



# Íkala

Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura



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1803

*David López*  
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## Óscar López Ospina

Nacido en Jericó, Antioquia, el maestro Óscar López Ospina tiene una amplia trayectoria en pintura y escultura. Después de culminar sus estudios de artes plásticas en el Instituto de Bellas Artes de Medellín (Colombia), el maestro viajó a Europa, donde permaneció dos años perfeccionando su técnica en escultura bajo la guía del maestro español Emilio Barrero, y estuvo en Estados Unidos realizando investigación artística.

Entre los reconocimientos que ha recibido se encuentran dos medallas por su trabajo de pintura y escultura en la ciudad de Charleroi, Bélgica (1981, 1982 y 1984); premios de pintura y escultura en el oriente antioqueño (1993, 1994 y 1996); y Órdenes al Mérito otorgadas por el Concejo de la ciudad de Medellín (Don Juan del Corral, 2016), Asamblea Departamental de Antioquia (Mariscal Jorge Robledo, grado plata, 2017) y el Congreso de la República, Cámara de Representantes (Moción de Reconocimiento N.º 058 de 2016).

Ha participado en 43 exposiciones individuales y 108 colectivas a lo largo de su carrera, en países tan diversos como Estados Unidos, Bélgica y Colombia. La más reciente de ellas tuvo lugar en el 2018 en el evento “Renacimiento: Florece el arte en Antioquia”, en el cual participó con sus obras: Las lavanderas (Biformismo) y Laberinto Bimófrico (El Gran Teatro).

También ha trasegado en las aulas, con cursos de artes plásticas a estudiantes de secundaria y público aficionado.

En esta edición de *Íkala*, tenemos el honor de presentar parte de una colección reciente suya, denominada “Abstracción Pura, el vuelo del color.” En esta serie de piezas en pequeño formato, en óleo sobre superficies como cartón o lienzo, el maestro despliega su técnica, contagiándonos del movimiento, en formas sinuosas en el umbral entre lo alado y lo acuático.

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**UNIVERSIDAD  
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**Escuela de Idiomas**



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## Escuela de Idiomas

*Íkala, Journal of Language and Culture*, is a refereed scientific journal published by School of Languages at University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia. Its main objective is to provide an academic forum for respectful, informed discussion about current subjects related to language and culture, linguistics, literature, translation, and teaching and learning foreign languages, among others. The journal continuously receives empirical studies, literature reviews, theoretical and methodological articles, case studies and book reviews written in English, Spanish, French, or Portuguese. These articles are gathered in three issues, each with an average of twelve articles, and they are published in January, May and September yearly.

Once a year, the journal publishes a special issue on topics of great interest for the field. Some of those topics have been about the professional development of language teachers, translation, terminology and specialized languages, global languages and local identities, academic writing, and literacy studies in Latin America. Other topics to be discussed in future publications from 2021 to 2023 will include systemic functional linguistics applied in language education, the use of technology and information communications (TIC) in the teaching of languages, and audiovisual translation. These special issues are generally published in January yearly, and they are available online in open access as the regular issues.

The journal expects that manuscripts submitted to regular and special issues uphold the following: meet the highest standards of academic excellence; advance theoretical knowledge by addressing current and cutting-edge topics in applied linguistics; reflect critically on theory and practice; show topic originality; contribute to or stimulate current debate; offer new, original interpretations of the topics of interest; demonstrate rigor in data collection and analysis; present interesting results, discussions and conclusions with a great depth of analysis; be well written with sophistication, precision and conciseness; avoid biased or prejudiced language; meet the specifications of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, apa* (7.<sup>th</sup> Ed.); and in general, make a significant contribution to the field



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# ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING AMID THE CRISIS GENERATED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ROL DE LA TECNOLOGÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS DURANTE LA CRISIS GENERADA POR LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

LE RÔLE DE LA TECHNOLOGIE SUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES PARMIS LA CRISE PROVOQUÉE PAR LA PANDEMIE DU COVID-19

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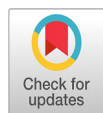
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The measures that governments have taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as lockdowns, mandatory mask-wearing, permanent school closings, etc., have had tremendous effects on education in general and language teaching in particular. One of the elements that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic was the concept of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) that Hodges et al. (2020) define as not being an attempt to recreate a robust ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional support in a manner that is quick to set up and is readily available during an emergency crisis. Regardless of its permanency, ERT has significantly impacted teachers and students.

This special issue is an attempt to understand how teachers and students reacted to the unexpected teaching and learning situations they faced. We hope it will be of interest to teachers, students, administrators, and language practitioners who want to know how other colleagues worldwide reacted to the COVID-19 measures. In it, we present 15 papers that explore how the authors coped with the teaching and learning situations that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic from different perspectives and methodologies and how their experiences inform their current and future practices. The large variety of contexts (i.e., geographical, institutional, methodological) demonstrates that this pandemic has affected teaching all over the world, and we are all collaboratively trying to figure out how to move forward and how we can extract knowledge from our collective experiences.

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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.  
Editors: Marta González-Lloret, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA; Laia Canals, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain;  
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The issue is divided into two main categories which comprise 13 empirical and 2 methodological studies. These cover a variety of geographical areas (from Colombia to Poland and Malaysia through Mexico, Spain, Czechia and the USA) and institutions (universities, primary and middle schools, and language programs). They also include a large diversity of participants, which illustrates how the pandemic and the switch to ERT affected learners of all levels and types. These range from pre-service and in-service language teachers, to primary and pre-school teachers; and from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners; to students in a middle school dual immersion program, and students with autistic disorder (ASD) and Down syndrome (DS) learning English.

Finally, the special issue includes five quantitative studies, eight qualitative studies, using a variety of methodologies, and two articles with a detailed description of theoretical and methodological models for two very different learning contexts (a German as a Foreign language university program and a middle school dual immersion program) based on the lessons learned during the pandemic.

The first set of studies is composed of three investigations. In the first paper, Shayna Katz presents a quantitative study that explores the impact of interaction on the development of teacher-student and student-student relationships in a Spanish as a foreign language classroom that transitioned from face-to-face (FtoF) to online. She concludes that it is necessary to bring qualities from face-to-face instruction to online. The second article by Nicola Fořtová, Jitka Sedláčková, and František Tůma explores how student-teachers perceive technology use when teaching online. The authors carry out a qualitative study and conclude that the participants normalize technology as a platform for teaching, and they use technology-specific language for teaching strategies and classroom events. In the third article of the first set of studies of this special issue, Maria Ángeles Escobar Álvarez and Julie Ciancio call our attention to the experience of implementing a Massive Online Open course (MOOC) on elementary English. The authors conduct a quantitative study and conclude that MOOCs can be considered as an alternative way to build specific content in situations of crisis.

The second set of studies of this special issue has three qualitative studies and two quantitative investigations. In the first qualitative study, Jacqueline García Botero, Gustavo García Botero and Margarita Alexandra Botero Restrepo explore the psychosocial aspects and educational conditions of students with their technology-mediated learning. They conclude that teacher support and structural conditions of technology-mediated learning affect students' satisfaction with courses. Amanda K. Wilson and Martha M. Lengeling carry out a qualitative study exploring the lived experiences and emotional

responses of students in an English teaching program when it was moved to online learning. Their investigation shows that students had emotions that go from youthful optimism to overwhelming anxiety. In another qualitative study, Azlin Zaiti Zainal and Siti Zaidah Zainuddin explore language teachers' professional development during the pandemic through agency. They use interviews from teachers from rural areas in Malaysia to contribute to broadening the scope of theories of teacher agency in professional development. In two quantitative studies, Bruno Echauri Galván, Silvia García Hernández, and María Jesús Fernández Gil explore the repercussions of the sudden immersion in an online teaching environment. They highlight certain benefits such as an enhanced handling and knowledge of technological tools. They also find that learners highly value the use of digital applications for assessment. Anna Czura and Małgorzata Baran-Łucarz compare students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to assessment in a face-to-face and an online course. They show that students value formative assessment in the course.

The third section of this special issue includes five studies. Juan Antonio Núñez-Cortés, María Constanza Errázuri, Adrián Neubauer Esteban, and Claudia Parada conducted a qualitative study comparing face-to-face and online academic writing tutoring sessions. Their findings suggest that tutoring sessions, whether online or face-to-face, are useful to improve the process of writing for university students. Next, Jesús Izquierdo, María del Carmen Sandoval Caraveo, Verónica de la Cruz Villegas, and Rubén Zapata Díaz conducted a quantitative study in which they explore the preparedness of teachers for technology mediated L2 instruction and the effect that the change from face-to-face instruction brought to them. They conclude that teachers have a large number of teaching hours and hold sustained computer or internet access, but they lack training. In a qualitative study, Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo and María Fernanda Jaime-Osorio investigate the challenges teachers face with the imposition of RET. Their findings indicate that the teachers face challenges related to the social realities of students and they have to adapt to respond to the challenges that emerged from the imposition of RET. Zoila Liliana Giraldo-Martínez and Sigríd Andrea Ramos Carvajal explore teaching English online to students with ASD and DS. Their study suggests that teaching English to these students requires knowledge of their condition and suitable teaching strategies. The last empirical study is by Sarah Cohen and Daniel Calderón-Aponte. They conduct a case study on the collaboration of two university educators to create a trans-national model of learning. Their model can afford meaningful opportunities for language development.

The methodological contributions start with a paper by Joseph Cunningham. The author details the adaptation of an undergraduate German curriculum for a distance language education context. The article highlights the role of synchronous instruction and asynchronous tools in supporting multiliteracies instruction. Finally, Jordi Solsona-Puig, María Capdevila-Gutiérrez, and Fernando Rodríguez-Valls present a theoretical model for dual immersion digital instruction. In their model, they focus on five dimensions (i.e., technological, content, social, linguistic, and pedagogical) to better understand the dynamics of a program for equitable, just, and inclusive teaching and learning.

As Payne (2020) points out, “Transitioning to teaching fully online requires reimagining how to help students achieve the learning outcomes you have set for them under a different configuration of capabilities and constraints” (p. 247). These studies demonstrate how teachers navigated those new capabilities and constraints, adjusting their methodologies, environments, and types of activities to the new context. Several decades of research have proved that online language learning can be effective (Blake et al., 2008; Golonka et al., 2014; Sallem et al., 2020; Violin-Wigent, 2014) but the content, the selection of materials and tools, and teacher preparation are key elements for the success of an online course. Some of the articles presented above highlight, through the lens of existing distance education and distance learning theories, the need for teacher preparedness to teach languages with technology in an effective manner and the importance of continuing to develop teacher-learner relationships during ERT and beyond. Teachers’ technological preparedness is a fundamental skill and prerequisite in teaching languages online (Hampel & Stickler, 2005) and equally important in distance education is the need for teachers to show their social presence (Garrison et al., 2010) by communicating with students in online learning environments.

Some of the authors in the special issue took advantage of the advent of ERT to implement technologies and activities that had already proved to be effective for language learning such as telecollaborative transnational projects (Helm, 2015) that connect language learners and pre-service language teachers from different countries creating mutually beneficial collaborations for the former to practice their English and the later to conduct language assessment. We believe that any attempt to integrate any technology, during ERT or beyond, must be based on the existing research in the fields of Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and Computer-mediated communication (CMC) which has set the basis of much of what we know about online learning and the effective use of technologies in L2 classes today.



We hope that this special issue about the role of technology in language teaching and learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic helps demonstrate that language teachers and learners are highly adaptable to challenging situations. The articles in the issue show that language teachers are resilient and flexible professionals. They have adapted and prevailed after enduring the pedagogical and emotional challenges of COVID-19. The articles also illustrate their journey and the journey of their students through innovation and change and show how some of the tools and ideas implemented during these months can be adopted when we return to more traditional face-to-face environments. Finally, the articles in this special issue show that the adoption of technology in learning and teaching offers both opportunities and contingencies that require a high level of resilience from teachers and students (Salmon, 2014).

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# RAPPORT IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: FROM FACE-TO-FACE TO ONLINE IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

RELACIONES EN EL AULA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS: DE PERSONALES A VIRTUALES EN TIEMPOS DE PANDEMIA

L'ENTENTE DANS LA SALLE DE CLASSE : DU PRÉSENTIEL AU DISTANCIEL EN TEMPS DE PANDÉMIE

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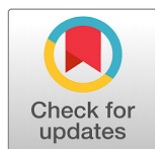
## ABSTRACT

As shown in previous studies, positive teacher and student rapport increases motivation and performance in foreign language learning. This study investigated the impact of three forms of interaction on the development of teacher-student and student-student relationships in a Spanish as a Foreign Language classroom that transitioned from face-to-face (FtoF) to online due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These forms of interaction were positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse. The participants were students from six different beginner-level Spanish courses at a university in Hawai'i. Because of COVID restrictions, half of the semester was conducted FtoF and half online. Data were collected through a three-part questionnaire with open and closed-ended questions which explored the impact of the online and FtoF setting and forms of interaction on rapport. The results reveal the importance of corrective feedback and positive comments on the development of positive teacher-student rapport, and of positive comments and personal thematic discourse on student-student rapport. The study suggests the need to bring qualities from the FtoF classroom to online, such as a sense of a more personal experience, ability to connect, ease in asking questions, receiving feedback, and greater interaction.

**Keywords:** corrective feedback; face-to-face interactions; online interactions; rapport; COVID-19; ICT, Spanish as a foreign language.

## RESUMEN

Como se ha demostrado en estudios anteriores, una relación positiva entre profesores y estudiantes tiene un efecto favorable en la motivación y el desempeño de los estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras. El presente estudio investigó el impacto de tres formas de interacción sobre el desarrollo de las relaciones entre profesores



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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Editors: Marta González-Lloret, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA; Laia Canals, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain; Jorge Pineda, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia.

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y estudiantes y entre estudiantes y sus pares en un aula de español como lengua extranjera que hizo la transición de la presencialidad a las clases virtuales, debido a la declaración de la pandemia por COVID-19. Estas formas de interacción fueron comentarios positivos, realimentación correctiva y discurso temático personal. Los participantes eran estudiantes de seis cursos diferentes de nivel básico de español en una universidad de Hawái. Debido a las restricciones por el COVID, la mitad del semestre se impartió en modalidad presencial y la otra mitad en línea. Los datos se recogieron por medio de un cuestionario de tres partes con preguntas abiertas y cerradas, que exploró el impacto que tuvieron el entorno presencial y virtual y las formas de interacción en las relaciones entre los participantes. Los resultados revelan la importancia de la realimentación correctiva y los comentarios positivos en el desarrollo de relaciones positivas entre profesores y estudiantes, así como la importancia de los comentarios positivos y el discurso temático personal en las relaciones entre estudiantes. El estudio señala la necesidad de llevar características de la clase presencial al entorno virtual, como la sensación de una experiencia más personal, la capacidad de conectarse, la facilidad para hacer preguntas, la realimentación y mayor interacción.

**Palabras clave:** realimentación; interacción en persona; interacción en línea; relaciones interpersonales; COVID-19, TIC, español como lengua extranjera.

### RÉSUMÉ

Comme des études précédentes ont démontré, une bonne entente entre des enseignants et des étudiants a un effet favorable sur la motivation et les performances des étudiants des langues étrangères. La présente étude a examiné l'impact de trois formes d'interaction sur le développement des relations positives entre les enseignants et les étudiants et entre les étudiants et leurs pairs dans une classe d'espagnol langue étrangère qui a fait la transition du présentiel aux classes virtuelles, à cause de la déclaration de la pandémie de COVID-19. Ces formes d'interaction ont été des remarques positives, du feedback correctif et du discours thématique personnel. Les participants étaient des étudiants de six cours différents de niveau débutant dans une université d'Hawaï. En raison des restrictions liées au COVID, la moitié du semestre a été enseignée en mode présentiel et l'autre moitié en ligne. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen d'un questionnaire en trois parties avec des questions ouvertes et fermées, qui ont exploré l'impact de l'environnement dans la classes présentielle et virtuelle et des formes d'interaction dans les relations entre les participants. Les résultats révèlent l'importance du feedback correctif et des remarques positives dans le développement de relations positives entre enseignants et élèves, ainsi que l'importance des commentaires positifs et du discours thématique personnel dans les relations établies entre les élèves eux-mêmes. L'étude souligne la nécessité de prendre des traits de la classe présentielle à l'environnement virtuel, telles que le sentiment d'une expérience plus personnelle, la capacité de se connecter, la facilité de poser des questions, le feedback et une plus grande interaction.

**Mots-clés:** feed-back; interaction face à face; interaction virtuelle; relations interpersonnelles; COVID-19 ; TIC ; espagnol langue étrangère.

## Introduction

The study of forms of interaction between the teacher and students, and their impact on a positive teacher-student and student-student relationship, offers an advantageous opportunity to better understand how the teacher can develop these essential elements in the foreign language (FL) classroom. As previous studies have shown, the attitudes of students not only toward the teacher, but toward classmates as well, affect motivation and performance in the learning of a FL (Minera Reyna, 2009; Dörnyei, 2002; Swan, 2003). Investigations have found that the development of positive relationships can be actively nurtured by the teacher over time (Eschenmann, 1991). As such, it is important to explore which interactions help build these relationships and to what extent. The three forms of interaction chosen for this study due to their value in second language and foreign language acquisition are positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse. Additionally, due to the transition to the synchronous online classroom as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, further investigation into the impact of the online versus face-to-face setting on the development of these relationships has become an essential component.

As half of the semester was conducted FtoF and half synchronously online due to the emergence of the pandemic, the unique circumstances allowed for the comparison of the two learning environments. Due to this sudden transition into online teaching and the unknowns that we have about teacher-student and student-student interaction in online settings, this study examined three questions regarding differences in the development of the teacher-student and student-student relationships in the FtoF and online classroom. These research questions include the following: (1) In terms of FtoF and online synchronous classes, which has a greater impact on the development of a positive teacher-student relationship? (2) In terms of FtoF and online synchronous classes, which has a greater impact on the development of

a positive student-student relationship? (3) How does feedback (i.e., positive comments and corrective feedback) differ from the FtoF to the online classroom?

Additionally, in terms of the impact of the three forms of interaction on the teacher-student and student-student relationship in the FtoF classroom only, that is, prior to the transition to the online classroom, two main questions are explored. (1) Of the three forms of interaction from the teacher examined in this study, positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse, which are the most effective in the development of a positive teacher-student relationship? (2) Of the three forms of interaction mentioned above, which are the most effective in the development of a positive student-student relationship?

To address these questions, students from six different beginner-level Spanish courses at a university in Hawai'i were asked to participate in the study by completing a three-part questionnaire during their final month of the semester with open and closed-ended questions regarding the impact of the online and FtoF setting, as well as the impact of the forms of interaction on rapport with their teacher and peers. After a qualitative analysis of their responses, an important relationship between a personal FtoF classroom, feedback, and the teacher-student relationship was revealed, as well as the importance of personal thematic discourse and positive comments in the development of the student-student relationship. This study concludes with suggestions of various pedagogical implications for when we find ourselves in a situation like the current one in which interaction, essential in the building of positive relationships, needs not only to be incorporated into the FtoF classroom, but in the classroom online as well.

## Theoretical Framework

The following section presents research on the role of teacher-student and student-student rapport in the field of Second Language Acquisition

(SLA) in both the FtoF and online classroom. First, studies on the correlation between rapport, motivation and linguistic performance will be described, followed by research on the impact of these relationships on online learning. Then, studies on positive comments, corrective feedback and personal thematic discourse will be described as seen in both the FtoF and online setting.

### Rapport in the Field of SLA

The correlation between the teacher-student and student-student relationship, motivation, and linguistic performance in the learning of a FL has been an important discovery in the field of SLA. The teacher-student and student-student relationship were incorporated in the socio-educational model by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1985) referred to as “attitudes toward the instructional atmosphere.” The impact of the teacher on the attitudes of the students has been investigated by many such as Minera Reyna (2009), Eschenmann (1991), and Dörnyei (2002). Minera Reyna (2009) demonstrated in a study that, among the attitudes of ten students examined in the FL classroom, the most positive attitude was toward the teacher, which correlated positively with their attitude toward their classmates and perseverance in learning Spanish as a second language. Gardner (2001) also proposed that the role of the teacher has a profound influence in the classroom. He found that a fundamental part of student motivation is their attitude toward the school atmosphere, which includes the teacher and their peers. In relation to the “social unit” of the classroom (the combination of the teacher-student and student-student relationships), a study by Dörnyei (2002) found that even when the student has a mediocre attitude toward the tasks, their output and their verbal participation can increase when their attitude is positive towards the course.

### *Rapport in the Online Classroom*

These findings in the FtoF medium also apply to online environments. In the online setting, a sense

of community co-constructed by positive teacher-student and student-student rapport has been shown to increase student satisfaction and persistence in the online course (Rovai, 2002a; Pollard et al., 2014). Rovai (2002a) found that the teacher’s role includes promoting a sense of community among students through socio-emotional-driven interaction, among other components, such as by writing empathetic messages or promoting self-disclosure. Another factor that seems to contribute is social presence. Garrison et al.’s Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (2000) holds that social presence, or the participants’ ability to project themselves online both socially and emotionally, is one of the essential elements in building community and promoting meaningful interaction. They claim that it is within the socio-emotional environment that students are better able to construct meaning of the course material (i.e., cognitive presence). Likewise, in a survey completed by 137 university students taking online courses, Pollard et al. (2014) discovered that instructor social presence impacts both the development of classroom community and students’ positive perception of their online course, allowing for enhanced academic learning. Finally, in a study by Sher (2009), the author observed that encouraging participation in discussions, giving feedback, and treating students with respect are effective in fostering rapport between teacher and peers. In fact, Sher’s study, which consisted of a survey completed by 208 students across multiple disciplines in web-based university classes, revealed that not only is teacher-student interaction one of the most critical components in student satisfaction but also in fostering a positive learning environment which promotes a sense of community among students.

### *Positive and Corrective Feedback and Personal Thematic Discourse*

The effects of interactions between students and the teacher such as positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse have all been of interest in the development of these essential relationships. Positive comments are a form of



interaction by which the teacher can demonstrate their confidence in the student and lower their affective filter which promotes learning (Hawk et al., 2002; Krashen, 1983). In fact, studies in the online setting have found that praise and encouragement, among other types of interactions that minimize the feeling of distance between the teacher and students, lead to greater learning (Swan et al., 2005a). Likewise, constructive and supportive feedback has been shown to be a principal component in building trust and community in the online classroom (Rovai, 2002a). Hackman and Walker (1990) found in a study involving 324 distance learning university students that positive comments and encouragement can be given effectively by thanking students for their contributions by name, smiling, and giving written and verbal praise on their assignments. As Ellis (2009) discusses, positive feedback has not received as much investigation as negative feedback (i.e., corrective feedback) in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but pedagogical theory values it for its provision of affective support and increased motivation in learning.

Another form of interaction that not only plays a role in building rapport but has also proven to be an essential component to second language learning is corrective feedback (CF; Ellis, 2009; Swan & Shea, 2005). As proposed by Hays (1970), the climate of the classroom depends on whether the student perceives the teacher's communication in a defensive way or not. As such, the moments of corrective feedback offer the student the opportunity to observe empathy from the teacher who is aware that the pride and confidence of the student are at risk. A study by Swan and Shih (2005) found that in the online setting, when students may feel particularly isolated, constructive and timely feedback, among other characteristics such as self-disclosure and encouragement from the teacher, is a means by which the instructor can foster positive teacher-student rapport essential in online learning. Likewise, the way in which the teacher provides corrective feedback

can communicate esteem and patience. Hawk et al. (2002) found that empathy, respect, and patience are fundamental elements in the development of the teacher-student relationship, and they motivate the student toward a higher academic performance. Their study showed that teachers can show and build respect by maintaining a courteous attitude, putting effort and energy into their work, as well as having enthusiasm for the class, loyalty to the school, and a genuine caring for the learners.

Personal thematic discourse, the third form of interaction investigated in this study, promotes a sense of connection that develops through sharing personal and authentic experiences, including by the teacher (Henry et al., 2018; Blattner et al., 2012). Self-disclosure, that is, personal discourse, has also been shown to build rapport by means of communicating a personal investment in the relationship (Cayanus et al., 2009). As González-Lloret (2020) explains, classroom community can be strengthened through the disclosure of personal information during classroom activities such as likes, dislikes, fears, and other details that help the students and teacher get to know each other. Additionally, Rovai (2002a) found that personal discourse can be fostered in the online classroom by putting learners into groups for informal discussions at the start of the term, as well as by assigning collaborative activities. As shown in a study by Hackman and Walker (1990), instructors can promote student participation online by asking questions, encouraging students to share, and giving personal examples. Blattner and Lomicka (2012) discuss an increased self-disclosure by students, higher motivation and a more positive classroom environment due to teacher self-disclosure via Facebook®. As found in studies by Zhang et al. (2009), and Cayanus et al. (2009), there are various advantages of self-disclosure by the teacher such as the positive correlation between the teacher-student relationship, motivation and academic performance. In the case of this study, the term *thematic* has been added to

*personal discourse* to signify the inclusion of personal experiences in line with the topic being studied in the classroom.

Based on these studies that focus on the teacher-student relationship, interaction, and academic performance, further investigation into the forms of interaction that aid in the development of positive rapport as well as differences between the FtoF and online classroom are essential in order for teachers to establish and maintain the interaction necessary to promote positive relationships in both the FtoF and online environments.

## Method

This qualitative study examines students' perceptions of the differences and similarities between the online and FtoF FL classroom regarding the development of rapport with the teacher and peers, as well as differences in teacher feedback after the sudden transition from the FtoF to the online classroom due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative analysis was also conducted on the impact of the three forms of interaction investigated in this study: positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse on the teacher-student and student-student relationship from the point of view of the students. To do this, approval was sought from the IRB to conduct the study. Written consent to participate was given by the students before completing the questionnaire (see Appendix).

### Participants

The participants of this study were university students in beginner-level Spanish as a Foreign Language classes at a university in Hawai'i between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. The study included six intact classes of the same level and curriculum with six different teachers. Each class lasted 50 minutes, three days a week. The classes adopted a communicative and task-based pedagogical approach (Long, 1985), and followed a task-based textbook called *Gente: A Task-Based*

*Approach to Learning Spanish*. Classroom activities intended to engage students in goal-oriented and relevant tasks with an emphasis on communication and language use, while also practicing listening, writing and reading. For the first half of the semester, the classes were held face-to-face, while the second half, due to the emergence of COVID-19, was conducted online using Zoom for synchronous meetings. With the shift to the online setting, more Web 2.0 technologies were implemented in order to allow for a continuation of relevant and meaningful interactive and collaborative tasks.

### Data Collection

In order to collect data on the students' perceptions of the quality of their relationships as a result of the three forms of teacher interaction, as well as being in the FtoF versus online classroom, the students completed an anonymous questionnaire via Google Forms with closed and open-ended questions (See Appendix). Five to six minutes were needed to complete the questionnaire. It was constructed by the author of this study based on previous research such as by Dörnyei (2003), Swan and Shih (2005), Sher (2009), Shin (2003), Rovai (2002a, 2002b), and Rovai et al.'s Sense of Classroom Community Index (SCCI) (2001).

The questionnaire has three parts. The first part of 13 closed-ended questions focused on the students' perceptions of their relationship with their teacher as a result of their teacher's use of the three forms of interaction in the FtoF classroom. The second part, also consisting of 13 closed-ended questions, examined the students' perceptions of their relationship with their classmates while considering their teacher's use of the three forms of interaction in the FtoF classroom. Lastly, the third part allowed students to compare the development of their relationships with their teacher and classmates online versus FtoF as well as any differences in their teacher's use of feedback in these two conditions. It includes six closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions.

## Data Analysis

The data of this study was analyzed qualitatively, with the implementation of thematic analysis for the open-ended questions of Part 3 of the questionnaire. As data could potentially vary according to the teacher, the responses of the students were firstly analyzed separately per class (i.e., per teacher). Since it was clear that there were no differences between the groups, data was aggregated. Twelve of the thirteen questions in both Parts 1 and 2 regarding the forms of interaction were analyzed according to the value each question received based on the students' responses of *Yes, totally*; *Sure*; *Not really*; and *Absolutely not*. On the questionnaire, the student response of *Yes, totally*, was equivalent to the interaction having a very positive impact, and it was assigned 6 points; *Sure*, or a somewhat positive impact, was assigned 4 points; *Not really*, or no significant positive impact, was assigned 2 points; and *Absolutely not*, definitely no positive impact, was assigned 0 points. After a value was ascertained per form of interaction, the impact of the three forms could be observed per class.

Lastly, a thematic analysis was done of the three open-ended questions of Part 3 which explored the students' perceptions of online versus FtoF classes on building positive relationships with their teacher and classmates as well as the differences they noticed in feedback online and FtoF. Further analysis was made by comparing the prevalent themes with the responses to the closed-ended questions of Part 3 which asked directly which setting, online or FtoF, was preferred regarding the development of the teacher-student and student-student relationship. As with Parts 1 and 2, data was analyzed separately and then aggregated as it was clear that there were no differences between the groups.

## Results

Due to the focus of this special issue on the role of technology in language teaching and learning

amid the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the results presented below will commence with a focus on the similarities and differences between the FtoF and online classroom, as investigated in Part 3 of the questionnaire, followed by the impact of the three forms of interaction on these relationships in the FtoF classroom.

### Online versus FtoF Classes and the Teacher-Student Relationship

Differences between synchronous online and FtoF classes in building a positive teacher-student and student-student relationship, as well as differences in teacher feedback, were explored in the final part of the student questionnaire. First, students were asked to compare the teacher-student relationship online versus FtoF. When asked the open-ended question about why they thought online or face-to-face classes were better for building a positive relationship with their teacher, the student responses were in favor of the FtoF instructional setting. The most common response stated that FtoF provided a more personal experience (26% of the students; 14 of the 56 students). This was followed by a better ability to connect in a FtoF classroom as said by 7 of the students (13%). It should be noted that out of the 13% of students who said they experienced a greater connection with their teacher FtoF, almost half of these also described this connection as being personal, displaying a possible overlap between the two responses of a more personal experience and ability to connect. Other shared responses included better communication (11% of the students), better interaction (9%) and easier to ask questions (9%). Additionally, four students (7%) stated that FtoF classes felt more real or genuine, and three students (5%) mentioned FtoF classes made it easier to stay motivated. Lastly, two students (3%) stated that they were more likely to attend office hours and discuss issues with their teacher after class when FtoF. As can be seen, there are various factors that take place in the FtoF classroom which can be taken into consideration

when planning for and conducting a synchronous online class.

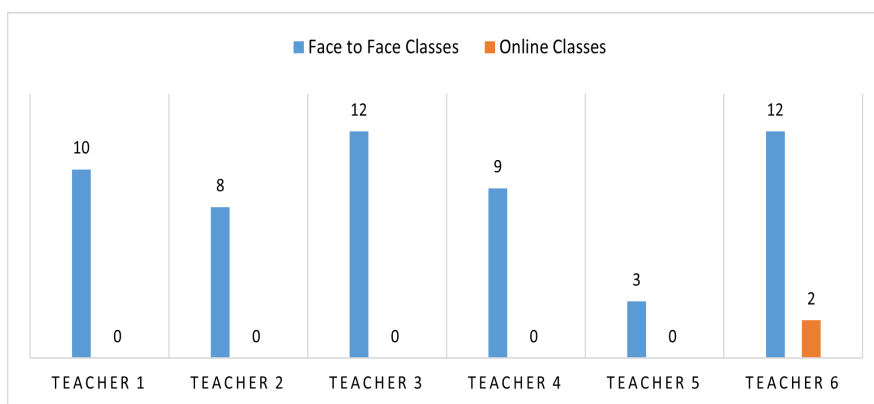
Regarding the closed-ended question about the teacher-student relationship, when asked whether they thought online or face-to-face classes were better for building a positive relationship with their teacher, the students in five of the six classes unanimously answered in favor of FtoF. In the sixth class, two out of fourteen students chose online classes (Figure 1). As can be seen, the students shared an overwhelming preference for the FtoF classroom in terms of developing teacher-student rapport, as discussed above. Subsequently, in response to the first research question of this study, whether FtoF or online synchronous classes have a greater impact on the development of a positive teacher-student relationship, FtoF classes were perceived by the students to have the greatest impact on the development of a positive teacher-student relationship.

**492**      **Online versus FtoF Classes and the Student-Student Relationship**

Students were also asked to compare the impact of online versus FtoF classes on the development of their relationships with their peers. When asked the open-ended question about why they thought online or face-to-face classes were better for building a positive relationship with their

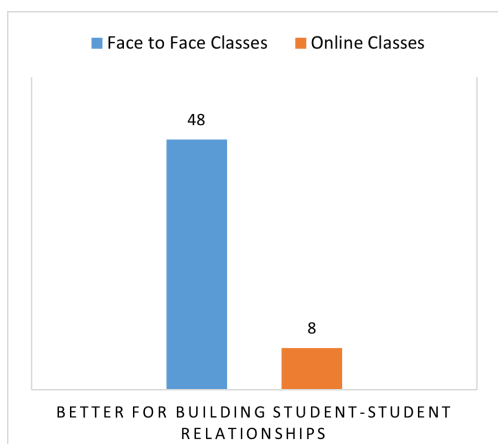
classmates, similarities and differences could be seen with the results discussed above regarding the FtoF classroom and the teacher-student relationship. The most common response to this question in support of the FtoF instructional setting was “interaction” as answered by 20 of the 52 students (38%) to answer the question. This contrasts with the 9% who mentioned this attribute regarding the teacher-student relationship in the FtoF classroom. On the other hand, common responses regarding rapport building with peers, in line with building a positive relationship with the teacher, expressed that there was a more personal experience in the FtoF classroom, as said by 7 students (13%), better connection (13%), and better communication (9%). More clarification would be needed, but there could be overlap among the answers of interaction and communication as well as between a personal experience and better connection.

When examining the impact of the FtoF and online classroom through the close-ended question regarding whether they thought online classes or face-to-face classes were better for building a positive relationship with their classmates, three of the six classes unanimously chose FtoF classes. In two of the other classes, 2 out of the 8 students chose online classes, while in the last class, 4 out of the 10 students chose online classes. Overall, 48 out of the 56 students chose FtoF classes for developing



**Figure 1** Student Responses to the Question: Do You Think Online Classes or Face-to-Face Classes Are Better for Building a Positive Relationship With Your Teachers?

