศไทย

¹ Mahidol University International College

² Roger Williams University



Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) in a Thai Intensive English Program: Lessons Learned

Joseph Serrani³

Alexander Chabot Nanni⁴

Abstract

In recent decades, few events can rival the international impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact is far-reaching and in many cases dramatic. Such is the case in education, where many programs were forced to shift to an online mode of teaching and learning on short notice. Of necessity, teachers and students worked to overcome this rupture in their established routines and to establish new approaches to effective education suitable for the situation. This paper documents the experience of one intensive English program at a university in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic and frames the experience in terms of emergency remote teaching (ERT). The paper then shares several practical lessons learned during the program's time in ERT. These lessons relate to the following: chunking, continuous assessment, rethinking assessment security, and building an online learning community. The lessons described in this paper will be of interest not only to English language teaching (ERT) professionals but also to other educators who wish to develop their teaching practice.

Keywords: Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), English Language Teaching (ELT), Intensive English, Thailand

³ Mahidol University International College

⁴ Roger Williams University



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has made a lasting impact on education in many contexts worldwide. Long after the pandemic abates, the impact will still be felt. Of necessity, educators in various contexts found their programs suddenly shifted online in order to provide continuity of education to their students. This sudden shift led to experimentation with new tools, new teaching methods, and new approaches to assessment. As communities, economies, and education systems begin to rebuild, there are undoubtedly some useful lessons that can be drawn from this experience. Some of the innovations from the time of the pandemic can undoubtedly be incorporated into educators’ teaching practice, even after the situation stabilizes into a “new normal.” Documenting and sharing these lessons should be a priority in the months and years to come.

The purpose of this paper is to document the ways in which an intensive English program in the English-medium liberal arts program of a major Thai university managed the mandatory and immediate transition to online teaching and learning. The intensive English program typically enrolls around 450 students, though enrollment varies seasonally. The program includes four levels: two levels of general English and two levels of English for academic purposes (EAP). The goal of the program is to prepare students to reach the level of language proficiency required to enter the English-medium bachelor’s programs at the college and to prepare them to thrive in an all-English academic environment. The intensive English program — like the college — keeps class sizes relatively small to facilitate active participation and communication among the students and teachers. Shifting these communicative English classes online during COVID was unprecedented and challenging.

This article shares the lessons learned in an intensive English program during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explains this experience through the lens of emergency remote teaching (ERT)



then outlines several hard-won insights into the management of the program during the pandemic. These lessons are directly applicable to online programs of all kinds, including both language and content courses.

Emergency Remote Teaching

During the pandemic, the concept of emergency remote teaching (ERT) emerged as a useful lens for understanding the type of mandatory, unplanned online education that took place. Hodges et al. (2020) provided a clear definition of ERT that is worth quoting at length:

emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances. It involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face or as blended or hybrid courses and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated. The primary objective in these circumstances is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis. (para. 13)

This definition of ERT includes several key components: it is temporary, for the duration of a crisis; it is a replacement for other modes of delivery — face-to-face or hybrid — that are disrupted by the crisis; and it emphasizes reliability and continuity of education over the reaction of a lasting online program. This definition stands in clear contrast with that of online education, which is better planned, better resourced, voluntary, and designed for longer-term delivery.

Since the onset of the pandemic, ERT has received significant attention in academic literature. The publications on ERT have a huge range, both geographically and in discipline. In the U.S., Aguliera and Nightengale-Lee (2020) documented inequitable practices in K-12 education



that were exacerbated during ERT. Mohmmmed et al. (2020) used the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation model to assess the transition to ERT in the context of an Omani college. Shim and Lee (2020) described the experience of South Korean college students in ERT during COVID-19. In Malaysia, Rahim (2020) published guidelines for online assessment during ERT. Jeffery and Bauer (2020) demonstrated the impact of ERT on undergraduate chemistry courses. These and other studies show the far-reaching and varied implementation of ERT.

A more limited number of publications have focused specifically on aspects of English language education during ERT. In Argentina, Accardo et al. (2020) studied the implementation of comprehensive sex education in English as a foreign language classes during ERT. Amin and Sundari (2020) investigated Indonesian EFL students' preferences for digital platforms during ERT. Huang et al. (2020) researched the experience of first- and second-year students at a Chinese university in their English classes. Writing about the Korean context, Yi and Jang (2020) emphasized the opportunities that ERT provides to “leverage our experience, interest, and knowledge as resources” (p. 5) to improve education despite the challenge presented. In a similar spirit, this article presents some lessons that may be carried forward even after the resolution of the pandemic.

