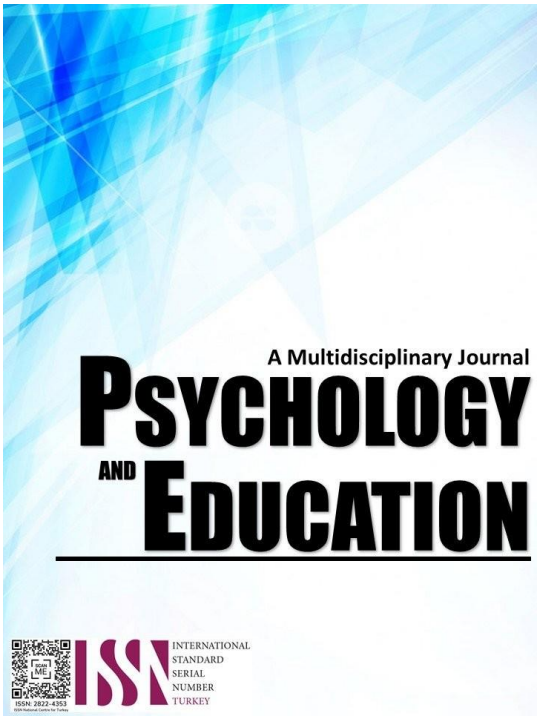
TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE CONTINUING NORMAL: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY



PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 36
Issue 10
Pages: 1121-1131
Document ID: 2025PEMJ3532
DOI: 10.70838/pemj.361006
Manuscript Accepted: 04-10-2025

Psych Educ, 2025, **36**(10): 1121-1131, Document ID:2025PEMJ3532, doi:10.70838/pemj.361006, ISSN 2822-4353
Research Article

Teaching English in the Elementary Schools in the Continuing Normal: A Qualitative Inquiry

Mary B. Aguilar,* Adrian V. Protacio
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

Teaching in the continuing normal presents unique challenges and opportunities for elementary English teachers, shaping their professional practices and personal experiences. This study explored the lived experiences of English teachers in public elementary schools in the East Tacurong cluster, focusing on their sources of joy and fulfillment, challenges, coping mechanisms, and strategies for effective language teaching. Using a qualitative design with thematic analysis, data were collected through face-to-face and online interviews, then transcribed and analyzed. Thematic analysis revealed a total of 17 relevant themes. The findings identified relevant themes that described the teachers' experiences: Positive Attitude and Flexible Attitude Towards Work, Addressing Teaching and Learning Issues, Managing Classroom and Students, Adapting to Tolerable Issues and Challenges, Poor Student's Academic Performance and Behavior, Adjusting to Teaching and Learning Resources and Environment, Providing Differentiated Strategies, Use of Technology in Teaching, Classroom and Students' Condition, Establishing Open Communication, Maximizing Resources for Professional Use, Innovativeness and Time Management, Establishing Support Systems, Effectiveness in Integrating the English Language, Use of Pedagogical Strategies in Teaching English, Teaching Basic Concepts of the English Language, and Teaching English Language as both Challenging and Effective. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of elementary English teachers' experiences in the continuing normal, shedding light on both the fulfillment and the difficulties they face. The findings offer valuable insights for the development of teacher support systems and professional development programs aimed at strengthening teachers' resilience and effectiveness in navigating the complexities of teaching in the continuing normal.

Keywords: *continuing normal, experiences, phenomenology, English teachers*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education in over 150 nations, affecting 1.6 billion students and forcing the rapid adoption of alternative learning modalities (Avazmatova, 2020). In the Philippines, this led to the widespread implementation of blended learning, which integrated face-to-face instruction with technology-based approaches to enhance learning quality (Graham et al., 2017). While this transition increased flexibility, it also presented significant challenges, including inadequate technical support, resource constraints, and disparities in digital access (Robosa et al., 2021).

Teachers played a crucial role in adapting to this new educational landscape, acting as facilitators and mentors while ensuring students' active and real-world learning (Cunningham, 2021). However, many senior educators struggled with technology integration—not due to reluctance but because of insufficient training and digital literacy skills (Pelgrum, 2018).

Additionally, teachers faced difficulties in managing students, handling increased workloads, and coping with stress, which often led to burnout (Robosa et al., 2021). Despite these obstacles, many found fulfillment in fostering relationships and delivering meaningful instruction.

As the education system transitioned into the "continuing normal," blended learning remained a fundamental component, particularly in English instruction.

However, this shift intensified language-related challenges, such as reduced student exposure to English, limited real-time interaction, and widening disparities in proficiency levels (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). The uneven access to digital learning resources further exacerbated these gaps, making effective language instruction more difficult (Manegre & Sabiri, 2020).

While research had explored various aspects of teaching English in blended learning settings, limited literature focused on the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in public schools (Prabawati & Prasetyarini, 2021; Ayu & Pratiwi, 2021; Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). Addressing this gap, the present study examined the challenges, strategies, and needs of educators and learners in the East Cluster of the City Schools Division of Tacurong, providing insights into how blended learning could be optimized in elementary education.

Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the central question: How do elementary teachers describe their lived experiences in teaching elementary pupils in the continuing normal? It also addressed the following sub-questions:

1. Do elementary teachers experience joy and satisfaction in teaching in the continuing normal?
2. What are elementary teachers' challenges, issues, and concerns in the continuing normal?
3. How do elementary teachers cope with the demands of teaching in the continuing normal?

Literature Review

Lived Experiences of Teachers in the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a sudden shift from in-person to distance learning, significantly impacting teachers' roles and instructional methods (Barlovits et al., 2021). In the Philippines, modular learning became the primary approach due to limited internet access (Dangle & Sumaoang, 2020), requiring teachers to adapt quickly despite minimal preparation. Educators faced increased workloads, balancing lesson planning, assessment, and remote support while struggling with technology integration (Garbe et al., 2020; Manire, 2021). To address these challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020), emphasizing modular remote learning (Pator et al., 2022). Tagudando (2021) found that English teachers, in particular, faced difficulties in delivering lessons and maintaining student engagement under the modular system. Despite these hardships, teachers demonstrated resilience, adjusting their strategies to ensure learning continuity while navigating the complexities of the new normal.

