



筑紫女学園大学リポジット

Interactive Online and In-person TESOL Part 3: Students' and Teachers' Reactions

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2023-03-23 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: WOOD, David John, WOOD, David John メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://chikushi-u.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/1165

Interactive Online and In-person TESOL Part 3: Students' and Teachers' Reactions

David John WOOD

Abstract

This is the third and final study in the series comparing online (OL) and face-to-face or in-person (IP) TESOL for English spoken communication. Part 1 considered the role of homework, and Part 2, that of reporting speech. Part 3 examines the reactions of teachers and students to compare and determine some of the important implications. Most of the data was collected during the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021, the overall period spanning early 2020 through the first half of 2022. The main aim of the series was to evaluate the respective merits and demerits of online and in-person spoken English communication education. Starting with the one student who took an online international course in this period, over 50 respondents (including 3 teachers) in a variety of situations were interviewed about their opinions and experiences of learning (and teaching) spoken English in these 2 distinct modes:

- 1. To establish whether most participants felt OL or IP was the more effective; and,*
 - 2. To identify what the benefits of OL and IP were seen as by comparing the results.*
- The results and subsequent conclusions will complete this research series.*

1. Background and Introduction

A school web page described the researcher's English Department mission as: "offering courses with English linguistics at its core and helping students acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. We help students to develop keen insight into English linguistics and to brush up their pronunciation, conversational and writing skills. Our aim is to help them acquire an internationally acceptable command of English." As with many such ideals, the original vision's power is under serious threat. The forced online era has further compromised many English departments. Increasingly constrained curricula fail to promote acquisition as authorities influencing them fail to recognize the real meaning and role of communication.

At the researcher's school, spoken acquisition prospects are limited by a 4-year system of 2 or 3 compulsory conversation classes only till year 3, for just 4 to 6 credits, or 3 to 5% of the total needed to graduate. Numbers fluctuate within these margins, but never grow. Academic affairs influencers, without ESOL expertise, pressure faculties to conform to a 1-size-fits-all general education system. Regardless of differences, departments must concede to a curriculum perpetuating courses unrelated to proficiency in students' majors, and thus suppressing

communication.

Equating subjects arbitrarily is illogical, but decisions are predetermined. Non-inclusive and online meetings deter meaningful discussion, an ethos persisting during the return to in-person assemblies. Coercive rulings affecting teaching and management are often imposed by a minority forcing-committee. English acquisition (as it is fundamentally harder than such popular languages taught having much in common with Japanese, like Korean and Chinese) needs sufficient time. TOEIC, long a major communication measure globally, in Japan, and at this researcher's university for 3 decades, requires 100 hours supervised study between test attempts for real proficiency improvement (ETS guidelines). Many other subjects may be learned from texts and 1-way lectures. Texts are also a major obstacle to TESOL. Most classes in Japan are taught passively, subordinated to Japanese, and avoid communication. Forcing global study into an insular curriculum deters both motivation and acquisition. This has been a long-term national trend rendering English teaching ineffectual.

Under such circumstances, conditions make acquiring spoken English more of a struggle than ever for students, leaving most dumbstruck. The concept of acquisition is further compromised by the over-emphasis on the written over the spoken word. TESOL is for speaking, but English teaching often devolves to reading or translation. Over 90% of English classes are text-bound, defaulting to teacher monologue.

Few if any students enter university with spoken English ability. Japanese high school English is usually subordinated to grammar translation, and even then, most students are not grammatically proficient, as their lessons are passive, one-way, and soon forgotten. Japanese universities rarely understand, let alone accept, the challenge of serious communicative teaching, so many students' abilities decline rather than improve after 4 years of post-high-school classes.

Classes in the first half of the period of this study were in-person (IP). The second half of this period was mainly online (OL) with 45 hours of third year compulsory OL conversation classes, then 45 hours IP 4th year seminar spoken classes. Only 3% of the 400 students enrolled opted for extra weekly 30-minute voluntary conversation sessions, with participants from different school years.

Although over a dozen students were accepted during this period for school English programs abroad, none could go because of the restrictions and fears generated by the Coronavirus from early 2020 until the present. In their place, only 1 student took a short-term OL course (**2. The International Online Experience**) for a fraction of the time she would have had abroad, and under very curtailed circumstances. These courses differed from others as they included much less class and social interaction.

