



An Investigation of Emergency Remote Teaching Conditions and EFL at Japanese Universities

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Abstract In spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic there was a sudden shift to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Although Japan is a technology rich society, the use of technology in education had been limited up until then. This pilot study explores the experiences of Japanese university EFL teachers from spring 2020 until summer 2022. A survey was formulated to investigate: to what extent EFL teachers in Japan are likely to continue using some of the digital tools they started using during ERT, what level of training was provided and if that assistance was found useful by teachers during ERT, and what styles of ERT classes were offered by institutions throughout the three Japanese academic years under investigation and if they indicate any new trends as universities shift away from ERT. This paper will look at the overall results ($N=31$) of the survey, as well as the voluntary open-ended responses that offer further important insights to the results. Results showed positive attitudes towards continued use of digital tools, but that training and support were lacking during ERT. In concluding the paper, the authors offer suggestions for the future use of technology beyond the pandemic.

Key words Emergency Remote Teaching, Online Education, Digital Tools, Teacher Perspectives

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Introduction

In spring 2020 the worldwide teaching community endured a sudden, unplanned, seismic shift to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). It is widely acknowledged that teachers, institutions and students were not prepared for this shift. Issues arose in areas including teacher training, reliability of technology, and teacher support from their institutions. Japanese universities were no different and this pilot study aims to explore the experiences of Japanese university English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers throughout ERT, a period which is still ongoing in Japan at the time of writing, and to what extent they are likely to retain and continue to use some of the *digital tools* they used during this period. For the purposes of the current research, the term digital tools is used as a broad overall term that includes but is not limited to: learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom and Moodle; communication tools such as Slack and email; apps such as Quizlet and Flip; and video conferencing software such as Zoom. This paper also looks at what level of training, if any, was provided by institutions and if that assistance was found useful by teachers. Furthermore, we examine how the different styles of ERT classes offered by institutions changed throughout the three Japanese academic years impacted by ERT, and if this has had any possible effect on future online learning opportunities offered by universities as schools' transition away from ERT. To do this, a survey was conducted to investigate teachers' experiences during this period and how these experiences are likely to influence their teaching beyond ERT.

Background

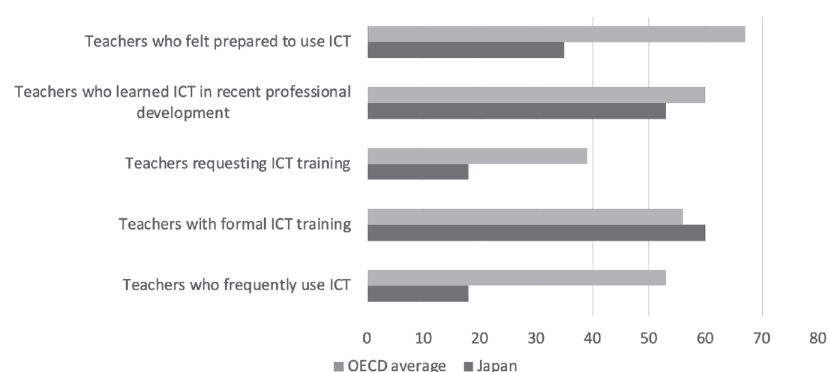
Despite the huge investments that have been made in educational technology in the last thirty years, when COVID-19 forced most universities and schools to close their doors, many universities found themselves unprepared for such a dramatic change in teaching practices. Although Japanese society in general is technology rich, the school systems up until now have been resistant to the integration of

technology (Moritz, 2017; Salcito, 2010). In 2015 Emerling found that in Japan 75% of classrooms still used the chalkboard as the primary means of presenting class content. With this as a background it is not surprising to find that many teachers were ill-equipped for ERT.

In research by TALIS published by the OECD (2019) it emerged that although the number of teachers in Japan who had received formal ICT training was about 60% , and 53% had received recent professional development in ICT, only 35% felt prepared to use ICT in the classroom (see Figure 1). This meant that when universities and schools suddenly needed to switch to online classes, many teachers were ill-prepared. This is illustrated by Lavolette’s (2021) finding that at her university some teachers did not even know how to use the university’s LMS, despite it having been available since 2005. She highlighted the lack of professional development (PD) as a significant cause for this lack of knowledge and had to set about providing support for all teachers. Caldwell (2020) also found significant hurdles to greater ICT use in Japanese classrooms. In his small-scale qualitative study on the attitudes of university teachers in Japan towards the use of ICT in the classroom, he noted that although educators agreed with the potential benefits of incorporating ICT within their classes, important factors such as support, infrastructure, educator interest in ICT, trust in traditional methods, and cultural differences were all acting as barriers to increased adoption of ICT in education.