English Language Teaching in the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered English language teaching, requiring educators to transition from traditional methods to virtual and modular learning (Pressley et al., 2021). Teachers faced increased stress due to technological demands and instructional challenges, exacerbating pre-existing burnout concerns (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Leech et al., 2020). English instruction adapted through distance learning platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom, enabling continued student engagement despite limitations (Custodio & Raguindin, 2021; Manegre & Sabiri, 2020).

However, barriers such as student motivation, varying proficiency levels, and independent learning challenges persisted (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Educators were tasked with modifying classroom activities, addressing learning gaps, and ensuring meaningful student participation in the evolving educational landscape (Almahrou, 2021).

English Language Teaching in the Elementary Level

English language instructors play a crucial role in teaching the four language skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—while also providing linguistic input in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges, particularly in integrating technology into the curriculum (Califf & Brooks, 2020; Heath & Shine, 2021). Many educators lacked the necessary skills and support, leading to increased stress and difficulty in engaging students effectively (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Sawchuk, 2020).

Additionally, teachers struggled to maintain relationships with students and parents, making communication and feedback more challenging, ultimately putting students at greater risk of academic failure or dropout (Pressley et al., 2021).

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore elementary teachers' lived experiences with blended learning. Through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations, it identified patterns in participants' thoughts and attitudes, aiming to uncover underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations (Lichtman, 2013; Wyse, 2011; Waters, 2016).

Participants

The study involved ten elementary English teachers using blended instruction in the continuing normal. Participants met specific criteria: (a) active English teachers, (b) at least two years of experience, (c) handling Grades 1–6, (d) aged 21–50, and (e) holding permanent status. The sample size followed Creswell's (1998) and Morse's (1994) recommendations, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of teachers' experiences with blended learning, student engagement, and pedagogical adaptations.

Instrument

The researcher designed a researcher-made interview guide based on a thorough literature review. A data collection scheme and objectives-data sets-question matrix ensured alignment with the study's goals. The initial draft underwent adviser review and revisions. A simulation with three non-participant teachers refined clarity and coverage. After final adjustments, the guide was submitted to the adviser and Research Committee for approval.

Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the Schools Superintendent of Tacurong. After approval, a copy was provided to the Cluster Head of East Tacurong, and interview dates were set. To ensure privacy and convenience, interviews were conducted in participants' chosen locations. The study's objectives were explained beforehand, and participants were informed that sessions would be recorded using a cell phone. Key ideas were noted, and the recordings were accurately transcribed with additional notes for clarity.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher strictly followed the SKSU Graduate School's Ethical Review Board guidelines to protect participants from exploitation. Participation was voluntary, with strict confidentiality measures ensuring responses were recorded verbatim and respected as final. Written and verbal consent was obtained, and precautions were taken to prevent harm. Participants were briefed on their rights, encouraged to seek assistance, and assured of transparent sharing of findings. No bias based on gender, nationality, or religion occurred. All sources were properly cited, adhering to intellectual property laws.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the study's results and deliberates the implications of data gathered through an interview guide questionnaire during the interview conducted with the participants. Seventeen (17) relevant themes were articulated through difficult procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from 168 formulated meanings with 148 Initial and 53 clustered themes. The relevant themes are the following:

The Relevant Themes on the Lived Experiences of English Teachers in the Continuing Normal

Relevant Theme 1: Positive Attitude and Flexible Attitude towards Work

The identified relevant themes highlight the sources of joy and fulfillment among English teachers in the continuing normal. These themes encompass positive attitude and resiliency, passion for teaching, self-expression, addressing diverse learners' needs, maintaining a positive outlook, adaptability, fostering a conducive learning environment, and openness to improvement. One teacher shared,"The source of my joy is when I see my pupils reach their milestones, even if it is just little..." (P6). Another noted, "My fulfillment is knowing they are progressing and using the English language more often. They have become bilingual or multilingual just to express themselves, and it is both exciting and challenging" (P7). Teachers also take pride in their impact on students. One affirmed, "I experience joy and satisfaction in teaching in the new normal. I take pride in making a positive impact on young lives, fostering a love for learning, and helping students develop essential skills and knowledge" (P10). Additionally, teachers acknowledge the evolving nature of education and the need to integrate technology. One mentioned, "The changes in terms of educating learners might be a little challenging, but as a teacher, one must be flexible and adapt to change positively" (P7). Despite the difficulties, another emphasized, "Despite the challenges I may face, such as adapting to new technologies or managing diverse learning needs, the rewards of seeing my students learn, grow, and succeed often outweigh the difficulties" (P10).

A positive and flexible attitude is essential for English teachers in today's educational landscape, encompassing resilience, passion, adaptability, and a commitment to diverse learners' needs. Studies highlight that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy and engagement experience greater job satisfaction and improved student outcomes (Wang, 2022; Friberg, 2013). Flexibility in teaching strategies fosters inclusivity, while immediacy behaviors enhance student-teacher relationships, leading to better learning experiences (Seville & S., 2023). Dewey's experiential learning, Vygotsky's social constructivism, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory collectively emphasize the importance of adaptability, real-life learning, and supportive environments in shaping effective teaching practices (Serin, 2023; Zorbaz & Ergene, 2019).

