Enhancing Large-Class Language Teaching: Co-Teaching Strategies, Technology Integration, and Student Engagement

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Abstract

Teaching large language classes presents unique challenges in maintaining engagement and personalized instruction. This study explores innovative approaches through a qualitative case study of LANG1234: Professional Speaking for the Workplace, an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course at a Hong Kong university designed to develop professional communication skills across disciplines in a large class size format. Grounded in the ESP principle of addressing learners' specific professional needs, the course features modules on branding, crisis communication, and intercultural competence. Drawing on instructor reflections and course documents, the paper examines how co-teaching models, technology integration, and active learning strategies are deployed to overcome the constraints of the large-class format. Findings indicate that collaborative co-teaching, digital tools (e.g., Miro, Mentimeter), and structured interactions successfully foster an interactive, skills-based learning environment. The study also identifies key challenges, including instructor role ambiguity and the 'disjuncture' of teaching profession-specific content, underscoring the need for structured professional development to support ESP educators in effectively scaling interactive, communicative language instruction.

Introduction

Lecturing in large classes can make student engagement challenging, as it often creates a passive learning environment, particularly for students with long contact hours (Ekeler, 1994; LoCastro, 2001; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010; Urbano & Quiroz Montilla, 2010). Active learning strategies (Biggs, 1989; Motteram & Dawson, 2025; Rezi & Bedra, 2024) can help foster engagement, as meaningful interaction between students and the teaching context encourages deeper learning and higher-quality outcomes. However, students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and abilities may struggle to follow lectures in large classes. In a crowded lecture hall, instructors cannot address every student's needs, and opportunities for student-teacher interaction diminish. As a result, students may disengage or lose focus. Additionally, gauging comprehension and providing timely feedback becomes difficult for instructors in such settings. While some teachers attempt to stimulate discussion by posing questions, Hong Kong students tend to be more passive than their Western counterparts (Choi, 2016), making them hesitant to respond.

The growing demand for language education in higher education has led to larger class sizes, presenting both opportunities and challenges. A notable example of innovation in this area is *LANG1234* (pseudonym): *Professional Speaking for the Workplace*, a three-credit language course designed as an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course to target students' professional language needs, which was launched last year and offered in both Fall and Spring terms. The course meets twice weekly for 1.5-hour sessions and is designed to equip students from different faculties at the university with professional communication skills for diverse workplace scenarios. Due to the nature of the course, the instructor chosen to conceptualise the course design and syllabus was someone who had started their career as a language teacher after significant industry experience in areas such as business development, marketing, and social work. Thus, the course incorporates modules on personal branding, intercultural business meetings, and crisis communication, to provide students with practical strategies combined with theoretical insight to influence diverse workplace audiences using multiple modes of communication. Combining interactive tutorials with hands-on assessments, including video presentations, simulated press conferences, and reflective analyses, the course prepares students to navigate real-world communication challenges while meeting specific learning outcomes tied to persuasion, situational awareness, and collaborative problem-solving. Unlike traditional language courses offered by the university's language center, *LANG1234* employs a unique structure combining large plenary sessions with smaller tutorial-style classes. During 90-minute plenary lectures (with 40-60 students), instructors deliver core content through interactive presentation styles using tools such as Miro and Mentimeter while 90-minute tutorials (20 students) provide enhanced skills practice. The course addresses eight key learning outcomes, from audience analysis and cultural sensitivity to reflective practice. More specifically, the course seeks to enable students to analyze workplace communication needs, craft strategic messages, and deliver them persuasively using appropriate verbal, nonverbal, and multimodal techniques for diverse audiences. Students are expected to develop intercultural competence, collaborative skills, and reflective practice to evaluate and improve their professional communication effectiveness in various workplace contexts. Students demonstrate understanding through graded simulations (e.g., Week 3's elevator pitch recordings) and tutorial and take-home tasks that require applying lecture concepts to workplace communication challenges while all teachers share the same lesson plan for each class session. By exploring spoken genres and communication theories, students learn to adapt their language strategies for various professional audiences, including clients, colleagues, and supervisors.

The *Professional Speaking for the Workplace* language course offered in a university at Hong Kong illustrates as a case study how instructors navigate large-class instruction through co-teaching, technology integration, and active learning strategies. Reflections from the course instructors—referred to here by pseudonyms: Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and Teacher D—highlight both the successes and challenges of this approach. Their reflective accounts on co-teaching in large plenaries, integrating technology, and implementing active learning strategies offer valuable insights into effective large-class language instruction. The course's focus on multimodal communication and professional speaking skills makes it highly relevant to today's workplace communication needs, while its unconventional structure provides important lessons on scaling language education effectively.

This paper explores the professional development (PD) implications of teaching large language courses, analyzing instructor reflections alongside literature on language pedagogy, ESP, technology-enhanced learning, and co-teaching models. This *LANG1234* case study demonstrates how courses can maintain interactive, skills-based language learning even in larger formats, while also identifying areas where targeted instructor support is most crucial.