Figure 1

Teachers’ preparedness for ICT-based teaching prior to the crisis



Source: OECD, 2019

In relation to institutional support Apple and Mills (2022) paint a stark picture. Their survey of Japanese university EFL teachers conducted at the end of the 2020 spring semester investigated the experiences of teachers during that difficult period. Their data suggests that Japanese universities relied heavily on a decentralised structure. This means that institutions largely relied on individual tenured faculty, or tenured faculty working with each other, to support and provide information for teachers during this time.

On a more positive note, Moorhouse and Kohnke (2021) do state that ERT had some positive effects on teachers' digital literacy, however they caution that negative effects of ERT may have been underreported. They also note that there is very little data on how language lessons were conducted during ERT, with classes being delivered in a variety of ways: synchronous, asynchronous and a blend of both. In many cases decisions about the delivery method was based on trial and error, which they assert was stressful for teachers and students. Going forward they recommend the development of frameworks for online teaching as well as increased professional development programs.

Though the move to ERT was abrupt and unexpected some teachers were able to bring prior experience and knowledge with digital tools to their online classes. Indeed, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a well-established field that asserts the effectiveness of digital tools in the language classroom, such as those in this study. As far back as 2003, when Bax wrote a seminal paper on the past, present and future of CALL, researchers in this area have been advocating for increased use of technology in the classroom and predicting the widespread adoption of digital tools. At the time, Bax envisaged a future with students and teachers having devices "in every classroom, on every desk, in every bag" (Bax, 2003, p.21). This certainly acts as a predictor of current bring your own device (BYOD) policies, including at some Japanese universities pre-COVID.

Bax also proposed seven stages of normalisation of CALL:

1. Early Adopters. A few teachers and schools adopt the technology out of curiosity.
2. Ignorance/scepticism. However, most people are sceptical, or ignorant of

its existence.

3. Try once. People try it out but reject it because of early problems. They can't see its value—it doesn't appear to add anything of 'relative advantage' (Rogers, 1995 as cited in Bax, 2003).
4. Try again. Someone tells them it really works. They try again. They see it does in fact have relative advantage.
5. Fear/awe. More people start to use it, but still there is (a) fear, alternating with (b) exaggerated expectations.
6. Normalising. Gradually it is seen as something normal.
7. Normalisation. The technology is so integrated into our lives that it becomes invisible — 'normalised'.

(Bax, 2003, pg.24-25)

It could be argued that the current ERT period has forced Bax's stages 2-5 into one abrupt stage and that perhaps many Japanese university EFL teachers are now at stage 6.

Moving forward it is important to harness all that has been learned throughout ERT in Japan, not only to better equip teachers and institutions for future unexpected events or shifts ERT has promoted in regular courses, but for the students themselves. In their review of previous research findings comparing online learning and traditional face-to-face classes from 2000 to 2020, Stevens, Bienz, Wali, Condie, and Shismenos (2021) found that the majority of findings reported better learning outcomes for online classes, or no significant difference between the two modes. They further discussed how other findings support the notion that 'well-structured' online courses can promote active learning in students and a move away from teacher-centred approaches often found in face to face classes. In Japan, Caldwell (2018) also posited that ICT use was viewed positively by students and had the potential to enhance a more student-centred learning environment.

Research Questions

With the issues and challenges outlined above in mind, the current study aims to investigate the experiences of teachers during ERT and consider future

digital contexts and future usage of digital tools. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What lesson formats did Japanese universities use during ERT?
2. What support and training did Japanese university EFL teachers receive during ERT, and was it useful?
3. What digital tools are teachers likely to continue to use in their teaching?
4. What digital contexts are likely to exist from now?

Methodology

Survey Instrument

In order to address these research questions a survey targeting non-Japanese teachers teaching in the Japanese university EFL context was designed. The survey consisted of four sections. The first section titled “Online Teaching Context” consisted of five items to obtain pertinent background/ demographic information. This section aimed to gather data about teachers' employment situation, their usage of digital tools prior to April 2020, and what lesson formats were offered during the three academic years of ERT. The second section, “Support and Training”, addressed issues related to the support and training that was offered to teachers by institutions. This section contained seven items and aimed to establish teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the training and support they received. Thirdly, a section entitled “Tech Usage Beyond ERT” gauged the likelihood of teachers continuing to use digital tools. This section contained 10 Likert scale items. Finally, section four was an optional comment section. The survey items were compiled into a Google Form which was distributed via email and other channels to collect responses. See Appendix A for the full survey.

Participants

A total of 31 non-Japanese EFL teachers teaching in the Japanese university context responded to the survey. Thirteen were full-time tenured faculty members,

ten were limited contract full-time faculty members, and eight were part-time faculty members. All of the respondents had taught in Japan both prior to and throughout the pandemic. All participation was voluntary and unpaid, and participants were free to withdraw at any time.