Relevant Theme 2: Addressing Teaching and Learning

The identified relevant themes highlight the challenges and satisfactions English teachers experience in the continuing normal. These themes include adjusting to the application of technologies and approaches, overlapping work and remediation, limited individual learning opportunities and support systems, strong teaching personality, conducive learning environment, classroom setup and behavior, support from parents, honesty, learning resources, workload and classroom influences, and updating teaching development and work balance. One teacher expressed, "Balancing these responsibilities while maintaining a high standard of instruction and learner support can be challenging and draining. Furthermore, the lack of adequate resources and support systems in some educational settings can hinder educators' ability to effectively meet the diverse needs of the learners" (P3). Teachers find greater satisfaction in face-to-face interactions. One stated, "Sometimes I feel like it's not worth the work of giving them module because I know they are not the one answering it, I'm happy now because we are back in face-to-face classes and I can teach them well daily, I'm satisfied when I can see them in actual, I have trust issues" (P7). The ability to adapt to challenges significantly influences teacher satisfaction. One teacher emphasized, "The extent of satisfaction or dissatisfaction often centers on teachers' adaptability, the level of support received, and their ability to foster effective learning despite the challenges posed by remote or hybrid teaching models" (P10).

Addressing contemporary teaching and learning challenges requires educators to navigate technological advancements, workload overlaps, and the need for inclusive learning environments. Teachers must adapt to digital tools, as seen in the rapid shift to online learning (Dhawan, 2020), while balancing instructional duties with remediation, which can lead to burnout (Kiremitçi et al., 2023). Creating a supportive learning environment, reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, enhances student engagement and inclusivity (Mafezoni et al., 2024). Professional development is crucial for maintaining effective pedagogy and job satisfaction (Tagadiad et al., 2024). Social Constructivism, particularly Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, underscores the importance of collaboration in addressing these educational challenges.

Relevant Themes Describing Elementary English Teachers' Challenges, Issues, and Concerns in the Continuing Normal

Relevant Theme 3: Managing Classroom and Student

In the evolving landscape of education, English teachers navigate numerous challenges related to managing classrooms and students. These challenges stem from larger class sizes, administrative tasks, expectations for accountability and assessment, and the need for effective student engagement and classroom management. Additionally, teachers must provide learning and reading assistance for non-readers while integrating technology into their instruction. According to one teacher: "Increasing demands on teachers, includi ng larger class sizes, administrative tasks, and expectations for accountability and assessment, can sometimes detract from the joy of teaching. Furthermore, the lack of adequate resources and support systems in some educational settings can hinder educators' ability to effectively meet the diverse needs of the learners" (P2). Another teacher highlighted the challenges of student engagement and assessment pressures, stating: "In the continuing normal of teaching, I faced challenges like classroom management, student engagement, and assessment pressure. To address these, I implemented strategies such as setting clear expectations, using differentiated instruction, and providing positive behavior management" (P9). Adapting to technology has also been a crucial aspect of teaching in the post-pandemic setting. As one teacher shared: "I am navigating a maze of challenges these days. I learn to use new technologies on the fly, trying to keep my young learners engaged from a distance, and figuring out how to tailor my teaching to meet each child's unique needs online" (P10).

English teachers face classroom management challenges due to large class sizes, administrative tasks, accountability pressures, and technology integration. Larger classes limit individualized support, reducing engagement and learning outcomes (Cristo & Ching, 2023; Toth & Csapo, 2022). Administrative duties cut into instructional time, while technology, though beneficial, can also be distracting (Pan, 2023; Denden et al., 2022). Gamified learning boosts engagement but requires proper integration (Sabourin et al., 2013). Positive teacher-student relationships enhance motivation and success (Tannert & Gröschner, 2021). Vygotsky's Social Constructivism highlights social interaction in learning, where peer collaboration and effective technology use improve engagement and classroom control (Amri et al., 2024; Durak & Sarıtepeci, 2017). Clear expectations and strong relationships foster a well-managed learning environment (Küçükakın & Demir, 2021).

Relevant Theme 4: Adapting to Tolerable Issues and Challenges

Elementary English teachers continue to face various challenges, issues, and concerns in the evolving educational landscape. However, many of these challenges are seen as tolerable and manageable. One participant emphasized adaptability and resilience, "I think these challenges are tolerable. The challenges I encountered are common. It only varies on how you handle it" (P6). Some teachers viewed these challenges as opportunities for growth, as one participant shared, "Tolerable. It became a challenge for me. To test my teaching capabilities and challenge myself" (P7). Despite these perspectives, the ability to tolerate and manage challenges varies depending on the support and resources available. One participant highlighted this by stating, "The challenges I face in the continuing normal can be both tolerable and intolerable, depending on the support and resources available" (P10). Another crucial concern raised by teachers is parental involvement, which significantly impacts students' learning experiences. However, another teacher expressed frustration, saying, "It is still tolerable for me because just like what I have said, I couldn't find any strong support from the parents, especially in helping the learners learn how to read and write. But I am still hoping" (P4).

Elementary English teachers face challenges in parental involvement, adaptability, and classroom management. While parental support boosts student achievement, its absence increases teacher stress (Torres, 2023; Noort, 2021). Adaptability is crucial in evolving education, especially online learning (Chen, 2022; Jelínková et al., 2022). Teachers who embrace change improve strategies and student outcomes (Yashima et al., 2016). Professional development and collaboration help address classroom and curriculum challenges (Futch et al., 2016; Li & Li, 2024). Dewey's theory emphasizes experiential learning, reflective practice, and teacher-parent collaboration for inclusive education (Wang, 2024; Herman & Reinke, 2017). Adaptive strategies and ongoing training mitigate issues like large classes and administrative tasks (Pelletier & Brent, 2002), while inquiry-based approaches enhance parental engagement despite socio-economic and cultural barriers (Bakker et al., 2007).