*Note.* This figure shows the total number of students per class.



**Figure 2** Student Answers to the Question: Do You Think Online Classes or Face-to-Face Classes Are Better for Building a Positive Relationship With Your Classmates?

*Note.* This figure shows the total number of students.

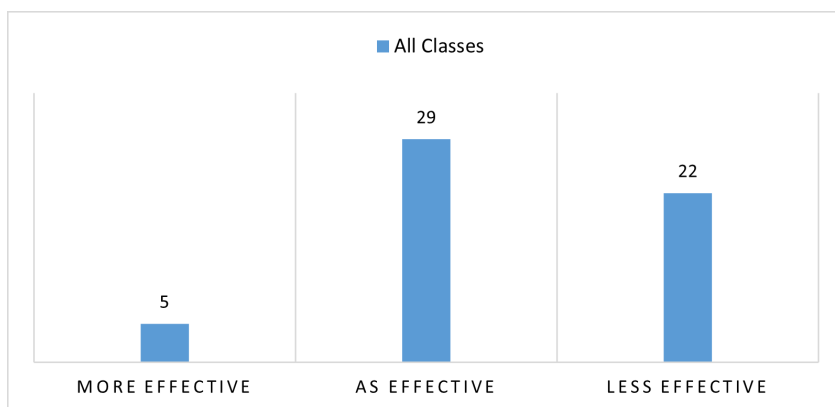
a positive student-student relationship (Figure 2). These results provide insight into the second research question, which was “In terms of face-to-face and online synchronous classes, which has a greater impact on the development of a positive student-student relationship?” As can be seen, the majority of students elected FtoF classes as having a greater impact on building a positive relationship with their classmates. Although to a slightly lesser degree than the 54 students that preferred the FtoF classroom for developing the teacher-student relationship, the need to bring qualities from FtoF to online is again apparent.

### Online versus FtoF Feedback

As two of the types of interaction discussed in this study are forms of feedback (positive comments and corrective feedback), differences between online and FtoF feedback were explored with one open-ended and one closed-ended question.

In order to examine the attributes of feedback online and FtoF as seen by the students, they were asked how they thought feedback was the same or different in the online and face-to-face Spanish class. In response, more than half of the students said they are the same (52% of the students). Although preference for one medium or the other was not part of the question, 48% of the students shared that they preferred face-to-face feedback. 12% of this latter group stated the reason was the ease of asking questions when face-to-face. 7% stated that face-to-face feedback is more personal. Other answers included various difficulties of online learning in general. Students who felt that face-to-face and online context were the same referred to the same amount of feedback, same content, and same learning from the feedback.

In terms of the effectiveness of online versus FtoF feedback, students were asked a closed-ended question regarding whether they thought getting feedback in online language classes was more, the same, or less effective than in face-to-face classes. Only 5 of the 56 students (9%) said more effective, while 22 (39%) said less effective. That said,



**Figure 3** Student Answers to the Question: Do You Think Getting Feedback in Online Language Classes is More, the Same, or Less Effective Than in Face-to-Face Classes?

*Note.* Total number of students was 56.

a little over half of the students (52%) said it was as effective (Figure 3).

This raises the third research question regarding the students' perception of differences between synchronous online and FtoF feedback given by the teacher: How does feedback differ from the face-to-face to online classroom? As can be seen, there is a mixed perception of not only the effectiveness of feedback online versus FtoF, but also regarding the similarities and differences between the two. Nonetheless, although 52% of the students stated there were no significant differences, it is noteworthy that almost half of the participants (48%) stated that they preferred FtoF feedback and 39% stated that FtoF feedback is more effective. As the students' answers varied greatly regarding the differences, further investigation into the preferred qualities of feedback in the FtoF classroom would be beneficial in order to be able to implement them as much as possible in the online setting.

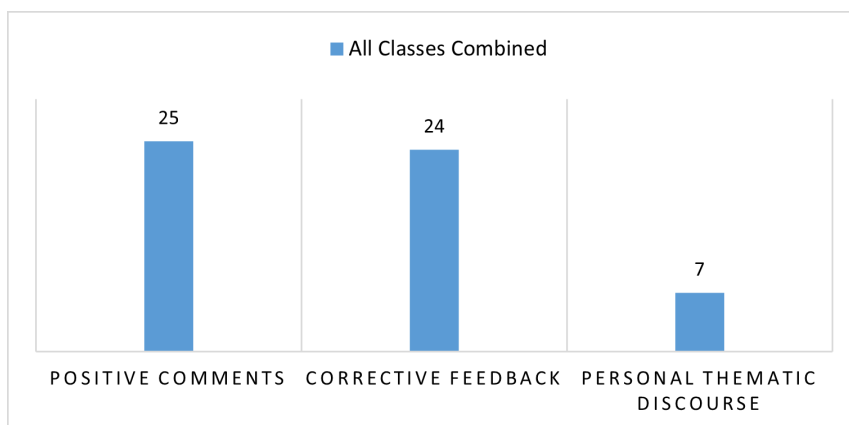
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### The Teacher-Student and Student-Student Relationship in the FtoF Classroom

The following section presents the results of the thirteen closed-ended questions of Parts 1 and 2 of the student questionnaire regarding the impact of the three forms of interaction: positive comments,

corrective feedback and personal thematic discourse on the teacher-student and student-student relationship in the FtoF classroom.

In accordance with previous studies (Swan, 2003; Ellis, 2013; Pacansky-Brock et al., 2019), the results revealed that among the six classes all three forms of interaction have a positive impact on the teacher-student and student-student relationship in the FtoF classroom. That said, certain forms of interaction were perceived to have a greater impact on rapport than others. First, when asked the closed-ended question regarding which of the three forms of interaction most helped build a positive relationship with their teacher in the FtoF classroom, 25 out of 56 students chose receiving positive comments (44.6%), followed closely by 24 students who chose corrective feedback (42.9%) and 7 who chose personal thematic discourse (12.5%; see Figure 4). This raises the fourth research question: Of the three forms of interaction from the teacher examined in this study (positive comments, corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse), which are the most effective in the development of a positive teacher-student relationship? As can be seen, the results reveal that positive comments and corrective feedback were chosen by the students to be the most effective in the development of this relationship. It should be noted, however, that the



**Figure 4** Combined Class Answers to the Question: Overall, What Do You think Has Helped Build a Positive Relationship Between You and the Teacher Most?

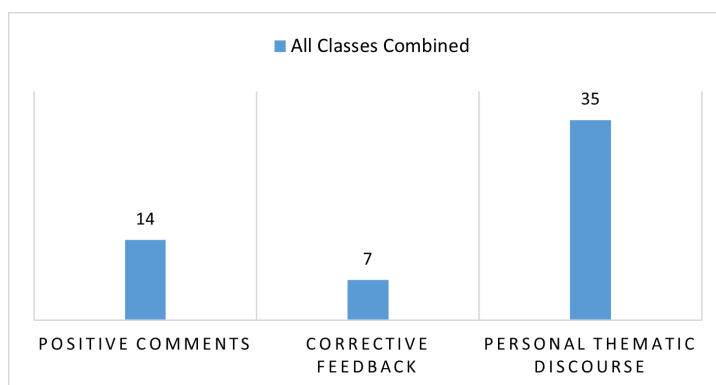
*Note.* This figure shows the total number of students.

small number of students to choose personal thematic discourse (12.5%) may reflect a perceived role of the teacher as one who gives feedback, and not one who engages in personal thematic discourse with the class. It may also be due to the lack of clarity in the questionnaire that personal thematic discourse includes the self-disclosure of personal experiences and opinions by the teacher.

In contrast to the impact of the three forms of interaction on the development of the teacher-student relationship in the FtoF classroom, the majority of students did not pick positive comments or corrective feedback as having the greatest impact on their relationship with their peers although positive comments and corrective feedback were indeed still chosen by some. When asked the closed-ended question regarding what they thought had most helped build a positive relationship with their classmates, 35 out of 56 students chose personal thematic discourse (62.5%), followed by 14 students who chose positive comments (25%) and 7 who chose corrective feedback (12.5%; see Figure 5). As a result, in answer to the last research question regarding which of the three forms of interaction were most effective in the development of a positive student-student relationship, it can be seen that the majority of students share a strong preference for personal thematic discourse. That said, it is noteworthy that a quarter of the students still chose positive comments, and 12.5% chose corrective feedback.

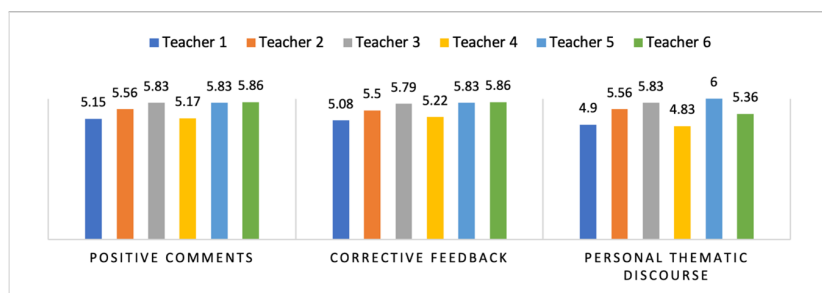
The fact that positive comments were perceived as an important factor in both teacher-student and student-student rapport, yet in the case of this study, they are a form of interaction between teacher and student shows that a causal relationship may be seen between the development of the teacher-student and student-student relationships. Although only 12.5% of the students chose corrective feedback, this is also an interaction directly linked to the teacher within the context of the questionnaire, again showing a possible causal relationship between the teacher-student and student-student relationships. As such, the need to promote these three forms of interaction in the second language classroom is not only important for teacher and student rapport, but rapport among peers, as well.

Lastly, the initial twelve closed-ended questions of Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire examined the impact of each of the three forms of interaction separately on teacher-student and student-student rapport in the FtoF classroom prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the teacher-student relationship of Part 1, on a scale of 0 to 6, the responses to each set of four questions were between 4.83 (4 representing a somewhat positive impact) and 6 (representing a very positive impact). As such, the three different types of interaction were perceived very similarly by all students regardless of teacher (see Figure 6), and they were also all regarded as important (5.57 average for



**Figure 5** Combined Class Answers to the Question: Overall, What Do You Think Has Helped Build a Positive Relationship Between You and Your Classmates Most?

*Note.* This figure shows the total number of students.



**Figure 6** Student Responses to the 12 Questions of the Impact of the Three Forms of Interaction on the Teacher-Student Relationship

Note. 6 = Very positive; 4 = Somewhat positive; 2 = Neutral; 0 = Absolutely not positive

positive comments; 5.55 for corrective feedback; and 4.41 for personal thematic discourse).

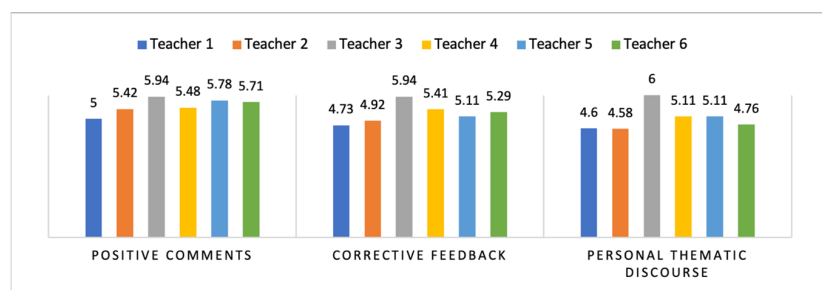
Similarly, the twelve closed-ended questions of Part 2 regarding the student-student relationship show that all three interactions were perceived positively as a whole among each class, regardless of teacher (see Figure 7), and they were also all regarded as important (5.56 average for positive comments; 5.23 for corrective feedback; and 5.03 for personal thematic discourse).

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As can be seen, the initial twelve closed-ended questions of both Parts 1 and 2 regarding the teacher-student and student-student relationship revealed that all three interactions were perceived positively as a whole. In fact, although teachers tend to be a variable, there did not seem to be a notable difference among the responses per class regarding the impact of each form of interaction. That said, the lack of differences in the perception

of the impact of each of the three forms of interaction on teacher-student and student-student rapport may be due to the design of the questionnaire not eliciting enough granularity on the data. Additionally, it should be mentioned that these closed-ended questions were not aimed at showing which form of interaction was perceived to have the most positive impact on building rapport with the teacher and peers, but simply if it had a positive or negative impact in and of itself.

In summary, as shown in the results of this study, although all three forms of interaction have a positive impact on the development of both teacher-student and student-student rapport, the development of said relationships in the FL classroom involves an array of factors which not only vary depending on the type of relationship (i.e., teacher-student or student-student) but also between the FtoF and online settings.



**Figure 7** Combined Answers to the 12 Questions on the Positive Impact of the Three Forms of Interaction on the Student-Student Relationship

Note. 6 = Very positive; 4 = Somewhat positive; 2 = Neutral; 0 = Absolutely not positive



## Discussion

Examining the development of positive teacher-student and student-student relationships in the online and FtoF classroom from the point of view of the students, as well as differences between online and in-person feedback, important information has been revealed about the need to bring qualities of the FtoF environment into the synchronous online setting in order to promote a more personalized and communicative space. As various studies suggest, a sense of connectedness in the online classroom is indeed valuable and possible in order to satisfy students' desire for community and satisfaction in the course (Gallien & Oomen, 2005). Now more than ever, with the unexpected transition to the online classroom from the FtoF setting due to the emergence of COVID-19, there is a need to establish the attributes that help build positive rapport in the online classroom.

As seen in this study, the students shared an overwhelming preference for the FtoF classroom in terms of developing both teacher-student and student-student rapport. Although a preference for the FtoF classroom at the time of the questionnaire was clear and shared by students taught by six different teachers, it should be noted that the students had only completed four weeks of online classes after an unexpected transition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, their responses were framed within a very unique setting. The same classes may have a different experience the following semester once both students and teachers alike have had more experience navigating the synchronous online space and teachers and institutions have had time to develop materials appropriate for online teaching and opportunities for authentic interaction. Nonetheless, the student responses reveal important information on the valued qualities of the FtoF classroom such as a greater ability to connect, a more personal setting, a greater ease in asking questions and receiving feedback, and more interaction, which

can now be fostered in the online setting prevalent in this time of pandemic.

To start, looking at the three interactions investigated in this study in the FtoF classroom, this study can affirm that all three forms of interaction have a positive impact on the teacher-student and student-student relationship as found in previous studies (Swan & Shih, 2005; Sher, 2009; Blattner et al., 2012). It was unexpected, however, to see that corrective feedback was chosen by almost as many students that chose positive comments when asked which form of interaction they found to have the greatest impact on building a positive relationship with the teacher. Although corrective feedback has been shown to be a fundamental element in second language learning (Ellis, 2009), it was not anticipated to be perceived as positively by the students in terms of relationship building. That said, receiving personalized meaningful feedback is indeed a means by which the teacher can show their support and connect with the students (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2019). As a result of these findings, further investigation into the strategies implemented for giving corrective feedback, as well as the other two forms of interaction that students find to be the most effective on building rapport with both teacher and peers would be beneficial in order to better understand which methods best foster these relationships in the FtoF and online instructional setting.

On the other hand, the fact that almost half of the students chose positive comments as having the greatest impact on building a positive relationship with their teacher is not surprising. As Ellis (2009) explains, positive feedback provides affective support to the student which in turn motivates the student to continue learning. In fact, it is not only an important way to foster positive attitudes but is as important as, if not more than, negative feedback in the classroom (Ellis, 2013). As Pacansky-Brock et al. (2019) describe, the development of the teacher-student relationship through forms such as validation is at the heart of

connecting students with each other and increasing student engagement and rigor. Likewise, in the results of this study, the value of positive comments, despite being a form of interaction between teacher and student, extended to rapport building among peers, demonstrating a possible causal relationship between the teacher-student and student-student relationship. As such, positive comments are indeed an essential interaction in building rapport in the FL classroom as they not only improve the teacher-student relationship but the student-student one as well.

Regarding the third form of interaction, personal thematic discourse, the fact that it was the most widely elected interaction by the students for its impact on building rapport with peers corresponds with previous studies which have shown that strong connections are built through personal discourse (Gallien & Oomen, 2005; Cayanus et al., 2009; González-Lloret, 2020). Consequently, it was surprising to be the interaction least chosen by the students regarding building rapport with their teacher. This could be due to the perception of the teacher as not being a participant in classroom discourse involving the self-disclosure of personal experiences. Future studies involving a focus on personal thematic discourse between students and teacher through activities in which the teacher explicitly shares their experiences (such as with Web 2.0 tools as discussed in further detail below) would allow for more insight into the impact of this form of interaction on teacher-student rapport. In fact, the use of technologies that promote meaningful interaction may not only aid in developing a sense of community (González-Lloret, 2020), but provide a bridge that allows for the personal connection and social presence valued in the in-person classroom to be promoted online (Lomicka, 2020).

As discussed, the presence of the favorable characteristics found in the FtoF classroom that help build rapport can now be fostered in the online setting with today's advances in technology-mediated activities and greater opportunities for

teacher-student and student-student interaction. More and more research has shown the success and benefits of authentic interaction in the online classroom (Woods et al., 2004). In fact, a study by Rovai (2002a), which compared the sense of classroom community experienced by 326 participants in FtoF and asynchronous online courses, found that the feelings of disconnectedness and isolation often associated with online learning were more often due to the course pedagogy and/or design than the online setting. Accordingly, Rovai's study suggests that at least the same level of community can be built in the online classroom as in the FtoF one. Likewise, various studies have revealed that instructors' immediacy behaviors, that is, the interactions that minimize the feeling of distance between the students and teacher (i.e., encouragement, praising, individualized feedback, using humor, self-disclosure, etc.), promote this closeness and increase student satisfaction in the online classroom (Gallien & Oomen, 2005; Swan & Shea, 2005a). Indeed, these are some of the attributes that students mentioned enjoying in the FtoF classroom in this study. Fortunately, these are skills that teachers can implement online with the aid of certain technologies, as discussed in Pedagogic Implications below.

### Pedagogical Implications

The implementation of the forms of interaction which improve the teacher-student and student-student relationship, is of great importance due to their role in motivation and performance in learning a FL. These forms of interaction along with the other attributes presented in this study, such as a more personal setting and a greater connection face-to-face, need to be converted as much as possible to fit the synchronous online classroom. Accordingly, a discussion of available techniques will follow, some of which would also be useful additions to the FtoF classroom.

There are numerous strategies to add occasions for interaction and connection in both the FtoF and online classroom. Some textbooks based on

the communicative and/or task-based methods already present activities that could be a starting point and transferred to the synchronous online classroom with the use of breakout rooms in Zoom and collaborative writing in Google Docs. In fact, studies have shown that students can interact in breakout rooms in a way that may actually be more comfortable for them than face-to-face (Debrock et al., 2020). Furthermore, having longer and more frequent pair and small group activities in breakout rooms as well as FtoF, creates more opportunities for the teacher to give feedback and to promote a more personal environment.

In terms of Google Docs, supplementary documents in line with the textbook can be created that permit the sharing of personal experiences and goals with collaborative writing in live time by the students. During such activities, the teacher can give immediate personalized feedback, both positive and corrective, verbal and written, along with comments and additional questions concerning the students' interests. As found in a study by Sher (2009) conducted across 30 sections of online university learning programs, treating students as individuals and promoting an environment that fosters the sharing of learning experiences, a sense of community, teamwork, and interaction are valuable factors in online learning.

Beyond the possibility of self-disclosure involved in collaborative writing activities, the addition of comments and questions by the teacher can promote a sense of connection and community. It is the small actions, after all, that also play a part in developing positive rapport. For example, by arriving before and staying a little after a synchronous online class, a teacher can mimic the aspect of a more personal setting as found in the FtoF classroom. Similarly, by actively promoting office hours online, students' desire for a greater ease in asking questions and receiving more personal feedback is addressed to a degree (DeBrock et al., 2020). Lastly, the use of icebreakers, even if not based on the textbook topic, allow students to

get to know each other better and build a sense of community (González-Lloret, 2020).

Interaction among students can also occur during and outside of class by means of accessing everyday tools offered by the Internet in order to complete tasks that are relevant to the students' lives. Such tools, as discussed below, can be completed in small groups or pairs in breakout rooms during synchronous online classes, as well as asynchronously. One such tool is Yelp, which allows students to complete meaningful tasks concerning restaurants or other shops of their choosing. Tools such as Google Earth and Google Maps allow for interaction concerning directions and searches of places of interest in a fun and relevant manner (González-Lloret, 2020). While using these tools to work collaboratively, the teacher can give personalized feedback, both positive and corrective, in breakout rooms or on the students' Google Docs if used, as well as afterward with the class as a whole.

Activities including more self-disclosure and personal thematic discourse could be completed using social networks such as Facebook or Instagram, or other interactive platforms such as Padlet and Flipgrid. As Blattner and Lomicka (2012) explain, the amount of face-to-face interaction that students get in class is limited, whereas social networking sites allow students to build rapport with their peers and their teacher in a way that may be even more motivating and personal. Padlet may be used to reflect on and share personal experiences and interests as pertains to the classroom topic. It is an interactive web-based board upon which students can respond to the teacher and other students in a written format, create topics, and upload pictures. As described by Maceira et al. (2017), the manner in which Padlet can be used to reflect on one's daily life and comment on the reflections of others is similar to the authentic responses to user-generated content such as on Facebook.

Lastly, another user-friendly and interactive tool is Flipgrid, a tool to be used asynchronously. Flipgrid is a website that allows teachers to create topics or tasks on which a shared, collaborative board of students' work (i.e., videos) is posted and available for video discussion and feedback. In terms of community building, being able to not only see and hear classmate's output when interacting through video messages but also have all the videos on one wall allows students to connect and get to know each other. In fact, within a community, even one that is in a digital space, students can express their identity through their stories of their friends and family, what they choose to wear in the video, their background, and how they respond to their classmates (Sickel, 2020).

As can be seen, the online classroom has opened up more opportunities to utilize the Internet to not only build language competencies in meaningful ways but to create spaces within and outside of the class for students to interact, get to know each other, and allow the teacher to give the feedback essential in foreign language learning and the development of positive teacher-student and student-student rapport.

### Conclusions

This study reveals the importance of feedback from the teacher in the teacher-student relationship in the form of both corrective feedback and positive comments as well as the importance of positive comments and personal thematic discourse on the student-student relationship. Not only this, but the need to bring qualities from the FtoF classroom to the online setting, such as a sense of a more personal experience, ability to connect, ease in asking questions and receiving feedback, and greater interaction has been presented along with ways to do so. Due to the fact that the development of these relationships is perceived to be greater in the FtoF classroom by the students, exploring the attributes of the above-mentioned characteristics, as well as how to further bring the qualities of positive comments,

corrective feedback, and personal thematic discourse into the synchronous online classroom is essential.

In spite of the factors that limit this study such as the interpretive nature of the data of the questionnaire and the lack of granularity as seen in the data, some qualities that students value in the FtoF classroom have still been revealed, as well as the need to foster said factors in the online classroom. Now, with the rise in online classes as a result of COVID-19, there is an even greater need for studies to not only take place in the FtoF classroom but also in the online one, as well. Such future studies would benefit from being performed in online courses that promote collaborative and technology-mediated learning, such as in technology-mediated task-based teaching curriculums, which would allow for further insight into the creation of a more personal, interactive and collaborative space that harnesses the potential of technology and language use. In conclusion, with today's technology and knowledge of collaborative online activities, the emotional element found in in-person exchanges may now take place in an online environment. As discussed by DeBrock et al. (2020), it is indeed possible to bring the "human element" to online learning.

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Appendix: Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire: The Use of Feedback to Develop Rapport in the Foreign Language Classroom

Form description

Please review the Consent to Participate form below. \*

I agree to participate in the research project entitled, "The Use of Feedback to Develop Rapport in the Forei..

Consent to Participate

Research Title: **The Use of Feedback to Develop Rapport in the Foreign Language Classroom**

Aloha! My name is [redacted] and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the [redacted] in the Department of [redacted]. I am doing this research as part of my [redacted].

**What am I being asked to do?**

If you participate in this project, you will be asked to complete a 5-7-minute anonymous online questionnaire about your perceptions of how three different forms of oral intervention by your teacher in your face to face classes before spring break, as well as some questions about your current online class.

**Taking part in this study is your choice.**

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you. Whether you choose to participate or not will not affect your grade in this class in any way.

**Why is this study being done?**

The purpose of this study is to investigate oral interventions in the foreign language classroom to improve the way teachers and students interact so that it is more effective for language learning. Your participation is extremely important since you are the teacher's interlocutor and the recipient of her/his feedback.

**What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?**

You will take part in the research by filling up a questionnaire with 32 closed questions that you will answer on a scale of 1 to 5 with how much you agree, and 3 open questions about your online class. It will take 5 to 7 minutes to complete the survey.

**What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?**

I believe there is no risk to you for participating in this research project. If you become uncomfortable answering any of the questionnaire questions, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop taking the questionnaire altogether. There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this survey at this time. The results of this study may help improve classroom management techniques to benefit future students.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:**

I will not ask you for any personal information, such as your name or address. Please do not include any personal information in your questionnaire. I will keep all study data secure in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office/encrypted on a password protected computer. Only my [redacted] advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The [redacted] Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this study, please call or email me ([redacted]) or the research supervisor, ([redacted]) Human Studies Program at [redacted]. For questions, obtain information, or offer input with an informed individual who is unaffiliated with the specific research protocol. Please visit <http://go.hawaii.edu/jRd> for more information on your rights as a research participant.

2. Class name

Mark only one oval.

101

102

3. Instructor

Mark only one oval.

Teacher 1

Teacher 2

Teacher 3

Teacher 4

Teacher 5

Teacher 6

504

Part 1: Your relationship with your Spanish teacher - Thinking about your face to face Spanish classes before Spring Break

4. When your teacher makes a positive comment after you say something in Spanish:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicabe
Does your teacher motivate you to learn and speak more?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does your teacher help you feel comfortable speaking in class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about your success in your Spanish language learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about you as a person, in general?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



5. When your teacher gives you feedback explaining the correct answer after you make a mistake:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel your teacher is okay with you making errors?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel your teacher corrects mistakes in a positive, kind and helpful way?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about your success in your Spanish language learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about you as a person, in general?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. When you have class discussions about personal experiences and opinions:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel your teacher is interested in your experiences and opinions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you enjoy sharing your experiences and opinions with your teacher?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about your success in your Spanish language learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does it make you feel like your teacher cares about you as a person, in general?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Overall, what do you think has most helped build a positive relationship between you and the teacher?

Mark only one oval.

- Receiving positive comments after sharing an answer/comment
- Receiving corrective feedback after making a mistake
- Class discussions about personal experiences

Part 2: Your relationship with the other students in Spanish class - Thinking about the face to face classes before Spring Break

8. In terms of how the positive comments from your teacher help you connect with classmates:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel your teacher makes a safe place in which you can be comfortable speaking with your classmates because of his/her positive comments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think your classmates feel comfortable speaking in front of and with you because of your teacher's positive comments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel there is a general feeling of camaraderie in your class because of your teacher's positive comments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. In terms of the effects on your relationship with your classmates when your teacher gives an explanation as part of correcting your mistakes:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel your teacher makes your classmates comfortable making mistakes in front of you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you comfortable making mistakes in front of your classmates?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel there is a general feeling of camaraderie in your class because of your teacher's "gentle" explanations when people make mistakes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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10. In terms of the effects of class discussions about personal experiences and opinions on your relationship with your classmates:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel your classmates are interested in your experiences and opinions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you interested in hearing about your classmates' experiences and opinions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel there is a general feeling of camaraderie in your class because of the discussions in class which include sharing about your personal experiences and opinions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. In general, in terms of your relationship with your classmates:

*Mark only one oval per row.*

	Yes, totally	Sure	Not really	Absolutely not	Not applicable
Do you feel you have a positive relationship with the majority of your classmates?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel like your teacher helps create a positive relationship with your classmates?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you become friends with any of your classmates to the point that you hang out outside of class or are friends on social media?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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12. Overall, what do you think has most helped build a positive relationship with other students?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Receiving positive comments from the teacher
- Receiving corrective feedback after making a mistake
- Class discussions about personal experiences

Thinking about your online classes

13. In your online classes, how often does your teacher make positive comments after answering a question?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Often  
 Sometimes  
 Almost never  
 Never

14. In your online classes, how often does your teacher correct your mistakes?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Often  
 Sometimes  
 Almost never  
 Never

15. In your online classes, how often does your teacher include discussions about personal experiences and opinions?

*Mark only one oval.*

- More than once every class  
 Once every class  
 Some classes  
 Never

16. Do you think online classes or face to face classes are better for building a positive relationship with your teacher?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Online classes  
 Face to face classes

17. Why do you think online or face to face classes are better for building a positive relationship with your teacher?

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510

18. Do you think online classes or face to face classes are better for building a positive relationship with your classmates?

*Mark only one oval.*

- Online classes  
 Face to face classes

19. Why do you think online or face to face classes are better for building a positive relationship with your classmates?

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20. Do you think getting feedback in online language classes is more, the same, or less effective than in face to face classes?

*Mark only one oval.*

- more effective  
 as effective  
 less effective

21. How do you think feedback is the same or different than face to face and online Spanish class?

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# “AND MY SCREEN WOULDN’T SHARE...”: EFL STUDENT-TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ICT IN ONLINE TEACHING PRACTICE AND ONLINE TEACHING

“Y NO CONSEGUÍA COMPARTIR LA PANTALLA...”: LAS PERCEPCIONES DE LOS FUTUROS  
PROFESORES SOBRE LAS TIC EN LA PRÁCTICA DOCENTE VIRTUAL Y LA ENSEÑANZA EN LÍNEA

“MAIS JE NE PARVENAIS PAS À PARTAGER MON ÉCRAN...”: PERCEPTIONS DES ENSEIGNANTS  
D’ANGLAIS EN FORMATION PAR RAPPORT AUX TIC AU COURS DE LEUR STAGE PÉDAGOGIQUE  
ET L’ENSEIGNEMENT EN LIGNE

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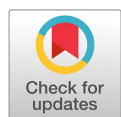
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## ABSTRACT

The sudden switch to online teaching enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted teacher education at universities, particularly micro-teachings and teaching practice, as technology has become an inherent part of these processes. The growing body of literature on online teaching and teacher education during lockdown conditions mainly addresses challenges in teacher education and educator perceptions. However, very few studies deal with the perceptions of student-teachers. To fill this gap, a group of teacher educators conducted a research study with 63 students enrolled in a master’s Degree in Teaching EFL for Secondary Schools offered at Masaryk University, Czechia. To carry it out, qualitative coding procedures were employed on a dataset of 120 lesson reflections written by students completing their teaching practice via online courses which were ordinarily conducted in person. The purpose was to find out how student-teachers perceived technology use when teaching online. The main findings show that, despite constant comparison between the face-to-face and online classrooms and an initial reliance on the success of technology to determine a lesson’s success, the majority of student-teachers normalized technology as a platform for teaching, using technology-specific language for teaching strategies and classroom events. These findings suggest that online teaching and learning should be seen as an integral part of teacher education.

**Keywords:** Teacher education; online teaching; teaching practice; EFL; perceptions; ICT; COVID-19.



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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Editors: Marta González-Lloret, University of Hawai’i at Mānoa, USA; Laia Canals, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain; Jorge Pineda, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia.

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## RESUMEN

La repentina necesidad de pasar a la docencia en línea impuesta por la pandemia de COVID-19 ha tenido un impacto en la formación de docentes en las universidades, especialmente en lo relacionado con la micro-enseñanza y las prácticas docentes. El creciente corpus de literatura sobre docencia en línea y formación de profesores en condiciones de confinamiento aborda principalmente los retos de la formación de profesores y las percepciones de los educadores, pero pocos estudios se ocupan de las percepciones de los docentes en formación. Para llenar este vacío, un grupo de formadores de docentes realizaron una investigación con 63 estudiantes de la maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE) en Instituciones de Educación Secundaria, ofrecido por la Universidad de Masaryk, República Checa. Para llevarla a cabo, codificaron cualitativamente 120 reflexiones de clase escritas por los estudiantes que hacían sus prácticas docentes en línea en cursos diseñados para dictarse en forma presencial. El objetivo era ver cuál era su percepción de la tecnología para la docencia en línea. Los principales hallazgos muestran que, pese a la comparación constante entre las clases presenciales y virtuales y a una confianza inicial en el éxito de la tecnología como determinante del éxito de la clase, la mayoría de los docentes en formación normalizaron el uso de la tecnología como plataforma educativa, usando un lenguaje específico de la tecnología para sus estrategias pedagógicas y las actividades de la clase. Estos resultados indican que la docencia y el aprendizaje en línea deben integrarse a la formación de docentes.

**Palabras clave:** formación de docentes; enseñanza en línea; práctica docente; percepciones; ILE; TIC; COVID-19.

## RÉSUMÉ

Le soudain changement à l'enseignement en ligne imposé para la pandémie de COVID-19 a eu des impacts considérables sur la formation des enseignants, particulièrement sur le micro-enseignement et le stage pédagogique, compte tenu que la technologie est devenue un composant important de ces processus. Le croissant corpus de littérature sur l'enseignement en ligne et la formation des enseignants dans des mesures de confinement s'occupe surtout des défis dans la formation des enseignants et les perceptions des enseignants, mais peu des études s'occupent des perceptions des enseignants en formation. Pour combler cette lacune, un groupe de formateurs d'enseignants ont mené une recherche avec 63 étudiants du master en éducation de l'université de Masaryk, République tchèque, qui faisaient leurs stages comme enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère au secondaire. Dans ce but, nous avons codifiée qualitativement une série de données dans 120 réflexions de classe écrites par les étudiants à partir de leurs cours donner en ligne quoiqu'ils étaient préparés pour le présentiel. Cela visait à voir les perceptions des enseignants en formation sur la technologie pour l'enseignement en ligne. Les principaux résultats montrent que, malgré la comparaison constante entre les classes présentiels et virtuelles et une confiance initiale dans le succès de la technologie comme déterminant de la réussite du cours, la plupart des enseignants en formation ont normalisé l'utilisation de la technologie, en tant que plate-forme éducative, utilisant un langage spécifique à la technologie pour leurs stratégies pédagogiques et leurs activités de classe. Ces résultats indiquent que l'enseignement et l'apprentissage en ligne devraient être intégrés dans la formation des enseignants.

