

English Language Teachers' Grit and Pronunciation Teaching Practices in a Time of Crisis

La perseverancia de los profesores de inglés y sus prácticas de enseñanza de la pronunciación en tiempos de crisis

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Longitudinal research contributes to the understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices, but few such studies have examined teacher development during a time of crisis. This gap is particularly significant in pronunciation pedagogy, where research on teachers' adaptive strategies remains limited. Building on a six-year study, this paper explores the development of second language teachers' practices and cognitions (knowledge, beliefs, perceptions) regarding English pronunciation pedagogy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings demonstrate a complete initial cessation of pronunciation instruction, but its later reemergence as a priority once lockdown conditions relaxed. These findings further highlight the dynamic nature of teacher cognition in response to crises, and the need for gritty teachers and an enhanced focus on hybrid learning in second language teacher education programs.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, L2 teacher cognitions, longitudinal research, pronunciation teaching, student wellbeing

La investigación longitudinal ayuda a comprender las creencias y prácticas docentes, pero pocos estudios han examinado el desarrollo del docente en tiempos de crisis. Este artículo, basado en un estudio de seis años, explora cómo evolucionaron las prácticas y las cogniciones de docentes de segunda lengua en la enseñanza de la pronunciación del inglés durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Los hallazgos demuestran una interrupción inicial completa de la instrucción, seguida de su reaparición tras el levantamiento de las restricciones. Se destaca la naturaleza dinámica de la cognición docente ante las crisis, así como la necesidad de contar con docentes resilientes y de integrar el aprendizaje híbrido en los programas de formación de docentes de segundas lenguas.

Palabras clave: pandemia de COVID-19, cogniciones de profesores de L2, investigación longitudinal, enseñanza de la pronunciación, bienestar estudiantil

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on teachers worldwide, affecting both their practices and cognitions (knowledge, beliefs, perceptions). In response to the unexpected onset of the pandemic in early 2020, many teachers had to rapidly shift from face-to-face teaching to online formats (Meirovitz et al., 2022). This required significant adjustments to their pedagogical knowledge and practices while they learned to teach remotely. Although longitudinal research has contributed substantially to the understanding of teacher learning (Crandall & Christison, 2016), such research conducted during a time of crisis remains scarce (Jandrić et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2024). This gap is particularly important to address given that crisis-induced shifts in teaching practices can have lasting effects on pedagogy (Zhao & Watterston, 2021) and negative impacts on teacher wellbeing (Kim et al., 2024). In second language (L2) English pronunciation, a skill essential for successful oral communication (Goh & Burns, 2012), longitudinal studies on teachers' practices and cognitions during crisis situations appear to be absent. Without this insight, educators and researchers lack the evidence base needed to inform crisis-responsive teaching strategies that ensure critical skill development during a global crisis. Research has shown the importance of improving the crisis management plans of educational institutions (Tan et al., 2025). By addressing this gap, this study provides a deeper understanding of teacher adaptation and practical implications for strengthening pedagogical resilience in future crises.

Considering this gap, and building on earlier stages of this ongoing longitudinal study (e.g., Burri & Baker, 2021; Burri et al., 2017), this paper continues the exploration of the development of four L2 instructors' practices and cognitions about English pronunciation pedagogy, focusing specifically on the impact of COVID-19. The qualitative longitudinal study originally began with an examination of the

development of student-teachers' cognitions during a pronunciation pedagogy course taken as part of their postgraduate education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The study continued for four more years, tracking the development of the participants' careers and focusing specifically on their cognitions and pedagogical practices concerning the teaching and learning of English pronunciation (see Burri & Baker, 2021; Burri et al., 2017 for more details). This study continues this line of inquiry by examining the teachers' developing practices and cognitions both at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Phase 4) and a year and a half later (Phase 5), and further contributes to Burri and Baker's (2021) framework for preparing pronunciation instructors. This study aims to provide insights into what happens to both pronunciation teaching and teachers' cognitions and practices when a global emergency arises in order to better inform future developments of flexible hybrid learning approaches for pronunciation instruction.