OL teaching was enforced as an emergency reaction and not as a planned method. This made it problematic in many ways as an objective form of teaching. Students, teachers, administrators,

parents, and governments all had different and often conflicting opinions and emotions about the kind of teaching taking place at this time. A lot of the discussions about OL versus IP education were distorted by the huge wave of personal feelings, often ignoring objective logic. We must attempt a more rational evaluation of the two modes of education in general, and, for the purposes of this study, focus on spoken English communication to find insights into the best ways to study and acquire English, avoiding prejudices from any personal likes or dislikes.

Conversely, thanks to the emergency, for the first time, there was a more globally concerted attempt to make online teaching work. Important findings surfaced. Thus, we may recognize some of the gains of this unprecedented period in education, at the same time as acknowledging the limitations. Accordingly, this study will use several viewpoints to look for common trends in the nature of the online experience to decide what advantages or disadvantages were produced for learning how to communicate in English.

2. The International Online Experience

Since the onset of Covid-19, the regular flow of students abroad to study English had come to a standstill during this study. Some options to study English arose, like online study programs with universities abroad, but the response from students was negligible.

The central subject was a senior student in this researcher's seminar, who alone experienced an online English communication program in her final year for 3 weeks during the summer of 2021. There were approximately 30 classes of 2 hours, 60 hours in total. Every class included spoken communication with 5 teachers of English, including 3 native speakers. The subject could interact with the other students taking the course (all but one being Japanese) from other universities in the same age range.

The subject identified the following advantages of the course:

- (1) Learning how to make case studies about various interesting topics, including international companies and businesses, sustainable developmental goals and so on.
- (2) All the classes being conducted in English.
- (3) Talking with all the teachers about cultural differences.
- (4) Limited opportunities after regular on-line classes to communicate with other students about cultural differences, English pronunciation and so on.

Some of the problems that the student noted included:

- (1) With other Japanese students, there was a tendency to use one's mother tongue.
- (2) Technical difficulties occurred, like slow internet connection.
- (3) Document downloading sometimes took too long

The subject had originally planned to study abroad, but the pandemic prevented that. She identified some of her main losses as:

- (1) Being unable to study abroad for a year with the expectation of becoming fluent.
- (2) Not making friends from different cultures or meeting many more teachers.
- (3) Not enjoying more kinds of social interaction.
- (4) Not experiencing the culture and sightseeing, local food, shopping and so.
- (5) Not being afforded better job opportunities, maybe even abroad.
- (6) Not learning to live independently, instead having to rely on friends and family.
- (7) Not experiencing school life in an English-speaking country.

3. Participant Background

In April of 2020, many schools' classes and administrative interaction in Japan and worldwide were forced online. Without proper preparation time, experience, or know-how, like many other educational institutions globally, the subject's university set out on an unknown path without enough understanding or resources to cope. It was left up to each student and teacher to figure things out for themselves. The result was far from ideal. Even for those with some technological ability, the widely varying equipment levels of each party were impossible to reconcile in many cases. While administrative sectors seemed to find enough budget and equipment, many teachers sacrificed personal research budgets, often without enough support. The slow response to Covid-19 by the Japanese government and its subordinates only made a bad situation worse. The diverse range of responses world-wide also created major disparities between countries where English is an official language, and those countries whose education systems included ESOL.

4. Response Data

In the following sections, we present the opinions of a varied range of learners and teachers of spoken English communication to collect basic information for a valid relative assessment of online and in-person teaching. During 2021, approximately 50 subjects were interviewed using the same questionnaire which covered the following aspects of the students' experience:

- (1) eye contact and seeing facial expression
- (2) pronunciation and listening to sounds
- (3) vocabulary and sentence structure
- (4) communicating with teachers and students
- (5) the amount and speed of talking
- (6) listening and speaking proficiency
- (7) summarizing and reporting speech
- (8) individual and whole group interaction
- (9) self-expression and making oneself understood
- (10) spontaneous talking, with no preparation

First, throughout the year 2021, we interviewed the students in 2 different conversation classes (the former of which the subject mentioned before was a member) totaling around 50 students, using the instrument outlined above. Not only were the results useful quantitatively, but they also yielded many insightful qualitative comments which helped understand participants' feelings in more depth. Next, we interviewed the 11 members of a graduation seminar (of which the subject was also a member) including in-depth group interviews, which again provided many valuable insights, discussed below. The English Lounge (of which the subject was a member) consisted of 10 voluntary members who met at least 1 lunchtime each week to practice talking freely in English with each of the English Department's 3 full-time native speakers of English. The teachers were also asked about their opinions and experiences of both modes of teaching, and the subject was given a final interview.