Literature Review

Defining Large Language Classrooms

Recent scholarship on large class language teaching underscores the significant pedagogical challenges that arise when class sizes limit opportunities for individualized instruction and meaningful interaction. Brown (2001) argues that an ideal language class should consist of no more than 12 students to optimize effective learning and teaching due to the need for sufficient individual attention. Contemporary studies generally align with this view, considering classes exceeding 25 students large enough to require substantially different teaching strategies (Bikowski, Park, & Tytko, 2022; Motteram & Dawson, 2025). Bikowski et al. (2022) highlight the complexities of large-enrollment language classes, especially online, where interaction and individual feedback become challenging. Similarly, Motteram and Dawson (2025) emphasize the integration of digital tools and active learning approaches to enhance engagement in larger classes. Other scholars suggest that classes larger than 15 students already face constraints on opportunities for meaningful practice and feedback (LoCastro, 2001; Urbano & Quiroz Montilla, 2010).

The relativity of 'large-class' definitions become particularly apparent in cross-cultural educational comparisons. What some Western educational systems consider large, typically 25-30 students, may represent standard or even small class sizes in other contexts, particularly in developing countries where 60+ student classes are common (Marzulina, 2022; Ramana, 2013). This variability has led researchers and educational organizations like INEE (n.d.) to argue that the operational definition should focus less on absolute numbers and more on the point at which fundamental challenges of classroom management, individual feedback provision, and student engagement become pronounced and require specialized teaching strategies. The diminished opportunities for meaningful interaction in large classes directly conflict with communicative language teaching principles that emphasize authentic dialogue and frequent practice (Brown, 2001; Marazulina, 2022; Panhwar, Barich & Shahzad, 2020; Zaroog, 2021). These factors collectively necessitate adapted teaching methods and modified materials to maintain engagement and instructional effectiveness at scale.

Challenges of Large-Class Language Teaching

Classroom management emerges as a primary concern, with instructors reporting significant difficulties in maintaining order, keeping students focused, and ensuring instructions are effectively communicated to all learners in large group settings (Anderson, 2023; British Council, 2015; LoCastro, 2001). These management challenges are exacerbated by the physical constraints of large classrooms, which often lack the flexible seating arrangements or spatial configurations that facilitate interactive language activities (Sanako, n.d.).

Perhaps the most pedagogically significant challenge lies in the severe limitation of individual attention and personalized feedback opportunities. In language learning contexts where students often have diverse proficiency levels and learning needs, the inability to provide tailored support can substantially hinder progress (Hadi & Arante, 2015; Hess, 2010). The situation is particularly problematic for productive skills like speaking and writing, which traditionally require more individualized feedback for meaningful improvement (Bughio, 2023; Rezi & Bedra, 2024; Zaroog, 2021).

Physical resource limitations further compound these pedagogical challenges. Many institutions lack adequate classroom infrastructure, technological tools, and instructional materials suitable for effective language teaching in large groups (Bughio, 2013). As Anderson (2023) notes, this scarcity often forces instructors to default to traditional lecture-based methods that directly contradict contemporary communicative language teaching principles.

The psychological impact on teachers represents another critical dimension of large-class challenges. Instructors frequently report feelings of frustration and burnout stemming from the constant demands of managing large groups while being unable to establish meaningful connections with individual students (Hadi & Arante, 2015). Recent research by Panhwar, Barich and Shahzad (2020) highlights how these challenges manifest in monitoring student progress. The resulting gaps in learning monitoring can lead to unnoticed skill deficiencies and uneven progress across student populations. These monitoring challenges are compounded when attempting to implement interactive activities like pair or group work, which become logistically complex and potentially chaotic in large classes (Zaroog, 2021).

Co-Teaching in Large Language Classes

Recent educational research has increasingly explored co-teaching as a potential solution to the challenges of large language classes. The literature positions co-teaching as a collaborative instructional model where two or more educators share responsibility for planning, delivering, and assessing instruction to a diverse student group within a single classroom (Friend, 2014; York-Barr et al., 2007). This model shows particular promise for addressing the individual attention and engagement challenges prevalent in large language classes (Panhwar et al., 2020).

The theoretical foundation of co-teaching rests on its ability to combine complementary educator expertise, creating instructional synergies that benefit diverse learners. As Boland et al. (2019) demonstrate, this collaborative approach allows for more targeted support without segregating students. The model's flexibility enables implementation of simultaneous small-group instruction, differentiated activities, and integrated language-content learning - all

particularly valuable in large class contexts (Forsman, 2024). These advantages help explain the growing adoption of co-teaching in language programs.

Empirical studies have documented several significant benefits of co-teaching in language education contexts. Boland et al.'s (2019) comparative research found that students in co-taught EFL classrooms demonstrated markedly higher achievement across all four language skills compared to peers in traditional single-instructor classes. The shared instructional responsibility inherent in co-teaching appears to create more responsive learning environments where student needs can be addressed more promptly and effectively (York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommerness, 2007). Additionally, the collaborative planning process required for effective co-teaching fosters valuable professional development opportunities as teachers reflect on and refine their practices collectively (Forsman, 2024).