Literature Review

Challenges of Emergency Distance Education

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to educators worldwide, forcing them to adapt to new learning environments created by physical distancing regulations. This resulted in education leaders swiftly shifting face-to-face programs to be delivered fully online; however, poor leadership often exacerbated the challenges of this transition, leaving many educators unsure of how to do their jobs effectively. This uncertainty was closely linked to increased stress and anxiety related to a lack of experience and training in teaching in online environments (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Majed et al., 2024; Panisoara et al., 2020; Shevchenko et al., 2024); minimal access to online learning tools (Majed et al., 2024; Shevchenko et al., 2024); inadequate

time to prepare for online teaching (Majed et al., 2024; Panisoara et al., 2020); shortage of hardware/software (Crawford et al., 2020) or insufficient network conditions (Gao & Zhang, 2020; Karataş & Tuncer, 2020); absence of real-time feedback (Majed et al., 2024; Popa et al., 2020); and, specifically in English as a foreign language contexts, the need to find opportunities for real-time communication (Bailey & Lee, 2020). This supports the findings of Benson et al. (2011) and Jeffrey et al. (2014), who found that educators struggle to shift from traditional classroom instruction to online teaching. In sum, research has consistently shown that, in emergency response contexts, educational institutions have been unable to rapidly adjust existing face-to-face curricula for online delivery.

Benefits of Hybrid Learning

While fully online or remote learning is typically the initial response in emergency situations, educators and students who are already familiar with hybrid learning may be better equipped to navigate and overcome challenges of emergency distance education (EDE) in the long term (Shevchenko et al., 2024). Hybrid teaching is an instructional approach that integrates in-person teaching with online or remote learning, providing flexibility and adaptability in education (Gudoniene et al., 2025). Such teaching approaches are thought to foster learning environments that emphasise student engagement, active participation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration (Azizah & Aloysius, 2023; Fu & Wang, 2021; Gudoniene et al., 2025).

However, hybrid learning is not without its own challenges, such as adapting to workloads, frequent technical issues, and initial difficulties with telepresence (Capello et al., 2022; Gudoniene et al., 2025), issues similar to those faced by educators in EDE. The successful implementation of hybrid learning relies on the provision of extensive support, including both technical infrastructure and professional learning

opportunities, to ensure educators can effectively design and deliver hybrid learning environments (Alhusban, 2022; Capello et al., 2022). This requires not only enhancing teachers' digital competencies but also ensuring access to technological resources and sustained organisational support to facilitate adaptation to virtual and blended instructional formats (Alhusban, 2022). While many educators have become accustomed to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, some continue to assume that remote students can engage with in-person classes the same way as their on-campus peers. However, Gudoniene et al. (2025) point to multiple recent studies highlighting a growing shift towards more deliberate technology adoption, with institutions and educators developing structured pedagogical models to optimise hybrid learning. This shift is particularly relevant in the context of pronunciation instruction, where technological integration offers new opportunities for interactive and immersive learning experiences.

Hybrid Learning in L2 Pronunciation Teaching

Providing L2 teachers with instruction on pronunciation is essential, especially when teaching pronunciation online. However, according to Murphy (2014), few language teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to teach English pronunciation in their tertiary studies. Research has shown that without pronunciation-related content knowledge and familiarity with appropriate teaching methods, teachers feel less confident and less capable in teaching the different elements of English pronunciation (e.g., Baker, 2014; Couper, 2017; Henderson et al., 2015). Foote et al. (2016) found that pronunciation instruction accounted for only 10% of all language-related instruction. These authors found that pronunciation instruction was not planned as part of the lesson and mostly occurred through corrective feedback in response to individual student errors. Subsequently,

Kochem (2022) recommends that teacher education programs provide opportunities for practical experiences in which student-teachers create and implement a variety of communicative activities. This research indicates a correlation between a teacher's knowledge of pronunciation techniques and the need for instruction in pronunciation pedagogy (Baker, 2014; Murphy, 2014). If teacher education programs do not provide sufficient focus on pronunciation pedagogy, the question lingers as to whether they address how to teach pronunciation in an online L2 teaching context.

