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# **EIL Pronunciation Research and Practice: Issues, Challenges, and Future Directions**

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## **Abstract**

Relevant research has seen a growing recognition of the crucial role pronunciation plays in teaching English as an International Language (EIL), in achieving effective communication and its close link to the mastery of other aspects of language teaching and learning. In spite of its recognised importance, pronunciation is still a marginalised skill in many EIL programmes due to EIL teachers' lack of required phonetic and phonological knowledge, and the paucity of comprehensive coverage targeted at EIL learners. While there has been much research on phonetic and phonological features of world varieties of English, there has not been a strong research-practice nexus in the field. There is therefore a need to comprehensively review EIL pronunciation teaching, to document what previous research tells us, and to discuss how research can be translated into practice. This article aims to cover a range of current issues concerning EIL pronunciation modelling and theorising, and provides a brief articulation of the current issues surrounding the global spread of English and its theoretical development. Specifically, it considers current EIL research issues, challenges, and their implications for pronunciation practice. It also considers the implications of Gardner's (2008) Five Minds for the Future for EIL pronunciation teaching and postulates the necessity of a sixth mind to navigate the field in the post-pandemic era.

## **1. Introduction**

Pronunciation has been considered to be of immense importance for teaching English as an International Language (EIL), both for achieving effective communication and for developing other aspects of language skills such as listening, speaking, and vocabulary. Nevertheless, many EIL programmes have failed to give due prominence to and coverage of pronunciation as a result of EIL teachers' limited knowledge about English phonetics and phonology. While research on phonetic/phonological theory and EIL pronunciation features has proliferated over the past few decades, research findings have remained largely divorced from the instructional materials for EIL pronunciation teaching. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive review of research on EIL pronunciation in order to shed some light on the practice of EIL pronunciation teaching. This paper reviews key issues surrounding EIL pronunciation modelling and theorising, and briefly discusses the current issues concerning the global spread of English and EIL pronunciation teaching. Specifically, the paper focuses on current issues about, challenges, and implications for EIL pronunciation teaching. In addition, the implications of Gardner's (2008) Five Minds for the Future for EIL pronunciation teaching are explored and the necessity of a sixth mind to adjust to the realities of the new normal posed by the pandemic is postulated.

As EIL is the focal topic in this paper, it is necessary to state the definition used in Low (2015: 7–11), in which EIL as a paradigm acknowledges different varieties of English and how these varieties are used for both international and intercultural communication. Recognising that English is used as an international language also necessitates a polymodel, multi-varietal approach to EIL teaching and learning with pluricentric norms. EIL therefore does not stand in opposition to the English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) paradigm but celebrates the diversity found in each variety and acknowledges that each variety's use and functions are unique to the cultural contexts of its use.

## 2. Issues Concerning EIL Pronunciation Teaching

With the world becoming more globalised, especially with digitalisation blurring all geographical boundaries and English still being one of the most widely used languages for international communication, EIL pronunciation teaching and learning is in great demand. However, there are a number of issues concerning the teaching of EIL pronunciation, ranging from international intelligibility to which norms/models to uphold and the ongoing debate about the efficacy between native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs), just to name a few.

As Low (2015: 143) stated,

in a context where English is spoken by people from many different countries, speaking many different background languages, and belonging to many different cultures, the issue of intelligibility becomes a complicated matter. It is no longer just about defining what constitutes components of intelligibility, but rather, who should one be intelligible to, and for what purpose.

Smith's (1992) conception of how understanding interactions between speaker and listener are achieved via intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability is important. He defined *intelligibility* as referring to the listener's recognition at the word/utterance level, *comprehensibility* as referring to the listener's ability to understand word/utterance meaning, and *interpretability* as referring to the listener's ability to infer meanings behind the word/utterance. Smith asserted that it was far easier to achieve intelligibility than comprehensibility or interpretability. While comprehensibility is mostly affected by language proficiency, interpretability is mostly affected by how familiar participants are with different varieties of English and how pragmatic meanings are conveyed in different varieties. Smith's seminal study reveals that native speakers are neither the ones who are most easily understood nor the ones who are most familiar with different varieties of English. Consequently, to achieve overall understanding in EIL contexts, speakers of different varieties of English need to be familiar with each other's varieties, which includes accentedness, perceived comprehensibility between native and non-native English speakers (Munro & Derwing, 1995; Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro, Derwing & Morton, 2006), and phonetic or phonological aspects (Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Date, 2005; Field, 2005; Hahn, 2004; Setter, 2005; Suntornsawet, 2019). Studies reviewed show that in terms of phonetics/phonology, certain features determine whether speech is intelligible or

unintelligible. However, some questions still remain to be answered, for example, ‘By what standards are they intelligible or unintelligible?’ and ‘What norms should EIL teachers and learners adhere to in order to achieve maximal intelligibility?’