**Mots-clés :** formation des enseignants ; enseignement en ligne ; stages pédagogiques ; ALE ; TIC ; COVID-19.

## Introduction

With the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and universities suddenly had to switch the delivery of education to the online environment. This switch has had a significant impact on the ways that teacher education programs are carried out, mainly in their practical components. Information and communication technologies, including tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication, have become an inherent part of the processes in teacher education programs, while face-to-face sessions on campus or within school placement have been cancelled or significantly limited. It follows that it is worthwhile examining the ways in which technology has become intertwined with teacher education under the changing circumstances caused by the pandemic.

Before we embark upon detailing the focus of the study, we should highlight that we understand teaching as a profession in the sense that teachers as members of a professional community (1) possess in-depth specialist knowledge about teaching as well as the ability to define it, (2) need a thorough initial academic and further education, (3) visibly take serious responsibility (characterized by maximum autonomy), and (4) are committed to social welfare/service in terms of meeting a significant need of society (see also Malin, 2017). This view has several implications for the way that we approach the ways students perceive their teaching experience. Firstly, the practical experience of students cannot be reduced to the "training" of classroom procedures, but it should be meaningfully linked to the body of knowledge addressed and developed in other courses within teacher education programs. This includes the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK; Shulman, 1987) which has been extended to technological and pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) by incorporating technology knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; see also Tseng et al., 2020, Nasri et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Heath & Segal, 2021). This seems to be central when

the teaching and learning processes are to be realized in online environments, as is the case with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, we recognize the wide range of possibilities, considerations, and challenges that English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education entails (e.g., Johnson, 2016; see also Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), upon which we now concentrate the theory and research in the reflective practice tradition. In this view, reflection aims to help student-teachers make sense of their practical experiences, such as teaching practice or micro-teaching performances. This reflection-on-action may relate one's practical experience with more general aspects of the knowledge base for teaching, as discussed above. The integration of theoretical and practical aspects is outlined as one of the strategies for high-quality teacher learning and teaching by Darling-Hammond (2017).

In this empirical study, we focus on the practical component and related reflective writing of EFL student-teachers within a teacher education program in Czechia, which was the eighth most affected country in the world (Pettersson et al., 2020) and reported having "the second-highest per capita death rate over seven days in the world" in autumn 2020 (Cameron, 2020, para. 1). During the lockdown, both universities and upper secondary schools had to switch to an online mode of teaching. Building on data from an English language teacher education program, we explore the reflective writing produced by students who did the practical component of their teacher education online. This study seeks to answer the following research question: *How do student-teachers perceive technology use when teaching online?* Our research contributes to the study of teacher education by reporting on how students perceived their own online teaching and, more specifically, how they themselves adapted to the technological aspects of the online delivery. Building on the literature on reflective practice and on changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we argue that student-teachers have a dynamic relationship with

technology and teaching online, which is visible through four distinct perceptions of technology use that emerged from the analysis (a comparison of the face-to-face and online teaching environments in favor of the latter, a view that technology can be used to substitute the traditional classroom, a belief that the online environment is not “real” like the face-to-face classroom, an action plan to improve ICT skills and thus become a better teacher). The challenges of teaching online, in the end, do not outweigh the benefits.

### Theoretical Framework

The following chapter presents the approaches to and the significance of reflection in teacher education and development. The existing research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher education is then discussed and related to the presented research.

#### Reflective Practice in EFL Teacher Education

Mann and Walsh (2017, pp. 8–9) argue that while the literature on reflective practice generally emphasizes its importance in teacher education and professional practice, there seems to be no commonly agreed definition. They conclude that many authors emphasize the role of experience and the intellectual and affective processes related to it. Schön’s (1983, 1987) distinction between reflection-in-action, which takes place during the professional experience, and reflection-on-action (i.e., analyzing a past professional experience) represents an important conceptual cornerstone. While professional performance, such as teaching a class, can be guided by automatized routines and tacit knowing, reflection-in-action comes into play especially when something surprising or unwanted occurs during the performance (Schön, 1983). Student-teachers who are engaged in reflection-on-action can become more aware of and responsive to various aspects of the professional activity, which can, in turn, help them engage in reflection-in-action.

In EFL teacher education, reflection-on-action can be implemented in many ways (Farrell, 2019; Mann

& Walsh, 2017). In this study we concentrate on reflective writing in which student-teachers were asked to return to their experience, attend to their feelings and re-evaluate the experience. This was done to encourage them to observe relationships between old and new ideas and incorporate the resulting knowledge into their normal ways of operating (Boud, 2001, pp. 13–14). This reflective circle roughly corresponds to Gibbs’ (2013) structured debriefing, as it provides guidance for student-teachers, who were asked to describe the action, focus on one’s feelings and reactions, analyze the situation, draw conclusions and devise an action plan. This way student-teachers can better understand their own performance and re-frame the knowledge that underlies it. Specifically, in the context of an online teaching experience, it also seems unavoidable for one to compare such an experience with his or her own previous face-to-face experience as a teacher or as a learner (Brookfield, 2017, pp. 69–72). To sum up, in writing about their teaching experience, student-teachers can engage with their feelings, knowledge, and previous personal experience to help them better understand the experience and to organize their thoughts and ideas about teaching.

Regarding the student-teachers’ practical experience, two types of practice are relevant to our empirical study: micro-teaching and teaching practice. We use the term micro-teaching to mean student-teachers teaching one another as part of a university course (Grossman, 2005), while teaching practice denotes student-teacher’s placement in EFL courses where they teach and take (partial) responsibility for foreign language classes. Both of these types of practical experience activities were situated within the reflective practice framework, as described above. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these practical experience activities were done online.

#### COVID-19 and Education

There are a number of studies that deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher

education in various countries, including Australia (Scull et al., 2020), Canada (Nuland et al., 2020), Chile (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020), Israel (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020), Malaysia (Nasri et al., 2020), Portugal (Flores & Gago, 2020), South Africa (Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020), the UK (Kidd & Murray, 2020; Velle et al., 2020), the USA (Loose & Ryan, 2020; Metscher et al., 2020; Mollenkopf & Gaskill, 2020; Moroe et al., 2020; Quezada et al., 2020) and Trinidad and Tobago (Kalloo et al., 2020). It follows from these studies that the transition to the online mode of teaching involved a number of challenges, one of which was the school placement of student-teachers. The present study addresses the research gap in that it gives voice exclusively to the student-teachers and examines their views of the technology in online teaching expressed through continuous reflective practice. As Kid and Murray (2020) affirm, students and educators were forced to assert their "pedagogic agility" in order to address the looming "practicum vacuum" that initial teacher education programs faced. Several studies have reported that there was no possibility for student-teachers to complete the practicum, so the teacher educators devised activities in which student-teachers were asked to do micro-teaching with their peers or families or to prepare instructional videos or presentations (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020; Kalloo et al., 2020; Moroe et al., 2020). In other teacher education programs, student-teachers did their school placement online (Flores & Gago, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Our study contributes to both of these strands and fills a gap in the literature as we report on both micro-teaching performances that were an inherent part of a course in EFL didactics and on teaching practice where student-teachers were teaching real students online.

The above-cited studies were written mostly from the perspective of teacher educators and reported on the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic posed on teacher education programs. Other studies concentrate more on online teaching and teachers' perceptions thereof, building mostly

on interviews and surveys (Coolican et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Spoel et al., 2020). Teachers involved in these three studies report that the training and experience of working in the online environments was a challenging one, thus pointing to the TPACK model mentioned above (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; see also Tseng et al., 2020). It follows that some tasks that are normally done in face-to-face classes need to be done in a different way or reframed completely when teaching online. Specifically in teaching English as a foreign language English represents not only the subject matter but also the language of interaction. This results in many challenges in an online mode of delivery, such as the need to establish new classroom routines and to address some technological aspects, or the lack of physical contact and control over learners' activity. Our study adds to this body of research by reporting on the perceptions of EFL student-teachers who were, similarly to teachers in these studies, suddenly required to teach online.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are relatively many studies that report on the experiences and perceptions of teacher educators and teachers. In addition, studies of the perceptions of learner's parents have begun to burgeon (e.g., Brom et al., 2020; Elgart, 2021; Mantovani et al., 2021). However, to our knowledge, there have only been two studies that concentrate on the perceptions of online teaching by student-teachers enrolled in teacher education programs. One of them is by Nasri et al. (2020), who report on the coping strategies that were employed by student-teachers in their interactions with lecturers and content. This study was based on a teacher educators' response helpdesk and on student-teachers' reflections on their online remote learning. In another study, Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) report on the challenges and opportunities that 27 student-teachers faced while undertaking their teaching placement online. Among others, their findings show student-teachers appreciated going beyond the professional knowledge and skills as developed in traditional teacher education programs but also reported on some problems, including a lack

of direct interaction with the learners, and a lack of “live” teaching experience that would make it possible for them to put into practice some of the classroom management strategies discussed in other courses. By analyzing student-teachers’ post-lesson written reflections, our study fills the gap in the literature on student-teachers’ perceptions of their teaching online. More specifically, we concentrate on detailing the student-teachers’ perceptions of what the technology brings them during their teacher education journey particularly when they are required to teach online.

## Method

This section provides information on the research procedure. The participants and the circumstances within which the research was conducted are described. The data collection and analysis are then detailed.

### Participants

The qualitative research was conducted with 63 first and second-year students of a Master’s degree program in teaching EFL for secondary schools at Masaryk University, Czechia; 34 first and 29 second year students. The students’ experience with teaching in general and the online environment in particular, varied greatly. Some had experience with teaching English in the online environment, some had experience with teaching face-to-face, and for some this semester was the first time that they had taught.

Although the year groups and the students’ individual experience with (online) teaching (or a lack thereof) provided a rich, heterogeneous data set, what all the participants had in common was having to partake in practical tasks online as part of their degree. The effect that this had in terms of a shift to the online environment for teaching in the context of their degree was new and the same for all the students. In this sense we viewed the two groups as homogeneous and thus included the 63 students in one cohort.

## Context

The data set of reflections were collected from two different courses; a first-year EFL didactics course where students were required to micro-teach their peers and a second-year course where students did their teaching practice teaching full lessons of English to students at A2/B1 level. Both courses were previously taught face-to-face. The students were asked to reflect once they had taught.

First-year students were required to reflect on their experience in several stages in writing (i.e., planning a session in tandem, micro-teaching and observing their partner teaching, and looking back at the experience). Their reflection assignments were produced in pairs and were structured by 5 topics for reflection focused on overall feeling, achievement of objectives, unexpected moments what they would do differently, and what they felt they had learnt.

Second-year students were required to produce post-lesson reflections; the semester also concluded with an overall written reflection. The reflections were structured by 10 topics focused on overall feeling, achievement of objectives, analyzing a particular lesson stage and what they would do differently, and what they felt they had learnt.

Based on Gibbs’ (2013) framework introduced above, neither set of topics for reflection for the first and second years asked specifically about the role of technology, nor were they meant to be questionnaires but rather a guide for the students to air their thoughts on the experience. Although the individual assignments differed in length and focus, they all belong to the category of reflection-on-action as described above.

## Data Collection

The data detailed above was collected throughout the autumn semester (2020). At the time of analyzing the data, 120 of the expected 150 assignments had been submitted (see Table 1 for an overview

**Table 1** Overview of the Dataset

	First Year	Second Year
Students	34	29
Assignments focusing on reflection	2 (per pair)	3 (individual)
Final reflection on teaching practice	0	1
Total reflective documents	34	116
Total reflective documents submitted at time of data analysis	34	86
Reflective documents mentioning technology	29	60

of the reflections). We thus worked with this number. The reflections were integral parts of the courses and we as teacher educators had access to them, as we were responsible for the courses and student assessment. For the purposes of this study, we copied and anonymized the students' assignments and post-lesson reflections. The following label was employed to anonymize the data from the reflections: Y followed by a number refers to the year that the student is in. S followed by a number represents the student. A followed by a number refers to which number assignment the quote was taken from.

Table 1 gives an overall view of the number of students and reflections. Excerpts from the reflections are presented in the results section.

**Data Analysis**

The data was approached through content analysis using some of the techniques proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) within the interpretive procedure of grounded theory with the aim of finding underlying themes and uncovering relationships among them. First, all the students' reflective writings were read to extract any passages which dealt with technology. In the next phase, the researchers worked individually approaching the data inductively with the research question in mind. The resulting open codes were then discussed together with the aim of increasing the "transparency, logic, or clarity" of the codes and emerging categories

(Duff, 2012, p. 107). When reading and discussing the initial codes, it became evident that students' remarks on technology either described its usage, evaluated its use and/or its impact, expressed their feelings connected to technology or related to their future plans regarding its use. This corresponded to the way that the reflective assignments were prompted. We thus tried grouping the relevant codes and categories under four labels in relation to some of the phases of Gibbs' model, namely Description, Feelings, Evaluation, and Action Plan.

Since the focus of the research was on students' perceptions of technology use, the use of the reflection framework was regarded as suitable and helpful in differentiating between the various meanings of the students' remarks. Subsequently, code clustering according to their meaning closeness (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 161) within the four groups was done individually at first, and later in the group. *Description*, for example, grouped codes such as *Technological Language*, and categories *Technological language* for traditional procedures and *Online teachers' room*. *Feelings* included remarks including expressions like frustration, scared, nervous or happy. To ensure that what was put under each category/code was evidenced and not forced into the category/code, the other two authors always read the examples connected by the first author to each category/code.

Through a mutual comparison of the categories and their properties across the material (i.e., axial coding; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 137), relationships between the individual elements were sought to discover patterns among the individual categories and the four groups in which these were clustered.

**Results**

The process of the content analysis revealed a number of themes that intertwine with the reflective process including description and analysis of the experience and designing a plan for the future. In the following section, the findings are

introduced using some of the stages of Gibbs' model of reflection (2013), namely *Description*, *Feelings*, *Evaluation* and *Action Plan*. Altogether 159 codes in the four aforementioned categories were produced; *Description* garnered 51 codes, *Feelings* 17, *Evaluation* 65, and *Action Plan* 26. We looked for emerging themes and what is presented below is typical of student-teachers' reflective writing within the respective categories. To illustrate the findings, quotes from the participants have been included. The quotes have been coded to ensure anonymity. Please see the Data Collection section, above, for details of the codes.

### Description

In their description of the various teaching situations, the student-teachers commonly used technological language freely without providing any explanations or details. The names of diverse web applications and their individual functions or parts appeared frequently and, as in the following example, were a natural part of the description of the course of action: "Jamboard and shared documents were great for group activities. Students were frequently using the Zoom chat, showing reactions, etc" (Y2S17A4). Sometimes the learners were rather more succinct as can be seen from the following reflection made about the practice stage of a grammar lesson: "Ss were cooperative. In the BR, they talked together about the exercise in English; later in the MR, even when one S didn't know, another S told me the right answer" (Y2S15A3). These show that technological terms such as breakout / main room (BR/MR) became a part of the jargon.

The lesson stages, classroom management and individual activities follow the traditional patterns. The technological elements, however, substituted the traditional forms. For example, instead of writing on the whiteboard, looking at a textbook page, filling in an exercise in the textbook, or putting students in groups, student-teachers talked about uploading links and writing answers in chat. In the following example, a student described a

lesson stage focused on listening for specific information: "I shared my screen with a table and students' task was to fill the interactive Google table in during the listening. ... Then, I put them into breakout rooms to check their answers with their partners" (Y2S01A1).

Supporting interaction in the classroom, establishing a connection and good rapport with students, providing a variety of tasks and forms, taking lessons off the coursebook page, etc. are important aspects of a successful language class. Clearly, they remained just as important in the online classroom and the student-teachers commonly looked for the technological means to do this:

I decided to take the practice off the textbook so I created a matching game. I sent the students a link for the game and asked them to match the words to create compound nouns and adjectives. I put them into breakout rooms to work in pairs so they could help each other. (Y2S02A3)

The student-teachers commonly seem to believe that achieving interaction and involvement in the online environment is on the one hand even more important: "As this was an online lesson, I wanted the students to be engaged as much as possible" (Y2S14A1). On the other hand, this was even more difficult than in the face-to-face classroom because of the lack of physical presence in one place or, as one student-teacher put it, "the invisible wall between the teacher and the students" (Y2S16A4). This "wall" or barrier makes foreign language teaching even more difficult, as the class is conducted in a language which is not yet fully mastered by the learners. The absence of the possibility of checking what page the learners are on, whether they are ready for the next task, or what they are actually doing is a challenge for the classroom management of every teacher, student-teachers included, and refers to the technological-pedagogical area of the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which is the integration of pedagogical (giving instructions, monitoring, etc.) and technological aspects. However, some content aspects are also addressed



in the reflective writing. In the excerpt cited above, the student "created a matching game" for the learners to make "compound nouns and adjectives" (Y2S02A3). Other quotes presented in this section also refer to listening comprehension and grammar. It follows that students in their reflective writing addressed all the three central aspects in the TPACK model: technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge.

### Feelings

Reflection on past actions and situations inevitably involves emotions. The student-teachers express a spectrum of feelings regarding technology and its role in their teaching experiences.

These include a number of negative emotions particularly nervousness, apprehension, and even frustration. The negative emotions dominated the reflections with students commonly acknowledging feeling "scared of teaching online" (Y2S01A4), "nervous [...] because breakout rooms didn't function as I wanted" (Y1S10A2) or not feeling "comfortable with online teaching" (Y1S05A1). These feelings typically marked the preparatory or initial stages of both micro-teaching and teaching practice and seemed to diminish with experience, as one of the student-teachers wrote in their final reflective essay:

Surprisingly, I would say that my third strength is the use of technology. Before we started with [teaching practice] I was so scared of teaching online. I had no experience, I did not feel comfortable using ZOOM, but I got used to it and it turned out that I am able to use technology effectively in the end. (Y2S17A4)

Similarly, other student-teachers reflected that, "despite all the initial fears" (Y1S01A1), the lessons usually ran smoothly without technical problems.

However, the respondents also experienced disappointment when various applications, online documents, and procedures did not work as planned due to either technical difficulties or gaps in their knowledge which caused malfunctioning

such as wrong sharing settings, not saving the newest version, and so on. The "background dramas when the technology does not work" (Y2S17A4) sometimes became a growing frustration, especially when the respondents felt like they could not influence the situation:

I feel that technology let me down a lot. In my mind, I started panicking. ... My computer stopped working, the screen sharing wasn't working, and the Padlet activities did not work. I also ran out of time. (Y2S13A1)

Technical problems are common, and some of them (e.g., a failing Internet connection or malfunctioning applications) seem to be beyond the control of regular users. Nonetheless, many issues can be prevented or at least solved very quickly by careful planning. Such planning requires a degree of experience and thoroughness. When reflecting on their teaching experience regarding technology, student-teachers were often aware of the need to plan the technical part of the lesson better, that they "could have prepared another option if it doesn't work" (Y2S13A1), or that they needed to plan "to test the tools we work with and the timing of an online class in the future" (Y1S11A1).

On the other hand, technology was sometimes blamed for the feelings of dissatisfaction after the lesson, even if the problems seemed to lie in other areas such as lack of meticulous planning, timing, and staging of the lesson or classroom management. Student-teachers appeared to default to blaming technical issues or their lack of experience with ICT for unsuccessful aspects of a lesson instead of a deeper reflection of the true causes.

However, I don't feel comfortable with online teaching (I'm not used to the environment) and due to this I had a problem with time and it caused me to become stressed in the second half of the lesson when I realized what time it was. (Y1S05A1)

Despite the fact that the negative feelings showed more prominence, student-teachers also expressed positive emotions. These were particularly connected to the moments when activities

using technology worked as planned, especially if these were applications or functions used by the students for the first time:

Finally, I was really happy to be able to familiarize myself with new online platforms, applications and functions well. In particular, I used Kahoot, Jamboard, shared my screen with the students for their better orientation, used various tools like a pointer or some drawing tools during my presentation, played a video online, used breakout rooms for discussions as well as other tools provided by the Zoom application. (Y2S14A4)

The feelings of accomplishment did not solely arise from the ability to use a particular tool but because including the technological aspect brought “another engaging element” (Y2S03A4). It also helped to make the lesson “more entertaining” (Y1S03A1) for the students than simply following a textbook page and served well for surveying the students’ existing knowledge or for sensitive error correction. The students reported that using tools such as Jamboard® or Google Documents®, and functions such as chat or showing reactions, increased the interaction and learner-centeredness of the class. We thus conclude that the student-teachers were not content with using technology for technology’s sake but tried to incorporate it to achieve their teaching objectives, thus integrating the knowledge of technology into their developing pedagogical content knowledge.

### Evaluation

As is often the case, separating the individual stages of reflection, particularly the description of events from feelings and evaluative comments, seems to have been difficult for the student-teachers. Objective re-telling of events usually quickly gives way to the assessment of one’s performance, the degree of success in the realization of the lesson plan, students’ reactions, and the reasons behind these.

Successful implementation of a technological element or execution of an activity involving a new tool or function served as a measurement of the success of the particular lesson stage. In addition,

a lack of technical issues seems to have acted as a measure of the success of the whole lesson. For example, during an introductory activity, a student invited their students to Jamboard® and to create sticky notes to brainstorm some ideas. In their reflection they wrote: “I feel that the Jamboard activity was well done, all went smooth. It was the first time I used it but it worked well” (Y2S07A2). This shows that rather than concentrating on whether the stage aims were met, the success of the stage was measured by the successful implementation of technology.

Many of the evaluative comments of the student-teachers were based on the comparison of the online and face-to-face teaching environments. The comparison did not typically favor the online environment. Several student-teachers doubted “whether it was even realistic to have a lively discussion via Zoom” (Y1S13A2). Many stated that it would be beneficial if “the students were given more power” (Y1S07A2) in their learning, but some “did not figure out how to perform the activity in a more engaging manner in the online environment without making it confusing or disorganized.” There were several instances where face-to-face teaching was referred to as “regular” (Y2S15A2), “normal” (Y1S11A2), and the “real” classroom (Y2S04A3). This notion of online teaching as an interim form may have led to the idea that it is not necessary “to worry about the [...] countless problems with slow Wi-Fi, Zoom that did not work [...] given the fact that the ‘accidents’ could be avoided in a regular face-to-face environment” (Y2S17A3).

In some instances, the student-teachers evaluate technology as an obstacle to their performance. In the online environment, they are not capable of managing the class in the same way as in the offline setting. Due to the different dynamic and “very limiting [...] lack of non-verbal communication” (Y2S19A4) student-teachers may overcompensate with “blabbering” (Y2S19A4) or what could be referred to as self-talk (unnecessary talk about different things that were not connected to the subject at hand). While this feature can be seen

as specific to the language classroom because the teacher's language may act as a source of input, the student-teacher here clearly refers to an extensive amount of teacher talk time, which may, in turn, make the class more teacher-centered and the talk difficult to grasp. As addressed in the Description section above, to make their talk more understandable and to adjust to the lack of physical presence, in their reflective writing, student-teachers searched for ways to overcome these limitations and to substitute the traditional procedures from the face-to-face classroom by any means that the technology had to offer, as the following quote illustrates:

Adaptations are inevitable – there is no whiteboard; the teacher cannot circle around the class, moving between the desks and monitoring pairs of students hunched over their tasks. Nevertheless, the lessons of our internal teaching practice showed us that we were able to adapt pretty successfully. Tools such as Google's Jamboard or ZOOM's Breakout rooms substituted the physical classroom satisfactorily. (Y2S16A4)

The student-teachers realize that the organization of a successful online lesson that would meet its objectives required changes in the approach and forms. It follows that good planning and gaining some experience (e.g., for a more realistic estimate of time) pays dividends. Careful planning does not only involve timing but also other aspects of classroom management which are affected by the lack of direct contact or an easy general overview of the classroom activity. A student described how, after the first problematic experience with online teaching, she "created paper cards with students' names so [they] can remember what pairs the students were in and who have not spoken yet" (Y2S03A4). Later the same student-teacher introduced another simple improvement and printed their lesson plan in order to have a "paper version of materials because these are easier to manipulate and you do not have to close Zoom to look at them" (Y2S03A4).

Managing all the technological aspects of the online classroom presents an additional challenge

for novice teachers mainly in two aspects. Firstly, the lack of experience with technology brings additional stress and apprehension. And secondly, it further divides their attention. Besides the lesson plan, the procedures, the students and the time, care needs to be given to managing the videoconference and other environments used during the lesson and this further aggrandizes multitasking to "an unsurpassable problem":

The internal teaching practice was my first experience with teaching English, in addition, it was my first experience teaching online. As a result, I was focusing on my plan, on the technology etc. and it was hard for me to focus on errors students made. The most frequent were the pronunciation errors, but the sound on ZOOM was not always good so it was hard for me to focus on the pronunciation of individual words. (Y2S01A3)

It follows from this quote that due to focusing more on technological and pedagogical aspects, the content aspects (here pronunciation) could not always be concentrated on by the student-teachers. Even though technology brought mixed feelings and represented various challenges, when the student-teachers formulated implications based on their experience and its analysis, there seems to be no controversy. Their plans for the future unequivocally include the need to improve in their technological knowledge (Mishra, & Koehler, 2006):

As I said, I find my lacking technology skills as my biggest problem at the moment, as it interferes negatively with my development as a language teacher. I am actively seeking opportunities to educate myself in this field and I am planning to continue to do so. (Y2S19A4)

The lack of student-teachers' experience and knowledge of technology was considered the "greatest weakness" (Y2S19A4) and "incompetence" (Y2S19A2). The technology-related knowledge and skills are assessed as inadequate and are commonly reported to result in the student-teachers' lack of confidence. The improvement which was achieved throughout the semester is positive but insufficient. One student remarked that they are used to "traditional course books, additional copied materials and flashcards" and they

“still lack the confidence in ICT” (Y2S19A4). Whilst another observed that they still do not have a “sufficient level of confidence in this area,” which not only prevents them from delivering lessons in a way that they would like but that their “students are aware of this fact” (Y2S08A4). We find this surprising, as the majority of the student-teachers were in their early twenties and in the Czech context could be expected to be familiar with technology and its application. In addition, the latter observation shows that mastering technology is perceived as a crucial step in teacher development.

Technological knowledge is typically represented in their action plan for their future development not only as the aim but also the means. Many student-teachers see the benefits of the accessibility of online resources such as webinars, activity packs, and videos created by experienced teachers or specialized websites “which offer hundreds of high-quality resources to help teachers in their professional development such as articles, videos, publications and courses” (Y2S08A2).

At the same time, less commonly, the use of social media as a personal learning environment for exchanging information and support within the group of student-teachers was seen as irreplaceable, especially in the pandemic situation when face-to-face interaction is highly limited and the student-teachers are living through their (often first) teaching experience individually:

Moreover, we created a Facebook chat for our group where we were sharing our experiences and tips about resources or tools for online teaching. I found that very beneficial, the girls were very supportive. (Y2S01A3)

## Discussion and Conclusions

The findings from the current study show that, during reflection upon their teaching and micro-teaching experiences, students made mention of technological knowledge in several areas and ways. The student-teachers made

mention of technology in relation to its use in teaching the language systems and skills and in classroom management. It was commonly noted that the online environment does not provide a direct substitute for the face-to-face language classroom, and skills gained from teaching face-to-face were not easily transferable to the online environment; classroom management issues in particular, such as checking understanding, giving instructions, and monitoring were mentioned, in addition to the lack of nonverbal communication present online. These can be related to the TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) model. While aspects of classroom management related mostly to the pedagogical-technological knowledge, the mentions of teaching language systems and the four skills embrace the knowledge of content.

One of the central findings is that student-teachers commonly mentioned technology and technological jargon when describing various situations that occurred during the lessons and when evaluating technology use and its possible impact on their teaching. The findings also show that the student-teachers often connect the use of technology to emotions, especially when a tool has been navigated successfully or when drawing comparisons between the face-to-face and online environment. Another finding of note is that *evaluation* (65 codes) and *description* (51 codes) were the most common categories in the reflections on perceptions of technology use, yet student-teachers typically mentioned technology when considering their professional development. A possible explanation for this may be that students have relatively strong opinions about the impact of the use of technology on teaching, yet at the same time realize its growing role and the need to master the technology itself and how to best employ it in the EFL classroom. However, one unanticipated and interesting finding from the data analysis is the emergence of four distinct perceptions of technology use.

Perception one: The things that are normally done in the face-to-face classroom cannot be done online. The evaluative comments show learners’

surprising lack of faith in the technology and a presupposition of obstacles that technology presents to hinder successful lesson execution. For example, building rapport and connections with the learners, fostering interaction, monitoring successfully, and the lack of physical presence were mentioned as problematic online. This comparison in favor of the traditional classroom accords with findings in other studies which report similar concerns from both student and educator perspectives (Gao & Zhang, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Brookfield's observations offer an explanation to this stage in student-teacher thinking as he posits that personal experience is a lens through which we reflect. Therefore, comparison, in this case, between face-to-face and classroom environments, is inevitable (Brookfield, 2017, pp. 69–72), and we naturally default to the familiar.

Of interest is that the common initial comparison that favored the face-to-face environment for teaching was made by student-teachers who had limited or no previous teaching experience. It may therefore be pertinent to consider the role that *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975) plays at this juncture. The apprenticeship of observation refers to the effect that (student) teachers' own experiences at school have on them professionally (i.e., the attitudes and orientations one develops as a learner at school influence their classroom practice). This may explain why the student-teachers with little to no teaching experience did not initially normalize the online environment and instead perceived the face-to-face classroom as an environment more conducive to learning.

Perception two: Technology, in fact, works as a satisfactory substitute for face-to-face teaching. Evaluative comments in the reflections show a realization that, often despite initial doubts, the student-teachers were able to adapt practice to the online environment. Student-teachers' enactment of their technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006) may have caused this shift in perception.

Heath and Segal (2021) report that initially their student-teachers also "wrestled with moving face-to-face technology integration to an online format" (p. 827). Tseng et al. (2020) observed that most teachers displayed "the dominant use of technology in traditional teacher-centered teaching" (p. 1). Both assertions may ring true for the student-teachers, who, prior to practicum online, had integrated technology to enhance the face-to-face classroom experience as either a teacher or learner and saw technology as a means to engage learners in the learning process rather than as a means to promote learner-centered lessons (Chapelle, 2005).

Although tracking the development of the perceptions of technology use in individual student-teachers in the course of the semester was not the focus of the analysis, it may be safe to say that a shift in views is present in our data. The evaluative and emotional remarks in particular often contain structures like *at first/initially* and *afterwards/after the experience* as seen in some of the examples above. In contrast with Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison's findings (2020), our data revealed an eventual acceptance of the online environment for teaching as adequate, and a recognition of some of its benefits (e.g., visibility of instructions and feedback, the possibility of lesson recording). As the findings in Gao and Zhang (2020) indicate, this may be due to the acquisition of technological knowledge and skills. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, most of the students had not yet taken a course specializing in using technology in EFL teaching during their studies and had "little knowledge and skills for online teaching" (Gao & Zhang, 2020, p. 8). As the student-teachers acquired some of this technological knowledge and skills in the course of the semester of online learning and teaching skills, their perceptions of the technology seemed to change favorably.

Perception three: Face-to-face teaching remains "the real thing." Evaluative comments in the reflections show that the online classroom is seen to bring problems and to be an interim measure

that does not replicate an environment equivalent to the face-to-face classroom. The student-teachers often describe problematic elements in their lessons yet express that in the “real” face-to-face classroom they would not have these problems. These findings chime with those of Sepulveda-Escobar and Morrison (2020) and Flores and Gago (2020). When negative or challenging aspects arose, for example, a lack of interaction with learners, the student-teachers argued that the online environment “was not a ‘real’ learning experience” (Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020, p. 599). The sudden change to online teaching and subsequent lack of preparation and guidance that the pre-service teachers had for this, which affected their “readiness” (Goa & Zhang, 2020; Downing & Dymont, 2013), may influence their need to default to the notion that only face-to-face teaching is real. As Downing and Dymont (2013) observe, “it can take time to become accustomed to providing and recognising an environment where both students and teaching staff feel engaged, valued, and intellectually and emotionally rewarded” (p. 102).

The fourth and final perception relates to the perceived need to improve technological knowledge and skills for the future teaching of English as a foreign language (i.e., TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006). This was commonly mentioned in the reflections as the area in which student-teachers needed to grow. Of interest is that the notion of developing technological knowledge was frequently connected to the perceived quality of an English teacher. This indicates student-teacher awareness of the importance of TPACK and their intention to integrate technology in their teaching. These findings correspond with the results obtained by van der Spoel et al. (2020), which show an “urgency to teach online created teachers’ intentions to use more technology in their lessons” and that ICT “should be integrated in teacher training programmes” (p. 633). In a similar vein, Goa and Zhang (2020) observe that “participating teachers realized that online EFL teaching [...] is limited by teachers’ mastery of information technology” (p. 12),

implying the need for teacher development in this area and for future research on teacher cognition and TPACK.

The different perceptions showing the relationship to technology outlined above were fluid among the students and may tell of a shift in the relationship that the student-teachers have with technology and the benefits and disadvantages that they see that it offered. To an extent, this possible shift shows a navigated transition from initial “pedagogic discomfort” towards “pedagogic agility” within the online environment (Kidd & Murray, 2020). The perceptions and perspectives outline what we observed in the reflections. It would be anecdotal to comment on the linearity of the development in this study as the temporal aspect of development was not our primary focus, and the design of the reflective assignments structured student-teachers’ responses. However, we believe that this outline shows the eventual win of the benefits of online teaching over the challenges, and that differs to others’ findings (e.g., Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). These findings add to the existing body of work on technology use in teacher education during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and help to fill the current gap in the literature on student-teacher perceptions.

It is without doubt that with the challenges that COVID-19 has brought, online teaching and learning can no longer be seen as an *add on* but as an integral part of teacher education (Kalloo et al., 2020). What we can see from the data is that student-teachers’ skills and ICT literacy were challenged by a lack of readiness and preparation to teach online (Downing & Dymont, 2013). Student-teachers express the need to improve their technological knowledge implying their intention to integrate technology in their teaching. In agreement with other authors, we too believe that developing TPACK should have its place at the high table in teacher education programs (van der Spoel et al, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Nasri et al., 2020; Kalloo et al., 2020, Gao & Zhang, 2020; Heath & Segal, 2021).