Lessons Learned

Despite the many challenges presented by the crisis and the switch to ERT, the program's curricular goals remained unchanged. Achieving these goals under the significant constraints imposed by the pandemic and ERT required the rapid development, deployment, and eventual assessment and refinement of new methods. This constant experimentation, evaluation, and adjustment, which spanned the duration of ERT in the language program, yielded several insights, the most potentially useful of which are shared below.



Chunking

In online education, teachers may struggle to keep the students engaged. Prior to the transition to ERT, relatively few of the students in the intensive English program had experienced online learning; even fewer had experienced online language learning. Studying from home presented the students with new temptations and new distractions. Teachers suddenly found themselves competing with chat applications, video games, music, videos, and a host of other (primarily digital) temptations. As many students had a secondary tablet, phone, or laptop in addition to the device that they were using for class, restricting access to these temptations — while accomplished easily enough in face-to-face teaching — proved difficult or impossible while teaching online. Further distractions included family, pets, and environmental noise.

One approach to increasing student engagement and consequent learning involves chunking. Rudolph (2017) defines this term as follows: “Chunking the lessons into smaller segments gives the learner the control to focus their attention on aspects of the lesson he or she prefers” (p. 8). In this context, chunking is related to segmenting (e.g., Baldwin & Ching, 2018) and “micro-uniting” (Landin, 2019). While these terms are sometimes used in slightly different ways, the core idea remains: breaking down a lesson into manageable units. Major and Calandrino (2018) define the related term of micro-learning: “any pedagogy encouraging learning in short segments” (p. 2). These concepts have been applied both online and face-to-face, and they are particularly relevant to teaching in ERT.

The intensive English program implemented chunking in several ways during the mandatory transition to online teaching and learning. For example, lectures and activities in the writing courses were segmented to keep students’ attention and to better highlight key points. One common activity in writing courses is peer editing, where students read and comment on each other’s drafts. In the past, teachers would typically go over the guidelines for the activity,



remind students of the aspects of their peers’ writing that they should focus on, and allow students time to comment on the entire draft. Applying chunking to this activity resulted in several much shorter periods of editing. The teacher would give instructions regarding one particular part of the draft, e.g., the introduction, and students would then have a short time to comment on that part of each other’s writing. They would do so in breakout rooms on Zoom, and the teacher would join various groups to answer questions and observe challenges that the students faced. He or she could also monitor the students’ writing in real time in their Google Docs, which they submitted to an assignment in Google Classroom. After each period of editing, the teacher would debrief the students about common issues that he or she had observed then instruct the students on how to proceed with editing the next section of the draft.

Continuous Assessment

In recent years, the concept of continuous assessment has received significant attention in education literature. Continuous assessment de-emphasizes high-stakes summative assessment by providing multiple smaller assessments spaced out throughout an academic term. Each of these low-stakes assessments is an opportunity to provide feedback to learners. This is related to the concept of assessment *for* learning (AfL), the primary goal of which is to provide direction for learners’ development (Author, 2020a). Zhan (2020) explained the benefits of continuous assessment: “mitigating the negative effects of one-off summative assessments such as low learning motivation, cramming, rote memorisation, high examination anxiety and low self-esteem because of its great promise in facilitating student learning” (p. 1055). The assessments may take many forms. For example, Alayafi and Gunduz (2017), advocate the use of learning portfolios as a means of continuous assessment.



One simple but effective means of moving towards continuous assessment that the intensive English program applied during ERT was dividing midterm and final exams into several smaller assessments. For example, the midterm and final vocabulary exams testing the Academic Word List (AWL) were each separated into two smaller exams. Students received feedback after each exam; they would then have the opportunity to improve their knowledge before taking the second exam. Separating high-stakes exams into several lower-stakes assessments had the added advantage of lowering student anxiety. This approach complements the project-based learning (PBL) (Author, 2020b) and other types of continuous assessment that the program practices.

Rethinking Assessment Security

The issue of security during online assessment has been discussed for the past few decades; however, the shift to ERT during the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly increased the stakes associated with the security of online exams. Academics have taken conflicting stances on this issue: some claim that online assessments are prone to being compromised by students' cheating, others claim that the results of online assessment do not differ significantly from the results of face-to-face assessment. Ladyshewsky (2015) analyzed the results of graduate students who had completed multiple-choice tests under two conditions: high-security in-class assessments and unsupervised online assessments. The analysis found no evidence of cheating. In contrast, Fask et al. (2014) did find evidence suggestive of cheating in online testing. The unfair advantage that students might gain from cheating, however, was perhaps mitigated by the disadvantages of online assessment, which include “greater ambient distractions, differences in student comfort, differences in technical problems and differences in the opportunity to solicit clarifications for possible ambiguous exam questions” (p. 111). Fask et al. (2014) concluded that administrators and instructors should take action to prevent student cheating.