Results

Section 1 Online Teaching Context

In Section 1, respondents were asked about their usage of technology prior to ERT and about the lesson formats offered by their institutions during the three years of ERT.

Table 1

Tech usage prior to spring 2020

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Extensively
Describe your use of digital tools for classwork/homework prior to spring 2020	6.5%	12.9%	38.7%	25.8%	16.1%

Note. N=31

Even prior to spring 2020 (see Table 1) only 6.5% (2 teachers) of respondents had never used digital tools, with a further 12.9% saying they rarely used them. The majority of the respondents landed in the middle, with 38.7% saying they sometimes used digital tools. The combined percentage of teachers who often or extensively used digital tools prior to spring 2020 was 41.9% . This suggests that even before ERT there was extensive use of digital tools in EFL classrooms.

The next three items on the survey asked respondents what types of online classes their institutions offered during academic years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. It should be noted that the survey was conducted in the summer break between the spring 2022 semester and the fall 2022 semester. This means that while the data for AY 2020-21 and AY 2021-22 each cover a full academic year, the data for AY 2022-23 only covers one semester. In addition to the four choices offered on the survey:

synchronous; asynchronous; hybrid; not offered, respondents were able to respond freely if their context was not covered by those four choices. While there is not a uniform acceptance of the definition of *hybrid*, for the purposes of this paper, hybrid classes are defined as classes with some students joining face to face in a classroom and others joining synchronously using a video conferencing tool such as Zoom.

Figure 2

Online class formats offered during AY 2020-21

During the 2020-21 academic school year, what type of online classes did you conduct? Select all relevant answers.

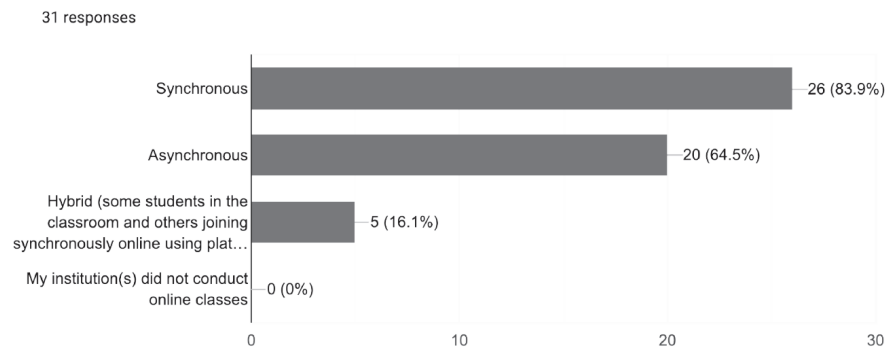
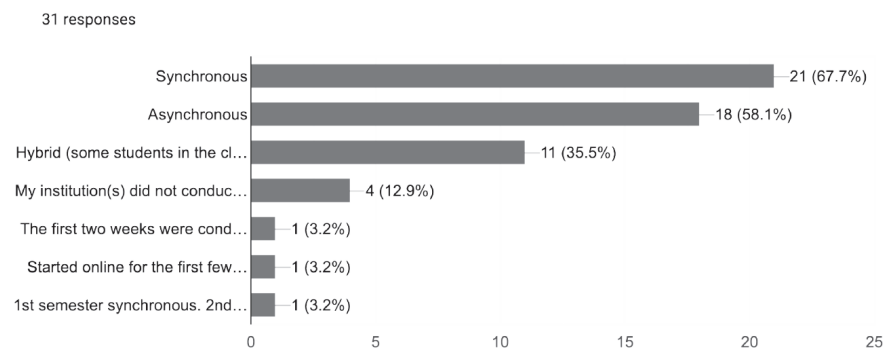


Figure 3

Online class formats offered during AY 2021-22

During the 2021-22 academic school year, what type of online classes did you conduct? Select all relevant answers.



The data for AY 2020-21 (see Figure 2) is quite straightforward. As expected, most institutions offered synchronous online classes (83.9%) and

asynchronous online classes (64.5%), with a much lower number (16.1%) offering hybrid classes. These hybrid classes were probably in the fall semester since Japan was in lockdown for much of the spring semester of AY 2020-21. All of the respondents stated that their institutions conducted online classes in some format.