5. Conversation

Students were in their third year. They had not had IP classes for over a year since the end of 2019 – their previous 30 spoken communication classes in the period up until April 2021 were online. In April, after only 2 IP classes, they were required to return to IP only for at least 8 times in 2 months with classes after that pending.

Of 22 students, 50% preferred IP classes overall, while 80% favored IP for communication. Those favoring online favored it mainly for vocabulary, pronunciation, reporting speech and, most of all, to avoid nervousness. The state of health emergency overshadowed everything and was exacerbated by Japan falling behind in its vaccination program, which had yet to begin, even at the time of the questionnaire. As the course was spoken English Communication, it may have been significant that so many still recognized IP teaching as superior to OL classes for communicating.

At the same time, many students' senses of nervousness were an important factor. Even after OL classes were no longer necessary, a blend of both forms would likely be beneficial for the most sensitive students. One student, for example, preferred IP teaching, but also stated: "I think both face-to-face and online classes were good. Each has good points." Other students also echoed this sentiment.

To understand the quantitative results of the survey better, we can refer in detail to the students' individual comments:

- (1) "I think face-to-face classes are better than online classes, but I'm scared about Covid19. So, I'd like you to do online class."
- (2) "I think listeners learn more about each other in IP classes than online classes."
- (3) "We can communicate better face to face, but can relax more online, which is better for anyone who is nervous."

- (4) "This class is not only about communication, but also getting to know each other so face-to-face is more appropriate."
- (5) "I think with face-to-face classes, we can check facial expressions. But I can talk online without getting tense."
- (6) "It's hard to speak loudly enough in classrooms compared to online."
- (7) "Listening without facial contact is enough."
- (8) "Online is better during Coronavirus."
- (9) "I think both face-to-face and online classes have their own good points."
- (10) "I'm not good at talking with people, even in Japanese, but I think it's important for our life to communicate with others. So, I want to improve my communication skills before I graduate. I want more chances to talk in person."
- (11) "We can clearly listen to speech online because we can adjust the sound."
- (12) "I have no problems in this class. As it was not face-to-face, I was able to think about how to answer without rushing."
- (13) "I didn't get nervous because I'm not in front of everyone."

Overall, 10 students chose IP, 10 chose OL, and 2 liked both equally. As stated above, students were Year 3 who had not had IP classes for a year since the end of 2019, with their previous 30 spoken communication classes being online. In April, after only 2 IP classes, they were required to return to OL only for at least 8 times in 2 months, with classes after that pending. Of 22 students, 50% preferred IP and 80% specified IP for communication – those favoring online favored it mainly for vocabulary, pronunciation, reporting speech and, most of all, to avoid nervousness.

The Coronavirus health emergency over the 2-year period had overshadowed almost everything. As the course was spoken English Communication, it seemed significant that 50% still considered IP teaching as superior to online classes for communicating. At the same time, student's sense of nervousness was an important factor, and may have suggested that, even after IP classes were no longer necessary, a blend of both forms would likely be beneficial for the most sensitive students, as indicated above.

In addition to the original conversation class questionnaire results from the first half of 2021, another conversation class in the second half of 2021 confirmed many of the same feelings, but students were even more emphatic about their preference for studying face-to-face for communication as opposed to online, suggesting that the longer they were compelled to study online, the more they missed in-person. The same number of students, of their own volition, were asked during face-to-face classes if they preferred one or the other, after having had half their classes online. They unanimously chose face-to-face with their main reason being they could talk English with friends more easily in-person than online.

6. Graduation Seminar

Quantitative results: Points given in the questions show 90% of students favored face-to-face spoken English. The points most emphasized were eye contact, pronunciation and listening, communication, talking speed, developing proficiency and interaction. The main point that the students favored online learning was reporting speech.