Despite this potential problem in L2 teacher education programs, research has demonstrated the positive effects of hybrid learning on pronunciation teaching. Inceoglu (2019), for example, observed that segmental errors of French learners reduced after receiving online pronunciation instruction; whilst Martin (2020) reported significantly improved comprehensibility of German learners who participated in homework-based computer-assisted instruction compared to in-class pronunciation instruction. Furthermore, Meritan (2022) found that using short online videos for explicit pronunciation instruction improved intelligibility and comprehensibility for all participants. However, the effectiveness of formative assessment in hybrid learning in any context depends on technological advancements, such as adaptive learning platforms, as well as organisational support for course redesign and teacher workload management (Gudoniene et al., 2025). Despite the efficacy of online pronunciation instruction in supporting intelligibility and comprehensibility (Lee et al., 2015; Saito & Plonsky, 2019), the abrupt transition to online learning exacerbated existing constraints, pushing pronunciation instruction to a lower priority (Meritan, 2022). Collectively, these studies suggest that while hybrid learning in pronunciation teaching presents some challenges, it also offers opportunities for innovation and the integration of new technologies, necessitating comprehensive instruction and support for educators

to navigate challenges effectively. Therefore, research is needed to understand how teachers' practices and cognitions about pronunciation are affected when instruction shifts to an online or remote learning environment during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This will inform the development of flexible hybrid learning approaches for pronunciation teaching as a standard practice, enabling teachers to be better prepared for EDE contexts.

Thus, the present study seeks to explore responses to the following research questions in relation to L2 English teachers in our ongoing longitudinal study:

1. What happens to pronunciation-oriented cognitions and practices held by teachers when a pandemic strikes?
2. What factors impacted teachers the most during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What enabled the teachers to persevere (if they did) in their work throughout the pandemic?

Method

Participants

Of the original 15 student-teachers who participated in Phase 1 of the longitudinal study, four participants from the first three phases volunteered for this current study (Phases 4 & 5): Aoi, Georgia, Lucy, and Rio (pseudonyms). This attrition was due to teachers leaving the profession, reduced desire to continue in the study, and/or changing contact details over time. As reported in previous stages of this longitudinal research, these participants were all students in a postgraduate course on pronunciation pedagogy in an Australian university, and we have traced their professional trajectories as practitioners for the past several years.

In Aoi's case, after completing her postgraduate degree, she returned to Japan and took up a position as a junior high school English teacher. She made a concerted effort to incorporate pronunciation instruction into her teaching as much as possible over the

next six years; prior to her postgraduate studies, she rarely did so. Georgia, a highly experienced primary and tertiary school teacher in Australia, had limited experience in pronunciation pedagogy prior to her postgraduate degree. However, over the next few years, she progressed from incorporating her pronunciation knowledge into her English for academic purposes classes to taking on a more administrative role as a student advisor. Nonetheless, she did occasionally teach a pronunciation seminar at the university. Lucy also had experience teaching mainstream classes in both primary and secondary schools in Australia, but had no experience in pronunciation teaching before taking the course. Following the course, she incorporated pronunciation instruction into her classes at a local intensive English centre, teaching mainly adolescent refugees, migrants, and international students. Rio, unlike the other participants, had several years of experience teaching pronunciation to adult learners in Iran prior to taking the course. But, as with the other three participants, he never undertook any formal coursework in pronunciation methodology. Following his postgraduate coursework, he took up a new position at a vocational institution in Australia, initially teaching English across multiple proficiency and age levels, incorporating some pronunciation work. This instruction was limited in its focus on novel approaches learned during his postgraduate degree, but pronunciation nonetheless played a role in his regular classroom teaching. Over several years, Rio began to take on more administrative responsibilities at the institution and consequently taught classes less frequently.