Soon after the intensive English programs shifted to ERT, teachers noticed evidence of cheating in online assessments. In several instances, Turnitin.com identified students' essays that had a significant level of similarity; in other cases, students admitted to cheating when teachers questioned them about their identical, incorrect, and highly unlikely answers to test questions. The program needed a solution; however, the solution would be constrained by the available budget and technology. The exam protocols have continued to evolve during the period of ERT. One significant step was the adoption of Exam.net, a secure exam platform, for most graded assessments. Exam.net allows teachers to restrict students' access to the Internet and other programs during exams. For added security, students join a Zoom meeting (using a second device, their phones) during exams. Teachers are then able to watch the students as they complete the exam. The exam security solutions that the program has implemented are a balance of cost, practicality, and effectiveness.

Building an Online Learning Community

The community of learning is central to formal education. The transition to ERT disrupted many learning communities, which consequently needed to be re-established online. Online and offline community-building strategies differ. Arasaratnam-Smith and Northcote (2017) described the “potential unique affordances” (p. 188) of online learning and warned against the temptation to base online community-building on prior offline experience: “It is neither practical nor logical to replicate strategies for fostering community in face-to-face classrooms” (p. 195). This temptation is often difficult to avoid: “Many educational institutions have, however, attempted to re-create the relational dynamics of a physical classroom in an effort to create that sense of community in online classes” (p. 188). Focusing specifically on online communities of teachers, Lantz-Andersson et al. (2018) reviewed twenty years of publications and concluded, “the



continuous growth of teachers' online interaction for professional use reflect a growing sense amongst teachers that these are meaningful and beneficial professional activities” (p. 313). Despite the large number of articles reviewed and the increasing academic interest in this area, questions remain, for example “the extent to which online environments foster a sense of competition amongst participants or a desire to work primarily for the community's mutual benefit as opposed to enhancing one's own individual status and reputation” (p. 313). The existing research on online learning communities does seem to conclude that they are beneficial; however, caveats are also included.

During the period of ERT, the program implemented several approaches to building an online community. A new communication platform, Slack, was adopted, and channels were created for the program admin, general issues, online teaching materials, each level of the program, etc. The program had previously created a Google Site for the teachers of each level and posted useful material; these sites were revised and greatly expanded. A further means of building an online community was a series of best practices workshops organized by the teachers. Teachers took turns delivering short workshops about techniques that they found useful for online language teaching. The speakers for each workshop rotated, and each teacher delivered one workshop over the course of a year.

Discussion: The “New Normal”

The shift to online instruction in the intensive English programs fits Hodges et al.'s (2020) definition: it was temporary, due to a crisis, fully remote (at least in the initial period of the crisis), and intended to be temporary. The objective of the switch to ERT was to provide continuity of education and to be reliable; the intention was not to permanently re-create the language program in an online mode. In adapting to this difficult situation, the intensive English program



developed new ways of organizing lessons, assessing students, delivering exams securely, and building a learning community. As the program prepares to transition back to face-to-face instruction, it is useful to consider how the experience of teaching online in ERT can improve face-to-face teaching and learning.

Aspects of each of the major lessons described above can be applied face-to-face as well as online. Chunking is not dependent on the mode of learning; this can be applied equally well face-to-face as it can be online. Instead of delivering a relatively long lecture then proceeding to a relatively long activity, teachers would do well to split the lecture into several shorter lectures and intersperse short activities. This can enhance student engagement and give the teacher more opportunities to adapt his or her teaching to the students' performance. Continuous assessment in some form will be carried forward. While the practicality of giving several short exams instead of one longer exam is an issue, the idea of providing several lower-stakes assessments and attending to assessment *for* learning can inform other aspects of the curriculum. Teachers' practices of giving more formative feedback are highly beneficial face-to-face as well as online. Some of the lessons learned regarding assessment security are immediately and directly applicable to in-person assessment. Many tools that the program has been using, including Exam.net, were designed for face-to-face usage and function even better in this context than online. In the future, a larger proportion of exams in the center will be typed on a secure platform such as Exam.net rather than handwritten. Multiple-choice quizzes and exams will increasingly be conducted on Exam.net and therefore graded automatically. The online learning community will likely survive in some form after the return to the classroom. Communication tools such as Slack are less vital when teachers physically share an office; however, the practice of sharing materials on websites and conducting best practices workshops has clear benefits. As the center settles into a new normal, the hard-won lessons of ERT should not be forgotten.