Qualitative results: In students' own points, nearly 100% favored face to face spoken English for the reason given below. The only exception was one student who said online was spontaneous, but this was likely personal preference or misunderstanding of the question's meaning.

Students' comments appear below:

- (1) "I prefer face to face because there is a feeling of emotional intensity which is more motivating and stimulating."
- (2) "I prefer face to face because we are less stimulated by remote technology and there seems to be a time discrepancy so it's less synchronic. Therefore, we can talk more smoothly in face-to-face classes."
- (3) "I prefer face to face because it's more spontaneous."
- (4) "I think face to face without a mask (or with a clear mask) is important to see facial expressions, eye contact in context. Also, the environment is not the same from student to student because rooms and equipment and so are different. There is also a connection gap with technology. We need face to face classes to better stimulate our feelings but while being able to see each other's face to help us relax more."
- (5) "Eye contact is different because face to face enables all-round vision"
- (6) "I prefer face to face if I do not need to wear a mask as I can't see facial expressions, gaps develop if technology isn't smooth and there is no feeling of emotional intensity."
- (7) "I prefer face to face because it is easier to understand what everyone is thinking. I can't speak English well, but everyone tries to understand me by my facial expression and the direction in which we are looking."
- (8) "I prefer face to face because online is difficult to catch the timing to speak."

As the responders were all senior students with greater experience than the Conversation class students above, their comments were more complex and insightful. Below are some examples of significant points that they made with comments:

"There is also a connection gap with technology."

"I prefer face to face because it's more spontaneous."

Communication is the most fluent when it flows, so the inevitable problems with technology, especially when students may have very different equipment and environments, can detract from the free flow and interaction of speech events.

In the same way as in the above comments, just as online spoken classes are often held

back by, or even break down as a result of, uneven technology or environments, classroom communication takes place on a more equal basis as all the students are in the same place and do not have to contend with the various kinds of trouble that frequently occur when students have to use their own devices and study situations.

Other insightful comments included:

“Eye contact is different because face-to-face enables all-round vision.”

“I prefer face-to-face because online is difficult to catch the timing to speak.”

Human perception naturally relies on all-round vision and hearing, so when this is reduced to a 2-dimensional visual and audio situation, our normal range of seeing and hearing may be adversely affected. Communication relies on smooth turn-taking and an equal ability to catch what is being said, as well as to be heard equally. Therefore, with the kind of problems indicated above, sometimes communication gaps occur which can even cause interactions to completely break down because we may be receiving information, cues and so on unevenly.

7. English Lounges

Students were asked (with responses parenthesized, and preferences in **bold**):

“Which helps you talk in English more, face-to-face (IP) or online (OL):

- (1) eye contact and seeing facial expression (**IP=6**) (OL=0)
- (2) pronunciation and listening to sounds (**IP=6**) (OL=0)
- (3) vocabulary and sentence structure (IP=2) (**OL=4**)
- (4) communicating with teachers/students (**IP=6**) (OL=0)
- (5) the amount and speed of talking (**IP=5**) (OL=1)
- (6) develop listening/speaking proficiency (**IP=4**) (OL=2)
- (7) summarizing and reporting speech (IP=2) (**OL=4**)
- (8) individual and whole group interaction (**IP=6**) (OL=0)
- (9) self-expression/making yourself understood (**IP=6**) (OL=0)?
- (10) spontaneous talking, no preparation (**IP=5**) (OL=1)”

Underlined modes in bold indicate the greatest significance. In 7 out of 8 categories, face-to-face (IP) was seen as better, while online (OL) only scored significantly higher in 2 categories. The categories stressed communication primarily, indicating that face-to-face learning was perceived as better than online learning in this respect.

The composition of English Lounges differed a lot from the other groups surveyed as it included a wide range of younger and older students. This naturally resulted in very different ability levels, motivational forces and the deference that accompanies a culture where hierarchy can affect regular communication in various ways. Nonetheless, in virtually every category, the members felt that face-to-face communication was better, while online English speaking was seen

as less worthwhile. The categories stressed communication primarily, indicating that face-to-face learning was perceived as better than online learning in this respect.