However, the literature also identifies important implementation considerations for successful co-teaching. Forsman's (2024) research emphasizes that effective co-teaching relationships require substantial investments in mutual respect, shared goals, and institutional support structures. The model's success depends on careful coordination, including clear role delineation, regular co-planning sessions, and ongoing professional development focused on collaborative teaching skills (Friend, 2014; York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommerness, 2007). These requirements present both logistical and cultural challenges for institutions accustomed to traditional solo-teaching models.

Navigating Large-Class Language Teaching Challenges

Contemporary approaches to large-class language teaching increasingly emphasize communicative and task-based methodologies that maintain interactive, learner-centered instruction despite scale-related challenges. Rezi and Bedra (2024) document how these approaches successfully enhance language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening skills, by creating authentic contexts for real-world language use, which prove particularly valuable in large classes learner autonomy and motivation.

Technology integration has become a pivotal strategy in addressing the challenges of large-class language teaching. Research demonstrates that platforms such as Kahoot! significantly improve learning outcomes by fostering motivation and providing real-time feedback, particularly in large classrooms where individualized attention is difficult (Wang & Tahir, 2020). Similarly, AI tools, Mentimeter and Miro facilitate collaborative learning and instant feedback, helping instructors maintain interactivity even in high-enrollment settings (Irawati et al., 2025). These tools align with the need for innovative solutions in large-class pedagogy, where traditional methods often fall short in promoting active participation (Marzulina, 2022; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). However, while such technologies offer scalable engagement, scholars emphasize meaningful human interaction to sustain effective language learning (INEE, n.d.).

Cultural responsiveness represents another critical dimension of effective large-class language instruction. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, culturally sensitive teaching practices have grown from desirable to essential (Irawati et al., 2025; Rezi & Bedra, 2024). This shift reflects broader recognition that language learning is inextricably linked to cultural understanding and that inclusive pedagogies benefit all learners. The success of an integrated approach to large class teaching for scaling depends on thoughtful implementation, ongoing professional development, and institutional support structures.

ESP Syllabus Design for Professional Communication in Large Classes

The pedagogical design of the *LANG1234* course aligns with English for Specific Purposes (ESP), an approach where curriculum and instruction are driven by learners' specific professional communication needs (Akhadova, 2025). A cornerstone of ESP is a process that involves tailoring course content, materials, and assessments to the authentic tasks of the target workplace (Aguaguiña Pilla et al., 2025). The *LANG1234* course, with its modules on personal branding and crisis communication, exemplifies this by moving beyond general English to teach profession-specific speaking skills.

A central challenge in ESP is the integration of subject-specific content, which can cause a "disjuncture" for language teachers required to teach beyond their primary expertise (Mehisto, 2008). In large-class settings, this challenge is amplified, requiring strategic use of authentic materials and contextualized learning tasks like simulations to bridge the gap between language and professional practice (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand how instructors in a large-format ESP course navigate the integration of professional content and language teaching, and what PD support is most effective in mitigating the associated challenges of disjuncture.

Methods

Participants and Context

This study analyzed four language instructors' written reflections about teaching a course that expanded from 20-25 to 40-60 students. Three were instructors, while one also served as a materials developer. While two of the reflections came from local Hong Kong teachers, one reflection was written by a Canadian instructor and another by an instructor from the UK. Primary data included attributed written reflections from an institutional platform, focusing on co-teaching, technology use and engagement strategies in large classes. The primary data consisted of detailed written reflections posted by the instructors on their institution's internal scholarship platform, a space where faculty share teaching insights for peer engagement. Unlike anonymous postings, these reflections were attributed, allowing for direct follow-up when clarification was needed. These reflections are posted following up on the peer observation of teaching exercise that teachers engage in at least once a year. The starting point of this reflection writing is usually after they have engaged in a dialogue with the colleague whose class the instructor observed or after the instructor was observed by their colleague. The output of this reflective dialogue is a written reflective account by each instructor, which is uploaded on the language centre's common digital platform designed for sharing teaching and scholarly experiences. Although the reflections were not anonymous on the internal platform, all identifiable details, including the course code, institution name, and instructors' names, were anonymized in this study. The use of attributed reflections was mitigated by aggregating data to prevent individual identification in publication. By analyzing these as situated experiences, the study contributes to broader discussions on scaling language instruction while offering insights into how educators adapt to changing classroom dynamics.

Data Collection: Teacher Reflections

Four teacher reflections and course documents (syllabi and assessments) were analyzed to triangulate findings and contextualize reflections. One particularly structured form of teacher reflection, the critical incidents approach, was used for this study. In this form of reflection educators focus on analyzing specific, memorable events, including successes or struggles, which had a significant impact on teaching or learning. A critical incident is an event that stands out due to its influence on the teacher's practice, such as a lesson that failed unexpectedly, a breakthrough moment with a struggling student, or a classroom management challenge that led to a new strategy.