Relevant Theme 5: Poor Student's Academic Performance and Behavior

Elementary English teachers encounter various issues in the continuing normal, particularly concerning poor student academic performance and behavior. Learning gaps in reading comprehension and mathematical abilities, along with increasing demands on teachers, further add to the complexity of the teaching process. One teacher expressed, "Learning gaps of diverse learners in reading comprehension and mathematical abilities, increasing demands on teachers, including larger class sizes, administrative tasks, and expectations for accountability and assessment, can sometimes detract from the joy of teaching" (P2). Language barriers also pose a significant difficulty, making it harder for students to grasp lessons. As one teacher stated, "The very common issue or problem that I encountered was that I cannot proceed to another topic without making sure that my learners have understand my lesson. They are very difficult to teach because like for example my subject is English, I could not teach them using the English language because they are like they are watching Korean" (P4). Another common struggle is absenteeism, which leads to time-consuming remediation efforts. One participant shared, "Absences of the learners, it is really a challenge for me because I keep on doing remediation and it is very time-consuming on my part because we have a lot of things to do and I cannot proceed to the next topic immediately if there are a lot

of learners I missed to teach with" (P5). Disciplinary issues also arise, requiring teachers to reestablish classroom order. As one teacher noted, "I'm challenged to straighten up again the discipline of the pupils. I have to regain my authority. Other challenges like slow readers, late submission, and inactive parents are common every year" (P6).

Poor academic performance and behavior challenges stem from lesson comprehension difficulties, absenteeism, and ineffective classroom management. Struggling students disengage, leading to lower achievement and behavioral issues (Girma et al., 2019). Frequent absences disrupt learning continuity (Zhu et al., 2024; Keshavarzi et al., 2023). Clear expectations and positive reinforcement improve classroom behavior (Reinke et al., 2014; Nagro et al., 2018). Teachers must balance diverse student needs while managing workloads (Broadbent & Poon, 2015). Dewey's experiential learning fosters engagement and comprehension (Silva et al., 2021). Blended learning and reflective practices enhance motivation and understanding (Jones & Chew, 2015; Cortellazzo et al., 2021). An inquiry-based, supportive environment reduces behavioral issues and promotes participation (Chen, 2023).

Relevant Theme 6: Adjusting to Teaching and Learning Resources and Environment

Adjusting to teaching and learning resources, as well as the environment, poses significant challenges for English teachers in the continuing normal. Beyond concerns about students' poor academic performance and behavior, teachers also struggle with limited access to essential resources and an environment that is not always conducive to effective teaching. One major issue is the difficulty in obtaining modules and ensuring stable internet connectivity. As one participant shared, "One of the biggest challenges faced is the issue of getting the module and internet connection" (P1). Additionally, the lack of sufficient resources and support systems affects teachers' ability to cater to diverse learners. "Furthermore, the lack of adequate resources and support systems in some educational settings can hinder educators' ability to effectively meet the diverse needs of the learners" (P2), one teacher expressed. The physical learning environment also presents challenges, particularly concerning classroom conditions. Overcrowding and extreme heat create an uncomfortable setting for both students and teachers. As one participant noted, "At present, the problem is the learning environment. It is too hot for the learners and, of course, for us, teachers. Cramped inside the classroom with a population of 30 or more is not helping at all. Maybe if our classrooms have air-conditioning units, we will all feel comfortable" (P3).

Adjusting to teaching resources is vital for instructional effectiveness and teacher well-being (Chan et al., 2021). Flexibility in modifying strategies based on student needs enhances outcomes (Xu et al., 2021). A supportive educational climate boosts engagement (Maharjan & Shakya, 2020). Digital tools require innovation in teaching methods (Sun, 2023). Vygotsky's Social Constructivism highlights social interactions in adapting to resources. Mobile pedagogy and technology-enhanced learning aid this transition (Yakar et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Machine learning personalizes instruction, while ICT fosters collaboration and growth (Dirin & Saballe, 2022; Wang, 2011).

Relevant Theme 7: Provide Differentiated Strategies

To address the challenges and issues encountered during the continuing normal, elementary English teachers implemented various differentiated strategies to enhance learning outcomes. These strategies were derived from the themes of parental involvement, differentiated instruction, blended learning, the use of a common dialect, clear communication, firm rule enforcement, alternative programs, and continuous training. One crucial approach was engaging parents in their children's education. As one teacher emphasized, "The parents were intensively asked to give time and appreciation to this because it is for the good of the children. In order for them to become proficient in reading, parents are asked to be patient during the times when they are not able to go to school" (P1). Teachers also focused on identifying learning gaps and applying specific interventions to meet the needs of diverse learners. "First, by identifying learning gaps, applying differentiated instruction, implementing targeted interventions, utilizing technology, promoting student engagement, and providing constructive feedback and reflection" (P2), shared one participant. Another strategy widely used was blended learning, which provided a mix of traditional and digital approaches. "Blended learning is the solution given to our leaders. But of course, with proper monitoring of their progress and learning" (P3), noted a teacher. To ensure comprehension, some teachers opted to use the local dialect in instruction. "As what I have said, I use our dialect, the Tagalog, in order for them to understand our lesson" (P4).

Differentiated instruction adapts teaching to students' varying abilities, learning styles, and interests, promoting inclusivity and improved outcomes (Tupiño et al., 2023). Parental involvement fosters a supportive learning environment, enhancing retention and performance (Wantini et al., 2023). Blended learning, combining traditional and online methods, offers flexibility and personalization (Shilvani et al., 2024). Ongoing professional development equips teachers with effective differentiation strategies (Hayden et al., 2023). Grounded in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, differentiated instruction emphasizes collaborative learning and adaptive teaching to enhance engagement (Parsons et al., 2017). Additionally, alternative models like the flipped classroom encourage active learning (Kurniawan et al., 2018).

Relevant Theme 8: Use of Technology in Teaching

The use of technology in teaching emerged as a significant concern among elementary English teachers during the continuing normal. This relevant theme was shaped by various factors, including internet access, the effectiveness of online instruction, limited resources, mental health and well-being, teacher workload, class disruptions, scheduling, classroom setup, student preparedness, and the overall integration of technology into teaching. One participant expressed concerns regarding internet connectivity and the availability of

technological resources, stating, "Concerns over internet connectivity, technology availability, and the effectiveness of online instruction in comparison to traditional classroom instruction may arise" (P1). The transition to digital learning posed challenges, particularly for those who were less familiar with modern technology. As one teacher admitted, "As to my 20 years of experience in teaching, I have difficulty in using the new technology. I have to ask help from the younger ones on how to use it or how this kind of technology helps me in my daily classroom routine, how to make my presentations more interesting and creative enough for my pupils. Limited resources of technology since I don't have my personal laptop to use" (P5). Additionally, some teachers struggled with the broader implications of technology use in the continuing normal setup, including the need to address learning gaps, manage workload, and sustain parental engagement. As one participant shared, "Some concerns that I have encountered about the continuing normal setup are addressing learning loss, successfully integrating technology, managing teacher workload and burnout, and encouraging parental engagement" (P9).