Procedures

This paper focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the professional trajectories of the four participants. What we refer to as “trajectories” represents the participants’ cognitions and practices over a particular period. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the influence of the pandemic

because they were the only data collection tool both realistic and permissible to apply during the height of the pandemic. During this period, most educational institutions, including schools, were in lockdown or under significant in-person restrictions, and not only were our participants affected by these lockdowns/restrictions, but our university ethics committee also required empirical research to be conducted remotely. Participants thus participated in two rounds of semi-structured interviews. Phase 4 interviews (P4I) occurred in June–July 2020 (ranging from 44 to 85 minutes), and Phase 5 interviews (P5I) took place approximately 1.5 years later (ranging from 33 to 57 minutes). All interviews were conducted on Zoom and were transcribed verbatim. Examples of interview questions included: “Do you teach pronunciation online? If yes, what does this look like? (P4I)” and “In your last interview, it seemed that pronunciation instruction was not a priority due to all the COVID-related challenges. Has this changed? Why or why not? (P5I).”

All participants provided informed consent to participate, and the analysis of their cognitions and practices in the interview transcript data largely drew on our previous research from earlier stages of the longitudinal study. To answer the first research question, the same procedures used in developing Burri and Baker’s (2021, p. 15) “Extended framework for preparing pronunciation instructors” and Baker’s (2021, p. 30) “Pronunciation pedagogy model: From awareness to clear and fluent pronunciation” (derived from Baker, 2014) were used in coding and examining the techniques discussed by participants. These included the broad categories of language awareness (T-LA), controlled practice (T-CP), guided practice (T-GP), and free practice (T-FP). An examination of the techniques used by teachers provided insights into teachers’ knowledge of pronunciation pedagogy and their beliefs about what techniques or practices are most useful or appropriate, based on their knowledge of their students (Baker, 2014).

To answer the second research question, we again used the “Extended framework for preparing pronunciation teachers” model reported in Burri and Baker (2021) to identify the external factors that inhibited or supported teachers during the COVID pandemic. These factors included: personal-professional factors (F-PP) such as emotions, personal interests, imagination of self and others; teacher preparation factors (F-TP) such as postgraduate course content and professional self-learning activities; language factors (F-L) such as variety of English dialect spoken or accent; and contextual factors (F-C) such as learner needs, curriculum, colleagues, and even parents that teachers encounter as part of their daily teaching activities.

To address the third research question, an inductive, data-driven thematic analysis was initially used. However, this changed during the first author’s reading of Duckworth (2016) and her notion of grit, which she previously described as “working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress” (Duckworth et al., 2007, pp. 1087–1088). However, it is important to note that, concurrent with the data analysis for this paper, other researchers worldwide were also making connections to Duckworth’s grit theory or an adapted version referred to as second language teacher grit (e.g., Namaziandost et al., 2022; Sudina et al., 2021). Yet most of these studies were quantitative in design, aiming to determine how “gritty” a person is using a scale. The current study differs in that it is qualitative, examining teachers’ profiles, or “snapshots,” based on interview data, specifically using Duckworth’s four psychological assets as the basis for the thematic analysis. According to Duckworth (2016), these four assets tend to grow from one to the next in the following order:

- *Interest*: genuine enjoyment derived from what we do.
- *Practice*: the conscious and consistent effort to improve day by day in our area of interest.

- *Purpose*: the belief that our work is meaningful both to ourselves and to others.
- *Hope*: a constant trait of grit that allows us to persevere in the face of challenges. Although hope is discussed after interest, practice, and purpose, it is not just present in the final stage, but permeates all stages of grit.

Based on these definitions, the initial grit analysis appeared to align with Duckworth’s (2016) conceptualisation of “grit,” and the four psychological assets that contribute to grit. In the findings section, these are designated as interest (G-I), practice (G-Pra), purpose (G-Pur), and hope (G-H). Examples of each code are provided in the Findings section, as relevant, for each participant’s snapshot to better illustrate how they were interpreted within the context of each participant’s journey.

As such, relevant data from the interview transcripts were subsequently coded according to these four psychological assets to explore whether grit played some role in the teachers’ professional careers during the pandemic. As this was the first time this coding was used in our longitudinal research, the grit coding and subsequent analysis were discussed extensively by the first two authors over several meetings to ensure the reliability of the data analysis.