Norms have also been extensively discussed based on Kachru’s (1992) Three Circles model, which was conceptualized initially to account for the types of spread, patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts. Inner Circle countries are those in which English was first spoken in native contexts and which are seen to be norm-providers. Outer Circle countries are those in which English is mainly spoken as a second language and which are norm-developing while Expanding Circle varieties are those in which English is used as a foreign language and which tend to depend on Inner Circle varieties as norms and are hence called ‘norm-dependent varieties’. Low (2015) proposed moving away from speaker-dominated norms to ‘listener-dominated norms’ which were adapted from Levis’ (2005) speaker-listener intelligibility matrix (see Low, 2015: 130). She proposed that to ensure successful communication, speakers should try as hard as they can to achieve intelligibility with their listeners. Which norms to adopt is thus dependent on where listeners come from. If the listeners are from Inner Circle countries, then Inner Circle norms should be adhered to; if they are from Outer and Expanding Circle countries, the corresponding norms should be adopted. To ensure that the relevant norm works effectively in EIL communication settings, learners need to be exposed to the linguistic features, in this case phonological features, of not only the Outer and Expanding Circle Englishes but also the Inner Circle varieties. Low’s listener-dominated norms resonates with Pakir’s (2010) fourth quadrant in her quadrant analysis of norms embraced in International English, English as a lingua franca, and World Englishes. In Pakir’s fourth quadrant, pluricentric norms are upheld and no one model dominates but the norms shift according to the audience and goals of communication. Note that Low’s mooted listener-dominated norms did not ignore the speaker-listener interactional dynamics needed to achieve successful communication as promulgated by Kachru and Smith (2008). She also did not ignore the importance of speaker and listener accommodation as observed by Yazan (2015: 203): ‘what is being emphasized by pronunciation-oriented ELF researchers nowadays is how people with different language backgrounds *achieve* intelligibility through accommodation while retaining their own “accents” and how they can be trained towards mutual understanding, with a focus on the hearer’s responsibility as well as the speaker’s (original emphasis).’

As stated earlier, Kachru (1992) considers Outer Circle countries to be norm-developing while Expanding Circle countries are dependent on Inner Circle norms. However, with the increase in the use of EIL, this may not always be the case. Low (2010) provided clear acoustic evidence that Expanding Circle varieties share features, at least in terms of rhythmic patterning, with both Inner Circle (norm-providing) and Outer Circle (norm-developing) varieties. Based on her findings, Low (2010: 401–402) developed a Venn Diagram (see Figure 1) showing that the Inner Circle is no longer encapsulated within the Outer and Expanding Circle varieties as a concentric circle and that ‘there is a definite centrifugal push away from global norms towards local norms ...’.

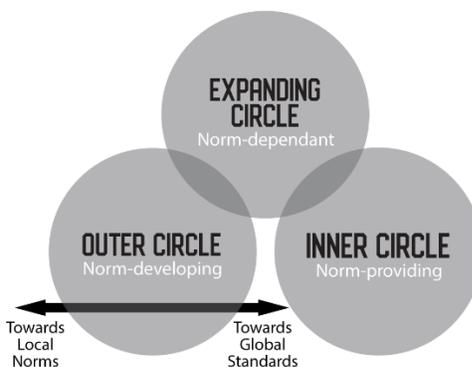


Figure 1. The changing relationship of Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles (adapted from Low, 2010)