Technology integration in elementary English teaching is reshaping pedagogy, especially post-COVID-19. While it enhances learning, engagement, and communication, effective use requires Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Muslimin et al., 2022). Tools like cloud computing and blended learning boost collaboration (Baojing & Jia-Qi, 2020; Finlay et al., 2022), but barriers include inadequate training, technostress, and generational gaps (Joshi & Nyaupane, 2024; Abas & David, 2019). Professional development is key to overcoming these challenges. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism highlights the role of digital interactions (Jowsey et al., 2020), while blended learning improves engagement (Bayyat, 2020). However, overreliance on technology may weaken foundational skills (Alhumaid, 2019), necessitating a balanced approach.

Relevant Theme 9: Classroom and Students' Condition

The condition of classrooms and students emerged as a significant concern among elementary English teachers during the continuing normal. This relevant theme, which stemmed from the same initial and clustered themes as the use of technology in teaching, highlights the challenges educators faced in adjusting to the evolving learning environment. One participant acknowledged the difficulties of online learning for both teachers and students, stating, "It can be difficult for teachers as well as pupils to learn online, which has become the standard" (P1). Another teacher emphasized broader issues related to accessibility, workload, and external disruptions, explaining, "Yes. Equity and access to resources and technology, mental health and well-being, workload and burnout, and continuous disruption of classes due to societal changes and/or calamity" (P2). The availability of classroom resources also emerged as a pressing concern. However, some educators noted that the primary challenge was not the physical classroom setup but the students' preparedness. One participant reflected, "Actually, I don't have a problem with the classroom setup; the problem is the learners themselves because they are not prepared for this. The past pandemic years felt wasted for their education because they are the clear examples of pandemic babies or learners. Their parents or relatives answered the modules just to make their children's lives easier rather than teaching them what the lesson was about" (P4).

The classroom environment—both physical and psychological—shapes teaching effectiveness and student engagement. Air quality, temperature, and classroom management influence academic performance and well-being (Brink et al., 2020; Wargocki et al., 2020). Effective management fosters self-control, participation, and engagement (Vairamidou & Stravakou, 2019), while supportive environments enhance self-regulation and school identification (Monteiro et al., 2021). Challenges like inadequate resources and hygiene concerns hinder management (Eşiyok et al., 2023), but student involvement boosts engagement (Yikilmaz & Alincak, 2021). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory underscores how these factors shape learning. Emotional support and teacher well-being further contribute to a positive climate (Ruzek et al., 2016).

Relevant Theme 10: Establish Open Communication

Establishing open communication emerged as a crucial strategy among elementary English teachers in addressing the challenges brought by the continuing normal. This theme was derived from thirteen initial themes, emphasizing the importance of maintaining clear and consistent dialogue with parents, adapting to students' learning needs, and fostering both personal and professional growth. One participant highlighted the necessity of maintaining communication to reassure parents and students, stating, "To address these concerns, I just keep lines of communication open with parents and never fail to remind them that these problems are just temporary" (P1).

Another teacher stressed the significance of both parental involvement and increased instructional efforts, explaining, "Keep in touch with the parents and double the effort in teaching learners how to read and write" (P4). Managing workload and encouraging parental engagement were also mentioned as key approaches to overcoming difficulties. A participant shared, "I've prioritized tasks to manage workload and fostered open communication with parents to encourage engagement" (P9).

Open communication among teachers, students, and parents fosters engagement, parental involvement, and collaboration. Regular teacher-parent interactions improve student performance, behavior, and conflict resolution, particularly for students with special needs (Stamatis & Chatzinikola, 2021; Azad et al., 2022). Addressing cultural and language barriers enhances parental participation (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Effective communication also boosts teacher job satisfaction, especially in distance learning (Panagopoulos et al., 2014). Social Constructivism (Vygotsky) highlights collaborative dialogue, while Dewey's Experiential Learning emphasizes communication in education (Schmidt, 2010). Bronfenbrenner's theory reinforces school-family interactions in student development

(Сторчак, 2022).

Relevant Theme 11: Maximization of Resources for Professional Use

In response to the challenges they encountered, elementary English teachers highlighted the importance of maximizing available resources for professional use. This theme emerged alongside the establishment of open communication, underscoring the need for teachers to be resourceful, adaptable, and strategic in their approach to instruction and classroom management. One participant likened a teacher's role to that of a captain guiding a ship, stating, "Diverse learners need wide understanding, so of course, the teacher is the captain of the ship. We have to navigate our learners according to their learning abilities" (P2). Creating an engaging learning environment was another key approach, as one teacher shared, "I connect my room to my pupils. I make sure that there are no boring moments with me as their teacher. I make them happy always so that they don't feel the heat or want to go home immediately. I need to be consistent in my energy, even though I am old—I keep my happy side with me every day" (P5). A more structured approach was shared by another participant, stating, "To address concerns, I've implemented various adjustments. I have diversified resources to ensure equity, incorporated mindfulness practices for mental health support, and provided targeted interventions for learning loss" (P9).

Maximizing resources enhances elementary English teachers' professional growth and instructional quality. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model highlights that personal resources like socioemotional competence boost engagement, while institutional resources support sustainable teaching (Zhou et al., 2024; Saunders, 2020). Dewey's Theory of Experience and Learning emphasizes resource utilization for professional development (O'Hara et al., 2019). Effective resource management fosters teacher growth, and instructional leaders play a key role in ensuring access to essential tools (Figueroa et al., 2019; Afshari, 2022).

