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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY  
Terrell Lamont Strayhorn,  
Illinois State University, United States

## \*CORRESPONDENCE

Ahdi Hassan  
ahdihassan441@gmail.com

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# Editorial: The post-COVID-19 language classroom in physical and virtual spaces

Ahdi Hassan<sup>1\*</sup> and Arif Ahmed Al-Ahdal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Global Institute for Research Education & Scholarship, Amsterdam, Netherlands, <sup>2</sup>Applied Linguistics, Qassim University, Buraydah, Saudi Arabia

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ESL (english as a second language), higher education, virtual classroom, COVID-19, applied linguistics

## Editorial on the Research Topic

### The post-COVID-19 language classroom in physical and virtual spaces

It gives me immense pleasure to present this special issue of Frontiers in Education Journal. It holds a special place for me as it comes at a time when the academic world is only finding its feet in a world that overcame serious challenges and uncertainties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is that time of the year when humanity came to accept a world changed forever in the aftermath of the pandemic, a particularly difficult time for learners and teachers as they began to master a new educational mode: the virtual one. Language research in this decade has been shaken by a paradigmatic earthquake with teaching-learning taking so many new forms and shapes that compelled multidimensional studies like never before. The resulting change in this field has been so fast and solemn that only a term like “blitzkrieg” can come close to defining it. New metaphors, technological tools and terms, and educational orientations have marked the beginning of the decade in cognitive and language research. Nevertheless, the prolific flow of thoughts and ideas have only immensely enriched the experiences of teachers as much as learners in the applied linguistics, second/ foreign language, and virtual classrooms.

This issue is unique since it ties together more than two ends of a language continuum represented in applied linguistics: ICT, and classroom research in ESL/ EFL. There are seven articles in this collection and the authorship is truly international, giving the issue a unique intellectual global village flavor. The first article is titled *Modeling Higher Order Thinking Skills and Metacognitive Awareness in English Reading Comprehension among University Learners* and is co-authored by [Aziz and Rawian](#). The study is placed in Pakistan and uses an explicit HOTS-based reading test using Bloom’s Taxonomy to create a model of learners’ levels in reading. Results of the study show that HOTS are low in these university learners and thus, has significant implications for ESL teachers, assessors and policymakers.

The second article is titled *Iraqi Kurdish EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK): The Role of Teacher Experience and Education*. Co-authored by [Sadiq Ali](#) and [Mohammadzadeh](#), the study recognizes the changed educational needs of the Iraqi Kurdish teachers in the post-COVID times and examines their beliefs about TPACK, a crucial factor in ensuring the success of ICT-enabled language teaching. The results affirm that the newer generation of teachers are more skilled in the application of tech-related knowledge domains, as compared to the more experienced peers who have higher pedagogical, content, technological, and pedagogical content knowledge.

The following article by [Abutayeh et al.](#) is titled *The use of Virtual and Augmented Reality in Science and Math Education in Arab Countries: A Survey of Previous Research Studies*. The study examines the role of augmented reality in science and math education in Arab countries since 2012 by reviewing available research using four variables: focus, research method, data collection tools, and geographical distribution. Results of the study show that most of the research related to uses of virtual and augmented reality in science and math education in Arab countries focused on students and their teachers.

The fourth article in this collection is titled *E-Leadership of the School Principals in Implementing Online Learning During COVID-19 Pandemic at Public Senior High Schools*, by [Indra et al.](#) aims to discover the implementation of e-leadership for school principals during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on school performance through changes in teacher behavior. Placed in Indonesia, its findings show the practical implication for academics in the country: principals need to change their roles and leadership styles from conventional to electronic-based learning leadership styles to realize effective online learning.

The fifth article is by [Ahmed and concerns](#) the applied linguistics scene in Saudi Arabia. The title is *Business English Instruction: Empowering Learners with the 4Cs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Apart from measuring the perceptions of business English teachers regarding the effectiveness of the proposed communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity (4Cs) teaching model, it also identifies some of the gaps that emerged while applying the 4Cs model, and recommends deliberate instructional steps for using the model. The study is undoubtedly relevant in a world which thrives on communication.

The next article in this series is based on classroom research by [Albelhi](#) in the EFL reading class of a Saudi university. The title is *Lexical and Cohesive Links in EFL Learners' Writing: Exploring the use of Task-Based Language Teaching*. Recognizing the importance of English as the preferred language for recording current innovation and technological breakthroughs, the study sees text as the essential medium through which EFL learners aim to enhance their writing abilities but fail to reach the desired

outcomes. In a ground-breaking move, the study explores the efficacy of task-oriented training in filling this chasm. Using linguistic learning methods, the research examines the efficacy of lexical and cohesive links in enhancing undergraduates' writing and shows through experiment that as many as (73%) of the students could master the discursive linkers in their writings better than the lexical or grammatical elements as a result of the intervention.

The last but none the least article in this limited edition is titled *Saudi English for Specific Purpose Students' Attitudes toward the Learning of English Language: An Investigative Study*, by [Alharbi](#). The study is motivated to gauge the attitudes of Saudi health-track students on learning English for specific purpose (ESP), their perceptions toward the culture of English, and the factors that impact the students in their endeavor. Importantly, its findings indicate the necessity of engaging students in a relaxed learning environment, and the need for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to take into consideration their students' interests while preparing and delivering the lectures.

The challenges in language teaching are both difficult and interesting. The saving grace is that so many of us are working on them with enthusiasm, tenacity and dedication to develop new methods of analysis and teaching to provide novel solutions to our institutions and learners. This issue is a positive step in that direction.

## Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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