This could be done in three ways. The first way is by adding online learning components to the existing structure, for example, through blended or hybrid learning. This can enhance ICT literacy through enriched experience and exposure to platforms and tools for learning. The second way is by incorporating ICT courses that develop student-teachers' technological knowledge and integrating this knowledge within the pedagogical content knowledge related to teaching English as a foreign language. The third and final way is by preparing teachers for both face-to-face and online classrooms (Metscher et al., 2020). These should all help the student-teachers to adapt to the new normal of online teaching and learning.

Our analysis showed the use of technology-specific language for teaching strategies and descriptions of classroom events to be common parlance among student-teachers. This, thanks in part to the sudden shift to online teaching, highlights the need for teacher educators to be familiar with the technology and the language that accompanies it not only to be able to follow the student-teacher discussion and reflective writing, but to also guide and enhance instructional practice.

In terms of further research, it would be fruitful to follow the progress in the "real" school classroom of those who had online practicum in lieu of face-to-face teaching. By doing so we may get a glimpse into the extent that learning to teach online prepares the next generation of EFL professionals for their classroom practice.

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# SPANISH ADULT STUDENTS' INTENTION-BEHAVIOUR TOWARD MOOCs DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

LA INTENCIÓN Y COMPORTAMIENTO DE ESTUDIANTES ADULTOS ESPAÑOLES FRENTE A LOS MOOC DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

A INTENÇÃO E COMPORTAMENTO DE ESTUDANTES ADULTOS ESPANHÓIS FRENTE AOS MOOC DURANTE A PANDEMIA COVID-19

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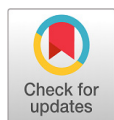
## ABSTRACT

Many Spanish students need to learn English beyond the age of 25 to be able to find a job or be further promoted. Unfortunately, those who attempt to pass a university entry-qualifications test often lack the required academic level. To help them achieve this goal, they are usually provided with learning materials and supportive digital resources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for online resources increased. This is why the National Distance Education University offered a massive open online course (MOOC) on elementary English. The main goal of this contrastive qualitative study was twofold: First, it attempted to explore adult students' intention-behaviour while taking the course. Secondly it delved into students' satisfaction with this type of courses during two different years: 2017 and 2020 when the pandemic had a clear impact on distance education. For this purpose, the study used a comprehensive post-questionnaire given at the end of both courses. The data revealed a few significant differences regarding students' satisfaction, intentions, perceptions, and interests in contexts where face-to-face-learning was not an option. These findings suggest that MOOC should be considered as an alternative way to build specific content in situations of crisis.

**Keywords:** MOOC; COVID-19; intention-behaviour; students' needs; ICT; EFL; adult students; brief-learning courses.

## RESUMEN

Muchos estudiantes españoles se ven en la necesidad de aprender inglés después de los 25 años para poder acceder a un empleo o lograr un ascenso. Lamentablemente, aquellos que intentan aprobar un examen de admisión a la universidad por lo general carecen del nivel académico requerido. Para ayudarles con este objetivo, en general, se les proporciona materiales de aprendizaje y recursos digitales de



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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Editors: Marta González-Lloret, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA; Laia Canals, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain; Jorge Pineda, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia.

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apoyo. Durante la pandemia del COVID-19, aumentó la necesidad de recursos en línea. Para llenarla, la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia lanzó un curso masivo en línea abierto (MOOC) de inglés básico. El objetivo principal de este estudio cualitativo comparado fue doble: en primer lugar, intentó explorar las intenciones y el comportamiento inicial de los estudiantes adultos al tomar ese curso y en segundo lugar, trató de profundizar en la satisfacción de los estudiantes con este tipo de cursos durante dos años diferentes: 2017 y 2020, año en que la pandemia tuvo un impacto evidente en la educación a distancia. Los datos se recolectaron mediante un cuestionario que se pasó a los participantes al final de cada curso. Los resultados obtenidos revelaron algunas diferencias significativas respecto a la satisfacción de los estudiantes con el curso, a sus intenciones, percepciones e intereses en contextos de aprendizaje donde la enseñanza presencial no era una opción. Esto implica que el diseño de MOOC debe considerarse como una alternativa para construir conocimiento específico en situaciones de crisis.

**Palabras clave:** MOOC; COVID-19; comportamiento e intenciones; necesidades de los estudiantes; TIC; ILE; estudiantes adultos; cursos breves de contenido específico.

## RESUMO

Muitos estudantes espanhóis precisam aprender inglês depois dos 25 anos de idade, para poder encontrar um emprego ou ascender ainda mais no seu local de trabalho. Aqueles que tentam efetuar uma prova de acesso à universidade, geralmente não têm a preparação suficiente para passar uma prova de qualificação de ingresso à mesma. Por isso, as universidades geralmente oferecem materiais de aprendizagem e recursos digitais de apoio. Durante a pandemia do COVID-19, os estudantes precisaram de mais recursos *on-line*. Para isso, a Universidade Nacional de Educação à Distância tem oferecido um curso aberto, massivo e *online* (MOOC) de inglês básico. O objetivo principal do estudo de um curso intensivo de inglês elementar foi duplo: em primeiro lugar, ele tentou explorar o interesse inicial dos estudantes adultos enquanto frequentavam o MOOC, e no segundo lugar, focouse na satisfação dos estudantes com este tipo de cursos nos anos 2017 e 2020. Este último em que a pandemia teve um claro impacto na educação à distância. Os dados foram coletados por meio de um questionário que foi repassado aos participantes ao final de cada curso. Os resultados revelaram algumas diferenças significativas em relação à satisfação do aluno com o curso, às suas intenções, percepções e interesses, contextos de aprendizagem onde o ensino presencial não era uma opção. Isso implica que o projeto de cursos intensivos LMOOC deve ser considerado como uma forma alternativa de construir um conteúdo específico em situações de crise.

**Palavras-chave:** MOOC; COVID-19; comportamento e intenções; necessidades dos estudantes; TIC; EFL; estudantes adultos; cursos intensivos de conteúdo específico.

## Introduction

With the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of technology in language teaching and learning has played a relevant role in distance education because it has expanded the teacher's ability to deliver new forms of multimodal discourse combining texts, podcasts, images or video, and the potential of massive open online courses (MOOC) is a case in point. They can offer large-scale interactive participation in the target language using open access via the web. Higher education institutions both in the public and private sectors are interested in carrying out MOOC design and implementation, particularly when face-to-face learning is not an option, as is the case now in many higher education institutions around the world (Bárcena & Read, 2015). Moreover, MOOC designers are especially interested in learning more during this unique opportunity since they may test the validity of their courses regarding student needs on a larger scale than normal. In this regard, the present study aims to test how quality content and technological tools aim to meet student needs in a MOOC intended as a vehicle for second-language learning.

It is commonly believed that motivation plays a substantial role in second-language acquisition, and a deeper understanding of student needs may help to reveal more about why some language learners learn more easily than others (Carrió-Pastor & Mestre Mestre, 2014). For example, diverse learning styles in higher education might lead to alternative methods of instruction and assessment that better match students' preferences surrounding language learning and the development of more effective teaching and learning practices (Grünwald et al., 2013). The data discussed are typical in the use of questionnaires regarding learners' goals and preferences as well as their intention to take a course such as a language MOOC.

The MOOC presented in this study was relaunched in the pandemic as part of the Spanish Distance Education University's (UNED) strategy to develop sustainable distance teaching programs

suitable for social and economic development. In order to measure students' intention-behaviour gap and their satisfaction regarding quality content and technological tools, this study aimed to compare data obtained from a survey taken by students enrolled in the MOOC during the first edition in 2017 with those found in the special edition offering of the MOOC during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Following *UNED Abierta* guidelines, we use the term "edition" together with the year for the courses examined since they have similar content.

## Theoretical Framework

This section deals with some literature review concerning the concept of MOOCs since they have recently underlined a process of transformation and settlement at both secondary and tertiary education levels.

### Digital Learning and MOOCs

Much research has been done on the benefits of learning for students from diverse backgrounds and age groups enrolled in MOOCs. Brahimi and Sarirete (2015) noted the tendency of MOOCs to appeal to learners from various ages, learning contexts, countries, interests, and abilities. Koller et al. (2013) pointed out the benefits to learning in MOOCs despite retention rates, challenging traditional concepts of assessment and course completion. Liyanagunawardena and Williams (2016) reported that elderly learners are also engaging at a significant rate in MOOCs. There has been a lack of research into understanding age difference and participation in MOOCs (Liyanagunawardena & Williams, 2016; Torres & Beier, 2018). However, age may not be the crucial factor in determining learners' motivation. Studies by MOOC providers have recently focused on other relevant factors determining their learners' interest. For example, Walker (2018) reported different learners on the digital education platform *FutureLearn* in terms of behavioral archetypes regarding common human behaviour, typical attitudes, motivation,

and similar goals. Likewise, the first objective of this paper is to discuss, from a pedagogical perspective, the type of adult learners that take MOOC courses launched by UNED, a Spanish distance education university.

So far, research on digital learning through MOOCs in higher education has put forward their potential to make high-quality teaching accessible to everyone with internet access (Grünewald et al., 2013). Indeed, one distinct aspect of these open-learning systems includes diminished impediments to enrollment; moreover, an analysis of learning analytics can aid in telling a more complete story of the benefits of open digital learning (Wedemeyer, 1973; Wong, 2019). The main goal of these courses is to bring together thousands of learners who are attracted to a common learning project; nevertheless, specific courses and learners largely differ with respect to their final goals (Jung et al., 2019).

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Possible motivations for entrance into MOOCs could include individual demand, broader intellectual improvement, acquiring employability skills and possible exposure to prospective subject matter for future study (Breslow et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2013; Gütl et al., 2014; Hew & Cheung, 2014). Some participants may take a MOOC course to complement additional learning in a formal setting. For example, it was noted that university learning provides both formal and informal learning opportunities that can include MOOCs as informal learning support (Pankowska, 2017); however, further research is still needed to determine how learning outcomes may vary for users based on their motivations for supplemental learning through MOOCs (Universities UK, 2013). Some users may want to enroll in a MOOC to interact with people of common interests. Social connections, a desire to engage with other like-minded individuals around the world and learning about peers' experiences and perspectives were also cited as driving factors in learners' motivation to join a MOOC (Loizzo et al., 2017).

Following Pilli and Admiraal (2016), we may distinguish among types of MOOCs offered by different open institutions. In particular, we can distinguish between MOOCs, relying on some text materials supplemented with interactive exercises and discussion boards, and more social-oriented MOOCs based on open educational resources in which participants play a more relevant role by constructing their own learning process through crucial interaction with others, as expected by connectivist pedagogy (Siemens, 2005). Due to the flexible nature of this second type of MOOC, which has an epistemological foundation based on connectivism, it is commonly referred to as a cMOOC (Zapata-Ros, 2013).

This adaptability of MOOCs is also one of their greatest benefits, allowing users to participate based on connection regardless of location, age, and other factors (Brahimi & Sarirete, 2015). Moreover, Anders' (2015) study suggested that hybrid MOOCs, such as those that are community or task-based, are able to reach the greatest diversity of learners and also help to address the issue of a loss of users and unequal participation over time.

Finally, other new types of MOOCs targeting other specific goals are being developed (Castrillo de Larreta Azelain et al., 2018). Even if the technology and heutagogy surrounding these types of open learning systems advance, it seems that the current false dichotomy of xMOOCs and cMOOCs is inadequate to describe the variety of MOOCs that are currently available to users (Canole, 2016). Another type of MOOC that can take advantage of and combine formal and informal learning while promoting improvement of reciprocal and practical interactions that could be lost in other language-learning contexts are Language MOOCs (Bárcena & Read, 2015), discussed more in the following section.

#### Language MOOCs

Since MOOC courses are especially useful when meeting specific requirements of learners,

language researchers, attempting to meet the needs of language teachers, have put forward a type of MOOC containing features of brief language courses. In this sense, the so-called LMOOCs crucially pay respect to the roles and methodological strategies of online language teachers (Martín-Monje & Bárcena, 2014; Bárcena et al., 2015; Castrillo de Larreta Azelain (2015). Currently, course organization is a central focus of online language teaching. Following Bárcena and Read (2015), modularly organized LMOOCs hold advantages for diverse groups of learners because they can offer more activities than necessary for most users while having students only complete a certain percentage of the total.

According to Castrillo de Larreta Azelain (2015), the teacher should work as a structure designer or content generator in an LMOOC, being engaged in four important steps, including dividing the course into modules of units, (over)estimating the hours of study involved in the MOOC, setting mastery standards for each unit, differentiating between obligatory and optional tasks, and including a proposed timeline with an ordering of content. Bárcena et al. (2015) discussed the “human dimension” of LMOOCs and noted that new teaching methods should create learning experiences that can be approachable and acceptable to students of differing personality profiles and cognitive abilities. Furthermore, the role of the teacher as a facilitator in LMOOCs cannot be overlooked since this is key for the educational integration of these types of open courses (Mengual-Andrés & Payà Rico, 2018).

### Intention-Behaviour Gap

As discussed by recent research, such as in Sheeran & Web (2016), the concept of intention has also proved essential, and some interventions are specifically claimed to promote public health, energy saving, as well as educational and organizational outcomes. Some studies indicate that intentions predict specific behaviour. Most ordinary-life behaviour is expected when provided

with ordinary situational cues (Bargh, 2006; Wood & Neal, 2007). However, in extreme situations like the current COVID-19 pandemic, the students' intentions may result in unexpected behaviour, and forming new intentions can be crucial for securing long-term goals (Baumeister & Bargh, 2014; Kuhl & Quirin, 2011). Indeed, there are emerging studies of different academic approaches to respond to emergency eLearning as an essential alternative to face-to-face schooling in many universities around the world (Escobar & da Cunha, 2018; Kenny & Escobar, 2020).

The study discussed in the following section addresses the intention-behaviour gap in educational contexts regarding LMOOCs launched in different social situations. In particular, it frames the responses of an emergency LMOOC launched by a Spanish university. It also provides a more in-depth analysis of students' responses to these types of courses and considers their utility in educational contexts extended to digital learning in future contexts after the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Common Challenges Encountered With MOOCs

Despite the potential of MOOCs for global digital education, a few challenges have been emerging, especially those related to foreign language learning. Hakim (2020) noted that some common challenges faced by online language teachers during the pandemic include the inability to access modern equipment, problems with internet connection, learners' low levels of motivation and attention deficit. The course completion rate of MOOCs is a challenge affected by numerous variables. Zhang et al. (2019) indicated that academic program alignment with student needs, English proficiency, and motivation all can contribute to the likelihood of MOOC completion. Another common obstacle for elementary language MOOCs lies in learners' low level of English language skills. In addition, the brevity of this type of course makes it difficult to provide materials with authenticity and communicativeness. It is

difficult to include a complete teaching method, regardless of whether it encompasses several activities under different skill or genre-oriented approaches. Self-motivation can also be difficult for learners, particularly during a pandemic, so exploiting the social nature of MOOCs through group work and connectivist activities can help to ease and even overcome this challenge. The emphasis on inclusiveness combined with mastering some discipline-specific knowledge can result in clear benefit from MOOCs.

The present MOOC framework might facilitate instructors attempting to address student needs concerning one particular purpose: to help them pass the English language university entry-qualifications test. Therefore, we include discipline-specific knowledge that is typically tested there: basic grammar, use of vocabulary and reading skills. While grammar is not always considered a practical ingredient in courses adopting a communicative approach, we adopt it as essential for our MOOC because it is part of the content on the entry-qualifications test which measures language proficiency levels.

In this study, we examine the responses to a pair of questionnaires completed by two groups of adult learners who had undertaken the course at different times: in late 2017 and in 2020, during the global pandemic of COVID-19. By analyzing students' responses to these questionnaires, we attempt to see the relevance of LMOOC courses among adults after having completed the course in two different human situations: ordinary and pandemic. In brief, we raise two main questions: (1) Can a MOOC course meet *the* human intention to learn, in other words to study and find something new that has not been seen or thought or discovered before? (2) Can a MOOC course similarly help to satisfy students' L2 needs and provide them with the most appropriate resources to optimize academic performance in both ordinary and pandemic situations? Since our study includes two different groups of adult learners according to the course year of the LMOOC when they

were enrolled, either in 2017 or in 2020 (COVID-19 pandemic special edition), we find ourselves in the unique position to also compare their motivation and preferences in these very different social backgrounds (ordinary and pandemic). By doing so, we have been able to contrast their responses and predict in future situations the importance of LMOOCs for digital learning that can be extended across borders.

## Method

Research on intention behaviour frequently makes use of questionnaires to elicit data. Our questionnaire had two parts (see Appendix). The first part included similar questions found in other MOOCs at *UNED Abierta* to obtain data regarding students' initial intentions, and therefore, test validity was confirmed. The second part of the questionnaire, at the end of the course, included common questions found in other UNED MOOC to test students' satisfaction with respect to course contents (Gil-Jaurena et al., 2017). In addition, we also included similar questions to those found in the first part of the questionnaire to test whether respondents' initial intentions were reaffirmed after taking the MOOC. The same questionnaire was previously administered in 2017 when students showed to have understood the questions, supporting their reliability.

## Participants

The data concerning the main characteristics of participants was provided by the initial test, which was administered at the beginning of both LMOOCs. Altogether, the majority of course participants were aged in their 30s or 50s (each approximately 28%). Nearly 30% belonged to the group in their 30s, and a remarkably high 55% came from the group above 40 years. The remaining 15% were students of 30 years and younger. Since the LMOOC course focused on English grammar topics, we also asked for a self-assessment of our users' background in English upon registration: approximately 60% of participants



described themselves as having a very low level (A1) of English, 32% declared themselves as beginners (A2), and 18% identified as intermediate (B1).

From the final experimental questionnaire delivered to all of the approximately 3,000 registered participants in the first LMOOC, we obtained over 500 questionnaire responses, and with over 1,200 registered participants in the special edition LMOOC, we obtained over 120 responses. These responses allowed us to understand the motivations, conditions, and expectations for taking part in the course in both ordinary and pandemic situations, and to obtain a high number of valuable suggestions for improving the course content and format in the future. The experiment design followed all research standards and abided by normative practices in the country where the experiment took place.

### LMOOC Design

For the purpose of our study, we attempted to design an LMOOC following the ideas put forward in current research. However, we did not draw on the beneficial implications of LMOOCs for language teachers. Rather, we paid closer attention to students' L2 needs in this type of course. In fact, our LMOOC course was part of a larger online program of English as a second language that prepared mature learners for university entry-qualifications tests. When designing the LMOOC, not only did we look for purely theoretical learning content, but we also invited learners to relate and apply the knowledge to their future needs. Interestingly, our LMOOC turned out to be very attractive to many other adult learners, as seen in the discussion of the results of our study.

The goal of the first edition of the LMOOC, launched in late 2017, was twofold. First, it would support a formal online English course (elementary level) offered by UNED to students over 25 years old, who wanted to get trained for the university entry-qualification test. Secondly, it would

highlight the four skills of this university entrance exam: reading comprehension, use of English, vocabulary, and writing. In short, the LMOOC included video clips with some guidelines followed by a few traditional exercises addressing listening, reading, and writing practice, like those exercises found in those tests through an intensive five-week program. The course ended with an optional post-questionnaire about learners' expectations and preferences for this type of LMOOC course in the context of learning English as a second language.

Eventually, the same LMOOC was offered as part of an open program to adults that wanted to keep learning from home due to confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic from March to June 2020. In this case, the main goal was to test the importance of LMOOCs in extreme social situations like our current one. News sources, governments, and scientists affirm that we will not return to our previous lives because we will have a "new normal," and its effects will be very important in the global academic sector. What will that new situation be like? Will its effects continue in the long term? We must consider different scenarios, but, in the short-term, the effects will be decidedly relevant. In our study, we wanted to test whether an LMOOC can maintain learning curiosity and motivation.

The LMOOC course lasted 5 weeks and included 4 modules, each taught by a different instructor. The first module was about the importance of learning a second language and its widely recognized benefits such as augmenting social life and enhancing work promotion. The second module included some basic concepts of English grammar fundamentally dealing with word order and highlighting the basic properties of nouns, verbs, and clauses. The third module largely focused on reading comprehension in a second language. It included a short English text followed by multiple-choice questions. The fourth module was about writing in the second language, where some

key linking words were introduced to show how to write a coherent paragraph.

All modules included short video clips in the form of learning “pills” (Martín-Monje & Bárcena, 2014), recorded by each module instructor. Related exercises followed all learning video clips to let participants practice and assess their own understanding of each course module. The LMOOC ended with some specific information about how to deal with the entry-qualifications test, with an extra learning video in which an instructor provided students with a mock test and some examination tips. After the course, participants could freely complete a questionnaire that we used as part of the current study. The final LMOOC structure is given in Table 1.

**Table 1** LMOOC Structure (L2 English for Entry-Qualifications Test)

Modules	Learning Pills	Activities
<b>1. English Courses for Adults</b>	1. Advantages, Methodology and Materials	Pretest Forum
<b>2. Basic Aspects of English Grammar</b>	2. Basic Notions of Nouns, Verbs and Clauses	Exercises Forum
<b>3. Reading: Basics</b>	3. Acquiring Vocabulary	Exercises Forum
<b>4. Writing: Basics</b>	4. Expressing Discourse Relations	Exercises Forum

Finally, students could do some additional research by browsing through a list of sources while working on each module. These resources ranged from web resources to online free dictionaries used freely as those indicated in Table 2.

To provide students with some help for the entry-qualifications test, the course ended with an extra learning pill in which an instructor provided

**Table 2** LMOOC Websites

Focus	Practice	Vocabulary	Pronunciation
URLS	Websites for English <a href="https://www.britishcouncil.org/tr/en/english/mooc">https://www.britishcouncil.org/tr/en/english/mooc</a>	Online dictionaries <a href="https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es-LA/dictionary/english/">https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es-LA/dictionary/english/</a>	Phonetics <a href="https://canal.uned.es/series/5a7ae069b111f72578b456f">https://canal.uned.es/series/5a7ae069b111f72578b456f</a>
Focus	Reading	Grammar	Listening
URLS	<a href="https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/elementary-a2-reading">https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/elementary-a2-reading</a>	<a href="https://www.grammarly.com">https://www.grammarly.com</a>	<a href="https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening">https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening</a>

students with a mock test and some examination tips. After the course, participants could freely complete the questionnaire. As for the communication with students, a group of 5 external facilitators were in charge of the forums created for each particular module. For low-level participants, online language forums were very convenient since they gave learners the flexibility to practice and ask the questions they had throughout the course, and the facilitators could address their questions about specific content and exercises as those mentioned in the LMOOC structure in Table 1, as well as for those web resources found in Table 2.

Through an intensive five-week course, students could practice the five modules described above. They were also encouraged to express their expectations concerning LMOOCs through the questionnaire at the completion of the course. In the first edition LMOOC in late 2017, this would initially serve to collect the data concerning students’ intention-behaviour gap, learning curiosity and motivation to take the course. Eventually, the same questionnaire was included in the special edition LMOOC in March 2020; therefore, we could also obtain information about participants’

preferences regarding the type of content exhibited in the LMOOC during very different social circumstances.

For the purpose of the current study, we attempted to analyse learners' perceptions of their L2 needs while attending this brief course during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the study could test the null hypothesis that there were no significant differences regarding the LMOOC questionnaire results of the pre and post-pandemic courses regarding the average intention-behaviour rate, provided that all modules were completed equally.

### Data Collection

In order to collect data regarding participants' preferences and needs with respect to both LMOOC editions, a two-fold survey was included at the end of the course in which we could raise our experimental queries in a final questionnaire. In the first place, we wanted to know about the reasons why participants chose our LMOOC course, paying particular attention to their initial intentions either for general interest, research purposes, or just curiosity about this type of course. Secondly, we wanted to know what type of contents participants expected to find in an elementary English course: a traditional grammar-based method or a tailor-made course with vocabulary or contents for specific professional purposes.

In particular, a total of 12 informative questions were posed: 6 questions regarding participant's intention-behaviour, and another set of 6 statements relating to students' expectations regarding the type of course contents for an LMOOC like ours. For the purpose of this paper, the different questions have been translated into English and discussed in the next two subsections below.

#### *Questions About Participants' Intention-Behaviour*

The first part of the experimental questionnaire included questions about participants' intentions. Roughly speaking, the course was assumed to be taken by two groups of students: those who

expected to take the final university entrance exam, and those who took the course for different reasons. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to measure participants' intentions while taking the LMOOC. In other words, we wanted to analyse the question of how consistent their goals were with their behaviour while living in an ordinary academic situation (LMOOC 2017), and contrast this to their goals and behaviour during the pandemic (LMOOC 2020). Consequently, we were looking for an intention-behaviour scale that could measure participants' intentions at two different points of time. The following list includes the specific post-test questions raised to measure participants' intentions.

#### *Questions on Intention Behaviour*

- a. I have "browsed", although I have not seen the materials and activities in depth.
- b. I have confirmed my level of English.
- c. I have compiled materials on English grammar.
- d. I have completed the course and made the best of it according to my L2 needs.
- e. I have improved my results in English in the entry-qualifications course.
- f. I have improved my English to pass the entry-qualifications test.

Considering the questionnaire items listed above, a number of corresponding categories were considered per each question mapping each intention (see Appendix for the entire questionnaire).

#### *Categories Mapping Intention-Behaviour*

- a. Just browsing through the course
- b. Confirming my level of English
- c. Compiling English grammar materials
- d. Meeting student L2 needs
- e. Helpful for the entry-qualifications course
- f. General L2 improvement

Thanks to the responses of the final questionnaires delivered to all participants in both groups, we were able to understand students' motivations, conditions and expectations for taking part in

the course in both ordinary and pandemic situations, and to obtain a high number of valuable suggestions for improving the course content, and format in the future.

*Questions About Participants' Course Expectations*

A set of seven statements were included to determine students' opinions regarding the two types of courses addressing English grammar and vocabulary, on the one hand, and English for specific purposes (ESP), on the other. These statements, from which students had to choose according to their preferences, have been translated into English as follows.

*Questions on LMOOC Content*

- a. University access English courses should primarily address grammar issues.
- b. English courses for the entry qualifications test should contain vocabulary and specific content on different disciplines: law, mathematics, engineering, etc.
- c. English courses for the entry qualifications test should explain the grammatical contrasts between English and Spanish.
- d. English courses for university access should introduce you to the practice of the different professions in English.
- e. The textbook titled "English Course for Adults" from UNED is helping me study English grammar.
- f. The textbook titled "English Course for Adults" from UNED is helping me study English grammar.
- g. The textbook "English Course for Adults" from UNED is helping me learn about different professional activities in English.

In order to measure the previous statements, we established a number of corresponding categories. The purpose of these was to map the following students' perceptions on course contents. From a pedagogical point of view, it was relevant to know whether students were aware that modern English courses may address different target audiences.

*Student Perceptions of LMOOC Contents*

- a. English grammar
- b. ESP content and vocabulary
- c. Contrastive grammar
- d. CLIL contents
- e. Textbook CLIL contents
- f. Textbook English

For example, considering English for specific purposes (esp content and vocabulary), in the context of Student Perceptions of LMOOC Contents, we wanted to know whether students expected to learn English as a second or foreign language, providing that esp usually refers to teaching the English language to university students or people already in employment, with reference to the particular vocabulary and skills they need (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Kenny et al., 2020). In addition, we also wanted to see whether students expected to find an approach for learning content through an additional language (foreign or second). That is, if they expected to learn both the subject content and the language, as is the case with most Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses (Thompson & McKinley, 2018; Escobar, 2020).

**Results**

In order to score students' answers for all the questionnaire items discussed above, we used a binary scale for each of them (Yes: 1 point / No: 0 points). In this way, we could measure the linearity of the response in each group. All the questionnaire items can be found in the appendix for the sake of clarity.

**General Course Satisfaction**

First of all, we used a binary-scale design to control student's general satisfaction and possible recommendation of the course. The items in the questionnaire related to course satisfaction are listed below.

*Items on General Course Satisfaction*

- a. The course has met my expectations to understand the necessary grammar for the entry qualifications test.

b. I will recommend this MOOC to family, friends, and acquaintances.

On the one hand, we wanted to compare students' general satisfaction with the course in both years 2017 and 2020. Figure 1 includes students' responses to the two main questions rating

general satisfaction and future recommendation of the MOOC launched in 2017.

According to the findings depicted Figure 1, most participants showed to be satisfied with the course and responded to be willing to recommend the course to friends and relatives. On the other hand, we wanted to see whether we obtained similar

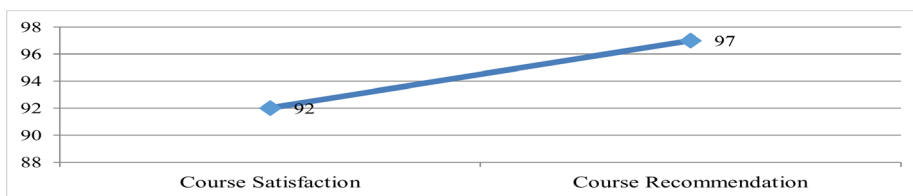


Figure 1 General Satisfaction and Recommendation (LMOOC 2017)

data from the students enrolled in the LMOOC launched in 2020 during the COVID-19 epidemic. As indicated in Figure 2, the data obtained in this second case shows a slightly higher number of students to be satisfied with the course compared with the first LMOOC, whereas a similar number of students responded that they were willing to recommend the course to friends and relatives.

In what follows, we consider the data concerning both students' intentions and perceptions regarding the contents for this type of LMOOC for an elementary English-based course. We present the mean responses per group in a contrastive manner to compare the data obtained from the questionnaires included in both LMOOC years (2017 and 2020).

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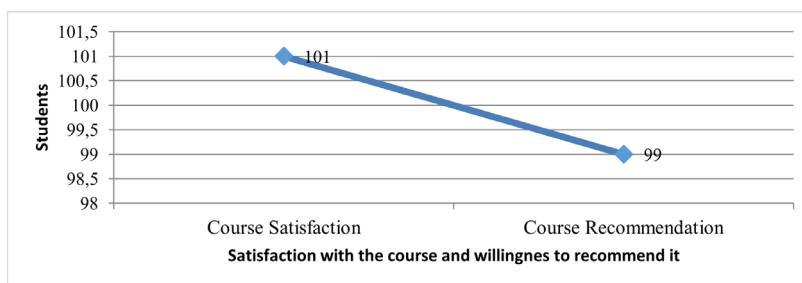


Figure 2 General Satisfaction and Recommendation (LMOOC 2020)

LMOOC-2017 Results

Nearly 500 students (out of 3,000 course participants) responded to the experimental questionnaire in the first LMOOC offered in 2017. For the purpose of our study, we took 122 students at random out of the first group to contrast their responses with those provided by the same number of students? from the second group of participants who took the LMOOC in 2020.

To begin with, we scored LMOOC participants' intention-behaviour using the first six statements regarding their perceptions of their attitudes towards the course they took in 2017. We assigned 1 for each selected statement and 0 when the statement was not selected. The total score is shown in Figure 3. As can be seen, most students chose confirming English level, and very few students show just browsing. In addition, many participants chose meeting their needs and expectations,

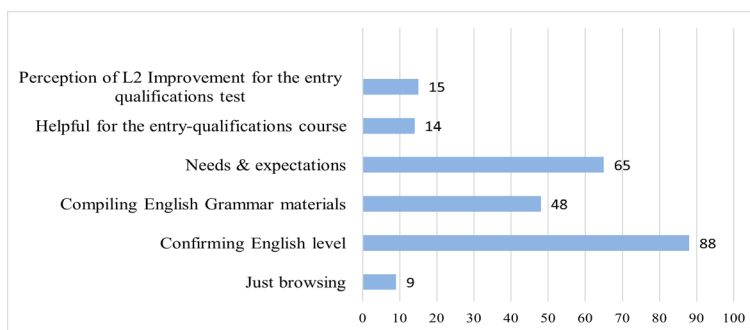


Figure 3 Results of Participants' Intentions (LMOOC 2017)

although for just a few the course was helpful for the entry-qualifications course. Finally, around half of participants opted for compiling English Grammar materials as their initial intention to take the course.

Next, more informative questions were asked regarding course contents in a similar fashion. The students' responses for the 6 informative statements deal with their perceptions about course contents, as shown in Figure 4. As a means to measure their responses, we assigned 1 for each selected statement and 0 when the statement was not selected. For the total score: most participants selected "English grammar" or "Contrastive Grammar" (English-Spanish) as their favorite content for MOOC; a lot of them selected "CLIL modules" or "ESP contents"; whereas just a half of participants preferred to use printed copies of "grammar textbook" or "ESP textbook".

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### LMOOC-2020 Results

Over 120 students (out of 1,200 course participants) responded to the questionnaire in the special edition of the LMOOC launched during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This time, they were not encouraged to answer the questionnaire but were allowed to freely answer the 12 questions raised in the final survey, as their peers had done in 2017.

As with the previous group, we could obtain relevant information on participants' intentions after having taken the brief course. Figure 5 displays the total score. Most of participants chose "confirming their English level", whereas very few selected "just browsing the course". About half of them chose "having met their L2 needs and course expectations" or "compiling English grammar materials". Just a few chose "L2 improvement for the entry-qualifications test" or "helpful for the entry-qualifications test".

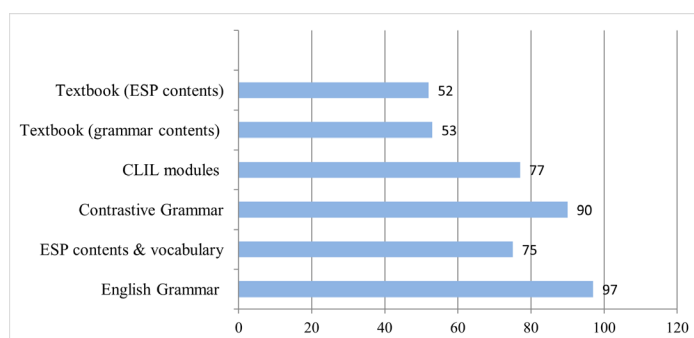


Figure 4 Results of Participants' Interest on Contents (LMOOC 2017)

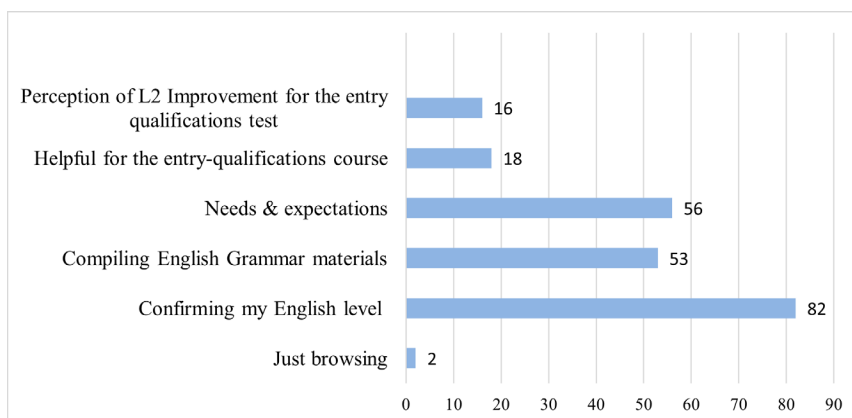


Figure 5 Results of Participants' Intentions (LMOOC 2020)

In addition, the same participants could freely rate this type of LMOOC. In this new course, participants were presented with six similar informative statements regarding their perceptions about course content. As in the previous cases, we assigned 1 for each selected statement and 0 when the statement was not selected. As indicated in Figure 6, below, most of participants selected “English grammar” or “Contrastive Grammar” (English-Spanish). More than half of them selected “ESP contents” or “CLIL modules”; less than half preferred to use a grammar textbook for standard English courses; and over a quarter of participants selected preferred to have a ESP textbook in other standard courses.