Relevant Themes Describing the Coping Mechanisms of Elementary English Teachers in Meeting the Demands of Teaching in the Continuing Normal

Relevant Theme 12: Establish Support System

To navigate the challenges of the continuing normal, elementary English teachers established a support system to help them overcome difficulties in teaching and learning. This support system involves peer collaboration, teamwork, mentorship, and parental involvement, ensuring that educators do not face their challenges alone. One teacher emphasized the importance of staying motivated, saying:

"We have to get ourselves motivated. Get yourself inspired by just thinking of what really our purpose is—to deliver a quality teaching-learning experience" (P2). Another participant highlighted the combination of resilience, adaptability, self-care, and support networks in overcoming challenges (P3). Teachers also relied on mentorship and peer support, as one shared: "I am just enjoying what I have and try to seek help from peers or mentors if needed" (P8). Additionally, collaboration and teamwork were key strategies, as one teacher noted:

"Together with sharing resources and offering support to one another, I also promoted teamwork among colleagues. In order to get parents' support and involvement in the educational process" (P9). Lastly, another teacher simply stated: "...leaning on colleagues for support" (P10).

A strong support system among elementary English teachers fosters professional growth, effective teaching, and student success. Mentorship programs, professional learning communities, and collaborative networks enhance pedagogical skills and teacher retention (Akiri & Dori, 2021). Educational policies and technology-driven platforms further support collaboration and resource access (Papadogıannıs et al., 2023; Beetson et al., 2020). Inclusive education thrives on strong support systems, while teacher well-being impacts job satisfaction and student outcomes (Gu, 2024). Dewey's Theory of Experience and Learning highlights structured collaboration, peer coaching, and lesson study in improving teaching efficacy (Johnston & Tsai, 2018).

Relevant Theme 13: Innovativeness and Time Management

In adapting to the continuing normal, elementary English teachers demonstrated innovativeness and effective time management to ensure high-quality education despite challenges. They implemented various teaching strategies, technological tools, and structured time management techniques to meet the evolving needs of their students. One participant emphasized the importance of diverse teaching methods, stating:

"Promoting an environment of cooperation and ongoing education in addition to the blended learning model, which attempts to give all students, regardless of financial situation, access to high-quality education. Other teaching techniques included self-study modules, radio-based education, television-based training, and online learning" (P10). Another participant highlighted the role of time management, saying:

"I began by giving time management a high priority. This involved creating distinct priorities and effectively allocating duties" (P9). Additionally, embracing technology and self-care were key coping strategies, as one teacher shared: "I cope by embracing new tech tools, crafting engaging lessons, setting clear boundaries, leaning on colleagues for support, and prioritizing self-care to keep going strong amidst the challenges" (P10).

Innovative teaching requires adaptability, supported by conducive school environments and teacher well-being (Munda, 2021; Alagöz

& Canlı, 2024). Job satisfaction, autonomy, and professional development enhance resilience and time management (Chan et al., 2021; Pohan, 2021). However, innovation pressures can lead to burnout without adequate support (Silva et al., 2024). Vygotsky's Social Constructivism underscores collaborative learning, while blended learning and self-regulated strategies optimize engagement and instructional efficiency (Dziuban et al., 2018; Saib et al., 2022). Narrative-based teaching further strengthens student engagement and adaptability (Meißner et al., 2024).

Relevant Theme 14: Effective in Integrating the English Language

Elementary English teachers demonstrated great effort in overcoming the challenges of the continuing normal, and their coping mechanisms proved highly effective in integrating the English language into their teaching. Their strategies ensured not only language acquisition but also an engaging and supportive learning environment for students. The emerging themes highlight their effectiveness in navigating teaching challenges, establishing support systems, incorporating English into the curriculum, implementing interactive activities, and adapting to the evolving educational landscape. One participant emphasized resilience and guidance in teaching English, stating: "…you can navigate the challenges of teaching English with resilience and confidence as you teach the pupils the language that they are not used to in their daily basis, it is very important that you are always there to guide them" (P1). Another participant highlighted the integration of English into different subject areas, saying: "English is taught mostly in a continuous, everyday environment. One method I used to teach English to my students was to integrate English language learning into every area of the curriculum" (P3). The role of consistent practice and translation in English language learning was also underscored:

"Indeed, the importance of having the coping mechanism in teaching the English language is the consistent practice of using it daily and by using it in a sentence and translate it into their mother tongue" (P5). Furthermore, innovative strategies and curriculum-based approaches were essential in reinforcing language learning, as expressed by another teacher: "Of course, it is still based on the curriculum [English], and of course, innovative strategies and methods really make a move on this" (P7).

Elementary English teachers adopt adaptive strategies, emphasizing interactive and learner-centered approaches to enhance engagement and language acquisition. Reducing teacher talk time (Hamad et al., 2021) and promoting student-centered learning (Brush & Saye, 2000) encourage spontaneous English use. Technology integration (Adhikari, 2021) and CLIL (Akumbu & Simo, 2018) support linguistic and subject comprehension. Collaborative learning (Tahrun, 2019) and transdisciplinary teaching (Niu, 2024) address diverse student needs. Rooted in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, these strategies leverage scaffolding and social interaction (Zhang et al., 2020). Visual aids (Ngongo et al., 2022) and songs (Rorintulus & Wuntu, 2023) further enrich language learning.