Moving on to AY 2021-22 (see Figure 3) there was still quite a high number of institutions offering synchronous online classes (67.7%) and asynchronous online classes (58.1%). It is worth noting that there was an increase in the number of institutions offering hybrid classes (35.5%). Four institutions had already stopped offering online classes by the start of AY 2021-22. Three respondents wrote freely in the other option section. Their responses were as follows:

Respondent 1: *The first two weeks were conducted online; I had one student hybrid synchronous. One student was asynchronous.*

Respondent 2: *Started online for the first few weeks but returned to the classroom in about week 3 or 4*

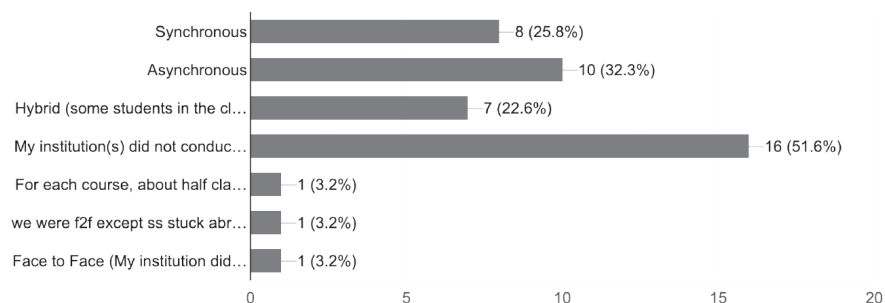
Respondent 3: *1st semester synchronous. 2nd semester hybrid.*

These responses suggest that institutions were starting to consider various options and were allowing students to join online if they could not attend face to face classes.

Figure 4

Online class formats offered during AY 2022-23

During the 2022 -23 academic school year, what type of online classes did you conduct? Select all relevant answers.
31 responses



The data for AY 2022-23 (see Figure 4) suggests a shift back towards pre-pandemic conditions. Only 25.8% of institutions offered synchronous online classes and just 32.3% offered asynchronous online classes. The percentage of hybrid classes offered also decreased from the previous year to 22.6%. Many institutions seemed to have returned to traditional classroom instruction with 51.6% of institutions not offering online classes. Three respondents wrote freely in the other option section. There responses were as follows:

Respondent 1: *we were F2F (face to face) except students stuck abroad because of visa / lockdown situations*

Respondent 2: *Face to Face (My institution did conduct online classes, but I taught F2F)*

Respondent 3: *For each course, about half classes F2F (face to face), about half asynchronous.*

As with the responses for AY 2021-22 these responses suggest that institutions were trying to accommodate students who had difficulties attending regular classes, for example, those who had gone to study abroad and could not return to Japan due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In summarising the three survey items relating to class formats offered, it can be said that the amount of synchronous and asynchronous online classes offered by Japanese universities decreased each year and that universities gradually moved away from online classes. All universities offered online classes in AY 2020-21, while four did not offer them in AY 2021-22 and that number increased to 16 for AY 2022-23. Also, it is worth noting that things were more complex in AY 2021-22 and AY 2022-23, with six respondents commenting on formats that had not been envisaged when the survey was designed.

Section 2 Support and Training

In Section 2, teachers were asked about the training and support they received from institutions and coordinators during ERT.

Table 2*Formal institutional training and/or support, Part 1*

	Not offered	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful
Written advice from the university in Japanese	9.7%	35.5%	38.7%	6.5%
Written advice from the university in English	35.5%	12.9%	38.7%	6.5%
Written advice from a coordinator in Japanese	45.2%	22.6%	16.1%	6.5%
Written advice from a coordinator in English	22.6%	6.5%	25.8%	32.3%

Note. $N=31$

In relation to written advice (see Table 2), the most widely offered format was from the university rather than the coordinator, and in Japanese rather than English. All of the respondents were non-native speakers of Japanese, so it is unsurprising that 35.5% of teachers found this advice from the university in Japanese to be not useful. Conversely, a combined total of 58.1% of teachers found the second most common form of advice, in English from a coordinator, to be useful or somewhat useful.

These four items also allowed for respondents to write their own replies and there were 11 such responses in total. One teacher felt that this kind of advice and support was unnecessary. Another commented on not being able to read Japanese. Several commented that they were providing the advice as they themselves were the coordinator.

Table 3*Formal institutional training and/or support, Part 2*

	Not offered	Offered, but, did not attend	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Useful
Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online video training in Japanese from the university	12.9%	48.4%	22.6%	9.7%	3.2%
Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online video training in English from the university	41.9%	12.9%	3.2%	22.6%	12.9%
Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online video training from colleagues or online teacher support groups	12.9%	12.9%	0%	12.9%	48.4%

Note. $N=31$

Universities that did offer training opportunities tended to do so in Japanese (see Table 3), with just 12.9% of universities not offering online training in Japanese, and 41.9% of them not offering online training in English. When this training was offered, teachers found the English language training to be more useful which is unsurprising. In relation to other opportunities for online training, the survey did not distinguish between English and Japanese since it was felt that most of these opportunities would be in English through a coordinator, an organisation such as the Japanese Association for Language Teaching (JALT) or private groups set up by teachers themselves. Well over half of the respondents (61.3%) found this avenue of training and/or support to be useful or somewhat useful.