The design of a study is key to carry out the analysis of the data (Lehmann, 1992). A number of initial steps were taken so as to correctly retrieve our designed study as indicated in the following sections.

### Hypothesis Testing

First of all, we examined the normality of the data of our sample obtained from our experimental materials (the questionnaire) from two different periods of time; secondly, we established the statistical differences between the two groups; and, thirdly, we established the relevant correlations between the variables that we were interested in controlling in relation to the hypotheses that we wanted to test in our study.

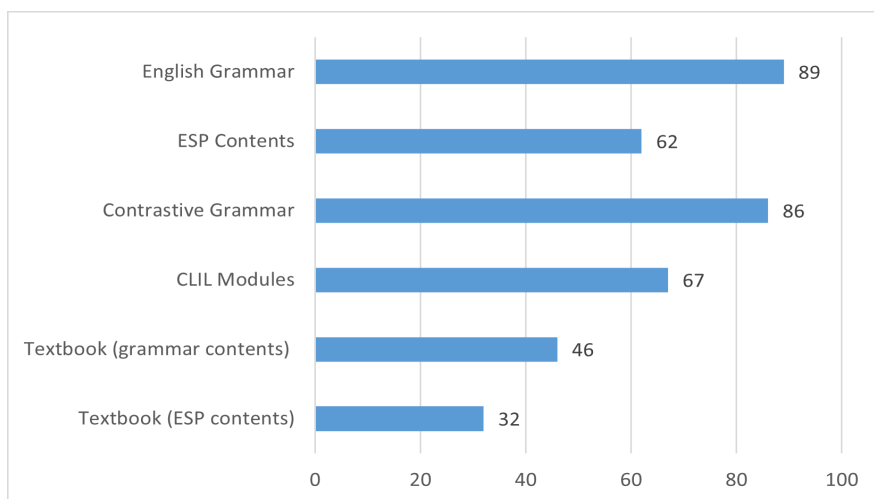


Figure 6 Participants' Interest in Contents (LMOOC 2020)

*Testing Normality of the Sample*

Following Corder and Foreman (2014), we used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test to measure the normality of the study samples, bearing in mind that our sample size is 122 per group, which is larger than 50. Using this test for normality of the distribution, we compared samples with a standard normal distribution. This is equivalent to setting the mean and variance of the reference distribution equal to the sample estimates.

Furthermore, the two-sample K-S test seemed to be relevant for our nonparametric method because we wanted to compare two groups and

estimate differences in both location and shape of the empirical cumulative distribution functions of our two samples. We also included the Shapiro-Wilk test, although it is commonly assumed to be more appropriate for sample sizes less than 50. In either case, significance is measured by the p value >0.05 to reject the null hypothesis and proceed with parametric testing. The results obtained from both tests concerning course satisfaction per group are indicated in Table 3.

Considering the test results above, the study samples did not follow a normal distribution since the significance value is >0.05 in both normality tests.

**Table 3** Tests Measuring Normality

	Course Year	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	GI	Sig.	Statistic	GI	Sig.
Course	2017	.469	122	.000	.535	122	.000
Satisfaction	2020	.503	122	.000	.456	122	.000

<sup>a</sup>Lilliefors Significance Correction

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This allowed us to further compare data and keep testing the null hypothesis that the two groups show a similar distribution of data. For this purpose, we measured the sample against the study variables on intention behaviour and course content through the Whitney U test.

*Whitney U Test*

In order to measure any statistical differences between the two samples that did not correspond to normal distribution, we used the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (Lehmann, 2006; Corder & Foreman, 2014). Following this test, we

examined the medians of the data from each group since the dependent variable was either ordinal or continuous but not normally distributed.

In particular, we tested students' intentions regarding the LMOOC, on an ordinal scale based on course year (independent variable), with respect to the following dependent variables "Recommending the course", "Browsing the course", "Confirming English level", "Compiling English materials", "Meeting L2 needs", and "Assessing general L2 performance". The results of statistical significance are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4** Mann-Whitney U Test: Intention-Behaviour

	Recommend	Browse	Confirm	Compile	L2 Needs	L2 Performance	Course Performance
U de Mann-Whitney	7320.00	7076.00	7198.00	7137.00	5612.00	738.00	7198.00
W de Wilcoxon	14823.00	14579.00	14701.00	14640.00	13115.00	14884.00	14701.00
Z	-.321	-1.773	-.560	-.649	-3.897	-.192	-.757
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	.748	.076	.575	.517	.000	.848	.449

Independent variable: Course year



**Table 5** Mann-Whitney U Test: Perceptions on Course Content

	English Grammar	ESP Content	Contrastive Analysis	CLIL	ESP practice	Textbook
U de Mann-Whitney	6954.00	6649.00	7062.00	6832.00	7015.00	7442.00
W de Wilcoxon	14457.00	14152.00	14565.00	14335.00	14518.00	14945.00
Z	-1.201	-1.674	-.855	-1.299	-.911	.00
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	.230	.094	.393	.194	.362	1.00

\* Independent variable: Course year

The test results indicated above show that we only obtained a significant difference in just one case, namely, the distribution of the variable of “meeting student’s L2 needs”. Note that the Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that this was statistically significant:  $U(N_{2017}= 122, N_{2020}= 122)=5612, z=-3.89, p< .000$ .

Furthermore, we proceeded to make a verification regarding students’ perceptions on course content and materials. In particular, our dependent variables were “English grammar”, “ESP content”, “Contrastive Analysis”, “CLIL”, “ESP practice”, and “Textbook activities”, “meeting L2 needs”, and “assessing general L2 performance (L2 improvement)”, whereas the independent variable was again “course year: 2017 and 2020”. The results of statistical significance appear in Table 5.

Considering the statistical data above, this time, we did not find any significant differences between groups, given that for all dependent variables on course content we obtained  $p > 0.5$ . Hence, we could not reject the null hypothesis that there were no differences between groups.

**Correlation**

As we saw in the previous section, only the variable of “L2 needs” showed a significant difference between year groups. Therefore, it is worth asking if there is a correlation between this variable and the sociological environment in which the students took the LMOOC, both in 2017 and in the

special course during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the K-S test, there was not a normal distribution, and therefore, we needed to use the Spearman Rho correlation test, following Corder and Foreman (2014) for similar designs. The test results are shown as in Table 6.

**Table 6** Rho Spearman: Intention-Behaviour (L2 Needs)

Rho-Spearman	Course Year	L2 Needs
Correlation	1.00	.250*
Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000
n	244	244

\*correlation is significant at the level 0.01 (2-tailed).

In order to correctly interpret the Rho-Spearman test results above, we considered coefficient values. We followed the common assumption that if they were close to 1, they indicated a strong and positive correlation. Values close to -1 could instead indicate a strong and negative correlation. Values close to zero would imply that there might be another type of correlation, but not a linear one. The results of coefficient values per both groups are provided in Figure 7.

Since our design was based on a binary response: 1 was the response obtained by those students who showed to have met their L2 needs, whereas 0 was the response obtained from those students who did not answer or who considered not to have met

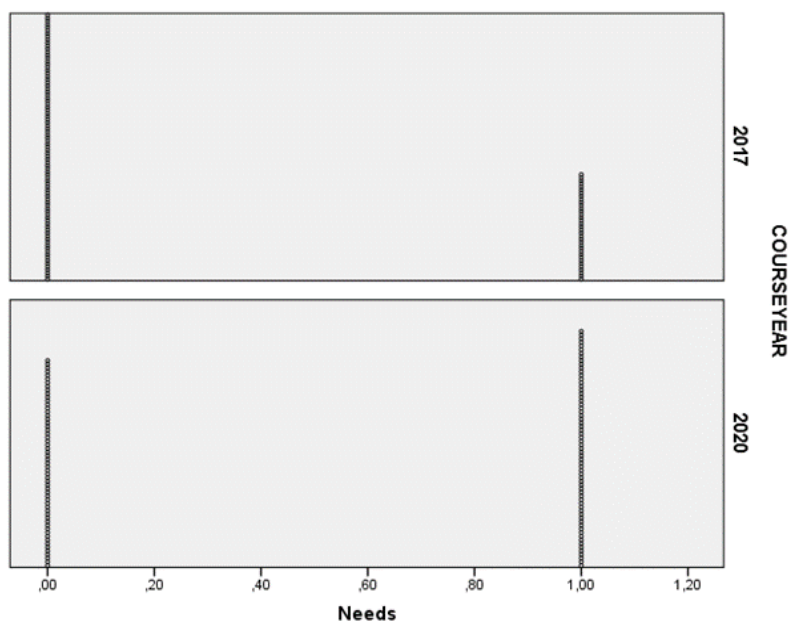


Figure 7 Rho-Spearman Correlation & Intention-Behaviour (L2 Needs)

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them. The fact that there was a positive linear correlation in the second group, as indicated in Figure 7 above, led us to assume that this dependent variable was only relevant for this group.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The study suggests that MOOCs are quite supportive when developing some particular learning skills in special-need situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. As for the main research question dealing with the intention-behaviour gap, some insightful responses were also obtained. For example, one of the motivations that led students to enroll in the LMOOC was to learn about language strategies to succeed in the entry-qualifications test which would allow them to enter university. However, the motivations for students were not limited to test strategy use.

In the case of the variable regarding student L2 needs, we found a significant difference between groups. The learners that took the LMOOC during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 did not score this variable as high as their peers in the group of students that took the LMOOC in 2017. This

significant difference suggested that under severe circumstances, participants were more demanding regarding their own learning processes. As for the answers to the question regarding the type of English courses that seem to be more appropriate for adult learners, we did not obtain any significant differences between groups. In both groups, the expectation to find English grammar when taking up English courses was highly scored. They also rated vocabulary and practice in ESP as quite useful. Therefore, we may conclude that language teachers should be aware of the importance of ESP at these elementary levels because adult learners seem to require this specific expertise in their second language primarily for their current and future careers.

However, the question on whether English courses should be based on a traditional approach to English grammar with practice in the use of English for general purposes, or rather a course based on English for specific purposes regarding different fields of study at the university requires further research. Language teachers could obtain very relevant information from students by doing research on more innovative LMOOCs;

consequently, these brief online courses may be an important tool at any moment to support other formal course settings.

Other examined results from the questionnaire (conducted under two very different circumstances) helped to depict learners' intention for this type of course. The research questions addressed the human need to learn in addition to the L2 needs of students and the appropriate resources necessary to optimize academic performance in both ordinary and pandemic situations. The motivations for students were not limited, since the LMOOC was open to students who could have different needs or course intentions. In fact, the LMOOC launched in both years also attracted many adult students who stated to be willing to learn English as a second or foreign language in general. New research studies could shed some light on how English courses should be addressed in extension education, especially for older students who usually have insufficient preparation in many academic aspects, due to lack of time.

As mentioned above, LMOOCs may be very supportive when developing learning skills in special-need situations. We might also surmise that under severe pandemic circumstances, participants were more critical of their own learning processes. Moreover, a measurement of the intention-behaviour gap also produced insightful responses particularly relevant for practitioners and policy makers concerned with educational outcomes. From this type of responses in other future courses, language teachers could obtain very relevant information from students and therefore LMOOCs can be used as an important tool at any moment of the process of formal course development.

Finally, limitations to the present study include the sample size, specialized course contents, and teaching approach. Since students were not required to use any textbook, we cannot conclude much about this type of study material, usually found in more formal settings. Moreover, large-scale

studies also ought to be conducted to reveal further correlation between perceived L2 needs and course completion. Creation of an LMOOC with the sole purpose of supporting entrance test preparation might lead to an increase in perception of L2 needs being met. Further research is necessary to identify more effective combinations of language teaching methodologies to be applied across different English-education teaching contexts. By analyzing intention-behaviour, one will better deal with educational experiences that encompass study needs, motivation, learning styles, and other social or cultural factors that affect differentiated teaching practices. MOOCs are part of the new global learning scenario and can help adopt a tailored approach to meet students' needs and interests.

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## Appendix

### Full Questionnaire (Spanish & English)

Instructions (In Spanish): ¿Cuáles de estas intenciones iniciales cree que se han cumplido? (puede elegir varias opciones) / “Which of these initial intentions do you think have met? (you can select several options)”

#### Part 1. General Satisfaction & Recommendation

1. El curso ha cumplido mis expectativas para comprender la gramática necesaria para el examen de acceso a la universidad

*“The course has met my expectations to understand the necessary grammar for the entry qualifications test.”*

2. Recomendaré este mooc a familiares, amigos y conocidos

*“I will recommend this mooc to family, friends and acquaintances.”*

#### Part 2. Student Intentions and Perceptions After Taking the Course

1. He “curioseado”, aunque no he visto los materiales y actividades en profundidad

*“I have “browsed”, although I have not seen the materials and activities in depth.”*

2. He comprobado mis conocimientos de inglés

*“I have confirmed my level of English.”*

3. He recopilado materiales referentes a la gramática inglesa

*“I have compiled materials on English Grammar.”*

4. He completado el curso y sacado el mayor provecho del mismo de acuerdo con mis necesidades: “I have completed the course and made the best of it according to my L2 needs.”

5. Mis resultados de inglés han mejorado en el Curso de Acceso

*“I have improved my results in English in the entry-qualifications course.”*

6. He mejorado mi inglés para aprobar el examen de Acceso a la Universidad

*“I have improved my English to pass the entry qualifications test.”*

#### Part 3. Course Contents

Instructions (in Spanish): Agradeceríamos su opinión sobre las siguientes afirmaciones

*“We would appreciate your opinion on the following statements.”*

7. Los cursos de inglés de acceso a la universidad deberían principalmente enfocarse en aspectos gramaticales.

*“University access English courses should primarily address grammar issues.”*

8. Los cursos de inglés para el acceso a la universidad deberían contener vocabulario y contenidos específicos sobre las distintas disciplinas: derecho, matemáticas, ingeniería, etc.

*“English courses for the entry qualifications test should contain vocabulary and specific content on the different disciplines: law, mathematics, engineering, etc.”*

9. Los cursos de inglés para el acceso a la universidad deberían explicar los contrastes gramaticales que existen entre el inglés y el español

*“English courses for the entry qualifications test should explain the grammatical contrasts between English and Spanish.”*

10. Los cursos de inglés para el acceso a la universidad deberían ayudar a los estudiantes a poder familiarizarse con la práctica de las distintas profesiones en la lengua inglesa.

*“English courses for university access should help to introduce you to the practice of the different professions in the English language.”*

11. El libro titulado Curso de inglés para adultos de la uned me está ayudando a estudiar la gramática inglesa.

*“The textbook titled “English Course for Adults” from uned is helping me study the English grammar.”* (ONLY APPLIES FOR THOSE ENROLLED IN THE ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS COURSE)

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# ASPECTOS PSICOSOCIALES Y CONDICIONES EDUCATIVAS DE DOCENTES DE LENGUA EN FORMACIÓN DURANTE EL CONFINAMIENTO POR LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

FL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN

ASPECTS PSYCHOSOCIAUX ET CONDITIONS ÉDUCATIVES CHEZ DES ENSEIGNANTS DE LANGUES EN FORMATION PENDANT LE CONFINEMENT PAR LA PANDÉMIE DE COVID-19

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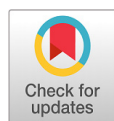
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## RESUMEN

Dada la contingencia sanitaria mundial a causa de la COVID-19, los escenarios educativos en todo el mundo se convirtieron en “laboratorios investigativos”, en los cuales cobraron gran importancia los procesos de enseñanza-aprendizaje mediados por la tecnología. Por esto, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo principal identificar los aspectos psicosociales y las condiciones educativas que influyeron en la satisfacción con el aprendizaje de 423 estudiantes pertenecientes a un programa de Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con énfasis en Inglés y Francés de una Universidad en Colombia que empleó la metodología de presencialidad asistida por la tecnología (PAT). Para esto, se implementaron cuestionarios abiertos, grupos focales y observaciones participativas, los cuales fueron analizados siguiendo las etapas del análisis de datos cualitativos planteadas por Miles *et al.* (2014) y los procesos de codificación propuestos por McCracken (1988). Se concluyó que las categorías determinantes que inciden en la satisfacción del estudiante son el apoyo del profesor y las condiciones estructurales. Estas dos categorías tienen un impacto en otros aspectos psicosociales que se convierten en un desafío para la metodología PAT. Los resultados señalan la necesidad de una reflexión pedagógica que ayude a unificar criterios para una implementación apropiada de esta metodología.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje en línea; aspectos psicosociales; COVID-19; enseñanza de lengua extranjera; presencialidad asistida por tecnología; TIC; condiciones educativas.

## ABSTRACT

Face to the global health contingency due to COVID-19, educational settings around the world have become a “research laboratory” in which technology-mediated

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teaching-learning processes have gained increasing importance. This research had as a main goal to identify the psychosocial aspects and educational conditions that influenced the degree of learning satisfaction of 423 students enrolled in a BA in Modern Languages (English and French) at a university in Colombia that employed technology-mediated 'face-to-face' learning (PAT, as per its Spanish acronym). Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires, focus groups and participant observations, and were analyzed following the qualitative data analysis stages proposed by Miles et al., and McCracken's (1988) coding processes. Findings show that students' learning satisfaction is highly influenced by teacher's support and structural conditions. These two categories have an impact on other psychosocial conditions that become a challenge for the PAT technology. The results show the need for a pedagogical reflection that helps instructors unify criteria for an appropriate implementation of this methodology.

**Keywords:** E-learning; psychosocial aspects; COVID-19; foreign language teaching; technology-mediated face-to-face learning; ICT; educational conditions.

### RÉSUMÉ

Compte tenu de la contingence sanitaire mondiale de la COVID-19, les milieux éducatifs du monde entier sont devenus un « laboratoire de recherche » dans lequel les processus d'enseignement-apprentissage à médiation technologique ont gagné plus d'importance. Cette recherche vise à identifier les aspects psychosociaux et les conditions éducatives qui ont influencé la satisfaction dans l'apprentissage de 423 étudiants dans une université en Colombie qui utilise l'enseignement présentiel médié par la technologie (PAT). Pour ça faire, des questionnaires ouverts, des groupes focaux et des observations participatives ont été mis en place et ont été analysés suivant les étapes d'analyse des données qualitatives proposées par Miles *et al.*, et les processus d'encodage proposés par McCracken (1998). Les résultats montrent que les catégories déterminantes qui affectent la satisfaction des élèves sont le soutien des enseignants et les conditions structurelles. Ces deux catégories ont un impact sur d'autres aspects psychosociaux qui deviennent un défi pour la méthodologie PAT. Les résultats indiquent aussi la nécessité d'une réflexion pédagogique pour aider les enseignants à unifier les critères pour une mise en œuvre appropriée de cette méthodologie.

**Mots-clés :** apprentissage en ligne ; aspects psychosociaux ; COVID-19 ; enseignement des langues étrangères ; méthodologie en présentiel assistée par la technologie ; TIC ; conditions éducatives.

## Introducción

Sin duda, la emergencia sanitaria ocasionada por la COVID-19 “ha dado un giro a la educación de lenguas extranjeras al igual que lo ha hecho en todos los ámbitos de la educación” (Pardo, 2020, p. 5), obligando tanto a profesores como a estudiantes a adaptarse al nuevo entorno académico mediado por la tecnología. No obstante, esta irrupción de la tecnología en el contexto de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas no es algo nuevo; ya lo advertían Kukulska-Hulme (2009) y Mac Callum *et al.* (2014), quienes resaltan el interés que ha ganado la enseñanza de lenguas por medio de tecnologías móviles. El contexto mundial, nacional y local que ha generado la COVID-19, le ha otorgado a la mediación tecnológica un rol protagónico y pone en evidencia la necesidad de repensar dicho rol, de reconstruirlo mediante un “desaprender”, en términos piagetianos (Tünnermann, 2011), para reaprender y resignificar el lugar que se le debe otorgar a dichos recursos tecnológicos.

En Colombia, desde que se decretó la emergencia sanitaria en el país el 12 de marzo de 2020, el Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN) ha generado diferentes lineamientos con el fin de facilitar el proceso pedagógico en casa y dar continuidad a la oferta educativa en todos los niveles educativos. Se insistió en hacer uso de herramientas como e-Learning, portales de conocimiento, redes sociales y plataformas colaborativas, para adelantar los procesos de capacitación y formación que sean inaplazables” (Colombia, Presidencia de la República, 2020). Así, las instituciones de educación superior, bajo el concepto de *autonomía universitaria*, han planteado diferentes estrategias para afrontar este gran desafío y seguir ofreciendo su servicio educativo, ya sea de manera remota o considerando una modalidad semipresencial.

Para el caso concreto de la Universidad del Quindío, y específicamente el programa de Lenguas Modernas, se desarrollaron sus actividades académicas de manera virtual, siguiendo la estrategia metodológica de *presencialidad asistida*

*por la tecnología* (PAT). Ya que esta estrategia representa una novedad en las prácticas tradicionales de la universidad, y en gran parte del sistema educativo de educación superior colombiano, el presente estudio plantea la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿cuáles aspectos psicosociales y condiciones educativas influyen en la satisfacción de estudiantes del programa de Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad del Quindío durante su experiencia de aprendizaje bajo la estrategia metodológica PAT? Dichos aspectos psicosociales fueron abordados teniendo en cuenta el cuestionario DELES (Distance Education Learning Environment Survey) propuestos por Walker y Fraser (2005)<sup>1</sup> y adaptado a la nueva realidad educativa; además, se incluyeron otros aspectos psicosociales como la salud física y mental.

## Marco teórico

Antes de ahondar en los aspectos psicosociales y las condiciones educativas analizados desde este estudio, es importante analizar y aclarar cuáles son las metodologías avaladas por el MEN para otorgar registro calificado o renovación de registro a programas académicos, ya que cada modalidad deriva unas características específicas para el tipo de estudiante colombiano que escoge entre una y otra. Dichas metodologías han sido clasificadas bajo la modalidad “presencial”, “distancia” y “virtual”.

En lo que respecta a la “educación presencial”, esta es “un acto comunicativo donde un profesor imparte clases a sus alumnos, en un mismo lugar y tiempo” (Romero *et al.*, 2014, p. 3). Dicho espacio y tiempo son sincrónicos, determinados y establecidos por las decisiones estipuladas por el MEN.

Teniendo en cuenta la democratización de la educación como un derecho fundamental y que los espacios presenciales no responden siempre a las

1 Cuestionario DELES (Distance Education Learning Environment Survey) DELES - Copyright ©2020 by Scott L. Walker. All rights reserved in all media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com.

realidades y dinámicas económicas, surge como alternativa a los problemas de calidad y cobertura la modalidad de “educación a distancia”. Esta se entiende como

[...] una modalidad educativa que comprende una situación formal de enseñanza y de aprendizaje donde profesor y estudiante, comunidad académica y actores organizacionales, se encuentran en una dimensión tiempo-espacio distinta (Asociación Colombiana de Instituciones de Educación Superior con Programas a Distancia, 2013, p. 18).

Esta mediación puede recurrir (y no de manera exclusiva) al uso de las TIC, y no excluye el encuentro docente-alumno de manera presencial.

En cuanto a la “educación virtual o en línea”, el MEN la clasifica como una posibilidad (en medio de muchas otras) de la educación a distancia. Particularmente, la concibe como

[...] desarrollo de un proceso educativo en un lugar distinto al salón de clases: en el ciberespacio; en una temporalidad que puede ser síncrona o asíncrona y sin la necesidad de que los cuerpos de maestros y estudiantes estén presentes. Para ello se usan las redes telemáticas que se constituyen en su entorno principal (Colombia, MEN, 2010, p. 33).

Esta definición sitúa a las TIC en uno de los pilares educativos, y no al tiempo ni al espacio. El encuentro educativo se modifica y no se centra en el cara a cara en un mismo momento (sincronía), o en un mismo lugar (aula), sino en una nueva dinámica, que puede ser también asíncrona, en una proliferación de espacios congregados en la virtualidad.

La educación virtual o en línea, si bien ha tenido un papel importante en la educación como una de las alternativas para acceder a ella, pasó de ser una elección a ser una exclusividad en tiempos de pandemia.

El contexto nacional aporta igualmente a las nuevas estrategias y denominaciones de la enseñanza en tiempos de crisis. Más particularmente, la Universidad EAN propone la metodología PAT para continuar con el proceso educativo. Esta

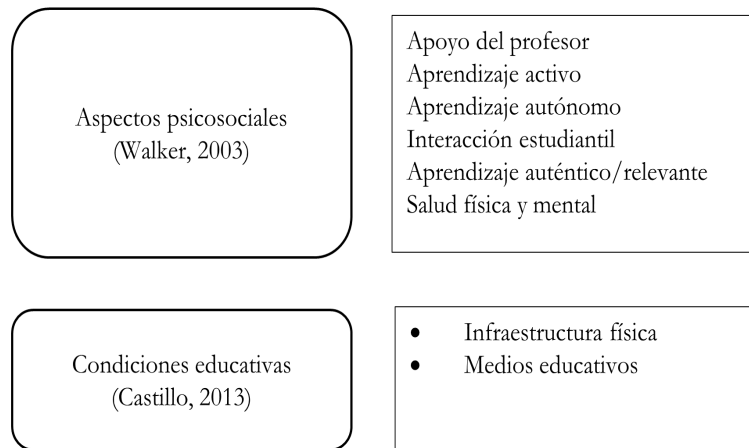
metodología ha sido orientada institucionalmente a través del comunicado institucional número 2 del 13 de marzo de 2020, en el que la funda como el principal mecanismo para dar continuidad a las actividades académicas establecidas en la Universidad. Así mismo, enuncia las características de esta metodología emergente y las ventajas de su implementación (Universidad EAN, 2020). PAT consiste en continuar con el proceso académico de la misma manera como se venía haciendo desde la presencialidad, pero por las medidas de confinamiento que se deben adoptar, desde la virtualidad.

La implementación de esta metodología se caracteriza por la conservación tanto del número de clases como de la intensidad horaria; el contacto directo con el docente (por medio de encuentros síncronos), en los mismos horarios de clase y las mismas actividades planificados previamente desde la presencialidad; procurando un ambiente activo y participativo.

### Aspectos psicosociales

Hablar de “condiciones psicosociales” remite a entender al sujeto y su relación con el entorno. Leal (2005) define los *aspectos psicosociales* como aquellas variables presentes en los contextos sociales que tienen un impacto en el desarrollo y el bienestar psicológico del individuo.

El cambio abrupto generado por la pandemia en el funcionamiento del sistema educativo ocasionó sin duda una serie de situaciones que confluían en el rendimiento académico, y en la salud física y mental de la comunidad académica. Y es que el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras se ve altamente influenciado por aspectos psicosociales, entre otros, la *motivación*, que resulta ser una “pieza facilitadora en la adquisición de una L2 [segunda lengua]” (Fonseca, 2005); la *interacción*, como factor indisociable de los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas (Govea y Sánchez, 2006); y la *autonomía*, como proceso evolutivo que potencia el reconocimiento de los estilos de aprendizaje



**Figura 1** Aspectos psicosociales y condiciones educativas en la satisfacción estudiantil en el aprendizaje mediado por tecnología digital

y el autodireccionamiento del conocimiento para lograr mejor desempeño en el aprendizaje de lenguas (Velázquez *et al.*, 2016).

Así, desde el presente estudio se analizaron los siguientes aspectos psicosociales propuestos por Walker (2003), teniendo en cuenta la mediación tecnológica como eje central: el apoyo docente, el aprendizaje activo y autónomo, la interacción entre los estudiantes, el aprendizaje auténtico y relevante. La Figura 1 resume los aspectos psicosociales y las condiciones educativas que se tomaron en cuenta en la presente investigación.

Considerando el apoyo docente, Chaves (2017) sostiene que, cuando hay mediación tecnológica, los docentes deben procurar el uso de diferentes herramientas que mantengan activo el contacto con los estudiantes; así, el rol docente debe ser activo, procurando la comunicación bidireccional y el acompañamiento continuo (Morales, 2014). El *aprendizaje activo y autónomo*, por su parte, se entiende como el rol del estudiante en la construcción de su propio conocimiento; el reconocimiento de su estilo de aprendizaje, la toma de decisiones, su autorregulación.

La *interacción* entre los estudiantes, como aspecto psicosocial, se comprende como el conocimiento adquirido que se ve complementado con el trabajo de los otros y cómo se posibilita acrecentar las experiencias de aprendizaje a partir de la colaboración entre pares. Pérez (2009) destaca la variable “interacción” como una de las principales causales de la deserción en la modalidad a distancia, pues considera que el proceso de aprendizaje se ve acrecentado en la medida en que el *clima socioafectivo* sea propicio.

Finalmente, en el *aprendizaje auténtico y relevante*, se analizan las relaciones entre lo aprendido y el mundo exterior; en otras palabras, la existencia de un aprendizaje significativo. Sumado a lo anterior, este estudio se interesó también por analizar la salud física y mental de los estudiantes durante el confinamiento y a partir de la implementación del modelo PAT.

### Condiciones educativas

Todo proceso educativo requiere de unas condiciones mínimas que les permitan a sus participantes lograr los objetivos establecidos para el desarrollo de competencias tanto individuales como colectivas.

En el contexto de educación superior, dichas condiciones están reglamentadas por dos ejes principales: medios educativos e infraestructura física. Ambas condiciones hacen parte de las

políticas establecidas por el MEN (Castillo, 2013) con el fin de otorgar los registros calificados a los programas académicos. Estos medios son descritos por Castillo así:

Medios educativos	Garantizar la disponibilidad de recursos bibliográficos, bases de datos, equipos y aplicativos informáticos, sistemas de interconectividad, laboratorios físicos, escenarios de simulación virtual y de experimentación y práctica, talleres con instrumentos acordes con la metodología a presentar. Para los programas a distancia y virtuales describir la disponibilidad de una plataforma apropiada, la infraestructura de conectividad, las estrategias metodológicas para su desarrollo, así como las estrategias de seguimiento (Castillo, 2013, p. 12).
Infraestructura física	La IES [institución de educación superior] debe demostrar que la infraestructura inmobiliaria para el desarrollo del programa cumple con las normas de uso del suelo de conformidad con las disposiciones locales del lugar de ofrecimiento en cuya jurisdicción se desarrollará el programa. En el caso de programas a distancia y virtuales la ies debe describir y demostrar la disponibilidad de la infraestructura de hardware y conectividad: Software que permita la producción de materiales, la disponibilidad de aulas virtuales y aplicativos para la administración de procesos de formación (Castillo, 2013, p. 12).

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Teniendo en cuenta que la pandemia movilizó abruptamente las dinámicas con las que se venían trabajando, fue necesario analizar cómo las condiciones físicas/estructurales (conectividad, espacios físicos, recursos, etc.) brindadas institucionalmente impactaron al estudiantado.

**Método**

La *etnografía*, como método de investigación cualitativa (Maturana y Garzón, 2015), permite “realizar una descripción rigurosa de lo que sucede al interior de las escuelas multiculturales y, por tanto, una mejor comprensión de los procesos educativos” (Ogbu, 1993). Los estudios etnográficos en educación autorizan una reflexión en torno a las situaciones o experiencias vividas en el contexto escolar, para contribuir a la transformación social. Maturana y Garzón (2015) describen la etnografía como un método de investigación pertinente al servicio del docente, el cual posibilita un amplio entendimiento “del contexto educativo o las particularidades del contexto escolar”.

El presente estudio se enmarca en la microetnografía como parte de los estudios etnográficos en

educación. Este tipo de estudio permite el análisis de una situación dada (Spradley, 1980). Así, dada la contingencia sanitaria a nivel mundial, los docentes se enfrentaron al reto de documentar, observar, analizar, reflexionar sobre las metodologías emergentes, las actitudes, las percepciones, las políticas y, en general, todo lo relacionado con el ámbito escolar, para hacer frente a este nuevo desafío.

La Tabla 1 condensa la metodología, el diseño de investigación, la unidad de análisis, los instrumentos y las técnicas de investigación, y las fases implementadas para el análisis de resultados en este estudio.

Cabe resaltar que durante la ejecución de cada una de las etapas de investigación, se tuvieron en cuenta criterios éticos y bioéticos, como la confidencialidad en la información personal de los participantes, el tratamiento de los datos, los riesgos y beneficios de la investigación, a partir del uso del debido consentimiento y asentimiento informado (documentos escritos brindados por algunos directivos de la institución); la garantía

Tabla 1 Proceso metodológico

Proceso metodológico	Descripción
<b>Tipo y diseño de investigación</b>	<b>Investigación cualitativa / Diseño etnográfico: microetnografía</b>
Participantes	Estudiantes activos de la Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con Énfasis en Inglés y Francés de la Universidad del Quindío, Colombia. Se contó con la participación voluntaria de 423 estudiantes activos (pertenecientes a la jornada diurna y nocturna, desde primero a décimo semestre).
Instrumentos y técnicas de investigación	Cuestionario abierto / Entradas de texto libre (Hernández et al., 2014). Centrado en la satisfacción en la experiencia de aprendizaje mediada por tecnología digital. Grupos focales (Escobar y Bonilla, 2011). Participaron 120 estudiantes pertenecientes a cuatro grupos de cursos básicos de Inglés, quienes ya habían respondido al cuestionario abierto. Observación participativa (Spradley, 1980). Uno de los docentes investigadores como parte de la metodología PAT
Análisis de resultados (fase 1)	Cuestionario abierto: se implementó un proceso de condensación, visualización e interpretación de datos, que sigue a Miles et al. (2014). Este fue un análisis iterativo de dos ciclos, que se realizó utilizando el software NVivo 12. Grupos focales y observaciones: también se tomaron condiciones generales en la codificación, expuestas por McCracken (1988). Estas consisten en leer las transcripciones y hacer anotaciones, describir categorías basadas en las transcripciones, conectar patrones y códigos, agrupar temas básicos y examinar los temas
Análisis de resultados (fase 2) Triangulación	Triangulación metodológica (Okuda y Gómez, 2005). Se analizan los resultados obtenidos desde los diferentes instrumentos/técnicas/métodos para profundizar y conocer mejor el tema

de una conducta científica adecuada evidenciada, entre otros elementos, por el buen uso de las referencias bibliográficas, y el planteamiento de criterios FINER (acrónimo de factible, interesante, novedoso, ético y relevante) (Hulley *et al.*, 2013) para delimitar la pregunta de investigación.