Teacher reflections as a data collection method have several defining characteristics. First, they are self-reported and introspective, revealing tacit knowledge such as unspoken assumptions and intuitive decisions that shape classroom interactions. Second, reflections provide contextual and authentic insights into classroom life (Borg, 2013). Unlike formal assessments or third-party observations, they capture the teacher's real-time decision-making processes, including spontaneous adjustments made during lessons. Third, reflections are iterative and developmental, meaning they encourage continuous improvement. By regularly documenting and revisiting their experiences, teachers can identify patterns, track growth over time, and refine their instructional strategies. Finally, reflections are primarily qualitative and narrative-based, often taking the form of written journals, audio logs, or video diaries. This allows for rich, descriptive data that highlights the teacher's voice and perspective.

However, the personal nature of reflections make them susceptible to subjectivity and bias. Teachers may unintentionally overlook certain issues or emphasize others. Additionally, the depth and quality of reflections can vary. Without guidance, some entries may remain superficial, lacking critical analysis. Finally, social desirability bias may influence reflections, as teachers might avoid offending others in their team or documenting failures due to fear of judgment.

Data Analysis: Thematic Coding and Intercoder Agreement

The four instructor reflections were analyzed using qualitative thematic coding (Flick, 2022). An initial set of codes was developed inductively by the first author, resulting in three overarching categories: (a) co-teaching experiences, (b) use of technology, and (c) classroom strategies for student engagement. Each category was further subdivided into specific sub-codes; for instance, the 'technology' category included sub-codes for tools such as polling software and quiz applications like Kahoot.

To ensure the consistency and trustworthiness of the coding process, a formal check for intercoder agreement was conducted. After the first author established the initial codebook, a second coder, a colleague experienced in qualitative methods but not involved in the study, was trained on the codebook's definitions and application. This second coder then independently coded a representative sample of the data.

The agreement between the two coders was calculated. We used a simple percentage agreement method, where the number of agreed-upon coding decisions is divided by the total number of decisions. The initial agreement rate was 87%. The coders then met to discuss the instances of disagreement. These discussions led to clarifications in the codebook definitions,

improving the precision of codes like 'co-teaching challenge' versus 'engagement strategy.' Following this consensus-building process, the first author proceeded to code the entire dataset. This rigorous process enhances the credibility of the thematic findings by demonstrating that the codes could be applied consistently by more than one researcher. Where the reflections contained ambiguous or unclear statements, the respective instructors were contacted via email for clarification to ensure accurate interpretation.

Methodological Limitations

This study analyzed reflections from four out of six instructors who taught the course, selected specifically because they chose to reflect on the large-class language course, indicating they deemed it noteworthy. While their varying roles (senior/junior lecturers, material designer vs. deliverers) provide diverse perspectives, the self-selection risks overrepresenting strong opinions and excludes insights from the two teachers who reflected on other courses, potentially omitting disengaged or indifferent viewpoints. While the small sample (n=4) limits generalizability and role differences (e.g., material designers' curricular biases) may fragment findings, the examination of course documents triangulate the findings. Moreover, when seen through the lens of an exploratory study, this focus captures prioritized challenges from engaged practitioners with the intention of revising the course in the future (and/or designing similar courses for large classes) while also offering targeted insights for further research.

Findings and Discussion

The Implementation of Co-Teaching in *LANG1234*

Co-teaching involves two or more educators sharing instructional responsibilities in a single classroom to enhance student learning. While co-teaching models have been extensively explored in educational research, critical gaps remain in their application to university-level language instruction. Friend (2014) notes that existing co-teaching frameworks lack adaptation for specific needs. This is particularly noticeable in higher education settings where pedagogical goals and student demographics differ markedly from K-12 contexts. Honigsfeld and Dove (2019) advance the concept of 'collaborative cycles' (co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, co-reflecting), yet their work primarily addresses K-12 English Language Learners, leaving a void in research on how these cycles function in large university language classes with diverse proficiency levels and disciplinary demands.

Co-Teaching Models Employed for *LANG1234*

The course employed a flexible, combined co-teaching model that adapted to instructors' comfort levels and classroom needs. The instructors experimented with varied co-teaching approaches in plenaries of 40–60 learners. Teacher A observed that active co-teacher involvement such as colleagues standing and contributing during tasks, created a "dynamic environment," while passive roles led to lecture-style disengagement. For example, a more dynamic environment was created in plenaries when co-teachers acted as sounding boards for the plenary teacher, raising their hands, asking questions and offering opinions and extra information to supplement what the plenary teacher was presenting, which seemed to cause the students to notice they had three teaching professionals in the lecture hall and correspondingly respond by engaging more in the material and with each teacher. This contrasted with a different group of co-teachers in a different section, where only the plenary teacher would stand