It is important to note, however, as indicated in the coding for the participants’ snapshots below, that the coding for factors impacting the practitioners occasionally overlapped with that of the grit analysis or was difficult to differentiate. For example, in Aoi’s snapshot, we relate that Aoi had “a strong drive to support students for whom she was deeply concerned,” which is coded as G-Pur; however, in Georgia’s snapshot, the statement “she worked hard to provide support to both students and staff” is coded as F-C. We perceived that the difference may be that Aoi explicitly attached her desire to support students to their well-being, whereas Georgia does not specify this relationship. Generally

speaking, a major factor in our identification of any participant's statement as a possible asset of grit is an explicit and long-term connection to personal enjoyment/interest (G-I), a long-term devotion to practice toward self-improvement in relation to this interest (G-Pra), long-term interest that is explicitly connected to the well-being of others (G-Pur), and a belief that no matter what happens to get in the way of those efforts, one will keep going because that work is important to people (G-H).

Findings

As this paper represents a specific period of great global turmoil within a longitudinal study spanning several years, the findings will be presented as "COVID snapshots" to capture each of the four participants' professional trajectories, including their practices, cognitions, and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The codes described in the Procedures section above are embedded in each snapshot to provide greater transparency into the data used to support the findings.

Aoi's Snapshot

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic marked a significant shift in Aoi's approach to pronunciation teaching. At the beginning of the pandemic, all teaching ceased and, with that, any focus on pronunciation teaching: "We didn't do any teaching things for two months . . . We couldn't interact for two months" (P4I). This was due to limited access to technology (both for students and teachers) and, as technology was virtually non-existent in classrooms at her school, she had limited confidence in using it. She stated: "I realise I'm not so familiar with technology" (P4I), and regarding her students, she commented: "Even though they have a laptop at home . . . their parents use it. Because of the telework, [students' using it] will not work, so it's a bit hard" (P4I). Yet this sentiment was tinged with a keen desire to learn more about how to use technology to

better teach her students (G-I). What emerged from this scenario, however, was a strong drive to support students (G-Pur) for whom she was deeply concerned (G-Pur), all while dealing with her own feelings of isolation and depression (F-PP).

Over a year later, and post-COVID lockdowns, pronunciation teaching had re-emerged in Aoi's teaching. She continued to have limited access to technology, but the resumption of face-to-face classroom teaching meant a return to pronunciation teaching. Despite challenges imposed by her school's requirement for everyone to wear masks, she reported using a wide variety of techniques in class, including rap music (T-LA), word/sentence repetition work (T-CP), preparing for presentations (T-GP), and giving presentations (T-FP). She also demonstrated a deep desire to improve herself personally in addition to her professional expertise as a teacher (G-Pra): "Working as a teacher is important" (P5I; G-Pur).

Georgia's Snapshot

With the arrival of COVID-19, all teaching opportunities for Georgia, including her pronunciation seminar—which was a much-needed "teaching outlet" (P4I)—came to an end. The lockdowns marked an excessive increase in administrative workload (F-C) and significant emotional toil (F-PP). During this period, however, she worked hard to support both students and staff (F-C).

Over a year later, Georgia continued to work under ongoing conditions of emotional toil and experienced disappointment in a continued cessation of teaching opportunities, feeling ostracised as a result (F-PP). She said, "I asked [a colleague] to let me know whether there were people there that wanted to practice their pronunciation . . . but I never heard from [them]" (P5I). Opportunities to teach pronunciation were assigned to other colleagues to keep them employed. Nonetheless, Georgia reported still doing her IELTS examination (speaking skill-focused) work outside of her regular

employment, something that she enjoyed and found “very interesting” (P5I; G-I). Additionally, Georgia’s gravitation toward supporting others led her to pursue becoming a Lifeline support crisis worker (G-Pur). She commented:

I don’t mind the counselling-type cases, you know, the people who have lost loved ones, etc., and so it made me think about the future and what I’d like to do [and thus] I applied to become a Lifeline crisis support worker. (P5I; G-H)

Georgia hoped that additional opportunities to teach pronunciation would re-emerge in the near future.