**Recolección de datos**

Las técnicas e instrumentos de investigación fueron aplicados en la Licenciatura de Lenguas Modernas con énfasis en Inglés y Francés de la

Universidad del Quindío, registrada en el MEN bajo la modalidad presencial, contando con 16 semanas de aprendizaje semestral. Sin embargo, debido a la situación generada por la COVID-19, los estudiantes tuvieron que asistir a más de la mitad del semestre (nueve semanas) bajo la metodología PAT, y siguiendo los lineamientos para el plan de contingencia derivados del MEN.

En la Figura 2 se presenta el procedimiento para la recolección de datos.

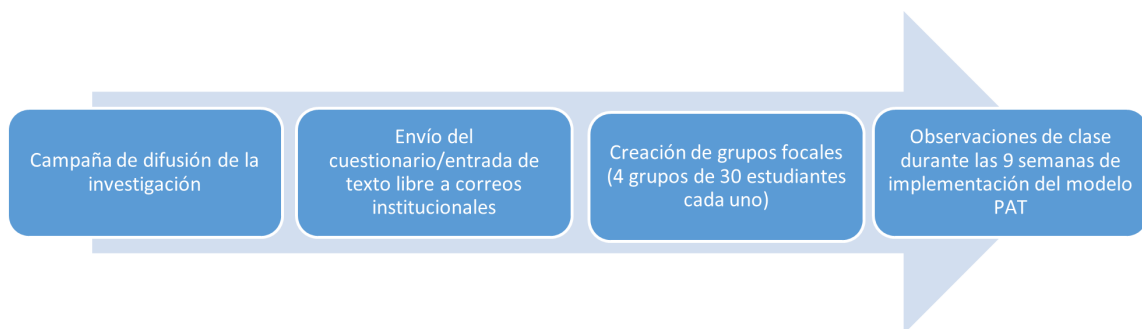


Figura 2 Procedimiento para la recolección de datos

Al finalizar el primer semestre académico, los investigadores de este estudio realizaron una campaña de difusión de la investigación con la ayuda de los demás profesores del programa académico. Posteriormente, los estudiantes fueron contactados por medio del correo electrónico institucional, invitándolos a participar del estudio a través de un enlace que los llevaba a resolver preguntas sobre su satisfacción en la experiencia de aprendizaje mediada por tecnología digital. Igualmente, se preguntó sobre las oportunidades de mejoramiento en situaciones de confinamiento similares.

Asimismo, en el primer periodo de 2020 se organizaron cuatro grupos focales de 30 estudiantes cada uno; se indagó, especialmente, sobre aspectos psicosociales y condiciones educativas que podrían tener un impacto en la experiencia de aprendizaje.

Durante las nueve semanas con la metodología PAT, se realizaron observaciones participativas que permitieron, posteriormente, contribuir con el análisis de resultados.

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### Resultados

Para dar respuesta al objetivo de investigación, se identificaron aspectos psicosociales y condiciones educativas de estudiantes pertenecientes a la Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con énfasis

en Inglés y Francés de la Universidad del Quindío que impactaron la experiencia de aprendizaje en línea bajo la estrategia metodológica PAT durante el primer periodo de confinamiento (2020-I). Es a partir de estas categorías apriorísticas que se develan los resultados.

#### Aspectos psicosociales y su impacto en la experiencia de aprendizaje en línea

Aunque los estudiantes que participaron en la investigación reconocen el esfuerzo y las condiciones difíciles que tuvieron que afrontar los profesores para impartir sus cursos (como se manifestó en los grupos focales), el análisis de frecuencia permitió identificar que el apoyo del profesor representa la barrera más usualmente mencionada para una experiencia satisfactoria por medio de metodología PAT. La Figura 3 muestra la frecuencia de aspectos psicosociales reportadas por los estudiantes.

Más específicamente, la ausencia de empatía, una metodología inapropiada, la falta de realimentación y comunicación, así como la falta de seguimiento por parte del profesor, constituyeron los obstáculos más recurrentes para los estudiantes. En la Tabla 2, se condensan algunas de esas opiniones de los estudiantes en las respuestas generadas a partir del cuestionario, así como sus comentarios en los grupos focales.

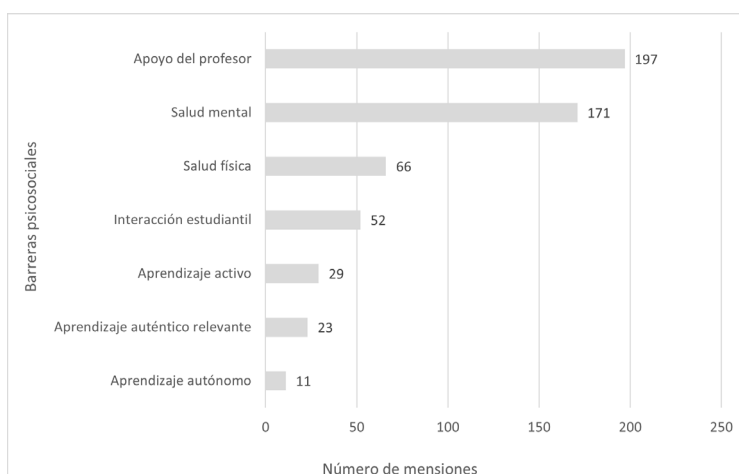


Figura 3 Aspectos psicosociales reportados por estudiantes en la aplicación de la metodología PAT



**Tabla 2** Categoría aspectos psicosociales y su impacto en la experiencia de aprendizaje en línea. Comentarios de los estudiantes en entradas de texto libre y grupos focales.

Apoyo docente	Interacción estudiantil	Aprendizaje activo	Aprendizaje auténtico y relevante	Aprendizaje autónomo	Salud física y mental
Est 38:* “La cantidad de trabajos incrementó y la mayoría de los profesores no son flexibles con los tiempos de entrega. Todos los profes utilizan plataformas diferentes”	Est 11: “La interacción en línea es nula, porque cada quien trabaja como puede y por el exceso de actividades no hay mucho tiempo para socializar”	Est: 328 “La manera actual en la que se orientan las clases de manera digital se convierte en un monólogo por parte del maestro en muchas ocasiones”	Est 225: “El aprendizaje se volvió más [completo en contenido], pero sin saber que lo que estoy aprendiendo está bien o mal”	Est 10: “No he podido organizar mi tiempo por la cantidad de trabajo extra que ponen los profesores”	Est 69: “[...] dejan más trabajos de los normales, creando así más estrés del que ya tenemos; además, nunca están presentes si tenemos alguna dificultad”
Est 140: “Los profesores no contestan rápido a los correos para resolver nuestras dudas”	Est 68: “Claramente, la interacción disminuye y la relaciones se ven parcializadas”		Est 95: “Mi punto es que los estudiantes están pagando más por que le envíen tareas sin propósito significativo alguno, y no por una buena educación”		Est 28: “Las largas jornadas en frente de un computador hacen dolerme la espalda, el cuello y los ojos”
Est 20: “No hay retroalimentación después de los exámenes; a veces la plataforma da solo la nota, sin mostrar los comentarios a cada respuesta”					

\* El número correspondiente a cada estudiante se asigna teniendo en cuenta la matriz obtenida para el análisis de información con el software NVivo.

[ ] información adicional para un mejor entendimiento de la oración.

Se evidencian claramente algunas variables que intervienen en las percepciones de los estudiantes en cuanto a los aspectos psicosociales que influyen en el aprendizaje en línea. Estas percepciones van en dos direcciones: por un lado, el docente, quien aplica una metodología, asigna unas tareas y regula de alguna manera la interacción. Por otro lado, el estudiante, con factores individuales (como la organización del tiempo de trabajo), es quien ve cómo muchos de sus procesos de aprendizaje se ven afectados.

Cabe resaltar que la interacción resulta ser uno de los procesos del aprendizaje más impactados, bien sea con sus compañeros (la interacción en línea es nula) o con sus profesores (realimentación de trabajos, tiempo para responder correos, etc.).

Estos hallazgos permiten reflexionar sobre la necesidad de una aplicación correcta de los lineamientos planteados para la educación virtual y a distancia, enfatizando en la importancia de la capacitación docente para afrontar los cambios que las nuevas dinámicas educativas implican.

**Condiciones educativas**

El análisis de las respuestas de los estudiantes obtenidas en el diálogo en los grupos focales permitió constatar que las condiciones educativas (medios educativos) tienen un impacto importante en todos los componentes psicosociales, incluido el apoyo del profesor. Algunas opiniones que ilustran estas dificultades se pueden contemplar en la Tabla 3.

Los resultados obtenidos desde las respuestas de entrada libre y los grupos focales fueron

constatados desde la observación participante, que permitió evidenciar cómo la falta de conectividad o inestabilidad en la conexión, el espacio inadecuado y la falta de dispositivos electrónicos hacen que las percepciones de los estudiantes revelen insatisfacción en múltiples aspectos psicosociales. Dichos hallazgos van en dirección con lo evidenciado desde otras investigaciones (Arias *et al.*, 2020; Chicaiza, 2020; Lovón y Cisneros, 2020; Ramírez *et al.*, 2020; Valdieso *et al.*, 2020), resaltando la importancia de contar con condiciones

**Tabla 3** Comentarios de los estudiantes acerca de la relación de las condiciones educativas con los aspectos psicosociales

<b>Sub 1 Apoyo docente</b>	<b>Sub 2 Interacción estudiantil</b>	<b>Sub 3 Aprendizaje activo</b>	<b>Sub 4 Aprendizaje auténtico y relevante</b>	<b>Sub 5 Aprendizaje autónomo</b>	<b>Sub. 6 Salud física y mental</b>
(05:10) "Presencialmente, el aprendizaje es mejor y no presenta fallas, mientras que virtualmente los profesores enfrentan demasiadas fallas técnicas en sus dispositivos o plataformas"	(08:00) "Muchas veces no pude participar por falta de internet" (08:30) "La interacción con tus compañeros depende muchísimo de tu capacidad para conectarte a internet. Así como hay compañeros que se apoyan entre sí para adaptarse mejor a las clases virtuales, hay otros a los que simplemente les cuesta comunicarse" (11:40) "Hay profesores que utilizan plataformas donde se pueden formar grupos, pero cada que lo hacen no puedo continuar con la actividad, porque la plataforma me expulsa inmediatamente"	(07:15) "Realmente considero que mi aprendizaje activo fue casi nulo, no cuento con conexión a internet cerca de mi casa y tampoco con medios tecnológicos, por lo que ha sido una experiencia bastante difícil y me siento excluida"	(15:45) "Los estudiantes no cuentan con la tecnología e internet de buena calidad para trabajar estas actividades. Con mucho esfuerzo y dedicación, trabajo y estudio con mi celular, pero no es lo ideal. En mi opinión, es mejor poco trabajo de buena calidad que mucho trabajo de mala calidad"	(12:00) "Es muy difícil concentrarse, debido a que en los ámbitos familiares no hay espacios ni ambientes apropiados para el aprendizaje. Hay demasiados estímulos alrededor de los estudiantes que dificultan las variables de atención en los estudiantes"	(25:15) "Tuve que soportar un desequilibrio emocional muy fuerte, pasar a ser la única fuente de ingresos en la casa y aparte la exigencia para intentar continuar normalmente el aprendizaje (cosa que no logré). Resulta muy desgastante". (31:00) "Es muy estresante estar todo el día al frente de un computador, termino más cansada, muchas veces muy frustrada por problemas técnicos y de conexión"

Convenciones en la transcripción de datos:

(00:00) tiempo en que se mencionó el comentario.

Cursiva: oraciones en el discurso que resaltan las condiciones educativas.

educativas óptimas para no afectar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y todo lo que ello implica.

La Figura 4 resume cómo, en la identificación de factores, el apoyo del profesor y las condiciones educativas son los aspectos de mayor relevancia, ya que estos tienen una incidencia tanto directa como indirecta en los componentes psicosociales y en la satisfacción estudiantil.

La identificación de factores que se exponen en este estudio indica que las condiciones educativas son la piedra angular en la experiencia de aprendizaje con la metodología PAT. En este sentido, existen estudios que ya apuntaban la dicotomía inclusión-inclusión digital presente en el contexto colombiano (Rueda y Franco-Avellaneda, 2018). Si bien hay planteamientos que señalan que no se puede alcanzar la justicia social sin conectividad digital, y que esta debe ser fundamental en Colombia (López y Gómez, 2020; Restrepo y Gómez, 2020), lo cierto es que la pandemia es un evento disruptivo que afectó la puesta en marcha de políticas educativas pensadas para este fin.

### Discusión

Los resultados del presente estudio resaltan los aspectos psicosociales y las condiciones educativas también halladas en otros contextos y latitudes; como lo evidenciado en Arias *et al.*, 2020, quienes

encuentran que un alto porcentaje de estudiantes universitarios (46,8 %) han notado cambios en sus estados de humor durante la pandemia, lo que ha afectado procesos académicos y la interacción entre pares; o en Chandra (2020), cuya investigación establece que los estudiantes experimentan estrés debido a situaciones relacionadas con aspectos psicoculturales y psicológicos por el contexto de pandemia transversal a todos los lugares del mundo; o en Ramírez *et al.* (2020), quienes concluyen su investigación afirmando que las percepciones de los estudiantes en cuanto a la educación virtual no son buenas, destacando, entre otras razones, factores socioeconómicos.

El apoyo docente, como una de las barreras psicosociales de mayor recurrencia en las entradas de texto libre y como un punto clave de discusión en los grupos focales, es sin duda uno de los criterios que necesitan mayor atención. Y es que, como lo afirman McNatt *et al.*, “un apoyo psicosocial adecuado y bien diseñado puede mejorar los procesos resilientes y mitigar las vulnerabilidades” (2018, p. 9). En este sentido, la educación, y particularmente el apoyo del profesor, puede constituirse en el canal principal para reducir la brecha entre algunas barreras psicosociales y el aprendizaje, como la propuesta por la Red Interinstitucional para la Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia (McNatt *et al.*, 2018) que plantea una “nota de

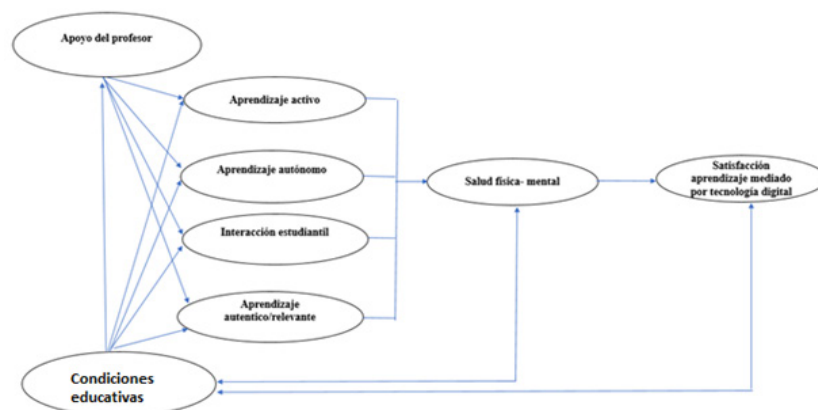


Figura 4 Identificación de factores que influyen en la satisfacción del aprendizaje en el contexto PAT

orientación” para dicho apoyo psicosocial en el contexto educativo.

En el campo de las lenguas extranjeras, Díaz y Jansson (2011) concluyen que el rol del profesor es muy diverso y que este “varía dependiendo de las tareas a enseñar con la ayuda de la tecnología”. En tal sentido, el profesor puede desempeñar el rol de “controlador”, ya que selecciona cuáles son las estrategias que mejor funcionen; “organizador” de todo el proceso, tanto de enseñanza como de aprendizaje; “asesor”, al participar con los estudiantes en las tareas realizando retroalimentación, y “diseñador” de estrategias innovadoras que ayuden al logro de objetivos. Es decir, la educación virtual requiere de una diversidad de los roles del docente en la educación.

Así, es deber de los docentes repensar cuál debería ser su rol cuando se enfrente a una metodología como el PAT. Ya lo advertía Vega en el año 1999, en su texto “El docente del siglo XXI: formación y retos pedagógicos”: el uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación se convierte en un *instrumento sociocultural* que debe incorporarse a los procesos de enseñanza aprendizaje con prontitud y los docentes deben estar capacitados para afrontar el acelerado ritmo con que va creciendo el uso y la importancia de las TIC.

Observaciones de los estudiantes respecto a factores metodológicos como la falta de empatía, la falta de flexibilidad, la monotonía y la falta de creatividad demuestran la necesidad de reflexionar en algunas estrategias que se deben tener en cuenta al momento de afrontar la metodología PAT. Y es que los docentes se vieron enfrentados a un reto para el cual no estaban capacitados. Como lo discutía Mirete Ruiz (2010) en su reflexión sobre la formación docente en el uso de las TIC, los estudiantes son *nativos digitales* y los docentes deben estar preparados a los cambios que impone la sociedad; en este sentido, deben estar preparados para la inclusión de las TIC en el aula como eje facilitador del aprendizaje, y para esto, se requiere de una formación pedagógica y de

unas “competencias *instrumentales* para usar el software y hardware”(p. 42) que permitan una inserción asertiva de la tecnología en las aulas.

Es por esta razón por lo que, además de las medidas que aseguren una democratización en el acceso a tecnología digital, se debe hacer hincapié en la formación profesoral en metodología PAT. Desde un punto de vista de políticas educativas, el estudio sugiere la articulación de un grupo de expertos en educación mediada por tecnología digital, el cual produzca lineamientos generales que sirvan como punto inicial para el desarrollo de capacitaciones a los docentes en enseñanza durante metodología PAT.

Por su parte, entre los desafíos que enfrentan los estudiantes de lenguas extranjeras frente a este nuevo modelo, se encuentra trascender en niveles superiores de autonomía; es decir, pasar de un nivel de autonomía aproximación-implicación, en el cual se reconocen las fortalezas y debilidades a nivel lingüístico-didáctico, a niveles superiores de autonomía, como el nivel de investigación-intervención y el nivel lingüístico didáctico, los cuales exigen, a parte de un reconocimiento de los estilos de aprendizaje y la selección de estrategias para afrontar el aprendizaje de lenguas, una capacidad de reflexión y proyección de lo aprendido hacia la resolución de problemas (Velázquez *et al.*, 2016).

Respecto a las condiciones educativas, es evidente que no había una preparación *a priori* para enfrentar la situación disruptiva que cambió todas las dinámicas que se venían implementando desde la metodología presencial; los estudiantes no contaban con las condiciones básicas para trasladar la presencialidad a la virtualidad; algunos no tenían los dispositivos necesarios, conexión a internet estable, o un espacio adecuado para el aprendizaje, y hubo factores socioeconómicos que impidieron un óptimo traslado de modalidad. De allí, entonces, la importancia de enfatizar en el uso de las tecnologías móviles, aún cuando sea factible regresar a las aulas.

Si bien los estudiantes podrían ser llamados “nativos digitales”, es su mayor reto canalizar y direccionar todos sus conocimientos digitales hacia procesos de formación que ayuden a mejorar su desempeño en lenguas extranjeras.

Es menester resaltar que el Gobierno debe implementar políticas educativas ya plasmadas en papel, como el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2018-2022 (Colombia, Congreso de la República, 2019) y el CONPES 3988 de 2020 en lo que respecta a medidas como la modernización de las telecomunicaciones, la implementación de programas de acceso y servicio universal de las TIC en todo el territorio nacional, la masificación del acceso a internet, el apoyo a la educación pública con conectividad, la formación a los usuarios para el uso de las tecnologías, y el subsidio para incentivar la conectividad en familias vulnerables; todo esto con el fin de mantener un sistema de educación PAT exitoso. Sobre todo, teniendo en cuenta que la educación tiene el riesgo de enfrentar una creciente deserción, a causa del mayor desempleo y el importante número de personas que pasaron a formar parte del segmento de personas en pobreza absoluta (Alarcón, 2020).

Desde este estudio, y considerando que la metodología PAT podría integrarse a la modalidad “educación a distancia” como una posibilidad para perfiles de estudiantes diversos que se encuentren en diferentes latitudes, se podría presentar una propuesta macrocurricular para los programas de pregrado que deseen continuar con la implementación de este modelo. Dicha propuesta debería incluir:

1. La organización de los espacios sincrónicos y asincrónicos, dependiendo del número de horas, tipo (teórico-práctico) y créditos del espacio académico.
2. La parametrización de contenidos en una única plataforma institucional que congregue a todos los estudiantes.
3. La creación de lineamientos concretos para cada encuentro. En los encuentros sincrónicos, la

posibilidad de grabar las sesiones (bajo consentimiento de cada uno de los estudiantes) para compartirlas posteriormente (garantizando flexibilidad y empatía hacia los problemas técnicos que puedan surgir); en los asincrónicos, procurar la organización del contenido de modo tal que se consideren todos los estilos de aprendizaje.

4. El aseguramiento de la interacción entre los participantes.
5. La capacitación docente como eje central para garantizar la satisfacción del aprendizaje en línea.

Ha transcurrido un año a partir del uso de la metodología PAT a causa de la pandemia; las medidas que ahora se vienen planteando desde el Gobierno nacional y que son analizadas y reestructuradas desde los Gobiernos locales y desde las instituciones, incluyen el retorno progresivo a clase a partir de la “alternancia educativa” y la metodología “clase espejo”; es así como, para futuras investigaciones, se espera indagar sobre las percepciones de la comunidad académica respecto a estas estrategias y continuar en la búsqueda del mejor escenario para sobrellevar situaciones como la que hoy por hoy nos aqueja.

## Conclusión

El presente estudio se interesó por identificar los aspectos psicosociales y las condiciones educativas de estudiantes de Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas con énfasis en inglés y francés de la Universidad del Quindío que impactan su experiencia de aprendizaje durante la implementación de la metodología PAT a causa del periodo de confinamiento ocasionado por el virus SARS-CoV-2 que ocasiona la enfermedad COVID-19.

Por medio de métodos propios de un análisis cualitativo, microetnográfico, como grupos focales, observación participativa y encuestas con entrada libre de texto, se pudo determinar una interconexión entre diversos aspectos psicosociales y condiciones educativas.

Así, el estudio sugiere que para una experiencia de aprendizaje PAT satisfactoria, se enfatice sobre dos ejes fundamentales: las condiciones estructurales que faciliten el aprendizaje (como, por ejemplo, el acceso a dispositivos digitales para el aprendizaje, una conexión de apropiada a internet, un espacio de estudio apropiado) y el apoyo del profesor al estudiante (en lo que tiene que ver con la empatía, la metodología, la realimentación, la comunicación y el seguimiento). Dichos factores cumplen un papel ineludible en otros aspectos psicosociales del estudiante, como su aprendizaje activo, aprendizaje autónomo y relevante, interacción, salud física y mental. Debido a esto, el estudio sugiere algunas acciones que pueden contribuir a enfrentar de una mejor manera las barreras en el aprendizaje por medio de la metodología PAT.

Desde la perspectiva de políticas educativas, se requiere la puesta en marcha inmediata de lineamientos decretados antes de la pandemia y que apuntan a la democratización de la tecnología digital y a la creación de un grupo de docentes especialistas que elaboren un plan de acción metodológico que aproveche los beneficios de la tecnología, utilizándola como un soporte crucial en el proceso formativo.

Desde una perspectiva metodológica, se sugiere establecer un balance entre la carga académica sincrónica y asincrónica, tomando en cuenta la opinión de los estudiantes; evitar actividades académicas extra que no contribuyan significativamente al trabajo independiente exigido en los créditos académicos y en las que solo se espera que los estudiantes sean receptores pasivos de información; utilizar una plataforma común que facilite interacción con otras herramientas tecnológicas para el aprendizaje; incentivar la creatividad y el aprendizaje activo en las actividades asincrónicas; fomentar la flexibilidad durante las clases sincrónicas, por ejemplo, permitiendo que se graben dichas clases para que los estudiantes puedan acceder a los contenidos cuando más les convenga. La implementación de dichas medidas contribuirá al

grado de satisfacción de los estudiantes hacia un aprendizaje por medio de la metodología PAT.

No cabe duda de que esta metodología seguirá cumpliendo un papel importante en el contexto de aprendizaje en línea durante periodos excepcionales, como el aprendizaje durante una pandemia. De allí que continuar en la búsqueda de planes de mejoramiento que optimicen su uso es y seguirá siendo tarea imperante para docentes e investigadores.

Finalmente, cabe resaltar que este estudio contó con algunas limitantes, como la exclusión de muchos participantes del estudio, puesto que al analizar los cuestionarios algunos no contaban con toda la información requerida. De igual manera, el hecho de omitir algunas preguntas que hubiesen sido de gran interés para acercarnos a una reflexión respecto a la percepción de los estudiantes, futuros docentes, acerca de los roles que tendrán que desempeñar cuando sean maestros en condiciones como las analizadas en esta investigación.

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# LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19: ELT STUDENTS' NARRATED EXPERIENCES IN GUIDED REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS EN TIEMPOS DE COVID-19: EXPERIENCIAS DE DOCENTES DE INGLÉS EN FORMACIÓN CONSIGNADOS EN DIARIOS REFLEXIVOS

L'APPRENTISSAGE DES LANGUES AU TEMPS DU COVID-19: DES EXPERIENCES DES ENSEIGNANTS EN FORMATION CONSIGNÉES DANS DES JOURNAUX DE RÉFLEXION

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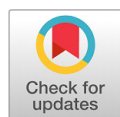
## ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a qualitative study of the lived experiences and emotional responses regarding language learning of 29 students in a bachelor's degree in English language teaching (ELT) offered at a public university in central Mexico. The study was grounded in sociocultural theory and was carried out at a time when the students' classes changed overnight to online learning due to the worldwide covid-19 pandemic. In this program, students learn a foreign language within a theoretical framework of second language acquisition (SLA) and document their language learning experience (LLE) through reflective journals. One month into the new online modality, they were asked to write in their journals about a historical artifact that would represent their experience during the pandemic for a historian 100 years in the future. A constant comparative method of analysis of their narrated stories reveals the challenges faced and ensuing emotions: from overwhelming anxiety to youthful optimism. These results provide an appreciation of students' complex emotions regarding their language learning process while in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and highlight the importance of creating activities that promote reflection.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; ELT; emotions; guided journals; narrative inquiry; reflective journals; teacher education.

## RESUMEN

En este artículo, presentamos los resultados de un estudio cualitativo fundamentado en la teoría sociocultural de las experiencias vividas de 29 estudiantes en clases de lengua extranjera como parte de un programa de Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés en una universidad pública del centro de México. El estudio se basó en



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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

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teorías socioculturales y se llevó a cabo cuando sus aulas cambiaron al aprendizaje en línea debido a la pandemia mundial de COVID-19. En este programa, los estudiantes aprenden una lengua extranjera dentro de un marco teórico de adquisición de idiomas y documentan su experiencia de aprendizaje de idiomas a través de diarios reflexivos. Un mes después de la nueva modalidad en línea, se pidió a los estudiantes que escribieran en sus diarios sobre un artefacto histórico que representaría su experiencia durante la pandemia para un historiador de 100 años en el futuro. Utilizando un método comparativo constante, las historias narradas en sus diarios guiados iluminan los desafíos enfrentados y las emociones resultantes, revelando desde un optimismo juvenil a una ansiedad abrumadora. El estudio tiene implicaciones para comprender las respuestas emocionales de los estudiantes en cuanto a su proceso de aprendizaje de lenguas en medio de una pandemia, y resaltan la importancia de crear actividades que promuevan la reflexión.

**Palabras claves:** COVID-19; diarios guiados; ILE; emociones; formación docente; indagación narrativa; diarios de reflexión.

### Résumé

Cet article présente les résultats d'une recherche qualitative basée sur les expériences vécues de 29 étudiants en cours de langues étrangères dans le cadre d'un programme License en ELT, dans une université publique du centre du Mexique. Fondée sur la théorie socioculturelle, l'étude a été menée lors du changement de la modalité présentielle à virtuelle pendant la pandémie mondiale de COVID-19. Dans ce BA, les étudiants apprennent une langue étrangère dans un cadre théorique d'acquisition de langue seconde et rapportent leur expérience d'apprentissage des langues à travers des journaux de réflexion. Un mois après le début du changement à la modalité virtuelle, on a demandé aux étudiants d'y décrire un artefact à un historien vivant 100 ans dans le futur qui représenterait leur expérience vécue pendant la pandémie. En utilisant une méthode comparative constante, les histoires racontées dans leurs journaux de réflexion par les enseignants en formation éclairent les défis rencontrés et les émotions qui en résultent, révélant tant un optimisme juvénile qu'une anxiété écrasante. Cette étude permet de comprendre les complexes émotions des étudiants à propos de leur processus d'apprentissage au milieu d'une pandémie et souligne l'importance de créer des activités qui favorisent la réflexion.

**Mots-clés:** COVID-19; ALE; émotions; enquête narrative; formation des enseignants; revues de réflexion; revues guidées.

## Introduction

On March 15, 2020, at 12:52 a.m., life changed for teachers and students in our public university in central Mexico when an email from the university announced the suspension of classes due to the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. When COVID-19 hit, the participants in this study were enrolled in a bachelor's degree (BA) in English language teaching (ELT). The BA includes a language learning experience (LLE) in which students study a foreign language (FL) other than English within a theoretical framework of second language acquisition (SLA) and complete individual action research (AR) projects about their language learning process. In addition to taking and passing an FL class, the students keep journals detailing their AR projects and reflecting on their experience through guided prompts. As our university community ventured into the new reality caused by the pandemic, face-to-face BA class meetings transformed into online synchronous classes, while students' FL classes either did the same, moved to asynchronous platforms, or were cancelled entirely. In this article, we analyze the data from the students' reflective journals to explore their emotions while learning a language during COVID-19.

Learning is the interconnection of emotion and cognition, as described by Vygotsky's (1994) use of the Russian term *perezhivanie*. The role of cognition in learning is the subject of much research while emotions have been considered to a lesser degree. Where research has explored emotions in learning, the traditional focus has largely been within a language classroom or resulting from the use of a second language (L2) outside of the classroom (Arnold, 2011; Horwitz, 2016; Richards, 2015). The worldwide pandemic has been a difficult time for learners, but the very immensity of this experience provides a unique opportunity to study learners' emotions in a more "general" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) sense. We now see research examining emotional responses to COVID-19 (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Karalis & Raikou, 2020) and studying the facilitation of space for cognitive

development (Chakma et al., 2021; Pasaribu & Dewi, 2021). Little has been explored, however, regarding the use of reflective techniques within a facilitated space to explore emotions when a social phenomenon such as COVID-19 affects learning.

For our study, students were given a guided journal prompt about their experience in the time of COVID-19 from an imagined perspective in the future. Written during the transition from in-person to online classrooms as our world was being turned upside down because of wholesale lockdown and overwhelming uncertainty, these guided journal entries offer a window into the students' lives and provide insight into their emotions during COVID-19. The data is viewed through a Vygotskian lens to help us understand student emotions during a new social phenomenon.

## Theoretical Framework

For this research, we recognize that while social phenomena may trigger different individual emotional responses, these responses nonetheless reveal information relevant to understanding the role of emotions in language learning more generally. The theory that supports this research is therefore informed by three areas: sociocultural theory, embedded LLE programs, and emotions in language learning.

### Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural stance adopted here is that we, as individuals, are shaped by our lived experiences and those experiences are therefore key in our quest to understand how COVID-19 has affected language learners. This sociocultural perspective is grounded in a view that "it is through others that we develop into ourselves" (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 161). Individuals are formed by both the "personal" and the "contextual," and both aspects are relevant to this investigation.

The context examined here is the language learning experience during a worldwide pandemic and the resulting move to online or remote learning. Sociocultural theory incorporates the Russian

term *perezhivanie* (Vygotsky, 1994), meaning that different people may react to the same environment in different ways. Success in learning a new language is the result of an intricate process recognized to be a consequence of both the individuality of students as well as their environments, a unity of cognition and emotion. The complexity created by this circle of “personal” and “contextual” influences arises because our experiences within any particular context are interpreted through and by our individual “self,” what Golombek and Doran (2014) identify as a “prism of *perezhivanie*” (p. 104). The individual prism is fundamental in understanding how remote learning and the coronavirus pandemic have affected individual language learners. In this study, we view the individual experience of our participants within a shared social phenomenon by examining their personal responses and analyzing the common themes that emerge from that shared experience. These themes then reveal a bigger picture which helps shed light on language learning in this context.

### Embedded LLE Programs

In teaching programs throughout the world, teacher cognition and how that translates into teaching practice is recognized as an important area of study. Personal experience is an essential component in cognitive development for teachers, as Lortie (2002) recognized in describing the apprenticeship of observation. This apprenticeship arises from the experience teachers have before entering the profession, as students who have spent perhaps thousands of hours in a classroom observing their own teachers. For English teachers in countries such as Mexico, where English is not the native language, future teachers generally learn the language they will eventually teach as students in an English-language classroom. Through this experience, they develop their own perceptions about how to teach a language, for better or worse.

The idea behind Lortie’s (2002) theory is extended in a more formalized manner by embedding an LLE

within a BA in ELT (Ellis, 2004; Flowerdew, 1998; Forman, 2015). Learning another language as an explicit part of ELT education provides students with a perspective that goes beyond that described by Lortie’s apprenticeship of observation. LLE students’ experiences are also informed by the theory they are learning as part of their studies: theory about language teaching and SLA theory. Thus, students may experience the theory they are learning in an ELT program as it is put into practice in a language classroom.