Relevant Themes Describing the Ways Language Teaching is Conducted in the Continuing Normal

Relevant Theme 15: Use of Pedagogical Strategies in Teaching English

Elementary English teachers employed various pedagogical strategies to enhance language instruction in the continuing normal. Their approaches ensured that students developed language proficiency while maintaining engagement and contextual relevance. This theme emerged from fourteen (14) initial strategies, including the use of the bilingual education policy, MTB-MLE strategy, speaking-based activities, teaching language structure, vocabulary building, integration of technology, contextualized learning, word translation, curriculum-based strategies, multimedia resources, differentiated activities, and online teaching techniques. One participant emphasized the significance of bilingual education and the MTB-MLE strategy in language learning:

"By guaranteeing language fluency in both, this seeks to both preserve cultural history and equip students for global competency. Another is by using the MTB-MLE strategy, which was put into practice and progressively moves from the learner's native tongue to Filipino and finally English" (P1). The role of speaking-based activities in language mastery was also highlighted: "Of course, there are strategies I have applied in teaching English… it is more of speaking. Give situations where they could relate and they could express as to their real-life experience. Let them do the talking, talking, using the language in a way they could practice and express themselves and get perfect the English language" (P2). Innovation and adaptability in instructional strategies were key elements in addressing students' diverse learning needs: "…the adoption of innovative instructional strategies, and a focus on addressing the diverse needs of learners" (P4). Multimedia resources and interactive activities were also instrumental in enhancing learning experiences: "I've used a variety of strategies when teaching English to my pupils in the continuing normal, including multimedia resources for enriched learning experiences, interactive activities to promote engagement, and real-life contexts to enhance relevance" (P9).

The use of pedagogical strategies in teaching English involves diverse methodologies that enhance language acquisition amid evolving educational trends. Elementary teachers employ bilingual education policies, mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), and technology integration to support effective instruction. Engaging teaching strategies cater to varied student needs (Paudel, 2020; Sarzhanova et al., 2022), while technology transforms traditional methods into interactive experiences (Nxumalo & Nxumalo, 2023; Wang, 2023). Bilingual education and MTB-MLE promote comprehension and inclusivity (Mukti & Muljani, 2016; Ağırdağ & Vanlaar, 2016). Differentiated instruction (Ojong, 2023; Reis et al., 2011) and multimedia strategies enhance listening and speaking skills (Zhang et al., 2022; Xu, 2024). Rooted in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, these approaches emphasize social interaction in learning. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) strengthens instructional effectiveness (Voogt et al., 2012), while mobile-assisted language learning and digital engagement boost student participation (Nurmala et al., 2023; Barzani et al., 2021; Adhikari, 2021).

Relevant Theme 16: Teaching Basic Concepts of the English Language

This theme emerged from the same clustered and initial themes as Relevant Theme 15, highlighting the essential role of teaching basic concepts in elementary English instruction during the continuing normal. Teachers emphasized the need to build foundational knowledge in language structure, vocabulary, and language patterns to support students' language acquisition. One participant stressed the importance of mastering language structure before its application: "Learning the language structure then using the language" (P2). Another participant highlighted vocabulary building and language patterns as key strategies for enhancing comprehension and retention: "I like vocabulary building and using language patterns for easy understanding and correlation" (P3). Additionally, incorporating multimedia resources and interactive methods helped address students' diverse learning needs: "You need to go back to the basics, from sounding, etc., using videos in teaching, singing songs, storytelling, one-by-one reading. So that I can cope with the needs of each learner" (P7).

Teaching basic English concepts is crucial for young learners, combining subject expertise with effective pedagogical strategies. Research highlights the need for teacher adaptability, professional development, and pedagogical content knowledge to address diverse student needs. Challenges include teaching speaking skills (Copland et al., 2013) and discrepancies between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices (Mutiah et al., 2020). Vocabulary acquisition (Setiawan et al., 2022) and integrating English with other subjects (Aljiffri, 2010) support a holistic learning approach. Rooted in Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, interactive and student-centered instruction fosters meaningful learning (Sofiana et al., 2022). Empirical studies validate constructivist methods in enhancing language acquisition (Hashmi et al., 2021), emphasizing teacher training aligned with modern language education trends.

Relevant Theme 17: Teaching English Language is both Challenging and Effective

In response to whether teaching the English language is effective or challenging, elementary teachers shared their perspectives, highlighting both the difficulties and successes of language instruction. Their statements generated a relevant theme that recognizes teaching English as both an effective and challenging endeavor. This theme emerged from four initial themes: teaching language is challenging, teaching language is effective, teaching language is satisfying, and teaching language is both effective and challenging. One participant emphasized the complexities of teaching in a diverse classroom: "Yes, teaching language in the continuing normal is more challenging. Why? Because we should be aware that cultural diversity among pupils can create an inclusive learning environment" (P1). Another participant underscored the effectiveness of language instruction in fostering self-expression among students: "I find it effective because we have to let every child express herself or himself. Nowadays, keeping something to yourself without telling anybody could have an impact on anxiety and expression. Let them do the talking… talking in the form of their experiences" (P2). A different perspective highlighted the influence of technology on language learning: "Yes, I think it is more effective. Learners are exposed to different social media platforms, and they are more appreciative of learning languages now more than ever, as compared to before. At the same time, it is challenging due to learning gaps" (P3). Another teacher reflected on the dual nature of teaching English in the continuing normal: "Effective and at the same time challenging. Teaching language in the continuing normal has its ups and downs; it offers flexibility but also brings challenges like keeping students engaged online" (P10).

Teaching English is both challenging and rewarding. Educators navigate diverse proficiency levels, resource constraints, and classroom management issues (Maizarah & Purwanti, 2023; Kusmaryati, 2020). Strategies like Think-Pair-Share and communicative teaching enhance engagement (Elismawati et al., 2021; Nyinondi et al., 2016), while reflective teaching improves effectiveness (Liu, 2017). Social Constructivism (Vygotsky) emphasizes collaboration and adaptability (Wyatt, 2023; Bhandari, 2023). Code-switching and technology foster inclusivity (Mawela & Mahlambi, 2021; Zarei & Fabregas, 2024), making instruction more effective.

Conclusions

This study explored elementary English teachers' experiences, highlighting their fulfillment despite challenges. Their positive attitude, flexibility, and adaptability—particularly in integrating technology—helped them navigate the evolving teaching landscape. However, job satisfaction was influenced by classroom management, student performance, and resource limitations. To cope, teachers employed resilience strategies such as innovation, time management, and professional development. They emphasized differentiated instruction, technology use, and collaborative support networks to enhance learning. Findings underscore the need for adaptable pedagogical strategies, emphasizing foundational English skills while addressing teaching challenges. Schools should provide training, improve resource allocation, and foster professional collaboration to support teachers in delivering quality education amid ongoing changes.