Lucy’s Snapshot

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on Lucy and her teaching. Teaching pronunciation was non-existent in her teaching context with refugees who can be “18 year olds who can’t add single digit numbers, who can’t write their name because of their lack of education [and it is] virtually impossible for them to catch up,” or who have endured corporal punishment at school in their home countries, or experienced “trauma and domestic violence and so forth at home” (P4I). As she pointed out, “on a scale of all the things that had to happen, [pronunciation] was just the least of my worries. It didn’t even factor into my thinking at the time. My number one thought was the wellbeing of the students” (P4I; G-Pur). She expressed a high level of concern for the welfare of her students in the midst of “mad scrambles” (P4I; i.e., educational disorganisation), including the students’ inexperience with or non-access to technology (e.g., not owning a computer or wi-fi, aside from having a mobile phone), and personal home-life situations (e.g., trauma experienced as refugees). In the end, any contact needed to be with individual students over the phone. For students with inadequate spoken English, three-way calls were needed, with a bilingual teacher’s aide providing sup-

port during the call. As the first lockdown progressed, in an effort to best support her students, Lucy began using Instagram to communicate with them and post messages, readings, and mini-lessons (G-Pra). When students returned to the intensive English centre after the first lockdown, Lucy worked hard to set up Google Classroom and Google Docs in preparation for the impending second COVID lockdown (G-Pra).

More than 12 months later, once the lockdowns had ended and everyone returned to face-to-face teaching, pronunciation instruction gradually regained its importance. At this point, Lucy had changed jobs, now working as an EAL/D (English as an additional language/dialect) teacher at a local high school, teaching EAL/D classes that ran parallel to mainstream English classes. Her previous employment had ended due to lockdowns that prevented people from entering Australia, so there were virtually no students left to teach. This new school presented new challenges in the form of an excessive workload (e.g., extra administrative accountability and additional student wellbeing documentation; F-C), but being part of a strong EAL/D support team was welcomed (G-Pur). Initially, teaching online at this new school, pronunciation played no role in teaching:

To be honest, the students didn’t say very much. I knew they were there, but you know, the students turn their cameras off; they turn their microphones off. If I ask a question, they’ll answer, and that’s about it. There wasn’t really a lot of conversation happening; they certainly listened to me, but they didn’t do a lot of talking, so pronunciation just didn’t come up at all. (P5I)

However, when face-to-face teaching resumed, pronunciation was “rearing its head a little” (P5I). The EAL/D teachers banded together and formed a structured face-to-face conversation group during the students’ supervised “free period” (P5I) with other students from another local high school joining in remotely via Zoom. Additionally, one of the Southeast

Asian students worked part-time at a local restaurant and expressed nervousness about her pronunciation difficulties and her need to talk with customers. This became the impetus for a lesson (F-C) focused on final consonant sounds in the language she would need to use with customers in the restaurant. Lucy reported using modelling (T-LA), repetition (T-CP), and highlighting the importance of using final sounds for successful communication (T-LA). Reflecting on this work, Lucy remarked, "It's lovely actually with that group of students, seeing their confidence grow . . . it's really satisfying" (P5I; G-H).

Rio's Snapshot

COVID-19 brought an abrupt end to Rio's limited focus on pronunciation teaching observed a few years earlier. An excessive administrative workload and limited student and staff access to information technology (F-C) prevented him from fulfilling any role or opportunity in teaching pronunciation. Solid support from his institution, as well as COVID lockdowns (T-C), enabled Rio to spend more time with his family, and, as a result, his passion for education seemed to blossom (G-I). He was eager to explore multiple ideas for enhancing learning opportunities for students and teaching staff (G-Pur).

More than a year later, working in an Australian State that experienced the longest COVID lockdown worldwide, Rio continued to experience excessive workloads (F-C) and emotional toil (F-PP) due to the ongoing lockdowns: "How do I cope? I don't really" (P5I). His staff were hesitant to return to face-to-face teaching with the regularity of snap lockdowns and family, friends, and neighbours getting sick from COVID. Nonetheless, Rio continued to persevere, communicate with his staff, and endeavoured to keep them safe and healthy (G-Pur), ultimately reaching the mutual decision to continue online teaching for the remainder of the year. He commented, "I always try to be a positive person; if you just give me the worst

thing, I try to find something positive and stick to that, [thinking that] nothing is impossible" (G-H), but at the same time noting his "fatigue" and "tiredness of repeating something for [so] long" (P5I). In the midst of all this, Rio considered pronunciation teaching to be "still invisible" (P5I), although he suspected that for students who were sufficiently advanced to use Zoom technology, teachers may have started correcting their students' pronunciation, but for low levels students using WhatsApp where nothing was "verbal" (P5I), pronunciation instruction would not be possible.