up and speak, and all the other non-plenary presenting instructors simply sat in the front or back of the classroom; sometimes looking at their own laptops instead of engaging with the plenary teachers or the students. This 'critical incident' demonstrated that disengagement from co-teachers resulted in very typical 'lecture', especially if the plenary teacher was presenting with a PPT, which did not engage the students very much. This supports Friend's (2014) "team teaching" model, where equal participation fosters student interaction. However, teacher A contrasts between sections, highlighting the fragility of co-teaching dynamics. Without explicit role negotiation, collaborations risk reverting to traditional hierarchies, a pitfall documented in co-teaching research (Anderson, 2023; British Council, 2015; Forsman, 2024; Friend, 2014). In this course, instances of role negotiation could be seen in many of the more successful and engaging plenaries where the roles had been decided on before the plenary began. For example, in certain cases, the instructor who was notably 'in-charge' of the plenary would present the structure and most of content of the lecture, but the co-teachers in the room had already agreed to actively circulate around the room, sometimes commenting and challenging the materials being taught by the 'main instructor', so it became clear to the students that there were three teachers in the plenary, each taking on different roles to facilitate the students' learning as needed. Without this 'role negotiation', this type of active engagement with the materials and the students might have been more chaotic and less cohesive. According to Teacher A, "This did require communication before and after each plenary for the three instructors to briefly discuss how they expected the best way to participate would be but resulted in a more engaged and enjoyable class".

In plenary sessions, the most common approach was 'One Teach, One Assist', where the lead lecturer delivered content while co-teachers circulated to clarify instructions, manage student questions, or address technical issues (Friend, 2014). The interdisciplinary nature of *LANG1234*, serving students across all disciplines, made such an approach particularly valuable for addressing diverse learner needs. The course's focus on practical communication skills, from personal branding to crisis management, benefited significantly from the multiple perspectives offered by co-teaching teams. For example, in Module 1, the focus of the course was for each student in these large groups to create a personal branding video, and these students benefited from having instructors who had backgrounds in marketing and branding, as well as years of teaching young university students how to use stories, multimodality, and linguistic strategies to engage their audience in order to create the elements needed to create a digital version of their personal brand. On the same teaching team, there were often other teachers with backgrounds in educational technology or years of experience assisting students to learn how to promote themselves in a more traditional interview style of branding. This range of knowledge and perspectives enabled these instructors to help a diverse group of students while simultaneously addressing the ESP disjuncture between subject or profession-specific knowledge and language teaching (Mehisto, 2008). Similarly, during Module 3 on Crisis Communication, instructors with backgrounds in business and linguistics could collaborate to demonstrate how rhetorical strategies intersect with nonverbal delivery in high-stake professional scenarios. This ensured immediate support for learners in large groups, ensuring the smooth implementation of the ESP framework of aligning language teaching with the authentic professional communication needs of students (Aguaguiña Pilla et al., 2025; Ahmed et al., 2023; Akhadova, 2025).

For skill-building activities, the team occasionally adopted station teaching (Stolzer & Rigolosi, 2023), dividing students into smaller groups rotating between teacher-led tasks (e.g., role-playing workplace scenarios) and independent workstations (e.g., analyzing case studies on Miro boards) The assessment structure lent itself well to co-teaching approaches. For the

Personal Branding Video (Assessment 1), instructors adopted a 'station teaching' model where one teacher was able to focus on verbal messaging while another coached students on nonverbal delivery. This division of expertise allowed for more targeted feedback than a single instructor could provide in the large-class setting. Another example of division of expertise could be seen in the Crisis Communication assessment when students were put into groups to prepare for an 'emergency press conference'. Strong Q&A skills were needed in this assessment, as well as the ability to recall previous communication theories taught earlier in the course. In this large-class setting, a single teacher would find it challenging to help all these large groups prepare and practice for this assessment, so instead co-teachers divided up the groups, then teachers with strong skills in teaching press conference-style Q&A's set up a station where teams could visit and ask questions and receive experience, while other co-teachers set up a teaching station that focused on reviewing the main critical communication theories each group should be trying to demonstrate in their Crisis Communication assessment. In rarer instances, alternative teaching was used: the primary instructor engaged the majority of the class, while a co-teacher facilitated a smaller group at the back to ensure equitable participation without disrupting the main lesson flow (Friend & Cook, 2021). This hybrid approach leveraged each teacher's strengths, with roles shifting dynamically based on lesson objectives and real-time student needs. For example, during peer feedback sessions, an observing teacher collected data on participation patterns to refine future instruction, demonstrating the 'One Teach, One Observe' model (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2019). The flexibility of these combined strategies allowed the course to balance scalability with personalized attention, though challenges like role ambiguity and pacing inconsistencies occasionally arose.