Embedded LLE programs can enhance cognitive development, but as Ellis (2004) explains, “this experience can only be significant if it becomes available to teachers through a process of reflection” (p. 92). Reflection based on personal experience and grounded in theory results in a richer understanding, allowing students to “gain insights into the language learning process by reflecting upon their LLE and relating it to the SLA research literature” (Forman, 2015, p. 2). The goal is for ELT students to recognize for themselves the complexity of learning a new language and gain an understanding of “how languages differ at the levels of pronunciation, lexical meaning, syntax, pragmatics and cultural norms” (Ellis, 2004, p. 96). An awareness of language learning brought about by personal experience within a purposeful ELT classroom context creates an appreciation that goes beyond received knowledge in a traditional classroom. It allows students to experience the emotional aspects of language learning and provides an opportunity to recognize the role emotions may play for their own future English language students.

In defining language learning awareness, Ellis (2012) notes the importance of this lesson for ELT students: “Language learning awareness is the understanding of and empathy with the challenges faced by learners of an additional language, and I would argue that it is only achievable through direct experience and reflection upon that experience” (p. 15). This direct experience allows students to reflect upon and explore the realm of emotions inherent in language learning.

## Emotions in Language Learning

Language learning has been described as the result of “what goes on *inside* people... [and] [w]hat goes on *between* people” (Arnold, 2009, p. 145), with both describing the emotional side of learning. Scovel (2001) writes, “Emotion is the single most influential” (p. 125) of the components of SLA theory, although perhaps the least understood. Emotions in learning are often thought to be difficult to study because of their complexity, and because emotions are both highly individual and sometimes hidden. Nonetheless, the need to understand the influence of emotions in learning is creating a “growing shift in the field toward the treatment of emotion as a distinct topic of scholarly inquiry in its own right” (Prior, 2016, p. 3). Recognition of the importance of emotions more specifically in language learning is also increasing (Richards, 2015; Song, 2016; Prior, 2016), including in Mexico (Mendez Lopez, 2020; Lengeling, 2010).

Hargreaves (1998) provides the source of the word emotion: “The Latin origin of emotion is *emovere*: to move out or stir up. When people are emotional, they are moved by their feelings” (p. 835). This response to feelings is socially constructed but takes place internally, which Zembylas (2003) describes as “a psychological phenomenon that is ‘located’ in the individual” (p. 216). The complexity of this cognitive process is recognized by Carlyle and Woods’ (2002) explanation that emotions “link...feeling, thinking, and actions” (p. xiii). We use the term ‘emotion’ here but recognize that in the literature, affect is also used as “the more technical term” (Scovel, 2001, p. 119). Arnold (2009) writes, “The term affect refers essentially to the area of emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods and attitudes, which greatly influences our behavior” (p. 145). It is the behavioral influence, specifically on cognition, that is relevant for language learning research.

Emotions occur in all contexts (Zembylas, 2003) and produce a wide range of responses (Arnold, 2009; Prior, 2016). Within that range, prior

research has primarily focused on aspects such as motivation and anxiety (Scovel, 2001). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) conclude, “Perhaps the only thing about motivation most researchers would agree on is that it, by definition, concerns the *direction* and *magnitude* of human behaviour” (p. 4), meaning the why, how long, and how hard people will do something. Different types of motivation include integrative (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003), extrinsic and intrinsic (Noels, 2001), and future self-image (Dörnyei & Chen, 2013). Motivation is one of the widest areas of research about emotions in language learning, followed by anxiety (Horwitz, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Scovel (2001) describes anxiety as “a vague sense of unease” (p. 127), while Richards (2015) refers to worry and stress in identifying anxiety as “[o]ne of the most important affective factors” (p. 154). Prior research has generally focused on emotions within a classroom setting or resulting from the use of L2 outside of the classroom (Arnold, 2011; Horwitz, 2016; Richards, 2015).

As a result of COVID-19, researchers are recognizing the opportunity to examine student emotions during the pandemic. These studies generally apply questionnaires about student emotions using closed questions with a Likert scale, along with a few open-ended questions. By their nature, they do not reach an in-depth reflection relating emotions and learning to the individual learner. For example, Aristovnik et al. (2020) report the results of a large-scale study at the beginning of the pandemic in which data was collected from university students in 62 countries using a web-based survey and Likert scale for primarily closed-ended questions about what student life looked like during the pandemic. Their study includes statistical information about student emotions such as boredom, anxiety, and frustration, but it does not address the important role of reflection as it relates to emotions in learning.

More closely aligned with our study is an investigation into student emotions at a university

in Greece at the start of the pandemic by Karalis and Raikou (2020). Their participants were also student teachers, although they were not simultaneously studying a language. Data was collected using an online questionnaire and included six closed-ended questions using a Likert scale and seven open-ended questions. The authors' statistical analysis of the participants' emotional response to online learning produced categories such as relief, joy, curiosity, pleasure, enthusiasm, and disappointment. From this, they conclude that there is "good reason for the renewal and development of teaching and learning in the university context" (p. 492).

Other research, such as that reported by Pasaribu and Dewi (2021), includes student reflection. In this study, EFL students at a private university in Indonesia were asked to submit written reflections describing such things as how COVID-19 changed their lives, what and how they learned through online classes, how they felt about online classes, and what they did to prepare for final evaluation in their classes (p. 406). Their analysis of the data using appraisal theory to identify and quantify student emotions found that "online learning has offered the students...opportunities to exercise learner autonomy and enhance social engagement" (p. 420).

Finally, as graduate students in Australia during COVID-19, Chakma et al. (2021) created an online study group as a "facilitated space" (p. 37). They each wrote and shared "a retrospective narrative to reflect on what they had expected, thought or did before, during and after" (p. 44) their online study group sessions. In reporting on this experience, they identify themes which show the online space provided a better understanding of the process of writing, a self-awareness of their learning styles, and support in completing their graduate theses.

Coupling emotions with a worldwide pandemic provides opportunities to understand how students make sense of their LLE. Specifically, in this article we look at social construction of emotions

through student reflection from an imagined perspective during the time of COVID-19, and the research method selected to help us see and understand those emotions is described next.

## Method

Using a qualitative approach, this study views our students' narrated stories through a Vygotskian lens. The purpose of qualitative studies is to understand human experience by "attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). By recognizing the complexities and uncertainties involved in individual experiences, a qualitative paradigm allows us to "illuminate' the life circumstances of individuals and communities" (Squire et al., 2014, p. 74), thereby leading to a deeper understanding of the human experience in response to social phenomena.

Narrative inquiry as a methodology is well suited to understanding the participants' LLE during COVID-19. Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) describe stories of experience as "the core of any narrative research activity" (p. 373), and it is therefore through our students' stories that we seek to understand their experiences. The "living and telling, and re-living and re-telling" (Clandinin et al., 2013, p. xv) of their stories allows us to examine their emotions while learning a language during a worldwide pandemic.

Although our participants may have had shared learning experiences, they lived those experiences individually. As a methodology for exploring their individual experiences, narrative inquiry is therefore coherent with the Vygotskian perspective taken here as it recognizes the importance of the individual within a specific context and allows for the interplay of those distinctive perspectives.

The stories presented here come from guided reflective journals, as described in more detail below. Farrell (2013) explains that reflecting "means that teachers subject their own beliefs,



assumptions, and values about the teaching and learning to a critical analysis” (p. 33), but further clarifies that structured reflection is necessary to be effective. Such structure allows thinking to take form. According to Golombek and Klager (2019), “As thinking is externalised in utterances, in speaking or writing, it becomes an object of reflection, questioning, critique, rejection, elaboration and possibly transformation by ourselves or in collaboration with others” (p. 41). Guided journals are one means of providing structure to externalize our thinking. When guided to reflect on a specific social event, these narratives can reveal “how personal lives traverse social change” (Squire et al., 2013, p. 4). As described by Barkhuizen, the participants’ narratives help us make “connections to the macro-context” (Wilson, 2017, pp. 5–6) in order to see how they experience a social phenomenon such as COVID-19. With that goal in place, we began the process of collecting our students’ experiences within a narrative framework. Next, we introduce the participants within their academic context.

### Context and Participants

The context of this study is within a four-year BA in ELT program at a public university in central Mexico. The BA offers a series of courses over three semesters in which students enroll at a language school of their choice. Their individual LLE is the focus of an AR project conducted by the student within an SLA theoretical framework (Brown, 2014; Scovel, 2001) in coordination with their BA class. The participants in this study were in the first and third semesters of these courses when the university announced the suspension of face-to-face classes and the subsequent move to online learning due to COVID-19.

To be accepted into the BA, all students must have an academic proficiency in both Spanish and English, so students have already learned at least a second language before beginning their BA studies. During the three LLE classes, students complete individual AR projects based on their

own FL learning experience. AR encourages reflection and adjustments to teaching and learning through “a spiral or cycle of movements between action and research” (Burns, 2009, p. 290). It is something that some teachers do instinctively, but which can lead to continued professional growth when done purposefully and consciously. The stages within a cycle involve identifying a research issue, developing a plan of action to address the issue, implementing the plan, gathering data by observing the effects of the plan, reflecting on the data, modifying the plan, and then starting a new cycle until the researcher achieves their goal related to the identified research issue (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). The objective for our BA students is for them to have the experience of learning an FL from the perspective of an ELT student, to reflect on their own learning process based on SLA theory, and thereby gain a better appreciation of the complexities of language learning and teaching.

The BA program promotes a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach (Richards, 2015), and in the three LLE classes, CLT ideology is incorporated as a way of teaching by example. In the first semester, students have weekly classes with their BA teacher while also taking an FL class. They identify an AR question related to their own LLE and, throughout the semester, compile a portfolio including a reflective journal, FL class materials, and student-created didactic materials. In keeping with a CLT approach, classes are student-focused and experiential. Rather than learning through the use of language (Richards, 2015, p. 71), the BA students learn through their use of SLA theory. Students present assigned topics related to SLA (Scovel, 2001) as well as their individual AR projects. In the second and third semesters, students continue taking FL classes and attending the BA class, with ongoing presentations and group discussions. In addition to the reflective journal and other portfolio materials described above, in the second semester, students prepare academic papers specific to SLA theory related to their AR projects. Finally, during the third semester, students

complete an academic paper reporting on their AR project and analyzing their FL learning experience. Reflective journals are an integral part of the three LLE classes. They contain students' data for their AR projects as well as a number of guided journal entries intended to promote student reflection.

In this study, 29 students participated: 21 were enrolled in the first semester and eight in the third semester. Of those, five are men and 24 are women, and their age range was 20 to 43. All of the participants are fluent in English and Spanish, and most are Mexican nationals although two students grew up and went to school in the USA before moving to Mexico. While enrolled in the BA, 16 of the participants were already teaching English in a variety of contexts: public and private schools, urban and rural communities, and with different student levels and ages. These in-service teachers had teaching experience ranging from beginner to 12 years. The remaining 13 students were pre-service teachers who had not yet begun teaching. Although the students generally had a good grasp of technology prior to COVID-19, some relied on internet cafes or computers at the university as they did not have dependable access to the internet and computers in their homes.

As our university community ventured into the new reality caused by the global pandemic and teachers scrambled to adjust their semester plans and find resources for online learning, the students also struggled to secure computer and internet access that would allow them to finish the semester while locked down in their homes. Our BA class meetings transformed into online synchronous classes using Zoom, while students' FL classes either moved to similar synchronous platforms, various asynchronous platforms (e.g., email, Google classroom), or were cancelled entirely, depending on the language teachers' individual circumstances. Throughout this time, the students continued to keep their AR journals, and how those developed as a data collection tool for this study is discussed next.

### Data Collection and Analysis

One month into the new modality, the students' reflective journals were recognized to be a valuable resource to help us all, students and teachers alike, make meaning of this unprecedented experience. An added journal entry assignment gave students a space to reflect on their lived experience:

Consider a historical artifact that could represent your experience during this pandemic to a historian 100 years in the future. Artifacts are objects shaped by humans that are of historical interest. Examples include tools, pottery, metal objects, weapons, and items of personal adornments, such as jewelry or death masks. (modified from Strauss, 2020)

This journal prompt gave students the opportunity to reflect on their experience from an imagined perspective removed from their current environment. It placed them in the future, as a survivor of the coronavirus pandemic, anonymously communicating with an unknown future historian. In addition, by asking students to describe a historical artifact, it triggered their imagination and creativity. Moon (2006) encourages reflective writing as a means of gaining a deeper reflection and more meaningful understanding "by standing back from an event" (p. 162). With this guided journal, students were allowed to stand back from their immediate reality in order to gain a deeper level of reflection. These guided journal entries developed in response to our new reality and now provide a window into students' experiences as their lives were changing due to the worldwide pandemic.

The journals were submitted electronically at the end of the semester as part of the BA class portfolios. Once the students provided written consent to participate in this investigation, pseudonyms were assigned to ensure their anonymity. Those pseudonyms are used to identify the data in the discussion below. The guided journal entries were compiled and reviewed using thematic analysis (Barkhuizen, 2019). Both authors first worked individually to identify particular themes. Then working

together, they compared the emerging themes using a constant comparative method (Richards & Hemphill, 2018) to identify similarities and differences in the journal entries. The data was scrutinized again to correlate the emerging themes with the data. This individual and joint review helps to avoid researcher bias and maintain principles of submission to the data and emergence of themes (Holliday, 2007). The data was then organized according to the themes for further analysis. The themes which emerged are (1) the challenges faced, technological and societal, and (2) a roller-coaster of emotions, highs and lows.

## Results

The participants in this study are both FL learners and students in a BA in ELT program, which gives them an awareness of language learning based on their studied knowledge of theory. This perspective helped them unpack their lived experiential knowledge (Ellis, 2012) and offers a greater insight into their pandemic experiences. We begin by presenting data related to their challenges during the beginning stages of COVID-19.

### The Challenges Faced: Technological and Societal

Language learning changed suddenly when in-person classes were suspended due to COVID-19, moving from in-person to online or remote classrooms. Students' efforts to find and use the technological tools needed to stay connected to their teachers and classmates present a common theme in the data. In their journals, students wrote about the internet, their computers, cellphones, internet platforms, and applications as their choices of historical artifacts representing their experiences. As one student, Pati, explained, "If there are no technological tools, the learning process is detained. To be honest, I have the possibility to have both the internet and a computer, but some students do not have the same opportunity." Although Pati had the necessary tools, she recognized that some classmates did not and were being left behind.

Students found they were completely dependent on the internet and their computers or cellphones. In explaining her choice of historical artifact, Ana wrote:

A cellphone allows us to be in contact with our teachers, classmates, and our co-workers from home...I believe that without cellphones we would not be able to do a lot of the stuff that we have to do to keep going with the semester or with our jobs.

Although cellphones may have been familiar technology, online classes presented other new challenges. Leo described his experience:

This period of time has been based a lot on learning new stuff related to teaching and learning due to this period of covid-19. I have used a lot of platforms to develop my teaching and some apps to practice my learning... These platforms and their functionality must be developed and learned to use properly.

To accompany this new use of familiar tools, students were challenged to learn new skills to continue their studies. Zoom® was a common selection of one of these tools. Yolanda wrote, "I had to download an unknown app called Zoom... This app will go down in history for being known as the app that saved many communication connections around the world for many different purposes." Although the participants who chose Zoom as their historical artifact found that it made it possible for them to attend online classes, they also voiced connectivity issues as an obstacle. As Yolanda further described, "Sometimes we would freeze online" while Elena noted there were "problems with the internet connection and with the lack of social interaction." Technology allowed students to continue their studies, but it did not provide a complete substitution for their traditional classroom experience.

Even with the practical function of technology in online learning, students found ways to personalize their experience, as Samuel demonstrated in his journal entry:

The artifact that would be representative from this time would be a phone stand crafted by my brother during this pandemic. It is made of ceramic material...

I even wrote the words “coronavirus edition” on it, so it is a very interesting artifact to be analyzed 100 years in the future.

Our students managed to integrate technology into their studies as well as their personal lives, making connection with school, friends, family, and the outside world possible, while still maintaining their individuality. The journal responses show how students faced challenges such as learning new technology while dealing with limited access to WiFi, computers, and cellphones to continue their education and work. The data also reveals the effect of technology on their identity needs. Although there is much research about student voices, a search for similar findings related to student identity and the use of technology for remote learning during COVID-19 indicates that this is an area which needs more study.

The participants’ selection of artifacts demonstrates an ability and willingness to adapt to a new learning modality, to learn new skills necessary for the transition to online learning, and to change their way of thinking about learning. The data reveals a determination and resourcefulness in overcoming challenges during COVID-19, and a desire to maintain social contact along with individuality in an otherwise isolating situation. In the following section, we see how facing these difficulties also carried some strong emotional responses.

### **A Roller-Coaster of Emotions: Highs and Lows**

When COVID-19 spread worldwide, our students reacted with an array of emotions depending on their foreign language class experience, personal lives, and individual contexts. The data reveals a roller-coaster of negative and positive emotions. Elena described feeling enthusiastic at first and how that then changed:

At first, Zoom was the new thing. Then, it was the phase in which we were enthusiastic about it, as we were working from home in our pajamas. It was innovative and it was even stimulating to use this platform

to work or to take classes. Then, we discovered its disadvantages.

Students had to isolate at home when in-person classes were suspended. Elena embraced a new mode of learning from home, but her positive emotions at the beginning changed as she experienced emotional lows. Anita wrote about a set of flashcards she created for her FL class using emojis to represent a vocabulary of emotions:

Although I was feeling happy for being with my family, I was also sad because of not going to class and other personal situations. I was angry because I could not manage my time. I was relaxed because I was home with my loved ones. These flashcards hold and represent my feelings during this pandemic.

The data demonstrates her wide range of emotions during COVID-19, the highs and lows. Regarding her emotional responses, Edith similarly described how the pandemic affected her life: “This pandemic changes our lives and routines. We become more conscious about the smallest things that we do. It is hard to celebrate birthdays without hugs from the people you love.” Edith described how COVID-19 caused people to “become prisoners,” which she feared affected their mental health. In describing an artifact to represent her experience, she wrote:

If I have to keep an object to explain this situation it should be a facemask because it represents the protection but at the same time the silence, there are no people talking in the coffee shops, streets, schools, etc. Everything is quiet. It does not matter how many times you are screaming, telling someone to stop this situation, nobody seems to hear. Human beings are dying, and we still are in silence, far away from the people we love.

Social activities that were once part of her life are now different, making her feel imprisoned. Edith described being both protected and silenced at the same time, and the feeling that no one was listening.

María similarly wrote about her emotional response to facemasks, demonstrating how her emotions evolved:

The few times I have been out I feel a mixture of emotions. For example, fear of not knowing what will happen next; amazement to see so many people wearing facemasks and not leaving their normal activities. And the most curious: I feel like I am in one of those zombie or epidemic movies. Never in my life did I imagine that we would live in a situation like this, but here we are and an artifact as simple as a mask has changed my life and that of other people.

While reflecting about the changes in her life outside of the online classroom, the facemask represented a needed change to continue her life, leaving her with the feeling that she was in a horror movie. This artifact represented her experience, and from the data, we recognize that anxiety was high on the list of emotions. Her choice of artifact shows how out-of-class emotions during COVID-19 impacted learning.

Students described their emotional struggles when dealing with issues in their home lives, their studies, and other contexts, and how they responded to those challenges. Juanita expressed her feelings about moving from her small hometown back to the university over 100 km away, leaving her family behind:

A modem because I had to come back to Guanajuato to finish my classes. A modem because it represents the inequality that exists in the world. Because some students are struggling with their classes because they do not have internet, and they do not have the money to rent internet because they lost their jobs and it is more important to have food on their table. My mom lost her job, my cousins, uncles, and aunts. I know how my little cousins that are studying secondary are struggling with their homework.

Here, her use of the word “inequality” indicates the unfairness she felt because she had to leave her family, because of her struggles with the internet, and due to her family’s problems because of the pandemic. A modem represents a stressful part of Juanita’s life as she was torn between being a student and a family member because of COVID-19. The boundaries of her emotions spread to other parts of her life and to her loved ones. How Juanita responded to these struggles reveals her motivation to continue her studies despite the hardship of leaving her home and

family during COVID-19. Susana's choice of artifact also illustrates her emotional response to learning a language during the pandemic:

The coronavirus period has been pretty exhausting in many ways. In this context (FL class) I think it ruined my first experience with a teacher that I liked and that I was truly learning from. I only had two weeks of class so it’s sad. However, that’s not important if we see health as the main aspect... I thank God my family and I are fine and that we get to spend time together. I think I would save a small puzzle piece... I think that is a proof of patience and something that many families are doing (puzzles) during this period.

She mentions emotions such as “exhausting” and “sad” and describes feeling demotivated about her learning experience. Susana’s use of “a small puzzle piece” is a metaphor revealing how she made sense of her experience during the coronavirus pandemic and what she gained from it: an understanding of the importance of health, patience, and her family. By focusing on a puzzle piece, Susana shows that although she may have felt demotivated, her experience outside of the virtual classroom encouraged her to gain perspective and thereby grow and mature during COVID-19.

In addition to selecting artifacts that demonstrated their emotional roller-coaster, students also described how the pandemic affected their growth and development. As Rosa wrote, a stone illustrated how she changed as a person:

I think learning during this pandemic time is hard like stone, but I also think it has helped me to get sharper at being self-sufficient about my own learning. I have been able to think about my needs and adapt to the situation. This way, even if it is difficult, I’m getting sharper.

The phrase “hard like stone” shows her recognition that she developed into a more “self-sufficient” or autonomous student. Rosa felt motivated to become more attentive and flexible as a learner.

Other data similarly shows how students matured as they became more reflective, as Beto expressed here:

My experience during this pandemic was productive for me because it changed me. It provided me time

to think and know what things are important and what things are not. I can relate this experience with the first wheel made by humans because this experience marked a change in my life. It made me a better person for myself, to focus on the important things in life and throw away the things that are not important. I am not the same person anymore.

He shows a deep level of thought regarding how he changed as a person. Beto associated his growth with the “first wheel made by humans,” a simple invention that caused changes and advancement in society. Beto’s experience during COVID-19 motivated him to mature and grow as an individual.

From the data, one can observe how the students’ challenges, both online and out-of-class, created emotional responses that affected their learning process. Unlike prior research that concentrated on emotions in the classroom or from the use of L2 (Arnold, 2011; Horwitz, 2016; Richards, 2015), the unique experience of a worldwide pandemic reveals the importance of “general” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) emotions in learning, no matter the source. Inspired by the impact of COVID-19, recent studies have identified a similar array of “general” emotions through questionnaires (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Karalis & Raikou, 2020). While such studies present relevant results, they do not focus on emotions in learning or techniques for promoting student reflection. The guided journal technique used here shows how students overcame anxiety caused by COVID-19 and were motivated to succeed as students. It reveals a level of reflection and recognition by the students of their growing autonomy, independence, and responsibility as learners. This is an unprecedented experience, and as it is ongoing, relevant literature is continuously developing. The drastic and sudden changes in education highlight the impact of emotions in language learning, and the intensity of emotions experienced during the time of COVID-19, as described here, contribute to our appreciation of emotions in the learning process.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The data presented in this article reveals the obstacles confronted by BA in ELT students while studying a foreign language during the time of COVID-19 and the emotional responses those challenges evoked—anxiety largely overcome by motivation. It also demonstrates that through the use of guided journals, students were able to reach a deeper level of reflection and share their emotional growth in response to the trials they faced. Not only did the students meet their class requirements, but they also became more autonomous, independent, and responsible. Through their guided reflective journal entries, students discovered their own resilience in the time of COVID-19. The use of narrative in a guided journal prompt gave students a space to reflect on their experiences during the initial moments of the coronavirus pandemic from an imagined perspective in the future as survivors of COVID-19, communicating anonymously with an unknown future historian. This task tapped into their imagination and creativity, encouraging a deeper reflection. As Vygotsky (1994) describes, revealing and understanding emotions as part of the learning process is relevant for all learners.

Our students’ emotional responses to a social phenomenon were examined using Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Building on prior research about emotions and learning, we viewed student emotions in a previously unexplored learning environment: a worldwide pandemic. The results illustrate the importance of emotions in learning not only from the language classroom or L2 use (Arnold, 2011; Horwitz, 2016; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Richards, 2015), but from any source. For this research, a reflective technique within a facilitated space was created to explore emotions and learning. Guided reflective journals from an imagined perspective allowed us to see the array of emotions students experienced because of COVID-19 and appreciate the impact on their learning. This technique revealed how the participants made sense of what was happening

to them and how this sense-making also influenced their relationships with technology, family, culture, and socio-economic issues. By fostering reflection, students were able to recognize and appreciate their own growth. Instead of being used to see “how the past is related to the present” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 68), the novel approach to narrative inquiry used here provided an understanding of the present through an imagined future perspective.

These results may be of interest to language teachers in other parts of the world, as well as to teacher educators, coordinators, and program designers. From this study, we recommend that language teachers foster student reflection about their emotions and language learning. Guided journals can create space for our students that encourages such reflection. Use of an imagined place and time sparks student creativity and provides a different perspective, yielding a new approach for student reflection. This unique way of journaling through narrative presents a means of uncovering and making sense by encouraging students to “stand back” (Moon, 2006) from an event. From this stance, students can appreciate their emotions at a deeper level and recognize their own growth. Creating a facilitated space for reflection makes student emotions visible for teachers as well as for the students themselves, leading to a better understanding of the learning process described by Vygotsky’s term *perezhivanie*. Studying students’ emotional responses to a social phenomenon such as COVID-19 not only helps explain the immediate emotional effects on their learning from that event, but also allows us to envision a future in which we may face other social phenomena and to recognize the importance of shedding light on emotions in the learning process more generally.

This study was limited by three factors. First, data collection might have included interviews or focus groups to allow additional insight. Second, although the timing of the study was favorable because it occurred at the beginning of COVID-19, students may have been hampered by time constraints

as they were required to submit their journals before the semester ended. They may have reached a deeper level of reflection without that deadline. Third, this study did not include students without internet and access to computers or cellphones, and so does not represent their experiences or provide information about their emotions and learning during COVID-19. In conclusion, coupling emotions with learning during a social phenomenon is relevant and warrants further research. This leaves open the potential for more exploration of emotions and learning for students in other contexts, as well as those without the resources necessary to take part in online classes.

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# MALAYSIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' AGENCY IN USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES DURING THE PANDEMIC: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

AGENCIA EN EL USO DE TECNOLOGÍAS DIGITALES EN DOCENTES DE INGLÉS EN MALASIA DURANTE LA PANDEMIA: UNA INVESTIGACIÓN NARRATIVA

L'AGENTIVITÉ PARMİ LES ENSEIGNANTS D'ANGLAIS EN MALAISIE À PROPOS DE L'UTILISATION DES TECHNOLOGIES NUMÉRIQUES PENDANT LA PANDÉMIE : UNE ENQUÊTE NARRATIVE

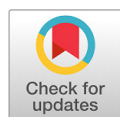
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## ABSTRACT

With the closure of schools due to imposed lockdowns in many parts of the world, teachers had to make a rapid transition from teaching in physical classrooms to online teaching, even though they had little to no experience teaching online prior to the pandemic. Adopting a narrative inquiry approach, this study aims to explore the factors that influence Malaysian English language teachers' professional agency in adapting to online teaching. Data were collected via interviews with ten secondary school teachers from rural and urban schools. The findings show how factors such as teachers' perceptions of the affordances of digital tools and existing support structures influence teachers' enactment of agency in online teaching and learning. They also demonstrate teachers' agentic potential to adapt their lessons to suit their learners' needs. These findings suggest the need for teacher professional development programs to recognize teacher agency in the design of future training modules. This involves providing a differentiated training curriculum that can support and sustain language teachers' development organically by taking into consideration their existing technology skills, teaching experiences and work contexts.

**Keywords:** Teacher agency; professional development; ICT; English teachers; narrative inquiry; online teaching.

## RESUMEN

Con el cierre de los establecimientos educativos por causa de las cuarentenas impuestas en muchos lugares del mundo, los docentes se vieron obligados a hacer una transición acelerada de la enseñanza presencial en aulas físicas a la docencia en línea, aun cuando tuvieran poca o nula experiencia con ese tipo de docencia antes

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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

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de la pandemia. Adoptando un enfoque de investigación narrativa, el presente estudio se propone explorar los factores que influyen en la agencia profesional de los docentes de inglés malayos en su adaptación a la docencia en línea. Se recolectaron datos por medio de entrevistas con diez docentes de educación básica secundaria de escuelas rurales y urbanas. Los resultados muestran cómo factores tales como las percepciones de los docentes sobre las posibilidades de las herramientas digitales y las estructuras de apoyo existentes influyen en el ejercicio de su agencia en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje en línea. También demuestran el potencial agentivo de los docentes para adaptar sus clases a las necesidades de los estudiantes. Estos resultados sugieren la necesidad de crear programas de desarrollo profesional que reconozcan la agencia del docente en el diseño de futuros módulos de formación. Esto implica brindar un currículo de capacitación diferenciado capaz de soportar y sostener de manera orgánica el desarrollo de los docentes de lengua tomando en cuenta sus destrezas tecnológicas previas, sus experiencias en la docencia y los contextos laborales.

**Palabras clave:** agencia docente; desarrollo profesional; TIC; docentes de inglés; investigación narrativa; enseñanza en línea.

### RÉSUMÉ

Avec la fermeture des établissements d'enseignement en raison des quarantaines imposées dans de nombreuses régions du monde, les enseignants ont été contraints de faire une transition accélérée de l'enseignement présentiel dans des salles de classe à l'enseignement en ligne, même s'ils n'avaient que peu ou nulle expérience dans ce genre d'enseignement avant la pandémie. Adoptant une approche de recherche narrative, la présente étude vise à explorer les facteurs qui influencent l'agence professionnelle des enseignants d'anglais malaisiens dans leur adaptation à l'enseignement en ligne. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen d'entrevues avec dix enseignants d'enseignement secondaire dans des écoles rurales et urbaines. Les résultats montrent comment des facteurs tels que les perceptions des enseignants sur les possibilités des outils numériques et les structures de soutien existantes influencent l'exercice de l'agence des enseignants dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage en ligne. Ils démontrent également le potentiel agent des enseignants pour adapter leurs cours aux besoins des élèves. Cela suggère la nécessité de créer des programmes de développement professionnel qui reconnaissent l'agence de l'enseignant dans la conception des futurs modules de formation. Cela implique de proposer des programmes de formation différenciée capable de supporter organiquement le développement des enseignants de langues, compte tenu de leurs compétences technologiques antérieures, de leurs expériences dans l'enseignement et de leurs contextes de travail.

**Mots clés :** agentivité de l'enseignant ; développement professionnel ; TIC ; enquête narrative ; enseignants d'anglais ; enseignement en ligne.

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the education sector in various ways. With the closure of schools due to imposed lockdowns in many parts of the world, teachers had to make a rapid transition from teaching in physical classrooms to online teaching (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Kaden, 2020; Trust et al., 2020). A majority of teachers, however, were not prepared to transition to online teaching having had little to no experience teaching online prior to the pandemic (Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020). The sudden shift triggered the need for teachers to quickly learn how to use new technologies to teach remotely (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Daniel, 2020). Examples of implementation can be seen in an emerging number of studies reporting the use of digital technologies such as video conferencing tools in schools for English language teaching (Cheung, 2021; Singh et al., 2020) and social messaging tools (Budianto & Arifani, 2021). Although these studies provide us with a better understanding of how language teachers adopted digital tools for online teaching, little is understood about how they exercised their professional agency in using such tools for language teaching.

Teacher agency depends highly on the teacher's individual qualities in terms of professional knowledge and skills (Biesta et al., 2015); and the pandemic has seen teachers across the world attempting to upskill themselves to adjust to the requirements of online teaching, including teachers in English as foreign language context in Malaysia. The Malaysian Ministry of Education introduced various initiatives as part of the national effort towards digitizing education, including most recently Google Classroom<sup>®</sup> as a standard digital platform to be used in all primary and secondary Malaysian schools. However, the adoption of new technologies among Malaysian teachers has been varied due to factors such as lack of access to internet connectivity, lack of facilities, and geographical locations among others (see Zainal & Zainuddin, 2020). The first Movement

Control Order (MCO) imposed by the Malaysian Government, which had seen nationwide school closures from March 18 until March 31 (and then extended to May 13), has forced teachers to learn to use Google Classroom<sup>®</sup> including the integrated video conferencing tool, Google Meet<sup>®</sup>. To explore these issues, the current study aims to examine Malaysian English language teachers' agency in using digital technologies.

The current study seeks to understand how teachers' professional agency is enacted in their learning of new technologies to deliver instruction from an ecological perspective (Biesta et al., 2015). It also presents an opportunity to closely examine the ways teachers adapt to new modes of working and whether this can be efficiently sustained. Another issue of concern is that this scenario has the potential to aggravate the inequity between certain populations of teachers and learners. For instance, teachers who are from rural schools may find it more difficult than teachers in urban schools to implement information communication technologies (ICT), and this consequently would affect the quality of learners' learning. Arguably, there is a call for "humanizing pedagogies" to online teaching to overcome the issue of inequity (Mehta & Aguilera, 2020). However, at present it is unclear how teacher agency is enacted in response to the issue of inequity, and through this study, a more cohesive understanding of the structural and cultural conditions that support or constraint teachers' agency in using digital tools during the pandemic can be obtained. The findings of this study will also contribute to our understanding of how teachers perceive the post-pandemic role of technology in teaching and learning.

## Theoretical Framework

With forced closure of schools during the current pandemic, teachers had to adopt new ways of teaching including using digital tools such as videoconferencing technologies to deliver instruction. Related literature to technology used

in language classroom and teacher agency are reviewed in this section.

### Online Teaching and Learning

With the availability of videoconferencing technologies, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, among others, synchronous remote teaching and learning is made possible provided that there is internet connectivity.

Among the advantages that have been highlighted in using the video conferencing technologies is that they provide an increased sense of equity (Carville & Mitchell, 2000). Educational equity, according to The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2012), highlights that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background should not be obstacles to achieving full educational potential. The perspective of equality should also cut across learners in the rural and urban areas. However, access to technology especially amongst learners in the rural areas is an obstacle in bridging the gap. Nevertheless, it is noted that educational use of video conferencing has been more established in higher education compared to mainstream schools (see Lawson et al., 2010). The initial uses of videoconferencing technologies in schools tended to be “isolated projects” and were commonly affected by technical problems making it difficult to explore their pedagogical potentials (Lawson et al., 2010, p.303).