Moving away from just native speaker norms, an appropriate model for EIL pronunciation teaching is ideally one that has some core phonological features to ensure international intelligibility and one that also incorporates some local pronunciation features. Jenkins' (2000) study of unintelligibility among non-native speakers of English led her to propose a list of more teachable and learnable pronunciation components which she termed the Lingua Franca Core (for details, see Jenkins, 2000; Dauer, 2005). The LFC is not without issues, however (for more details, see Dauer, 2005), including emphasizing segmentals and downplaying suprasegmentals, which other scholars have advocated as being important (e.g. Gilbert, 1993; Miller, 2000). Jenkins (2000) first explained that those studies were based entirely on native-speaker listeners, whose way of processing speech may be different from that of non-native listeners. Second, some components included in the LFC are not really more teachable and learnable whereas some components excluded are in fact quite teachable and learnable. Finally, the data which the LFC was based on were those of British English and hence may not be representative of other Inner Circle varieties such as American English (see Dauer, 2005). In spite of such criticisms, the LFC casts some new light on research into models for EIL pronunciation teaching.

Following from the debate about native versus non-native norms for EIL pronunciation, the debate about NESTs versus NNESTs has been prominent the field. What constitutes a native speaker is still in debate. Several definitions of a native speaker have been given by scholars in the field. Bloomfield (1933) saw a native speaker as someone who speaks a language as the first language (L1) from a very young age. Paikeday (1985) agreed and added that the competence and ability to use the language idiomatically should be included in the definition. While Kachru (1992) defined native speakers as those who were born, bred, and live in the Inner Circle, Davies' (2003) definition takes into account a speaker's sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and communicative competence; educational background; and the exceptional proficiency equivalent to a Kachru-described native speaker of a language. Mukherjee (2005) emphasised the competent use of the language, describing a native speaker as one with good intuition of what is lexically and grammatically possible, and one who is able to appropriately use the language according to the linguistic norms of the speech community. Rather than scholars defining native and non-native

speakers, other studies looked at NESTs' and NNESTs' self-perceptions and how students who were taught by NESTs and NNESTs perceived their teachers (Anchimbe, 2006; Braine, 2010; Cheung, 2002; Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002; Maum, 2002; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). While learning and performance were not affected with regard to whether students are taught by NESTs or NNESTs, which shows pronunciation pedagogical skills are more dependent on the teaching practices of the teacher rather than the native pronunciation of teachers, students still preferred being taught by NESTs, confirming that the bias for NESTs or the 'native speaker fallacy' (Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik & Sasser, 2004; Levis, Sonsaat, Link & Barriuso, 2016; Philipson, 1992) still exists.

This biasness limits the advantages that NNESTs are able to bring to students, such as having deep insights into the English language as they had learnt it as a second language, having had to acquire higher qualifications than NESTs to distinguish themselves from NESTs, and having empathy for their students as language learners (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). These experiences of NNESTs are consistent with McKay's (2018: 21) basic principles of teaching EIL, which 'support a pluricentric view of standards, recognises the value of students' other languages, endeavours to promote pragmatic sensitivity, and respects the various cultures from which its speakers come'.

### **3. Challenges for EIL Pronunciation Teaching**

Several challenges confront the field of EIL pronunciation teaching. One challenge faced by NNESTs comes from a bias against them in the English language teaching (ELT) profession. For example, in intensive ELT programmes in the United States, NESTs take up 92.1% and only 7.9% are NNESTs, most of whom are hired as part-time teachers (Low, 2015). Clark and Paran (2007) reported that 72.3% of their respondents considered a native speaker criterion to be either moderately or very important in hiring ELT teachers. Rajagopalan (2005), studying NNESTs in Brazil, reported that the NNESTs were worried about their career development and financial prospects, given that they were being treated as 'second-class' compared to NESTs. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the keynote and invited speakers in many English language conferences has always been native English speakers rather than non-native English-speaking scholars. Another challenge is related to communicative competence, a concept which is of prime importance to EIL (Acar, 2007). Low (2014), following Hymes (1977) and Canale and Swain (1980), stated that communicative competence includes grammatical or linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discoursal competence, and strategic competence. Low (2014: 93) elaborated on each type of competence:

Grammatical competence refers to knowledge about the linguistic rules of a language (phonetics, phonology, syntax, lexicon and semantics). Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use the language appropriately according to audience (who), domain (the setting in which the conversation is taking place), timing (when the conversation is taking place) and the topic (what one is talking about) and to help understand language as used in its context. Next, discoursal competence refers to aspects of cohesion (how a text is linked) and coherence (knowledge of how to logically connect ideas in a text). Finally, strategic competence is the ability to repair breakdowns in communication in order to achieve the goals of communication.