8. Subject

After a month's summer OL course with an Australian university in 2021, the subject answered the question "Which helps you talk in English more, face-to-face or online?"

(1) eye contact and seeing facial expression:

"I think face-to-face is better for eye contact and seeing facial expression because there is a time difference between what you see and what you hear online whereas in person we can see and hear both at the same time."

(2) pronunciation and listening to sounds:

"I think face-to-face is better for pronunciation and listening to sounds because the Internet is slow sometimes, but such technical problems never occur during in-person spoken English communication."

(3) vocabulary and sentence structure:

"I think face-to-face is better for vocabulary and sentence structure because they are closely connected with pronunciation and listening."

(4) communicating with teachers/students:

"I think face-to-face is better because it's more fun and in-person is 3-dimensional, so it creates a deeper sense of communication and enhances paralinguistic aspects of communication which are 90% of all communication. On 2-D screens, we may miss out on many aspects of visual communication."

(5) amount and speed of talking:

"I think face-to-face is better because when I'm online I try to talk over-accurately which is stressful whereas in-person communication is both more natural and relaxing, increasing confidence, content and quality of communication events."

(6) developing listening/speaking proficiency:

"I think IP is better as it increases concentration levels which is good for listening."

(7) summarizing and reporting speech:

"I think online is better to reinforce what we hear and say in natural English style."

(8) individual and whole group interaction:

"I think face-to-face is better because it brings us closer together."

(9) self-expression/making yourself understood:

"I think face-to-face is better because I can use gestures as well."

(10) spontaneous talking, no preparation:

"I think face-to-face is better as it's easier to create a real conversation flow."

The subject continued: “Self-expression to make oneself understood (Number 9) and spontaneous talking, with no preparation (10) are both equally the most important. Self-expression to make yourself understood (9) is important because this is essential for real English spoken communication using gestures and facial expression in a situation where two or more people can perceive each other’s feelings and intentions more clearly than in an online situation. Spontaneous talking, with no preparation (10) is also very important because in one’s first language, we don’t use any preparation because this encourages extended communication with less anxiety about making mistakes which is vital to develop spoken communication ability in any language.”

9. English Language teachers

Q1: Which do you prefer, IP-or OL teaching? (All questions were student devised.)

T1 preferred in-person teaching as it was smoother and the content more complex. When online, students could suddenly disappear or couldn’t hear, but in IP classes, it was possible to know how every student felt by looking at their faces and easier to get everybody working together. When online, students often had technical problems T2 preferred IP teaching having taught face-to-face lessons for an entire teaching career, while teaching online was something new and strange.

T3 preferred IP as most oral communication classes worked better.

T3 felt OL was good for smaller classes to speak freely together in breakout rooms. T3 thought that bigger classes required students to consult with each other, practice speaking together, and do information exchange activities which required a lot of extra time OL. T3 added that some students participated less in OL.

In summary: All 3 teachers unanimously favored in-person teaching, especially for oral communication.

Q2: Did you change the examination method?

T1 said that, when online, the exam had to be easier, otherwise some students panicked, but when it was face-to-face, there was more time to explain, even if it was more difficult, so they could cope.

T2 felt obliged to change the examination method as the administration required this of all teachers and urged teachers to set reports without considering class aims.

T3 changed the “weight” of different components of students’ grades. For example, as testing was difficult to supervise, T3 gave weekly homework assignments for a bigger percentage of the grade.

In summary: All 3 teachers changed their exam and evaluation systems: one did so because of the academic affairs office’s guidelines which mandated the factors mentioned; another did so to increase the weightings for assessment assignments, also mentioning that it was necessary to make the content simpler; and, the last teacher also pointed out that it was necessary to simplify

the testing and assessment due to the limitations of online as opposed to IP study.

Q3: What do you think of students without their camera on during online classes?

T1 preferred students' cameras off when online to concentrate on listening and for them to concentrate on the sounds, like telephoning. Sometimes seeing faces affected listening focus, but that it could be an advantage for them to see the teacher's mouth movements to help them learn how to pronounce words better.