These three items also allowed for respondents to write their own replies and there were seven such responses in total. These responses generally suggested that teachers were unaware of such opportunities, or that they were the person providing them. One respondent said that the teachers in their department worked collaboratively to learn and develop during this period and that they had an ongoing dialogue with the university which allowed them to receive useful information.

Overall, the responses in Section 2 of the survey suggest that there was support both written and through online synchronous training offered primarily in Japanese and to a lesser extent in English. Unsurprisingly, teachers found the English support to be more useful. Additionally, the results suggest that respondents favoured online synchronous training.

Section 3 Tech Usage Beyond ERT

In Section 3, respondents were asked about future usage of technology –do they think it is likely that they will continue to use a range of digital tools in future non-ERT contexts (see Table 4).

For all of the 10 items in Table 4, it seems that the majority of teachers will continue to use digital tools in some way. In particular, 87.1% of respondents said they are very likely to use digital tools for homework. This was the highest percentage for any of the items. Furthermore, at a combined percentage of 90.3%, teachers indicated that they are either somewhat likely or very likely to continue to

use digital tools for feedback. Positive attitudes towards future use of digital tools for testing and communications with students and colleagues were also evident. Broadly speaking, these might be seen as asynchronous and less interactive digital tools.

Table 4

Projected usage of digital tools in future non-ERT contexts (either face to face or online)

	Very unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Use of digital tools for testing	12.9%	3.2%	3.2%	16.1%	64%
Use of digital tools for homework	9.7%	0	3.2%	0	87.1%
Use of digital tools other than email to communicate with students	12.9%	6.5%	6.5%	22.6%	51.6%
Use of video conferencing to conduct synchronous classes	12.9%	12.9%	22.6%	38.7%	12.9%
Use of video conferencing for other communications with students	9.7%	9.7%	19.4%	29%	32.3%
Use of digital tools to allow students to participate synchronously in courses if they cannot attend face to face classes	16.1%	22.6%	22.6%	19.4%	19.4%
Use of digital tools to allow students to participate asynchronously in courses if they cannot attend face to face classes	9.7%	12.9%	16.1%	35.5%	25.8%
Use of digital tools other than email to communicate with coordinators and colleagues	12.9%	9.7%	6.5%	22.6%	48.4%
Use of digital tools to provide feedback for assignments	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	22.6%	67.7%
Using a variety of digital tools for classwork/homework such as: Flipgrid; Padlet; Quizlet; Kahoot; Mentimeter	9.7%	9.7%	16.1%	12.9%	51.6%

Note. N=31

In relation to the more interactive and synchronous digital tools, such as video conferencing, there was also support for continued usage with over 50% saying they would be likely to use video conferencing either to have consultations with students, or to conduct classes. Additionally, just under 40% suggested that they

might use video conferencing to allow students who could not attend face to face classes to participate. In addition to video conferencing, tools such as Flipgrid, Padlet, Quizlet, Kahoot, Mentimeter are often used in an interactive way. There were positive attitudes to future use of these technologies, with 64.5% of respondents saying they are somewhat or very likely to use them in the future.

Interestingly, there was a positive position on the future use of digital tools to communicate with colleagues. In total, 71% of respondents said they are somewhat or very likely to use digital tools for communication with colleagues in the future.

Section 3 clearly shows positive intentions about the future use of digital tools, both interactive and non-interactive. However, there seems to be a greater willingness to continue the use of non-interactive tools.

Section 4 Optional Comments

In Section 4, respondents were given the opportunity to make optional comments. Thirteen of the respondents chose to make comments in Section 4. The researchers classified five of these as broadly positive, four as broadly negative, and four as mixed, i.e., containing both positive and negative points or neutral. All the comments can be seen in Appendix B.

Firstly, there were four which contained both positive and negative points. One respondent stated that hybrid classes were “*the most difficult style of lessons*”. Another respondent who taught at several universities commented on the differences in support provided by different universities.

Some universities were very supportive in providing hardware such as computers and pocket wifis; others were not. Some provided financial support to part-time faculty.

The negative comments touched on many of the key issues that have been faced by teachers during ERT. These responses highlight some of the key issues such as: poor quality LMS; difficulty in mastering various systems when teaching at multiple universities; poor coordination; lack of training; and failure of students to engage with synchronous classes offered via video conferencing software. These

issues are key and will be addressed in the discussion section.

Finally, there were five positive comments. As with the negative comments in the previous section, these comments touch on some of the positives to emerge from ERT such as: forcing teachers to develop new skills in relation to digital tools; students embracing digital tools; faculty wide development and collaboration; a chance for mask free interaction during a time when Japanese society implemented a strict mask wearing policy.