Both teachers and learners face the challenge of developing their multicultural competence, which ‘includes a deep understanding and appreciation of one’s own culture and the culture of other users of EIL in order to understand the cultural norms that will impact the use of the English language in these multicultural contexts’ (Low, 2015: 133). Low (2015) argued that unless multicultural competence is developed along with grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursual, and strategic competences, communicative competence in EIL cannot be achieved.

A third challenge is in the area of assessment. To tackle this challenge, one must first address questions such as ‘How should assessment in the EIL pronunciation classroom work in a way that can inform the instructor about areas of attention that the learners require and how can assessment be used as a form of learning rather than as a diagnostic tool?’ and ‘If a diagnostic test of oral pronunciation for EIL is indeed needed for admission requirements, what should the international benchmark be set against?’ (Low, 2015: 146). Jenkins (2006) suggested that the system of English language testing be overhauled as English has spread around the world, resulting in distinctive features of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary from local linguistic and cultural influences. A range of educated second language (L2) users have emerged, whose varieties of English may be different from Inner Circle English norms. Many see these features as deviations from the native-speaker English norm and indicative of negative transfer or interference from the L2 users’ first languages. Jenkins cited Lowenberg’s (2002) observation that there is remarkable similarity between the linguistic innovation processes of native and non-native varieties of English in that what are initially linguistic errors gradually become accepted new standard forms if they are widely used. The issue then rests with whether international tests accept non-native English norms or only accept native English norms against which one’s English proficiency is benchmarked.

Taylor (2002) reported that the Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages Board has been working hard to address the need for more detailed descriptions of the types of norms identified in different EIL varieties for examination boards to refer to. Jenkins (2006) recommended that, in this interim phase in which the tests are evolving to accommodate different norms, the examination boards could rely on some corpora built on successful communication between non-native speakers of English to lay down their testing criteria, namely, Seidlhofer’s Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) (Seidlhofer, 2001), Mauranen’s Corpus of Academic English (Mauranen, 2003), and Jenkins’ LFC and research into phonological accommodation (Jenkins, 2000). Due to the fact that it takes time for the EIL criteria to be set up, Jenkins suggested that test-takers should not be penalised for systematically using certain non-native English variants, and that it is unfair to penalise speakers just because their pronunciation converges towards non-native English forms or diverges from native English forms. Jenkins further proposed that the emerging EIL variety should not be ignored, that a pluricentric EIL approach to English language testing be adopted, and that EIL users be given freedom to use their non-native norms to express their unique socio-cultural identities.

Taylor (2006) further suggested that speaking tests should consider a multiplicity of factors, including the accuracy, appropriacy, and range in the use of grammar and vocabulary; the extent, coherence, and relevance of the speaker's contribution; the ability to achieve comprehensibility in communication by using individual vowels, consonants, intonation, stress, and rhythm; and the ability to employ communication strategies for effective and meaningful communicative outcomes. Thus, the focus in assessment is not centrally on adherence to NS norms but on comprehensibility of the message and effective communicative outcomes.

#### **4. Implications for EIL Pronunciation Teaching and Future Directions**

A review of EIL pronunciation research has yielded many implications for practice. Moussu and Llurda (2008) suggested that preservice courses should be offered in TESOL programmes to prepare NESTs and NNESTs for the realities of the EIL classroom, and to equip them with the pedagogical tools and knowledge required to succeed. In addition, the two groups of teachers need to be provided with ample opportunities for collaboration and also team teaching because they both have strengths which they can share with each other, as indicated by research on students' perceptions of teachers cited in the prior section.

Students need to be aware of and exposed to different varieties of English through teachers who are speakers of different English accents and pronunciation models. If there is no face-to-face opportunity, students may view online videos of speech produced by speakers of different English varieties. It is also imperative that the multiplicity of cultures be understood and appreciated so that intercultural, social, and pragmatic norms can be conformed to when students communicate with speakers of other varieties of English around the world. This is pertinent especially for online meetings or classes that see participants from all over the globe. Phan (2020: 96–100) identified teaching materials that reflect the diversity of English and suggested using teachers' past experiences in foreign countries. However, some teachers participating in Phan's study felt that 'the diversity of English should only be introduced to students whose English levels were more advanced' as 'introducing other varieties of English to beginner learners might be confusing or overwhelming' (Phan, 2020: 101).