T2 felt sorry for students who did not turn on their camera. Some did not even have one and were obliged to buy computer equipment to participate. T2 felt this was a huge financial drain on students who were already paying a lot of money to attend university, especially for students living far from home on a tiny budget when part-time work was more difficult than ever. As for students who didn't turn on their camera during an online lesson, T2 felt it depended on the activity of the lesson. For example, if they were watching a short video or doing a listening comprehension exercise, then there was no need for students to turn on their cameras. But even in conversation classes, T2 commented that many students left their cameras off to practice conversation, despite being asked to turn cameras on, noting that usually conversations needed participants to see each other.

T3 said smaller, older classes were no problem, but younger, larger ones were, as students did not all know each other, so felt anxiety about showing their faces.

T3 allowed cameras to be off, but encouraged students to use them in breakout groups. If breakout rooms ran smoothly, then T3 didn't require cameras to be on.

T3 felt cameras could make students too self-conscious.

T3 said some students use this to avoid participating altogether.

In summary: Each teacher would allow students to leave cameras off in certain cases, but one emphasized this was unnatural in spoken communication, while another felt having cameras on could be distracting. In terms of mood, practicality and expense, it was also felt that compelling students to use a camera could be problematic.

Q4: How is the way you test students different?

T1 said online spoken test questions were shorter and simpler, but in-person, they were more detailed and complex, so easier tests online were necessary.

T2 found it difficult to give quizzes online that would normally be easy to give in class. A lot of the quizzes or in-class work necessary for evaluation purposes were given as homework for students to submit online instead.

T3 felt in an IP class, it was possible to control the situation and check there were no papers or books on desks, smartphones were off and in bags. With online quizzes and tests, students were better able to use their texts, dictionaries or the Internet to help them answer. So, it was better to have questions using just their own knowledge in that situation and give a time limit for the

quiz or test.

In summary: One teacher acknowledged the limitations of online testing as it was impossible to monitor. The other two teachers pointed out that it was impossible to give the same kind of tests online as in-person, one of them stressing the need to simplify testing when it was done online, so the level of achievement that students could aim for online seemed more limited than with in-person teaching.

Q5: Which motivates students more?

T1 preferred teaching IP because it motivated group interaction more.

T2 felt that many students preferred in-person classes, but that there were still some who preferred online lessons. For conversation classes, students were more motivated to practice conversation face-to-face, especially with a native speaker. Some students lived far from school and had to travel for an hour or more to come to campus. T2 felt those students were more motivated to stay at home and do online lessons.

T3 said that, while on-demand lectures and real-time lessons were convenient for students, they were more motivated by face-to-face classes as they enjoyed school more, not just for learning a subject, but because people love to connect. In face-to-face situations, students could connect with each other and the teacher.

One thing that could be hard about online classes was that teachers might not know who each student was. It made them feel they could disappear and not be noticed or cared about. The teacher also felt that as a professor, after online classes, students would know the teacher if the latter's camera was on, but not always vice versa. It felt like they were meeting for the first time as the bond with students was not strong.

In summary: One teacher pointed out that it was harder to create human contact online, so that in-person teaching is normally more motivating. Another believed that only students could answer this question, but added that individual circumstances and taste played a big role, such as convenience, location and learning style.

From the teachers' viewpoint, their preference for in person teaching might even affect how enthusiastically they taught, so there were factors beyond student motivation that affected this area.

Q6: Which do you focus on more, face-to-face or online teaching?

T1 preferred teaching face-to-face as teaching online required most of one's concentration to make sure that every student felt comfortable. The concentration and effort while teaching was the same, but the aims were different.

T2 by far preferred in-person classes, so online teaching was like a bad dream.

T3 focused on whatever kind of class it was necessary to teach. Teaching online was more stressful because of technical issues and trying to teach the content. Sometimes, when trying to

talk about the class content, students would send messages in panic which made teaching online more stressful.

In summary: As questions were student-devised, some of them might not be clear. Thus, one teacher felt this question couldn't be answered, but said that as online teaching was more "stressful" it required more attention than face-to-face teaching.

Another teacher felt that in person teaching deserved more attention and that online teaching was only a temporary matter. Two teachers pointed out that, professionally, they felt it their responsibility to focus on both types of teaching equally.

Q7: Which takes more time to prepare?