This concludes the results section. The results will be discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Section 1 Online Teaching Context

The results indicate that many of the teachers had exposure to digital tools prior to spring 2020, and we would suggest that this helped to ease a very abrupt and difficult transition to ERT. Regarding the teaching formats, the first year of ERT seemed straightforward, with most institutions initially offering either synchronous or asynchronous online classes and probably gradually returning to face to face classes as the year went on. As one would expect, the survey revealed more evidence of a return to face to face classes the second and third years of ERT. These results are not surprising, but comments from respondents did reveal the fractious and diverse ways in which institutions handled the necessities of ERT. This suggests that many institutions are still struggling to come to terms with the shift after two and a half years, and have still to develop clear, proactive policies in relation to teaching online. One point that is unclear from the survey data is why institutions are still conducting online classes in AY 2023, when the government has strongly encouraged a return to face to face teaching. Apart from some isolated examples of universities that have chosen to keep certain classes online regardless of the pandemic, we believe that the vast majority of schools are keen to return to face to face teaching, as evidenced by the results from our survey.

Section 2 Support and Training

Our own experiences throughout the pandemic, which included conducting impromptu training for teachers, and anecdotal evidence gained through conversations with teachers at various universities, leads us to believe that more support and training was sorely needed throughout this period. The survey results seem to support this. Universities seemed to offer written advice from administrators in Japanese and while not reflected in the survey, our own experiences were that that advice was mainly administrative and not pedagogical. Furthermore, while there was some training and support offered in English, we feel that much of this was coming from the efforts of teachers and colleagues collaborating to help one another in unprecedented times, with established organisations outside of institutions, such as JALT, also providing assistance.

Section 3 Tech Usage Beyond ERT

This section revealed some of the positive effects of what was a very stressful and difficult period for many teachers. Teachers seem very positive about continuing to use digital tools that are less interactive for purposes such as testing, feedback, and homework. While a positive attitude towards video conferencing software and more interactive digital tools was found, teachers seem more cautious about their continued use. We would strongly suggest that the more interactive tools are very important to future online teaching and adoption in face to face classes and that further support and training is essential moving forward. Thus far, the majority of support and training seems to have come from informal groups and grassroots organisations such as JALT and has been lacking at the institutional level and probably also from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

Another interesting result from Section 3 is that many teachers said they were likely to continue to use digital tools for communication with colleagues. This opens interesting avenues for both administrative meetings and training and support. In terms of the latter, it could well allow for easier access to training and support for a greater number of teachers. This is of particular importance for part-

time teachers, who may not have time to travel to face to face meetings at a number of different universities.

Section 4 Optional Comments

The optional comments proved insightful, and interestingly the split between positive and negative comments was fairly balanced. Issues such as difficulties with access to technology, a lack of connection with students who did not engage during synchronous online lessons, poor LMS that were not ready for the sudden overload brought on by the pandemic, and lack of institutional and coordinator support were highly prevalent. Conversely, many teachers saw this as a learning opportunity and reported improved digital skills. In some situations, it fostered teamwork and opportunities for students to have some interaction at a very difficult time.

Conclusion

We would like to conclude by answering the research questions set out above and by discussing limitations and future research directions that have emerged from this research project.

RQ1 What lesson formats did Japanese universities use during ERT?

Japanese universities offered largely synchronous and asynchronous online classes at the start of ERT with a gradual move back to face to face classes. This shift has not finished, with some institutions still offering online options.

RQ2 What support and training did Japanese university EFL teachers receive during ERT, and was it useful?

Institutional support was largely offered in Japanese and tended to be administrative rather than pedagogical. There was evidence of support and training in English instigated by coordinators. We would also suggest that many used avenues such as colleagues, informal support groups, and groups such as JALT to get support and training.

RQ3 What digital tools are teachers likely to continue to use in their teaching?

It seems that teachers are likely to continue using a wide variety of digital tools. The survey results indicate that teachers are more likely to use digital tools that are less interactive.

RQ4 What digital contexts are likely to exist from now?

The answer to research question 3 would suggest that teachers will continue to use digital tools, but the survey provided no evidence that online teaching using digital tools such as Zoom, or using LMS to deliver on demand classes is likely to continue on any systematic and planned way at the institutional level. Even though the survey did not reveal any evidence of this, the researchers are aware of institutions that plan to continue offering synchronous and asynchronous classes, or are considering making such options available under certain circumstances. However, even those institutions that do offer such options will need to improve on the training and support they provide to teachers. Thus, we can say that to some extent ERT has influenced institutional thinking on some level. However, we would contend that the main digital context over the coming years will be the blended classroom where teachers use traditional face to face instruction as the main pillar of their teaching, and support with digital tools both in the classroom and outside the classroom for homework tasks. However, thought will need to be given to those teachers that are returning to classrooms ill-equipped to use digital tools despite their interest in employing them after their experiences during ERT. In these cases, guidance about how teachers can still best utilise these tools in a limited capacity will be necessary. Furthermore, if institutions continue to offer synchronous and asynchronous options, they will also need to ensure their classrooms, teachers, and students are adequately furnished.