The fact that primary stress placement is important at the word and the utterance level suggests that it should be incorporated into the EIL pronunciation curriculum (Hahn, 2004). Teachers should also focus on where stress is placed when introducing new lexical items in vocabulary lessons. Pennington and Ellis (2000) found that learners who received explicit audiovisual instruction improved in their primary stress placement patterns significantly, indicating that primary stress, which is helpful for overall intelligibility in speech communication, is teachable. Pedagogically, contrastive stress can be practised and embedded into situations in which students are asked to express disagreement or to oppose others' views, and examples of misunderstanding or miscommunication arising from differences in primary stress placement would be helpful. Levis (2005) suggested some ways of focusing on stress instruction ranging from the usual stress perception exercises to those that help students produce weak syllables (in function words, in particular), which assist listeners in differentiating them from content words in

longer utterances and promote overall intelligibility. Stress placement can also be taught through rules governing English word stress (Low, 2015: Chapter 7).

Another important implication of previous research for EIL pronunciation is that intelligibility should take priority in both EIL communication and EIL pronunciation teaching and learning. In order to achieve mutual intelligibility, Sifakis and Sougari (2005) underlined the need for EIL interlocutors to achieve different levels of comprehensible discourse. However, their definition of EIL was limited to communication between non-native speakers of English. I would extend the definition to also encompass speech interactions between native and non-native speakers of English, which are important in the contexts of communication where pronunciation plays a key role in achieving mutual intelligibility, especially in globalised settings. Intelligibility is influenced by many factors, such as rate of speech, accent familiarity, dialect and topic familiarity, and grammatical and discursal features (Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta, & Balasubramanian, 2005). Sifakis and Sougari (2005) argued that it also facilitates the expression of the sense of sociocultural identity of the speakers. Rajadurai (2007) looked at previous research on intelligibility and proposed ways forward to promote further investigation. Apart from other concerns, the role of the listener is considered to be an aspect of intelligibility to which sufficient importance has not been attached, and so is the role of speakers to accommodate their speech productively and receptively to their interlocutors in cross-cultural communications.

In EIL communicative contexts, a minimum number of standard pronunciation elements should be available (as in the LFC) to ensure mutual intelligibility, but achieving native-like proficiency for L2 learners should be recognised as being unrealistic. Adopting a pronunciation core, however, is not without risks when put into practice; for example, teachers and learners may adopt the extreme approach of regarding the non-core features as being expendable and excluding them from EIL pronunciation teaching and learning, which may negatively impact the learning of other language skills, such as listening and vocabulary. For these reasons, Suntornsawet (2019) suggested that a pronunciation core should be used to assess learner communication skills in authentic contexts rather than as a model for teaching EIL pronunciation. Teachers should inspire learners to acquire the pronunciation of the target variety to their highest potential while being aware of the fact that native-like pronunciation is an unrealistic goal and may overburden certain learners. Furthermore, Suntornsawet advocated that English pronunciation cores should be developed by local researchers, educators, and authorities instead of native-speaker scholars based in Anglophone countries because the former have the necessary exposure to the local socio-cultural context.

Some of the areas of EIL pronunciation teaching and learning call for urgent investigation. Firstly, as Matsuda and Matsuda (2018) rightfully pointed out, teacher preparation programmes in the Expanding Circle (and perhaps Inner and Outer Circles as well) need to further understand how EIL teachers should be prepared and how to incorporate EIL pronunciation norms and approaches into these programmes. Secondly, more research is needed to advance the understanding of how EIL pronunciation teachers from different contexts manage to provide their students with exposure to different varieties of English, how such exposure can be incorporated into the curriculum and

teaching practice, and how the research may be implemented. Thirdly, more research is needed to debunk the ‘native speaker fallacy’. Fourthly, more systematic research on communicative strategies in EIL contexts needs to be locally done, and researchers should explore how their research can lead to programmes that develop the strategic skills for speakers who aspire to succeed in communications in EIL.