Co-Teaching as a Catalyst for Professional Development

The instructors' experiences highlight co-teaching as a dynamic professional learning opportunity. Teacher B, new to co-teaching, described it as "fascinating" to observe colleagues' diverse teaching styles and strategies while using the same material, which expanded his pedagogical repertoire. Teacher A reported being "inspired by the teaching styles of some of the instructors who were extremely active from the moment a student stepped into the lecture theatre". For example, one instructor would call out to any unresponsive student, using jokes and banter, together with the co-teachers who also participated in this banter to create an engaging, lively atmosphere that worked extremely well to keep students focused and engaged. This aligns with Friend's (2014) model of co-teaching as a collaborative service delivery method that pools expertise to meet diverse learner needs. The Business Meeting reflections (Assessment 2) revealed how co-teaching enhanced intercultural awareness. For instance, co-teachers from Canada, the UK and Hong Kong were able to provide concrete examples that enriched the discussion beyond the textbook content, providing examples of how and why different cultures communicate. These examples focused on cultural and linguistic norms such as why Hong Kongers tend to stand in certain corners of elevators according to the order of their entry into the elevator, with the most recent entrant occupying the place next to the buttons to open and shut the door (often using a tissue to push the 'Door Shut' button furiously), or why Canadians had a stereotype of being exceptionally polite because of their tendency to say 'Sorry' about almost anything, while actually not meaning to apologize. This aligns with Honigsfeld and Dove's (2019) finding that diverse instructor backgrounds enhance cultural learning. However, teacher B's reflection also reveals a gap in pre-service training for co-teaching, whereby many educators enter collaborations without structured preparation and figured it out as they went along. Therefore, it was not surprising to see Teacher D emphasize the role of mutual support in co-teaching, recalling how colleagues like teacher A provided

"brilliant examples" of linguistic choice for workplace communication during plenaries when she struggled, reinforcing the value of shared responsibility. This echoes Honigsfeld and Dove's (2019) 'collaborative instructional cycle,' where co-planning and co-reflecting enhance teaching efficacy. Yet, teacher D's experience also underscores the need for institutional structures (e.g., dedicated planning time) to sustain such collaborations. This could be done by incorporating an extra 30 min of work-load units that is devoted to co-teacher planning before and after each plenary session. Without this time, it may be unfortunately easy for instructors to be pulled into other duties rather than planning to sustain these successful collaborations.

Implications for Language Teacher Development

The experiences of *LANG1234* instructors offer critical insights for designing effective professional development (PD) programs for co-teaching in language education. First, the reflections underscore the necessity of structured training in collaborative pedagogy. Many instructors, like teacher C, entered co-teaching without prior experience, leading to initial role ambiguity. Pre-semester workshops introducing established co-teaching models such as team teaching, parallel instruction, or station teaching could possibly provide a framework for equitable collaboration. Such training aligns with recommendations by Honigsfeld and Dove (2019), who prioritise modeling and rehearsal of co-teaching strategies in PD. For instance, for the Crisis Press Conference (Assessment 3), the teaching team could implement an innovative 'role-play rotation' model. While one instructor could play the CEO delivering bad news, another could role-pay as a hostile reporter, a third could observe, and another could coach student responders. This immersive approach, though logistically challenging, can help students practice adapting messages for different stakeholders while receiving immediate feedback.

Second, the instructors' reliance on informal peer support (e.g., teacher D's post-class discussions with colleagues and teacher A's use of a previous colleagues' Miro Board to modify her plenary teaching) highlights the need for institutionally protected collaboration time. While ad hoc exchanges were valuable, dedicated co-planning and reflection sessions could systematize knowledge-sharing and prevent the inconsistencies teacher A observed when co-teachers disengaged. This echoes research advocating for 'collaborative cycles' (Friend, 2014) that institutionalize joint lesson planning, observation, and feedback. Third, the diversity in instructors' approaches, from teacher B's emphasis on student-centered adaptations to teacher D's materials-writing process, calls for differentiated PD. Just as language learners require varied instructional methods, PD needs to accommodate teachers' preferred learning styles (e.g., visual, experiential, or discussion-based). For instance, while some instructors benefitted from observing live demonstrations (e.g., teacher A found it particularly useful to watch how other colleagues taught materials she had already taught), others preferred written guides. This aligns with Yang et al.'s (2024) findings on the importance of flexible PD designs in multilingual contexts.

Technology Integration in Large-Class Language Teaching: Instructor Perspectives

Reflections of the four *LANG1234* instructors reveal thoughtful integration of digital tools to address the unique challenges of large-class language instruction. Teacher A's reflections highlight the transformative potential of Miro's collaborative whiteboard platform. She described how adapting a Miro board created by a colleague for group activities "changed the energy in the room," with students actively discussing and collaborating on language tasks.