Conclusion

This article has shared several concrete and hard-earned lessons gleaned through the implementation of ERT at an intensive English program at a Thai university. These lessons, which include chunking, continuous assessment, rethinking assessment security, and building and strengthening an online learning community, will continue to inform the teaching of the intensive English program post-COVID. It is the authors' hope that the contents of this article will benefit educators in other contexts who are seeking to improve their programs in the wake of COVID-19. The hardship brought on by the pandemic was unavoidable and resulted in adaptation and innovation. Individuals and communities finding their footing in the “new normal” of the post-COVID world can draw on this innovation to better achieve their teaching and learning goals.



References

- Accardo, S. P., & Nuevo, E. C. M. (2020). Comprehensive sexuality education activities in the EFL lesson through emergency remote teaching (ERT). *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 8(2), 8–19.
- Aguliera, E., & Nightengale-Lee, B. (2020). Emergency remote teaching across urban and rural contexts: perspectives on educational equity. *Information and Learning Sciences*. 471–478.
- Alayafi, E.G. & Gunduz, P. (2017). An essential tool for continuous assessment: The learning portfolio. In R. Al-Mahrooqi R., C. Coombe, F. Al-Maamari, & V. Thakur (Eds), *Revisiting EFL assessment* (pp. 237–260). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32601-6_15
- Amin, F. M., & Sundari, H. (2020). EFL students’ preferences on digital platforms during emergency remote teaching: Video Conference, LMS, or Messenger Application?. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 7(2), 362–378.
- Arasaratnam-Smith, L. A., & Northcote, M. (2017). Community in online higher education: Challenges and opportunities. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 15(2), 188–198.
- Baldwin, S. J., & Ching, Y. H. (2019). An online course design checklist: development and users’ perceptions. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 31(1), 156–172.
- Fask, A., Englander, F., & Wang, Z. (2014). Do online exams facilitate cheating? An experiment designed to separate possible cheating from the effect of the online test taking environment. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 12(2), 101-112.



- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *Educause Review*, 27.
<https://medicine.hofstra.edu/pdf/faculty/facdev/facdev-article.pdf>
- Huang, M., Shi, Y., & Yang, X. (2020). Emergency remote teaching of English as a foreign language during COVID-19: Perspectives from a university in China. *IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation*, (15), 400–418.
- Jeffery, K. A., & Bauer, C. F. (2020). Students’ responses to emergency remote online teaching reveal critical factors for all teaching. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 97(9), 2472–2485.
- Ladyshevsky, R. K. (2015). Post-graduate student performance in ‘supervised in-class’ vs. ‘unsupervised online’ multiple choice tests: Implications for cheating and test security. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40(7), 883–897.
- Landin, J. M. (2019). Excellence in Lesson Planning: The Purpose and Use of a Micro-uniting Template. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 19(5), 91–97.
- Lantz-Andersson, A., Lundin, M., & Selwyn, N. (2018). Twenty years of online teacher communities: A systematic review of formally-organized and informally-developed professional learning groups. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 75, 302–315.
- Major, A., & Calandrino, T. (2018). Beyond chunking: Micro-learning secrets for effective online design. *FDLA Journal*, 3(1), 1–5.
- Mohammed, A. O., Khidhir, B. A., Nazeer, A., & Vijayan, V. J. (2020). Emergency remote teaching during Coronavirus pandemic: the current trend and future directive at Middle East College Oman. *Innovative Infrastructure Solutions*, 5(3), 1–11.



- Rahim, A. F. A. (2020). Guidelines for online assessment in emergency remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 12(2). 59–68
- Rudolph, M. (2017). Cognitive theory of multimedia learning. *Journal of Online Higher Education*, 1(2). 1–15.
- Shim, T. E., & Lee, S. Y. (2020). College students’ experience of emergency remote teaching due to COVID-19. *Children and youth services review*, 119, 1–7.
- Yi, Y., & Jang, J. (2020). Envisioning possibilities amid the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications from English language teaching in South Korea. *TESOL Journal*, 11(3). 1–5.
- Zhan, Y. (2020). Motivated or informed? Chinese undergraduates’ beliefs about the functions of continuous assessment in their college English course. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 39(5), 1055–1069.