T1 said that at first, teaching online took a lot of time, but T1 came to change the way of teaching face-to-face too, so that took more time, especially checking reports, because of adding some of the study points learnt online.

T2 felt online lessons took longer to prepare Every 90-minute class required at least 2 to 3 hours to prepare.

T3 felt online took longer, but that it had changed the way to prepare for IP classes, too. When preparing online activities, more detailed thought was required which was a good thing.

In summary: 2 teachers both stressed the positive effects of having had to spend more time on developing new techniques and materials which could be transferrable to the classroom. The other teacher echoed the point about the extra time and effort needed to prepare what were effectively completely new courses, suggesting that it took far longer than before.

Q8: Do you think students' English is improving?

T1 felt that students' listening improved, whether it was online or face-to-face, but in face-to-face classes, you could get more detail.

T2 felt that neither face-to-face lessons nor online lessons necessarily determined a student's improvement in English, but instead that the students themselves determined their own improvement.

T3 felt it depended on the skill being taught. For example, online classes seemed good for Reading and Writing, and graduation seminars, but oral communication classes were more difficult online as students didn't get enough time to practice speaking as it took time to go in and out of breakout rooms.

In summary: One teacher said that oral proficiency was harder to achieve online. Another teacher suggested that only students could make improvement possible if their motivation was strong enough. Teacher3 felt that listening took more time online because group work was harder to organize.

Q9: What do you think of using sound only online?

T1 thought that sound only was good for listening, but that it was also good for students to see

how the teacher shaped his or her mouth so they could see how to pronounce different sounds. T2 felt that when learning a foreign language, it was important to use a variety of activities that practice different skills. Audio was important, but so was video, reading, writing, pronunciation, speaking, vocabulary building and so on.

T3 felt that human communication needed more than just oral/aural information, and that breakout rooms with cameras on could help them understand facial expressions and gestures. However, for lecture-style classes, students just needed to listen.

In summary: 2 teachers did not feel that this was an advantage, but 1 mentioned that using one's ears more than eyes might improve listening proficiency.

Q10: When you ask questions, are they different in any way?

T1 said that it was easier to develop questions and answers in face-to-face classes because online classes had to be easier and more concise to help the students handle the content, and that there was a bigger comprehension and communication gap in online teaching.

T2 felt that questioning was different in the two modes. When asking a question in a face-to-face lesson, it was easier to tell immediately if a student had understood a question by their reaction.

T2 felt he had to repeat questions more frequently and wait longer for a response online.

T3 thought that asking for a volunteer to answer a question was never very successful, so, in both situations, T3 tended to ask students directly, but also tried to give some time for them to get ready by reading questions aloud even when they already understood, to give them a moment to prepare to speak. T3 didn't think it was necessary to ask questions differently, whether online or in-person.

In summary: 1 teacher felt it depended on the nature of the questioning, stressing that open questions were usually problematic in both cases. The other 2 teachers both said that in-person teaching was more amenable to successful communication as facial reaction gave important feedback as to the student's having grasped the meaning of the question, which was often not the case in online classes.

The teachers' comments speak for themselves and do not require this writer's re-interpretation, but they are unanimously in favor of face-to-face teaching, with some minor differences of opinion, such as regarding having cameras switched on or off.

10. Conclusion

This study has considered differences between online and in-person modes of studying spoken English communication to determine which was better by collecting and analyzing feedback from numerous groups with diverse viewpoints. The aim was to find which point or points were of widest significance to the participants.

The points that were used to evaluate the two modes can be found in **4. Response Data**. In

addition to one international online experience, the groups that were interviewed during 2021 included:

- (1) The conversation classes
- (2) A graduation seminar
- (3) An English Lounge
- (4) One individual student's interview
- (5) Three teachers (separate questions, and student devised)

While conversation students saw advantages in both modes, a closer look at the reasons behind their choices indicates they favored online study for its convenience and as the style of study was simpler and customized for online learning.

Neither factor is objectively better for acquiring English. On the other hand, reasons in favor of in-person learning were stronger, stressing communication as far better in-person.

The graduation seminar was far more strongly in favor of in-person learning and provided some valuable insights which showed that in-person spoken English learning had considerably more advantages over online. Again, communication was a major reason. In a similar way to the English Lounge students, the vast majority favored in-person teaching for communication, and as this group covered a wider age range, it represents another strong indication that in-person learning was significantly superior to the online alternatives that they had experienced.