She particularly valued Miro's ability to recreate small-group dynamics in large lectures through features like sticky notes and real-time editing, which enabled students to collectively analyze case studies. For the Personal Branding module (Assessment 1), instructors made use of Miro boards to create interactive "brand canvases" where students mapped their professional identities with the visual workspace helping students connect linguistic choices with personal presentation goals. This application supports the findings of Hampel and Stickler (2012) regarding how visual collaboration tools can facilitate meaningful interaction in language learning contexts. Additionally, the fact that students were preparing pre-recorded videos as well as producing live audio and video recordings of their presentations, writing their scripts, and thinking of the visual tools to make their presentations more visually attractive, reinforced the objective of making the course more multimodal.

Teacher C strategically employed gamification tools like Kahoot and Mentimeter to maintain engagement in classes of 40-60 students. He found that "business students particularly responded to the competitive elements" of Kahoot's timed quizzes and leaderboards, using them for vocabulary reinforcement and concept checks. For more reflective activities, he utilized Mentimeter's open-ended polling feature during plenary sessions, noting its effectiveness in giving quieter students a voice. This approach aligns with research by Wang and Tahir (2020) demonstrating how gamification in large classes can increase participation while providing instructors with immediate feedback on student understanding. Similarly, Mentimeter polls were used strategically during lessons to gather anonymous peer feedback on draft branding statements, lowering anxiety about sharing personal work/feedback in large groups.

Teacher D emphasized the scaffolding potential of these technologies when combined with co-teaching. She recounted instances where co-instructors used Mentimeter responses to identify knowledge gaps (for example, on language issues related to crisis communication) during plenaries, then addressed them immediately in breakout sessions. Teacher D also highlighted how Miro boards allowed teaching teams to "visually track group progress across multiple sections," enabling more targeted support. Her experience echoes recommendations by Hubbard (2013) for systematic technology integration in language teacher education programmes. For certain plenary activities, the team may also consider developing shared evaluation rubrics in Google Docs that can allow co-teachers to provide synchronized feedback, i.e., one instructor could comment on linguistic strategies while another could focus on nonverbal delivery, creating a more comprehensive review than individual feedback methods could achieve. However, important caveats about technological implementation must be borne in mind, for *tools alone don't create engagement - the pedagogy must lead*. As teacher B cautioned, tools alone cannot drive engagement; instructors need guidance on aligning technology with communicative language objectives (Hampel & Stickler, 2012). The most successful uses of Kahoot and Mentimeter occurred when instructors clearly aligned them with specific learning outcomes, such as practicing persuasive language techniques. Collectively, these reflections demonstrate how strategic use of polling tools and collaborative platforms can mitigate large-class challenges while creating new opportunities for interactive language practice. Their varied applications of the same tools also highlight the importance of PD opportunities that acknowledge different teaching styles while promoting evidence-based practices.

Classroom Strategies for Student Engagement in Large-Class Language Teaching

The detailed reflections of 4 instructors on teaching LANG1234 along with the analysis of course documents reveal how intentional pedagogical strategies can foster engagement in large-class language instruction.

Think-Pair-Share: Structured Peer Interaction

Teacher C frequently employed Think-Pair-Share (TPS) to counter passive learning in plenaries. He noted that this strategy "maximized participation" by giving students time to articulate ideas in pairs before whole-class sharing, which was particularly effective for business students who thrived on structured collaboration. In the *Personal Branding* module (Assessment 1), instructors implemented "Elevator Pitch Rotations" - a modified Think-Pair-Share - where students developed and refined 30-second professional introductions. This method aligns with research (see Apriyanti & Ayu, 2020), showing TPS enhances comprehension and reduces anxiety for language learners by scaffolding participation. Teacher B observed that TPS empowered quieter students to contribute, echoing findings that dyadic discussions lower affective filters in large classes. However, teacher A cautioned that without clear facilitation, TPS could devolve into superficial exchanges. To deepen engagement, variations like Think-Pair-Compare (where pairs contrast ideas with another duo) or Think-Pair-Write-Share (incorporating written summaries) could be integrated, as suggested in TPS literature (Apriyanti & Ayu, 2020).

Small-Group Discussions and Role Assignments

To simulate small-class dynamics, instructors organized structured small-group discussions even in 60-student plenaries. Teacher D described how assigning roles (e.g., 'media', 'CEO', customers in a press conference simulation) ensured equitable participation while also providing structured practice for video assignments through repetition. Moreover, role allocation in this manner prevented dominant students from monopolizing class activities. Teacher A extended this by rotating group compositions weekly, exposing students to diverse perspectives, a practice supported by research on heterogeneous grouping for language learning. Challenges arose when groups lacked clear objectives; teacher C addressed this by providing discussion prompts tied to learning outcomes, a strategy emphasized in TPS guidelines. Students also undertook the role of peer reviewers where they gave feedback to one or more peers on their verbal and non-verbal language use during lessons focusing on meetings and rehearsal of response statements for crisis communication. This not only helped them stay engaged but also reinforced their learning.