References

Abas, A., & David, B. (2019). The impact of digital learning on teacher stress and performance. Educational Technology Journal, 36(2), 45–60.

Abedi, J., Hofstetter, C. H., & Lord, C. (2021). Assessment accommodations for English language learners: Implications for policy-based empirical research. Educational Assessment, 26(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/10627197.2021.1874512

Achadiyah, B. (2023). Higher-order thinking skills assessment in English language learning: A review of current trends and practices. International Journal of Educational Research, 50(3), 215–230. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2023.101872

Adhikari, R. (2021). Technology-enhanced instruction in second language learning: A systematic review. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 24(4), 88–105.

Afshari, M. (2022). Instructional leadership and teachers' professional development: A systematic review. Journal of Educational Leadership, 15(2), 120–135.

Afshari, M. (2022). Leadership strategies for teacher resource management in public schools. Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy, 18(1), 77–91.

Ağırdağ, O., & Vanlaar, G. (2016). Bilingual education and student success: Examining the impact of multilingual policies. Educational Review, 58(1), 25–42.

Alhumaid, K. (2019). The negative impacts of technology on education: A review of literature. Educational Research International, 8(1), 15–24.

Aljiffri, I. (2010). The integration of English language instruction into content-based subjects. International Journal of Language & Communication, 12(3), 34–49.

Ancheta, R., & Ancheta, H. (2020). The basic education learning continuity plan: A review of the Philippine experience. Educational Planning Journal, 19(2), 98–112.

Atmojo, A. E. P., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL teachers' strategies in online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 5(3), 167–181.

Ayu, M., & Pratiwi, Y. (2021). Blended learning in English language teaching: Teachers' perspectives. Journal of ELT Research, 9(2), 233–249.

Barlovits, S., Pistor, P., & Schmidt, U. (2021). Teaching and learning in times of crisis: An empirical study on distance learning experiences. Journal of Educational Science, 45(1), 12–29.

Bhandari, P. (2023). Social Constructivism and the future of language education. Journal of Language Pedagogy, 14(2), 49–63.

Billingsley, B. S., & Bettini, E. (2019). Teacher stress and burnout in special education: The role of resilience. Exceptional Children, 85(4), 385–400.

Broadbent, J., & Poon, W. L. (2015). Self-regulated learning strategies & academic achievement in online higher education learning environments: A systematic review. Internet and Higher Education, 27(1), 1–13.

Chen, C. (2023). Inquiry-based learning in English language teaching: An experimental study. Journal of Language and Education, 19(2), 132–147.

Cunningham, M. (2021). The evolving role of teachers in the digital classroom. Journal of Educational Technology, 32(1), 56–72.

Dangle, Y. R., & Sumaoang, J. D. (2020). The implementation of modular distance learning in the Philippine secondary schools. International Journal of Academic Pedagogy, 7(4), 15–30.

Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 49(1), 5–22.

Garbe, A., Ogurlu, U., Logan, N., & Cook, P. (2020). COVID-19 and remote learning: Experiences of parents with children during the pandemic. American Journal of Qualitative Research, 4(3), 45–65.

Graham, C. R., Woodfield, W., & Harrison, J. B. (2017). A framework for institutional adoption and implementation of blended learning in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 35, 1–10.

Heath, M. K., & Shine, J. (2021). Teacher preparedness in online learning environments: Lessons from the pandemic. International Journal of E-Learning, 20(2), 125–140.

Jakubowski, T. D., & Sitko-Dominik, M. M. (2021). The impact of remote learning on teachers' psychological well-being. Educational Review, 73(1), 28–45.

Leech, N. L., Barrett, K. C., & Morgan, G. A. (2020). IBM SPSS for intermediate statistics: Use and interpretation. Routledge.

Liu, X. (2017). Reflective teaching in EFL classrooms: A study of teachers' beliefs and practices. Journal of Second Language Teaching & Research, 6(1), 89–107.

Manegre, M., & Sabiri, K. A. (2020). Online language learning using virtual classrooms: An analysis of teacher perceptions. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 11(1), 45–54.

Maizarah, L., & Purwanti, R. (2023). Overcoming challenges in English language instruction: A case study. Educational Research and

Innovation Journal, 10(3), 56–72.

Nyinondi, O., Nyinondi, J., & Bakar, S. (2016). The effectiveness of Think-Pair-Share strategy in improving English language skills. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 7(2), 97–110.

Pelgrum, W. J. (2018). The use of ICT in education: A study of digital literacy among educators. Computers & Education, 122, 1–12.

Pressley, M., El-Dinary, P. B., & Brown, R. (2021). The nature of effective first-grade literacy instruction. Routledge.

Robosa, J., Paras, N., Perante, L., Alvez, T., & Tus, J. (2021). The struggles of online learning: An in-depth study of students' academic performance. Journal of Education and E-Learning Research, 8(2), 99–106.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.

Wyatt, M. (2023). Vygotsky's social constructivism and language teaching: A contemporary review. Language and Education Journal, 22(1), 78–92.

Xu, J., Du, J., & Fan, X. (2021). The role of learning environments in student engagement: A systematic review. Journal of Educational Psychology, 113(5), 953–973. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000635

Xu, Y., Li, M., & Chen, Z. (2021). Adapting teaching strategies to student needs: A meta-analysis. International Journal of Educational Research, 49(2), 99–115.

Zarei, R., & Fabregas, A. (2024). Technology-assisted English language instruction: Benefits and challenges. International Journal of E-Learning and Instructional Design, 19(4), 112–130.

Zhou, X., Wang, H., & Li, T. (2024). The impact of personal and institutional resources on teacher engagement: An empirical study. Journal of Educational Research and Policy, 20(1), 67–89.

Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Mary B. Aguilar
Amado Fernandez Sr. Central School
Department of Education – Philippines

Adrian V. Protacio
Sultan Kudarat State University, Philippines – Philippines