Limitations and Future Research?

Given that this was a pilot study, there are some limitations to our findings. The context is a very limited one, with all the respondents being non-Japanese EFL teachers. Further investigation is warranted into the experiences of Japanese

teachers and administrators. The overall nature of the term digital tools is also limiting. This term did not allow for a more in-depth investigation of what tools the teachers were using and to what extent they were using them. Finally, there is no data on teachers' level of experience and pre-pandemic support and training.

The limitations mentioned above, and the data collected in the survey opens up several potential avenues for future research. Given the sudden nature of the shift to ERT, which was ubiquitous, researchers have been outputting research in this area over the last two years, but more is needed. We would propose that research is needed in the following areas.

Firstly, and most importantly, research is needed in relation to teacher training and support. Issues such as access to training and institutional support is evident in the survey results. Additionally, with the support sometimes being offered in Japanese, this created language barriers for some teachers. Is the responsibility with teachers living in Japan to improve their Japanese language skills, or is it incumbent on institutions to improve their English language support at a time when MEXT is strongly pushing institutions to globalise? Comments in the survey also touched upon institutional financial support for equipment and other expenses related to online teaching. We would contend that this largely relates to employment status with full-time contracted and tenured teachers generally having better financial support than part-time teachers, although the survey did suggest that some part-time teachers received some financial support. The final point related to training and support that warrants further research is the training materials and the medium of delivery, are teachers more likely to engage depending on how training is delivered? We suggested in the discussion above that busy part-time teachers may be more amenable to synchronous training delivered through video conferencing software. And, how can coordinators most effectively implement and provide this training?

In regard to pedagogy and continued use of digital tools, it is important to investigate the extent to which teachers are actually using them and how they are actually using them. In this vital area of pedagogy, materials and the extent to which digital pedagogy has developed needs to be investigated. Also, what happens to

traditional pedagogy? Is there still a place for teachers who do not use any digital tools in their classrooms?

Two final areas for research are ones that were not directly addressed in this paper. Firstly, can research and pedagogical advancements in this narrow context of Japanese university EFL teaching have implications for and applications to other contexts? Secondly, student perspectives are not explored in this paper. Areas such as student experiences of ERT and the digital skills gained would make for good research projects.

Given the multiple areas listed above, it is clear that much research is needed in relation to the events of the past two and a half years and the changes that will emerge from their influence.

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Appendix A

Full Survey

Section 1: Online Teaching Context

1. How would you describe your main teaching situation?
 - Full-time tenured
 - Full-time contracted
 - Part-time
2. Describe your use of digital tools for classwork/homework prior to spring 2020
 - I never used digital tools prior to spring 2020
 - I rarely used digital tools prior to spring 2020
 - I sometimes used digital tools prior to spring 2020
 - I often used digital tools prior to spring 2020
 - I extensively used digital tools prior to spring 2020
3. During the 2020-21 academic school year, what type of online classes did you conduct? Select all relevant answers.
 - Synchronous
 - Asynchronous
 - Hybrid (some students in the classroom and others joining synchronously online using platforms such as Zoom)
 - My institution(s) didn't conduct online classes
4. During the 2021-22 academic school year, what type of online classes did you conduct? Select all relevant answers.
 - Synchronous
 - Asynchronous
 - Hybrid (some students in the classroom and others joining synchronously online using platforms such as Zoom)
 - My institution(s) didn't conduct online classes
5. During the 2022-23 academic school year, what type of online classes is your institution currently providing? Select all relevant answers.
 - Synchronous

- Asynchronous
- Hybrid (some students in the classroom and others joining synchronously online using platforms such as Zoom)
- My institution(s) are not conducting online classes

Section 2: Support and training

What formal institutional training and/or support did you receive during your Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) experiences (spring 2020 onwards)? Did you find it useful?

6. Written advice from the university in Japanese
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Not offered
7. Written advice from the university in English
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Not offered
8. Written advice from a coordinator in Japanese
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Not offered
9. Written advice from a coordinator in English
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Not offered
10. Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online training in Japanese from the university
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Offered, but did not attend
Not offered
11. Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online video training in English from the university
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Offered, but did not attend
Not offered
12. Opportunities for face to face or synchronous online video training from colleagues or online teacher support groups
Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Offered, but did not attend
Not offered

Section 3: Tech usage beyond ERT

In future non-ERT contexts, either face to face or online, to what extent are you likely to use the following digital tools?