Considering that global communication is affected by the realities of EIL, and now also how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work, and learn overnight and potentially forever, I propose applying Howard Gardner’s (2008) Five Minds for the Future, with an additional mind from my own observation, as a lens to view EIL pronunciation teaching and learning. In a society where interdisciplinary knowledge has become widely advocated, a teacher must possess disciplinary depth, viz., a *disciplined mind* to master the key conceptual knowledge necessary for EIL pronunciation teaching. This refers to knowledge of segmental and suprasegmental features of as many varieties of English as possible in order to be able to model pluricentric norms. Next, EIL instructors must have a *synthesising mind* in selecting crucial information from the vast reservoir of data, arranging it in a way that makes sense to their students (Gardner, 2008). This is especially important in the digitally mediated, information-rich world, where the quality and credibility of much of the information available is highly questionable. EIL pronunciation teachers need to keep abreast of the latest research and technology to tap into the best digital pronunciation apps and resources that have been adopted, such as *Moo-O*, *Hooked on Phonics*, *Endless ABC*, *Twinkl*, *Khan Kids*, by trialling these and assessing their effectiveness for themselves. Yet it must be acknowledged that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. A teacher must also have a *creating mind* to think inside and outside the box, to go ‘beyond existing knowledge and syntheses to pose new questions, offer new solutions, fashion works that stretch existing genres or configure new ones’ (Gardner, 2008: 156). When available tools and materials are not suitable, teachers must be willing to create and innovate teaching methods and resources. One such case is that of the *Well Said!* mobile app, which was developed because of a shortage of pronunciation resources that are produced by non-native speakers of standard English and that appropriately visually demonstrate dynamic articulatory movements. The benefits of mobile app development are that learners can practise anytime and anywhere.

Gardner’s first three minds may be summarised as the depth, breadth, and stretch of knowledge (Davis and Gardner, 2012). While these are cognitive domains, the next two minds may be described as how one person relates to another (Davis and Gardner, 2012). A *respectful mind* is one where teachers can sympathetically respond to the many differences that people have while genuinely trying to understand the differences and respond to each other’s motivations (Gardner, 2008; Davis and Gardner, 2012). In pronunciation, this refers to a deep respect for speakers of different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, who speak a multiplicity of English varieties with distinct accents. An EIL pronunciation teacher must expose students to the different varieties of World Englishes and encourage them to think further about the sociocultural dimensions that each variety and accent brings. This leads to the related *ethical mind*, which considers one’s role as a local and global citizen (Gardner, 2008; Davis and Gardner, 2012). The

ethical mind helps to anchor EIL pronunciation teachers in both technical excellence and also ethics to ensure that each student is nurtured into a self-regulated learner and responsible citizen.

I end by mooted a sixth mind necessary to take the field into the future, that is, a *digitally literate* mind. Technological disruption – which brought about the arrival of augmented and virtual reality, artificial intelligence, data science, and big data analytics – came to the fore in the recent pandemic when our classrooms were transformed overnight from a physical to a digital space. How can we ensure that our students’ learning continues uninterrupted by the lack of access to technology and Wi-Fi, and how can we tap into the many digital affordances and artificial intelligence to monitor our students’ learning progress from our homes to theirs, which has become of prime importance to ensure that learning continues uninterrupted? In the case of EIL pronunciation, teachers need to take advantage of technological affordances and to connect with students using digital platforms to keep learning going on any time, during crises or worldwide disruptions. A good exemplar are the NNESTs in the Philippines who have been teaching English students in China over online platforms and videoconferencing (*The Straits Times*, 2020). Digital tools have opened a whole range of opportunities. For example, the issue of learners getting used to different varieties can be circumvented with digital affordances. Teachers can compile videos with speakers of different varieties or curate their own content to be played virtually. In some videoconferencing platforms, there is an option to break out into smaller groups and while some students are viewing the videos, teachers can devote personalized attention to individual learners. In tandem with the creating mind, teachers may collaborate with education app developers or learn programming themselves to create content and personalised learning apps. Another area of opportunity is the development of a digital assessment diagnostic tool in which AI can be used to automatically tag learners’ conversations to identify instances of communication breakdown caused by pronunciation issues. Technology can also be used to identify weaker students and to propose independent learning solutions to students before a teacher steps in. A digitally literate mind, open to exploring, synthesising, and creating new ways of teaching and learning in a virtual space, albeit respectfully and ethically, appears to be the way forward in keeping teaching and learning going in the new pandemic and post-pandemic era.

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