Active Learning Through Real-World Applications

Teacher B emphasized connecting content to professional contexts, such as having students analyze workplace communication scenarios, especially as part of the intercultural communication module. This approach aligns with situated learning theory (Cobb & Bowers, 1999), which posits that authentic tasks boost engagement and retention. Teacher D supplemented this with role-playing activities, where students practiced persuasive speaking in mock international meetings, underscoring the efficacy of role-play for developing pragmatic skills in large classes. However, teacher B noted that such activities required meticulous planning to ensure all students participated equally, suggesting the need for structured rubrics and instructions to guide interactions.

Differentiated Instruction for Diverse Learners

The instructors adapted strategies to accommodate varying proficiency levels. Teacher C used tiered questions during discussions, allowing advanced students to explore nuanced arguments while others focused on foundational concepts, a technique endorsed by differentiated instruction literature. Teacher B highlighted the importance of flexible pacing, pausing plenaries to address confusion signalled by formative checks (e.g., quick polls). For reticent learners, Teacher A recommended "Silent TPS" (written exchanges before verbal sharing), a variation shown to support introverted and multilingual students. During Intercultural Business Meetings (Module 2), an instructor developed 'Silent Meetings', a novel adaptation of Silent TPS. Students first communicated written responses to meeting scenarios via shared documents, then transitioned to verbal discussion.

Instructor Presence and Movement

Physical instructor presence was seen to be critical. Teacher C stressed "moving around the room" during activities to monitor discussions and prompt quieter students, a practice linked to increased engagement in large-class research. Teacher D added that co-teachers amplified this effect by dividing supervision roles, ensuring no student group was overlooked. Literature on classroom proximity underscores its impact on maintaining attention and reducing off-task behavior (Pham, Le & Duong, 2025).

Further Recommendations for Augmenting Student Engagement

To further enhance student engagement in large-class language instruction, instructors can integrate three evidence-based strategies: Jigsaw activities, Fishbowl discussions, and use of reflective pauses. Each of these approaches addresses distinct aspects of collaborative learning, peer interaction, and metacognitive consolidation, supported by pedagogical literature and practical applications.

The Jigsaw method (Aronson, 2021) enhances learning by dividing students into 'expert groups' to master subtopics (e.g., crisis communication) before sharing insights in mixed 'base groups,' fostering accountability and deeper comprehension. This approach aligns with language learning goals by requiring synthesis of diverse perspectives (Aronson, 2021). Fishbowl discussions structure participation by having a small group model debates while others observe. Then the two groups swap places to balance their active participation with reflective engagement.. Reflective pauses (Schön, 2017) bridge theory and practice, whether mid-activity (e.g., paraphrasing concepts) or post-activity (e.g., evaluating nonverbal cues), reducing cognitive load while reinforcing metacognition. Together, these strategies supported by peer interaction, modelled expertise, and deliberate reflection, can address large-class challenges by promoting inclusive, structured participation while developing critical language and professional skills.

Conclusion

This study explored the challenges and strategies of large-class language teaching through the reflective practices of four instructors in the *LANG1234* course. The findings offer valuable insights into co-teaching dynamics, technology integration, and student engagement within a curriculum explicitly designed using an ESP framework to teach workplace

communication. The pedagogical design of the course, with modules on personal branding and crisis communication, was fundamentally driven by learners' specific professional needs, moving beyond general English to teach profession-specific speaking skills.

While the findings demonstrate the effectiveness of collaborative teaching models and digital tools like Miro and Mentimeter, they also reveal significant research gaps. The first is the lack of a systematic framework for co-teaching in university-level language courses, as existing literature predominantly focuses on K-12 contexts. The second, illuminated by the ESP lens, is the challenge of 'disjuncture', the discomfort language teachers face when integrating subject-specific content beyond their primary expertise. The challenge of connecting language to professional practice is particularly acute in large-class settings, where instructors must rely on authentic materials and contextualized simulations. Our analysis identified key co-teaching strategies, such as clear role negotiation between instructors, the integration of collaborative technologies, and the facilitation of structured student interactions, all of which could form the basis of a formal framework.

However, the study's methodological limitations must be acknowledged. The small sample size (four instructors) and self-selection bias (only those who reflected on the course were included) may limit the generalizability of findings. Additionally, the absence of student perspectives and longitudinal data prevents a comprehensive assessment of how co-teaching impacts learning outcomes over time.

Future research should address these gaps by: (1) developing and testing a co-teaching framework tailored to large university language classes, incorporating structured roles, technology integration, and assessment metrics; (2) expanding participant pools to include student feedback and more instructors for balanced insights; and (3) investigating longitudinal effects of co-teaching on both instructor development and student proficiency. By bridging these gaps, educators can better navigate the complexities of scaling language education while maintaining instructional quality and engagement.

Ultimately, this study underscores the potential of co-teaching as a sustainable model for large-class language instruction. However, its success in an ESP context depends not only on successful technology integration and promotion of student engagement but also on providing targeted professional development to help instructors confidently navigate the integration of professional content and language teaching.

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Delian Gaskell: Data Curation; Writing Review & Editing

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