Finally, in the single subject's interview of the only student to experience a formal online course with a university in an English-speaking country, in-person advantages outweighed online benefits by a ratio of 4-to-1, and once more emphasized in-person communication as superior. This was important as it showed that the categories referred to had no bias towards the in-person mode, as they included aspects of learning where an online mode was an advantage.

While students in nearly all the groups (and the subject) thought online learning was good for reporting speech, there was less consensus for any of the other of the 10 factors. Reporting speech was the focus of the previous paper in this study, which concluded that it was a beneficial feature for in-person learning too, with the correct adaptation and execution. The 3 teachers independently validated in-person teaching as superior to face-to-face alternatives, but gave contrasting reasons, possibly providing a wider basis of evidence than was expected. They unanimously asserted motivation and interaction as superior with in-person teaching.

Feedback collected and analyzed from these 5 sources indicated in-person spoken English communication had more benefits than online. Though this is the final study in the consideration of online and in-person TESOL in this restricted context, it begs broader questions such as the continuing effects of administration which, even since the COVID 19 crisis has waned, keeps an impersonal mentality, making communication harder. Without the checks and interface of in-person administration, the powers controlling so many aspects of education have cemented their

monopoly on many aspects of organizational process, impacting crucial decision making and thus teaching itself. Even with the return to IP activities, this risks insulating decision-making from real discussion and deliberation. The agendas of the few increasingly threaten to mute the needs of the majority and do not acknowledge communication.

Feedback is important to the extent that it proactively informs our future methods and practices. Evaluations have regularly been used in this study series, so it is important to conclude by referring to the most recent, collected in 2022, while the memory of online learning was still fresh in the memories of respondents. All 6 classes given by this researcher, teaching a wide range of English (movies, basic English, remedial reading, advanced reading, advanced conversation & graduation seminar) echoed previous comments, emphasizing communication gains. Comments included:

- (1) "I acquired practical communication by asking and answering questions."
- (2) "Thank you for teaching us about English communication."
- (3) "I enjoyed talking with my classmates in English."
- (4) "For me, this was the most enjoyable class."
- (5) "I was happy to learn living not textbook English by communicating with others."
- (6) "I realized English communication is fun. I could communicate with my classmates."
- (7) "I had a lot of opportunities to speak so I'll keep studying and do my best!"
- (8) "I enjoyed talking with others."
- (9) "I got a lot of skills I can use when I work in future."

11. Summary Tables of Respondents' Main Corresponding Reactions

Perceived In-person Benefits

Conversation: 80% specifically chose IP for communication
Graduation Seminar: 100% specifically chose IP for communication
English Lounge: 100% specifically chose IP for communication

Perceived On-line Benefits

Conversation: 80% specifically chose OL for reporting speech
Graduation Seminar: 80% specifically chose OL for reporting speech
English Lounge: 66% specifically chose OL reporting speech

While in-person ESOL emphatically and unanimously indicated that face-to-face classes (93% overall) were better for communication, the most positive consensus from on-line lessons seems to have been reporting speech (75% overall) which was the subject of the second study in this series, and closely connected with homework, the central focus of the original study.

In this way, the original focus of this series, reporting speech as homework, would seem to have been a justifiable starting point. As reporting speech also works well in face-to-face classes,

this may be taken to confirm the latter's value and suggests that it may have important potential for wider use in TESOL. As indicated in the previous study, reporting speech was a powerful enough motivator to make students comment on it specifically in their formal evaluations. Here is one example again:

“We learned the ability to summarize what we said in English.” (Wood, 2022b).

Students specifically choosing to refer to using reporting speech as homework after each class to recall and reformulate lesson content in reported form is a clear indication of the perceived value of the practice. While its scope is obviously limited, the potential it offers for regular face-to-face classes is significant.

References

- Wood, D.J. (2022a). “Interactive Online and In-person TESOL Part 1: Homework.” Chikushijogakuen University.
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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank all those participating for their valuable contributions to this research, and in particular the main subject, who was a dynamic member of my seminar and helped compose the questions for teachers.

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