Discussion

The four snapshots show that the COVID-19 pandemic had a sudden and dramatic impact on pronunciation instruction and on the professional trajectories of the four participants. Essentially, all pronunciation instruction and thoughts about pronunciation ceased completely.

Despite being a highly valuable component of spoken communication (Goh & Burns, 2012) and one that had previously been a relatively strong and well-regarded component—albeit to varying degrees—of the four participants' teaching practices (Burri & Baker, 2021; Burri et al., 2017), pronunciation no longer had any perceived relevance during a global crisis. When faced with a global emergency that affected their students' and their own lives, the teaching and learning of the English sound system (e.g., vowels, consonants, stress, intonation, etc.) never entered their minds. In part, however, this was due to limitations with technology (Bao, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Karataş & Tuncer, 2020), and so for most of these teachers, communication with their students was primarily text-based, and there was little to no focus on interactive, oral communication. It was not until lockdowns started to ease and face-to-face teaching resumed that pronunciation teaching began to resurface in the classrooms of some of these practitioners. This finding is important because although research

has indicated that explicit pronunciation teaching continued during the pandemic, this occurred only in courses focused solely on pronunciation (Meritan, 2022) or oral communication (Asmawi & Sun, 2023). But what about the majority of L2 teachers who teach English more generally? We contend that our ongoing longitudinal study provides a better glimpse into the “messier” lives of educators who teach pronunciation within a more holistic educational system. Specifically, it shows a stark contrast between the “norms” in their cognitions and practices under typical teaching conditions and how those cognitions and practices changed dramatically when a global crisis hit.

Findings from this study further support our model “Extended framework for preparing pronunciation instructors” (Burri & Baker, 2021). In relation to this model, among the factors that affected the four practitioners, contextual and personal-professional factors had the strongest impact. Personal professional factors included concern for students/colleagues and personal emotional toil, while contextual factors included learner needs, excessive workloads, and challenges related to instructional technology. Excessive workloads strongly influenced the cases of Lucy, Rio, and Georgia, but not Aoi’s. For Aoi, instruction of any kind in the context of the Japanese school system virtually ceased, and thus the workload decreased accordingly. However, for Aoi, as well as Rio and Georgia, the emotional toil stemming from either their concern for their students’ well-being, feeling isolated and/or depressed due to the limitations imposed on social interactions with either students, colleagues, or other people in their lives, was notable. Multiple studies have reported on similar concerns (e.g., Orygen, 2020). Aoi and Lucy, in particular, highlighted their concerns for their students resulting from educational disorganisation, students’ limited instructional technology skills or lack of access to instructional technology, and/or previous trauma or violence at home. Lucy, Aoi, and Rio also reported on issues related to instructional technology, including

their own limitations (Lucy, Aoi) and those of their students (Rio, Aoi). These difficulties made it challenging for everyone to carry on with their studies. Such problems with technology during the COVID-19 pandemic have also been described in other research studies (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Crawford et al., 2020).

As a result of these challenges, what emerged during the data analysis and thus showed in the participants’ snapshots was a potential demonstration of grit. The teacher participants’ experiences in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to reflect elements of Duckworth’s (2016) four grit assets. These four assets aligned with themes we identified in the interview data as participants discussed their experiences dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our exploratory grit analysis, however, appears to transcend that of factors related solely to the practitioners’ emotions and interests. The global crisis uncovered a genuine desire to help others, which simultaneously aligned with the action the participants took to help people. This was coupled with a hope that their current or future efforts would continue to help others. All participants thus demonstrated a commitment to learning, especially to learning that would benefit others, whether students, colleagues, or society at large.