13. Use of digital tools for testing

Useful Somewhat useful Not useful Offered, but did not attend
Not offered

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

14. Use of digital tools for homework

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

15. Use of digital tools other than email to communicate with students

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

16. Use of video conferencing to conduct synchronous classes

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

17. Use of video conferencing for other communications with students

- Very unlikely

- Somewhat unlikely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely
18. Use of digital tools to allow students to participate synchronously in courses if they cannot attend face to face classes
- Very unlikely
 - Somewhat unlikely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely
19. Use of digital tools to allow students to participate asynchronously in courses if they cannot attend face to face classes
- Very unlikely
 - Somewhat unlikely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely
20. Use of digital tools other than email to communicate with coordinators and colleagues
- Very unlikely
 - Somewhat unlikely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely
21. Use of digital tools to provide feedback for assignments
- Very unlikely
 - Somewhat unlikely
 - Neither likely nor unlikely
 - Somewhat likely
 - Very likely

22. Using a variety of digital tools for classwork/homework such as: Flipgrid; Padlet; Quizlet; Kahoot; Mentimeter

- Very unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

Do you have any other comments or insights about your ERT teaching experiences or possible future use of digital tools that you would like to share with us?

Appendix B

Optional Comments by Respondents

Positive Comments

Comment 1: ERT forced me to face my fears about online educational tools and provided me with the impetus and time to learn how to implement various online tools in my teaching. The v only good to come see out of the COVID crisis was bringing my teaching skills into 21 st century, if only to a limited degree

Comment 2: I was terrified about it but found it quite fun in the end. I conducted the majority of my classes on Zoom for the entire 90 minutes and felt we could build up a good rapport as students could see each other without masks and it was almost 'normal'. I became a complete convert to Zoom, Google Classroom and Slack. Now I feel at a disadvantage if I work somewhere where I can't use Google Classroom. I plan to use it as much as possible in the future!

Comment 3: We were in a different situation from many as we needed to put a program online. Of course, ERT was difficult and provided many challenges. Just before the pandemic we had put in a proposal to become a BYOD department. Our intention had been to move slowly toward less paper and more digital content. The pandemic forced our hand and we had to accelerate that process. We were online in some way for 4 semesters and we learned a lot during that time. We have been using and will continue to use the university's LMS to deliver materials, conduct tests, post discussion boards, etc. We also often use Kahoots, and other ed tech. We were limited in our use of this before the pandemic, but this has been a good addition to the program.

Comment 4: The students seem very receptive to online and other digital teaching methods such as editing docs via Google Docs rather than a paper version, which they seem to often lose or mishandle. Many students embraced having a laptop or using smartphones when I offered online

components and seem to prefer this to paper handouts. Online tools such as Kahoot, Socrative, and others were received favourably according to surveys.

Comment 5: I believe the "force" to go online these past couple of years has made me appreciate even more how beneficial it is for students to have technical/digital skills and confidence. As a teacher I also need to improve my knowledge and skills to set a good example.

Negative Comments

Comment 1: Students were very unengaged - camera and mic off. I created digital worksheets to make all students do the class activities which meant twice as much prep and marking. Unengaged students were also hugely demotivating. Felt very lonely teaching. No feedback or interaction. Big issue was zoom screen names - students either used kanji I can't read, their student number or weird nicknames. I couldn't call on anyone in class.

Comment 2: I feel that institutions need to adopt an LMS/CMS that will not crash under use in ERT (Typhoons, Earthquakes, Train strikes, etc) and offer proper training to all instructors.

Comment 3: As a part-timer, you are very much at the mercy of how well/willing the full-time coordinator is to embrace digital tools and whether they are able/willing to offer training. It seems that management that didn't like teaching online was eager to return to the classroom in September 2020, whereas management that made it work/embraced it was happy for remote teaching to continue until the vaccines were available.

Comment 4: Also, as a part-timer, spring 2020 meant having to master each institution's differing LMS system and differing methods of instruction tools. Training or "just get on with it" differed from place to place. LMSs vary greatly in quality between institutions. I am using three different LMSs (Manaba, Blackboard, and a proprietary system) at four different schools. It seems as if administrators are not aware of the limitations (i.e., poor quality) of the LMS their institution uses

because they have not had to use other LMSs. FWIW, Manaba is by far and away the worst of the LMSs I use.

Mixed/Neutral Comments

Comment 1: I felt hybrid lessons were the most difficult of the styles of lessons.

Comment 2: Some universities were very supportive in providing hardware such as computers and pocket wifis; others were not. Some provided financial support to part-time faculty.

Comment 3: The first year of synchronous teaching was very difficult since I needed to adapt and change all of my lessons for an online medium. Although it is now easier and more convenient for me to teach online, I think my students have more opportunities to improve their English with in-person classes.

Comment 4: I had some experience in online teaching and much experience with "digital tools" before the pandemic. I am interested in the results of your research.