To borrow Duckworth’s (2016) phrasing, all four practitioners were “knocked down” (p. 109) by the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that affected everyone worldwide. However, each of them persevered to support their students and/or colleagues to the best of their abilities, while dealing with their own feelings of isolation and/or depression. This shows remarkable grit in a time of global crisis. As indicated by the data, their perseverance to support their students and/or colleagues implies a sense of hope that they can, through effort and a strong desire to learn new knowledge (e.g., using technology to provide both emotional support and/or content instruction), help students during a time of crisis. This is a powerful revelation during a difficult period in the professional trajectories of these

four practitioners. During a time when there were serious mental health issues in society, leading to teachers suffering from burnout (Daniel & Van Bergen, 2023), intending to quit their jobs (Moser & Wei, 2021) or worse, such as people from all walks of life taking their own lives (Gramenz, 2020; Thompson, 2020), the COVID snapshots of these four participants illustrate tremendous grit. Thus, in light of our “Extended framework for preparing pronunciation instructors” (Burri & Baker, 2021), it is important to acknowledge the potential role teacher grit can play in preparing teachers to teach pronunciation in the long term, especially during times of crisis. More research is needed to determine how best to accomplish this goal.

Conclusion

The findings of this ongoing longitudinal study demonstrate the impact of a global emergency event, such as a pandemic, on teachers' professional trajectories and teaching pronunciation. As outlined in Burri and Baker (2021), “the long-term development of teachers' practices and cognitions about pronunciation is a complex, nonlinear, individual and context-driven process” (p. 13) that is typically influenced by numerous factors. But what this longitudinal study demonstrated in particular was how the participants' cognitions and practices shifted dramatically from viewing pronunciation as a priority during normal teaching times to one of virtually no priority during a time of crisis. In alignment with our “extended framework for preparing pronunciation instructors” (Burri & Baker, 2021), personal-professional factors and contextual factors did, in fact, have a notable impact on the teaching of pronunciation during the pandemic. However, in the case of a global crisis, rather than positively influencing practitioners' development as L2 pronunciation educators, the opposite occurred. The pandemic virtually halted any pronunciation teaching in their respective contexts; it was instead regarded as having little importance when communication with students

became largely text-based or teacher-centred. This suggests that, when an emergency event occurs, only what teachers perceive to be the most critical components of language teaching and learning receive attention. In this case, their overriding focus was care for their students and/or colleagues; supporting others was their key concern. Their efforts to best support their students and/or colleagues subsequently appear to reveal elements of grit in their professional lives.

The study's findings further highlight the critical importance of research into teachers' professional lives over an extended period. Although the study involves only four participants, which we acknowledge limits the overall generalisability of the study's findings, these participants nonetheless provide rich data as dedicated educators. In particular, the “snapshots” of these participants demonstrate incredible levels of diversity and extremes in the lives of teachers, particularly during a global crisis, and how, through grit, they strove to persevere during difficult times. It is essential, therefore, that second language teacher programs have a better understanding of such diversity and teacher grit to better equip their student-teachers for EDE in the future. What types of hybrid learning can we develop to better prepare teachers to teach students from such diverse backgrounds and educational contexts? What happens if technology fails and online learning is not possible? Hybrid learning that is adaptable to changing online and offline conditions is key, but more work is needed to determine how best to address this issue. Furthermore, when it comes to pronunciation instruction, this work requires explicit attention to ensure language learners continue to receive the education they need so that they do not fall behind during an emergency. As Levis (2025) reminds:

[a] troubling and important consequence of inaccurate L2 pronunciation is not being understood or being understood but at a great cost to the listener [and...] struggles with intelligibility and comprehensibility almost guarantee that communication can only go forward with

great trouble, resulting in lack of access to the speaker's goals. (p. 295)

To that end, our study is clearly an important point in today's world: it shows that our world needs "gritty" educators. To ensure that pronunciation teaching continues even during times of global emergencies, the emphasis on and development of such grit would be an enormous asset to second language teacher education programs worldwide. More longitudinal research on teacher cognition, teacher grit, and pronunciation pedagogy is clearly needed to better inform second language teacher education programs.

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