The established research literature on video conferencing in the field of computer assisted language learning (CALL), although mainly conducted in the context of higher education, provides some insights into its role in second language learning. Apart from transferring the lecture style of teaching into an online environment, some of these studies have shown that videoconferencing can potentially be used in interactive ways. Wang's (2006) study on university students' learning Chinese using videoconferencing technology has shown that meaningful interaction can be built into online activities where this can lead to

negotiation of meaning and language acquisition. Hampel and Stickler (2012) found that the use of video conferencing can promote multimodal communication in language learning. However, to assume that schoolteachers are immediately able to use tools such as video conferencing in interactive ways is rather premature. The pandemic has clearly highlighted the need to further explore the skills and competencies needed for online teaching. As pointed out by Egbert (2020), teachers tend to depend on teacher-directed materials consisting of multiple-choice questions and drill-based activities given that they are not too difficult to put together and require little teacher support.

The existing literature has highlighted different types of skills needed for language teachers to effectively teach online. Hampler and Stickler (2012), for example, proposed a skills pyramid where each skill is built on the mastery of the previous one. They argue that teachers should start with developing basic ICT skills. This is followed by developing specific technical competence for the software, understanding the limitations and the capabilities of the technology, promoting online socialization, promoting communicative competence, applying creativity and choice, and finally, adapting to the teacher's own style.

Although these are clearly important skills that language teachers need to master, they are not without criticisms. Online socialization among learners is important for promoting communication in learning in an online environment; however, Compton (2009) suggests that online socialization through learner-learner interaction should not be viewed as the only method to promote language acquisition. Understanding how to conduct online teaching is therefore clearly important. To address the urban-rural disparities, it is important that teachers are able to apply appropriate remote teaching strategies that consider learners' contexts. In the context of Malaysia, teachers, especially in rural areas, need to consider several context-related factors that influence the appropriacy of technological tools (i.e., the internet connection and the socioeconomic background of the learners).

## Teacher Agency and Professional Development

Teacher agency can be viewed from the ecological perspective, as proposed by Priestley et al. (2015). While teacher agency was previously viewed as individual teachers' capability to take action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), the ecological model of teacher agency presents agency as being influenced by a configuration of temporal and relational factors. In other words, the model provides insight into how the teachers' experience and environment contribute to their achievement of agency. It is suggested that teachers' achievement of agency may be affected by the following three dimensions: iterational, projective, and practical-evaluative. The iterational dimension entails the role of thoughts and actions accumulated from the past that form patterns that affect present activities. The projective dimension includes aspirations, both short term and long term, that influence one's actions in relation to the possible trajectories of one's future. The practical-evaluative dimension is about the ability of the actor in making decisions based on the alternatives available, considering the cultural, structural, and material factors that surround an actor's present situation. These aspects could also be enabling or constraining factors or resources. The iterational and projective elements may be referred to in one's decision making. This, in turn, allows possibilities for one to not only sustain one's prior practices but also to modify them. Leijen et al. (2020) expanded on the ecological model of teacher agency to demonstrate how teacher agency can be achieved through components such as teachers' professional competence, structural and cultural context, and professional purpose. They also propose that different types of teacher reflections have the potential to strengthen teachers' agency.

Other scholars have highlighted the importance of teachers' working environment. Jenkins (2020) suggested that contextual influences such as school leadership, teacher relationships with others (such as leaders and colleagues), school operational practices, and culture and personal motivation affected

teacher agency. Her study found that teachers' agency is manifested as proactively, reactively, and passively depending on the contextual factors. However, adopting a different perspective, Oolbekkink-Marchand et al. (2017) argue that teachers' professional agency is a form of teacher leadership when they actively make use of their professional space. They set forth that teachers "evaluate their agentic space and decide how to act within that space," and they define evaluation of space "as teachers' perceived space and to teachers' achievement of agency as the exploitation of space" (p. 38). Others such as Halvorsen et al. (2019) found that teacher agency is shaped by their perceived professional space.

These recent studies highlight the importance of examining the mediating aspect of professional space and values in studies of teacher agency. This is especially crucial given that teachers' professional space is no longer defined by their physical workplace (the school setting) but rather the digital space in light of the pandemic.

### Teacher Agency in the Time of the Pandemic

Several studies exploring teacher agency during the emergency remote teaching have emerged in recent months. Thumvichit (2021) drew on teachers' responses to a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to identify teachers' positioning and agentic actions. The results suggest that despite the many constraints that prevented them from exercising other important responsibilities, the teachers maintained their positioning as being professionally responsible for students' learning outcomes. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020) adopted the PEAT model (Dicte, 2019) in examining teacher agency. They used a survey to analyze teachers' responses according to the following dimensions: Pedagogical, Ethical, Attitudinal and Technical. Their preliminary findings based on data obtained from Norwegian and US teachers yield some insights into how teachers exercised their agency in the early days of school

closure. Most of the teachers' reflections were focused on the technical and pedagogical dimensions as opposed to the ethical dimension. Teachers shared their reflections on learning to use new tools and how to teach online but not so much on ethical issues of "privacy, copyright and source criticism when teaching online" (p. 243). Nevertheless, despite having to quickly shift to the online teaching mode, teachers showed positive attitudes.

An implication of Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020) on teacher education is the need for more modelling of online and blended learning environments to prepare teachers for remote teaching. Another implication is for teachers to be exposed to teacher training content that emphasise the affordances of a specific tool in teaching online. Findings of research on the use of video-conferencing in schools also appear to echo this finding. Its use is more likely to be successful when its implementation is coupled with curriculum considerations instead of guided by the technology alone (Smyth & Fay, 1994). However, in situations where technology is not available, it is important to find out how teachers exercise their agency in ensuring that their students are able to access education remotely.

## Method

The two main questions that drive the study are: (1) What are the factors that influence and constrain their professional agency in adapting to online teaching? and (2) How do Malaysian English language teachers' exercise of professional agency affect their professional development in online teaching?

### Participants

Ten secondary school English teachers from both East and West Malaysia participated in the study on a voluntary basis. All participants were women. With the exception of one teacher who has a degree in Business Admin with a diploma in Education, all teachers have a bachelor's degree in teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). All of the teachers

have English language teaching experience ranging from five to 20 years. They teach a mixture of form levels ranging from Form 2 to Form 6 (ages 14-18) students. The researchers contacted the participants and informed them of the particulars of the study, including the purpose of the study, the activities during the interviews as well as the research in general and how much time was required.

### Context of the Study

Four teachers are teaching in rural schools in four different states in Malaysia, and four are in suburban schools in Selangor, Johor, Melaka, and Cyberjaya (See Table 1). All 10 schools are government funded day schools; however, one is a partial day school and another school is under the Trust School Programme, a public-private partnership in education initiated by the Ministry of Education (MoE). It is important to note that the infrastructure for schools under this program is similar to day schools. They, however, are assisted by Leap-Ed Sdn Bhd., a private agency selected by MoE to train and oversee the collaborative teaching and learning in classrooms. Another teacher is currently teaching in one of the schools that was piloted under an initiative introduced by the Malaysian Government in the 1990s to reform the teaching learning processes in schools to prepare learners for the age of Information Technology (the Smart School Initiative). One teacher (Trisha) is teaching in Miri, a coastal city in north-eastern Sarawak. The main languages are Iban, an indigenous language, and Sarawak Malay, a variety of Standard Malay language. Her students live in longhouses (communal houses built on stilts where several apartments are built under the same roof) and most parents are farmers.

### Data Collection

Data collected consisted of students narratives and interviews.

### Narratives

In the current study, narratives were collected through field texts from two sources, including



**Table 1** Background of Teachers and Context of the Study

N.º	Teacher	Experience	Location of school	Type of School
1	Azrin	Over 20 years	Klang (Urban)	Day
2	Trisha	Over 20 years	Miri (Rural)	Day
3	Salina	Over 20 years	Taiping (Rural)	Day
4	Ema	Over 20 years	Bandar Melaka (Urban)	Day (Missionary)
5	Liza	Over 20 years	Cyberjaya (Urban)	Day (Trust School Programme)
6	Shahida	Over 20 years	Tangkak (Rural)	Day (Partial Boarding)
7	Nora	20 years	Gombak (Urban)	Day (smart school)
8	Sherry	20 years	Kuala Langat (Rural)	Day
9	Afidah	6 years	Pasir Gudang (Urban)	Day
10	Alana	5 years	Pasir Gudang (Urban)	Day

individual in-depth interviews. Narrative inquiry helps discover the underlying meaning of the teachers' actions through the story telling of their experiences. This approach is very much rooted in the philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey but was made known by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a methodology to describe personal stories of teachers. Narrative inquiry provides the participants a platform to share their views and augment voice through imparting their real-life experiences without having any constraints or fear. To achieve this, the researcher-participant relationship is best to be an active one where researchers need to “continually discuss the participant’s stories with the participant and reflect on the personal, social and political background” (Wang & Geale, 2015, p. 197). Wang and Geale (2015) also highlighted that this approach is not interested primarily in the facts or truth of the accounts given by the participants but rather the underlying meaning. The stories constructed by the participants illuminate the intricacy of the event as well as beliefs that are not articulated verbally but are most often constructed through actions.

*Interviews*

After obtaining consent from the participants, ten interviews were conducted online as the Movement Control Order (MCO) period was still in effect.

This prevented any crossing of districts and states to conduct face-to-face interviews. Each interview took between 1 hour 30 minutes and 2 hours according to the most convenient time for the participants. As narrative researchers, we let the participants talk about their experiences without much interruption. The interviews were carried out mainly in English, however, there are some parts of the interaction where the participants were more comfortable using the Malay language, especially when sharing their emotions. The questions in the interview were not limited to the interview prompts which were prepared prior to the session. Throughout the interview sessions, the researchers adhered to the best of their ability to Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) principles of facilitating an interview: the use of open-ended questions, avoiding *Why* questions because these questions can “encourage intellectualization and can be threatening” and following up by using respondents’ ordering and phrasing.

Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the study employed three aspects of the narrative approach: Interaction, continuity, and situation. Using this framework, the interviewers analyze the story of the personal experiences of the participants’ interactions with other people. In the current study, the interview questions focused more on the Continuity aspect, which involved

participants' experience in the past, present, and future. Open-ended questions were used, as this method of inquiry is a "way of initiating a research conversation that reflects dynamic and organic dialogical processes" (Etherington & Bridges, 2011). The researchers began with the participants' teaching background and the background of the school and students. The teachers then shared their experiences in the rest of the interviews. In order for the researchers to prevent any preconceived ideas, meanings were negotiated with the participants. In checking and validating their understanding of the experiences shared by the participants, the researchers continually reconfirmed the stories with the participants.

### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by both researchers. The interviews were then transcribed and compared with the notes taken by the researchers during the interview. It is important to note that there were some instances where the reviewer used Malay especially in expressing their emotions. The data from both sources were then processed thematically. The study adapted Richard and Morse's (2012) coding approach. They identified three types of coding, which are descriptive, topical, and analytic. Based on the questions asked as well as the context, main ideas are highlighted and categorized into themes.

### Findings and Discussion

The aim of this study was to see how teachers negotiate professionalism through their agency in an online classroom because teacher agency is key to teachers' capacity in enhancing student learning, ongoing professional development, and school improvement (Toom et al., 2015). This section attempts to answer the first research question which is: What are the factors that influence teachers' professional agency in adapting to online teaching?

#### Teaching Strategies and ICT Use Pre-Pandemic

Examining the teachers' discourses on their ICT competence prior to the pandemic and the types

of formal training they had received related to online teaching provides us with a better understanding of how teachers exercise their agency in response to the requirements of remote teaching. Teachers also acknowledged that the context plays a role in both teachers and students' access to the internet and technology. According to the teachers, their schools were supportive of ICT initiatives even prior to the pandemic. This somehow helped teachers to prepare for online teaching. The schools are generally equipped with infrastructure such as a computer lab and a multimedia room with LCD screen. However, despite the availability of such infrastructure, they did not necessarily use ICT regularly.

Nora, who teaches at an urban school, recalled that the use of ICT in her classroom prior to the MCO was limited to showing videos to her students in a dedicated room in the library, which is equipped with LCD projectors. Her students' use of ICT was mainly for presentation purposes.

Afidah stated that she did not use the ICT lab in her school because teachers had to book it in advance, and there were teachers of other subjects who would also want to use the lab. According to her, although teachers can bring their own LCD projector and laptop to their classes and set them up themselves, this would be a hassle if there are many classes in one day. She said that she would only use ICT once a month prior to the pandemic.

Salina, who teaches at a rural school, noted that the environment of the school is supportive of the government initiatives to promote digital technologies in teaching and learning. Although the school is not considered an urban school, in terms of ICT facilities, the school is well-equipped with an ICT laboratory and the Digital Classroom, a dedicated classroom which has an Internet connection and a television that can be connected to the computer. Despite this, she did not use ICT regularly in her teaching prior to the pandemic. Her use was restricted to showing videos in her teaching, and she would usually bring her own speakers to the classroom.

### Teacher Training on ICT Literacy

The interviews revealed that teachers' ICT literacy skills can be attributed to formal training and informal training. Formal training is programs initiated by the Ministry of Education or agencies selected by the ministry.

According to Trisha, the training prior to the pandemic included introducing teachers to the use of Google Classroom®. Following the training, teachers in her school were encouraged to explore Google Classroom® for teaching. Teachers in her school were already using it but not regularly, and they are already competent in using Google Classroom®. Although Trisha had used the internet before to search for materials, the move to online teaching was challenging. She stated that "when it comes to online learning, I thought it's quite a big challenge for me... it's like starting from zero."

Similarly, prior to the MCO, Nora did not know how to use video conferencing tools for teaching remotely. Although she attended a training session provided by *Pusat Kegiatan Guru* (PKG) Gombak on how to use Google Classroom® prior to the MCO, it did not prepare her for the use of Google Meet® as the training only introduced teachers to the basic functions of Google Classroom®. *Pusat Kegiatan Guru* (PKG) is a unit under the Education Technology Division and is responsible for providing teachers with professional development programs including ICT training. The formal training provided by the PKG Gombak on how to use Google Meet® enhanced her skills on using video conferencing tools for teaching. Her online teaching skills were further strengthened by joining many courses and webinars voluntarily, including the ones organized by other PKGs. The teacher demonstrated an enactment of agency by making an active choice to join formal but non-compulsory training, even that offered by PKGs of other districts to upgrade her skills and competencies in online teaching.

### *Informal Training in ICT Skills*

The teachers' discourses reveal the enactment of their agency in terms of developing themselves

professionally are not only by attending formal training on online teaching. Teachers have reported that they learn about how to embed technology into their own online on their own. The importance of social learning and training conditions that contribute to professional agency has been emphasized by Vähäsantanen et al. (2017). Aspects such as peer-learning and community learning are also reported by the teachers.

### *Self-Learning*

Azrin acknowledged that the development in using technology in the classroom during the emergency online learning is very much an individual initiative. Salina attributed her ability to use Google Meet® to teach online as a result of self-learning. As Salina noted, "YouTube actually helps a lot. At the moment we have Google classroom® and so on. I learned mostly from YouTube®." She learned how to insert video links to Google Forms® from watching YouTube videos. Sherry also explained that she learned how to use Google Form®, Padlet®, Wordwall®, and LiveWorksheets® on her own.

### *Learning from Peers*

The teachers in this study attributed their learning to the existing support structure in schools in the form of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) program, introduced by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The PLC initiative serves as an important platform in promoting teacher competence in ICT use. We note that the teachers participate in knowledge sharing sessions with their peers. It was during the MCO that Salina developed her competence in using Google Classroom®. During one of the PLC sessions, she stated that she learned how to use Google Meet® to record her lessons. The PLC meetings provided opportunities for her to learn from other teachers such as how to use the social messaging tool, Telegram, to carry out quizzes. Liza also said that she learned how to use new apps for teaching from her colleagues. She explained that that "we found out about a new app-the other day Pair Deck... the teacher then shared

with the panel”. She also said that they would keep on sharing any information about new apps via their department WhatsApp® group.

*Learning from Communities of Practice*

Apart from learning from colleagues, the teachers also revealed that their learning occurred from joining social media groups that connect them to the community of teachers in Malaysia. Salina stated that she improved her knowledge on how to use ICT for teaching and learning when she joined a Telegram channel, *E-didik*, an online community in Malaysia that consists of a group of teacher volunteers who offer educational support to teachers throughout Malaysia.

She highlighted the role of discussions amongst colleagues and friends outside the school circle. In the interview data, she commented on how discussions and sharing of information and ideas are regularly done with her friends through social media platforms such as Telegram or WhatsApp. This is a demonstration of the teacher’s enactment of her agency in her own professional development. She cited that one of the outcomes of this MCO is that it made her want to learn more on how to build on her newly developed knowledge and skills in using ICT to teach. Joining such an online forum exposes her to a Community of Practice consisting of teachers from all over Malaysia. She says, “the support is not just from our own school but also nationwide.”

*Teachers’ Willingness to Adapt to Online Teaching.*

As agency is a form of achievement, it can be said that the teachers in this study have shown that they are more competent in using ICT tools for online teaching compared to how they were pre-pandemic. With increased competence, the teachers have also demonstrated their willingness to adapt to this new mode of teaching. This willingness to adapt to online teaching enhances their agentic potential in not only learning how to use digital tools for online classroom practice but also in adapting their teaching approach

to fit the situation. Being accustomed to teaching in physical classroom settings, the transition to online teaching required them to go beyond their comfort zones and to also tolerate aspects of online teaching that they deemed unsatisfactory. This section will discuss some of these aspects. From the interview data, we found that there is an aspect that is not met when it comes to pedagogy. This is in terms of self-satisfaction. For example, for Azrin, she was not able to replicate what she would normally do in a face-to-face classroom which is to monitor learners’ progress. She also stated that she liked to share stories and her experience with learners because she noticed that her students were more engaged in her lesson through sharing of experiences. Technology is a constraint as it prevented her from doing what she would normally do in a physical classroom. She is unable to share that part of herself when conducting online classes. In other words, teacher input is restricted to the delivery of the content of the syllabus.

In addition, while technology has the potential to promote collaborative learning, this process did not happen in her classes. Unlike in a physical classroom where the teacher is able to assign group work in class, the online teaching affected the way she designed her learning activities. For her, online teaching has affected her level of self-satisfaction in how classes are conducted. This is because she is only able to view the product instead of seeing how her efforts have positively impacted her students’ understanding and performance.

Another challenge stated by some teachers is the difficulty in getting students’ full participation. Salina cited the students’ language proficiency as a constraint. A majority of her students do not like written messages when the teacher uses Telegram to communicate. They prefer listening to recorded audio as they could not comprehend written messages. Another factor is the students’ geographical location. Students who lived quite far from Taiping town had to go to the town to get internet access.

These factors affected how Salina enacted her agency in online teaching. Her choice of medium to communicate with her learners was influenced by her perceptions of her learners' needs.

### Executing Agency in Online Classroom

This section will discuss the findings to answer the second research question: How do Malaysian English language teachers' exercise of professional agency affect their professional development in online teaching?

The teachers' discourses on how they conducted online teaching and how they exercised their agency can be viewed from the practical-evaluative dimension of the ecological model of agency (Priestley et al., 2015). We note that their agency was influenced by a host of factors. As suggested by Priestley et al. (2015), an actor's decision-makings are based on a range of alternatives including the cultural, structural, and material factors available in an actor's present situation. In the case of the teachers in this study, the structural guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education, the ICT facilities available, and internet connectivity, the school culture are among the factors that affected their agency.

#### *Teachers' Exercise of Agency in Relation to Structural Conditions*

The guideline given by the Ministry of Education for teachers to conduct their lessons is based on the following categories: online, offline, and onsite. The structural conditions are in place in the form of how often teachers should teach remotely. In terms of implementing lessons remotely, some structure was provided by the school management such as through the reporting of attendance and the problems faced by the teachers. Teachers are allowed to exercise their agency in deciding how best to conduct lessons as long as the teacher follows the timetable. The timetable given provided a form of structure for teachers to implement online lessons. For online teaching, Azrin used Google Meet to conduct online lessons for her

class. Two classes were combined in one online lesson. Social messaging tools such as WhatsApp® and Telegram® were the most commonly used tools to communicate with learners.

Even though Azrin indicated that there was less sense of personal achievement in terms of her students' understanding of her lesson, online teaching has increased her confidence in using technology. She learned to use quizzes in her teaching, but she did not attempt to use other types of ICT applications and prefers to use what she is comfortable with to ensure one hour of smooth delivery of online lessons. The teacher is agentic in the sense that she is able to carry out the lesson using the tools she is comfortable with.

#### *Adapting Lessons Based on the Understanding of Context*

Access to technology amongst students is one of the factors that influence teachers' agency in language classrooms. A common view in the teachers' narratives is that context or location is a determiner of the technology used by students. Taylor (1991) stated that agency is interconnected with responsibility and self-evaluation, where a person is not only governed by his or her sense of duty but is also responsible in their evaluations when making decisions.

#### *Using Social Media to Deliver Lessons and Conduct Assessments*

Although teachers were already competent in using Google Meet® as a video conferencing tool to carry out synchronous lessons, it was not feasible for them to use it all the time. Students' lack of internet access or unstable internet connection and lack of access to devices were among the factors affecting the teachers' use of Google Meet®. This was a more common scenario for teachers teaching at rural schools. Nevertheless, it was observed that these teachers were able to take an agentic role despite these constraints by using social media. For example, for Sherry, because a majority of the students were unable to attend

synchronous sessions via Google Meet®, she used social media such as Telegram® and WhatsApp® to conduct lessons with the students.

Shahida noted that the range of online activities she can implement are limited because the internet connection can be slow for her learners. This made her resort to using applications that do not require strong internet connection like Kahoot®. She also prefers to use Telegram, a social media application to conduct her lessons as she could not get full participation if she were to use Google Meet® all the time. The use of Google Meet® would be heavy for her students' internet data and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. For her, Telegram® is convenient and flexible. She further explained,

Considering where my students come from, the nature of the internet, so most of my classes are actually on Telegram. And I see that Telegram can be very convenient. You can have voice chat. So, I can actually talk to my students, have a discussion. There's also the video and quiz. I can ask my students to record and send their presentations.

From their narratives, the teachers also indicated an awareness of how assessments can be done using Telegram®. They would use the quiz feature of Telegram® or post links to Google Forms® containing reading or listening comprehension questions. They would also use voice chats to assess students' speaking skills.

#### *Using Technology to Support Learners' Learning*

Another aspect of teacher agency that was noticeable from the interview data was teachers' awareness of how online teaching can be utilized to enhance certain aspects of language teaching and learning. Although the teachers had to change their teaching methods from what they were used to doing in physical classrooms, they also reported how the use of an online mode of teaching has its advantages. For example, Nora had to adapt her teaching methods when teaching online. She did not assign group work to her learners. Although her teaching

approach was not student-centered (unlike when she teaches in a physical classroom), the use of Google Forms® to assign her students work allowed her to focus on areas that her students needed to improve on. Google Forms® provided the tools to analyze student responses to plan individualized interventions.

For Liza, although the school where she teaches is located in an urban area, the students who attend the school are from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ranging from middle-income to low-income groups. In physical classrooms, some students may be shy and may not necessarily speak much. However, during online lessons she discovered that some students appeared to be more active in lessons. She stated that "introverts are more comfortable during speaking practice; they would give feedback they feel more confident and comfortable."

#### *The Role of the School Culture in Supporting Teacher Agency*

As suggested by Edwards (2015), there is a significant link between teachers' agency and prominent issues such as social justice, professional isolation, and teacher autonomy. These issues are even more prominent in the context of the pandemic. In the context of this study, the school culture is critical in addressing the issue of social disparity, that is the disparity between students with access and students without access to technological tools. For Shahida, the school administrative officers played a role in ensuring that disadvantaged students were not left behind. Students from a low socioeconomic background who did not have access to a digital device and internet connectivity were identified. Her school worked closely with PIBG or the Parent Teachers Association to provide the necessary devices and internet data for these students. Without such intervention from the school, the teacher would not have been able to exercise her agency in carrying out online lessons.

According to Shahida, the community of teachers in her schools also played a role in ensuring

that they were able to address any issues that arose during online teaching. This is also a reflection of collective teacher autonomy as they gathered together to discuss ways to assist problematic students. These issues may not only be about the teaching pedagogy but also other matters related to student attendance and identifying students who needed more help.

For Sherry, live video conferencing with her students was impossible to conduct as a majority of students in her class did not have internet access. Online lessons were not feasible for these students. However, her school had developed action plans to address this issue by ensuring that learning modules were disseminated to these disadvantaged students. The school helped with printing hard copies of these modules and delivered them to the individual students.

### Teachers' Post-Pandemic Perceptions of the Role of Technology

Teacher agency can also be viewed from the projective dimension and how their aspirations are linked to future trajectories (Priestley et al., 2015). In the context of the current study, this is related to how the teachers perceived the role of their professional competence in ICT for future application. The teachers in this study have demonstrated an increase in their knowledge and skills in online teaching during the MCO as an outcome of their agentic action in pursuing new skills via self-learning, peer learning and by joining an online community of teachers. The teachers in the study have also shown agency in their classroom practices despite the structural and socio-cultural conditions. However, with the opening of schools, the requirement to teach remotely has diminished. There is no longer a need to use videoconferencing technology to deliver instruction when physical classes resume. Having developed professionally in using ICT tools as an emergency response to the pandemic, the question of continuity in their professional development remains.

In the context of school reform, teachers are expected to continue to develop professionally to achieve reform goals. However, the pandemic crisis is not similar to a school reform scenario. The crisis has disrupted existing classroom teaching norms and accelerated change in teachers' practice in ways that were not possible in a typical school reform effort, which can be met with resistance. Teachers' narratives on how they envision the post-pandemic role of technology is also key to understanding their agency in continuing to develop professionally.

Salina, for instance, changed her attitudes towards digital technology. Prior to the MCO, she did not see the importance of learning technologies such as Google Classroom. Having been forced to learn to use it, adopting the technology in her teaching and being able to experience the usefulness of the technology made her want to learn more about how to use technology for teaching. She is still interested in learning how to use technology when school reopens (e.g., designing your own board games). However, the teacher perceives the role of technology as supplementary to face-to-face teaching. For her, technology can be used "to give extra work during the weekend."

The peripheral role afforded to post-pandemic digital technologies, however, is not necessarily an indication that their classroom practice will be the same as before the pandemic. Their practice may evolve in new ways post-pandemic as teachers adapt their face-to-face teaching to incorporate digital technologies.

### Conclusion

The COVID-19 crisis arguably serves as a strong force that pushes a great majority of teachers to use their agency in online teaching, a feat that no previous ICT in education policy was able to accomplish. The unprecedented scenario has disrupted the existing classroom teaching practices of language teachers, forcing them to migrate to online platforms. In the wake of the pandemic,

teachers had to learn not only how to use new digital tools but also to take into consideration the socio-cultural conditions in implementing online lessons. As shown by the study findings, the teachers needed to evaluate their own existing ICT literacy and seek ways to increase their competence in order to conduct their lessons online. To this end, they resorted to seeking support from their peers and online communities and also had to be prepared to learn how to use the relevant tools on their own. The existing school support structure serves as an enabler for teachers to collaborate with each other and to collectively improve professionally. Clearly, having such structural support is an essential element in promoting teachers' agentic potential and reflects the ecological perspective of agency.

Teacher agency, as the capacity to take action, was also demonstrated in their online classroom practices. Transferring their pedagogical content knowledge to their online space is not straightforward as they also had to adjust their teaching methods to accommodate the constraints of online teaching. The teachers depended much on their agency in order to navigate the online teaching space and ensure that their students were able to participate in lessons. Teachers' expectation especially in replicating teacher-student relationships when conducting their online classroom was often not met when compared with the physical classroom. These teachers were accustomed to applying student-centered teaching approaches in physical classrooms. The shift to online teaching, especially when they had to use video conferencing tools, required them to reconsider their classroom activities. The affordances of the tool, the students' ability to access, and the external support received from their school all play a role in their manifestation of agency.

Nevertheless, these teachers' exercise of agency also had its limitations. The rural-urban disparity affected the ways the teachers implemented their lessons. The study revealed that the location

of the students, especially those who lived in the rural areas, were largely affected by the lack of a stable internet connection. Without an Internet connection and appropriate digital devices, these students could not participate in online lessons. They missed out on aspects such as teacher-student interaction and peer-peer interaction which are essential for language learning. An implication of this is that teachers would need to recognize that their teaching approaches would not only involve adaptation during periods of lockdown but also adaptation when the school reopens to address these students' needs.

This study explored the factors that contributed to language teachers' agency and how their agency was manifested into their professional development in online teaching. All the teachers have indicated that they now have more knowledge on how to teach online compared to before the pandemic through formal training, self-learning, and learning from peers and community. One thing we note from this study is that their peer-learning, although intentional, is situation-specific. Teachers reported that they learned about new apps and how to use digital tools from their peers as and when the need arose, which reflects the organic nature of teachers' professional development. A limitation of this study is that we did not look closely at how these teachers exercised their agency in teaching and testing particular language skills online and to what extent these actually reflected professional competence in online language teaching. Further research into how teachers utilized ICT in teaching and testing specific skills online would be welcomed to understand how teachers' articulation of their ICT skills is related to their professional development. This would help training providers to plan the types of courses teachers need according to different needs and trajectories in the future. Future research may also include an exploration of teachers' post-pandemic classroom practices, especially how teachers provided differentiation to their students.



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# ENSEÑANZA VIRTUAL DE LENGUA INGLESA DURANTE EL CONFINAMIENTO DOMICILIARIO: PERCEPCIONES Y REACCIONES DEL ALUMNADO EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD ESPAÑOLA

TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE DURING THE NATIONAL LOCKDOWN: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES AT A SPANISH UNIVERSITY

ENSEIGNEMENT EN LIGNE DE LA LANGUE ANGLAISE PENDANT LE CONFINEMENT DOMICILIAIRE : PERCEPTIONS ET RÉACTIONS DES ÉTUDIANTS DANS UNE UNIVERSITÉ ESPAGNOLE

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## RESUMEN

La explosión de la pandemia de COVID-19 en España supuso un reto mayúsculo para las universidades con educación presencial ya que estas fueron obligadas a adaptarse a la docencia en línea de manera casi inmediata. Este artículo tiene el objetivo de ofrecer una instantánea de los resultados de este salto repentino a un modelo virtual en la enseñanza de lengua inglesa en distintos programas de grado de la Universidad de Alcalá en España. Para ello, se centra en las percepciones y reacciones del alumnado. Los datos derivaron de una encuesta respondida por 159 estudiantes de Inglés de las facultades de Filosofía y Letras; y de Ciencias Económicas, Empresariales y Turismo, y de un grupo de discusión posterior en el que participaron los autores del estudio y una selección de los encuestados. Estos dos métodos se utilizaron para ahondar en el tratamiento dado a aspectos centrales de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, tales como: (a) la adquisición de competencias, (b) los métodos de evaluación, (c) la utilidad de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC), y (d) la interacción entre estudiantes y entre estudiantes y docentes, durante el periodo de enseñanza a distancia que sobrevino a la pandemia. Los resultados evidenciaron la problemática que entraña esta modalidad virtual en cuanto a la adquisición y la práctica de destrezas como la expresión oral, la participación en clase, la articulación del trabajo en grupo y las relaciones interpersonales. Además, subrayaron beneficios, tales como un mayor conocimiento y manejo de los recursos tecnológicos. Finalmente, sirvieron para mostrar al profesorado los instrumentos digitales de trabajo y evaluación mejor y peor valorados por el estudiantado.

**Palabras clave:** COVID-19; enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras; enseñanza del inglés; enseñanza virtual; percepciones de los estudiantes; TIC.

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**ABSTRACT**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain was a major challenge for universities offering face-to-face education since these were compelled to adjust to online teaching in an extremely brief time span. This article aims to offer a comprehensive picture of the repercussions that such a sudden immersion in full virtual mode had on instrumental English subjects taught in different undergraduate programs at Universidad de Alcalá in Spain. The profile is based on the data collected from: (a) a survey with 159 respondents enrolled in English courses in the faculties of Philosophy and Arts, and of Economics, Business and Tourism; and (b) a subsequent discussion group, including the authors of the study and a deliberately selected number of respondents. Both methods were used to delve into core aspects of language teaching such as: (a) skills acquisition, (b) assessment methods, (c) the usefulness of the ICT tools employed in the classroom, or in-class, and (d) interactions between students and between students and teachers in this exceptional context of unforeseen remote education. Results underscore the problems this scenario entails for the practice and acquisition of skills such as oral performance, class participation, or the management of teamwork and interpersonal relationships. They also pinpoint certain benefits related to an enhanced knowledge and handling of ICT tools. Finally, they give instructors insight into the digital applications and assessment instruments which were more and less highly valued by students.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; foreign language teaching; English teaching; online teaching; ICT; students' perceptions.

**RÉSUMÉ**

L'explosion de la pandémie de COVID-19 en Espagne a constitué un défi majeur pour les universités qui offrent des cours présentiels, car elles ont été obligées à s'adapter à l'enseignement à distance d'une manière presque immédiate. Le présent article se concentre sur les expériences des étudiants et vise à offrir un instantané des résultats de ce saut soudain vers un modèle virtuel de l'enseignement de la langue anglaise dans les différentes licences de l'Université d'Alcalá, en Espagne. Les données sont issues d'une enquête répondue par 159 étudiants inscrits dans les cours d'anglais des facultés de Philosophie et Lettres, et de Sciences Économiques, de l'Entreprise et du Tourisme, ainsi comme d'un groupe de discussion postérieur, où les auteurs de cette étude et une sélection des interviewés ont participé. Ces deux instruments nous ont permis d'approfondir les questions essentielles de l'enseignement des langues, telles que a) l'acquisition des compétences, b) les méthodes d'évaluation, c) l'utilité des technologies de l'information et la communication (TIC), et d) l'interaction dans la classe entre les étudiants et entre l'enseignant et l'apprenant dans ce cadre exceptionnel de l'enseignement à distance. Les résultats ont mis en évidence les défis de cette modalité virtuelle concernant l'acquisition et la pratique de compétences, telles que l'expression orale ; la participation en cours ; l'articulation du travail de groupe et les relations interpersonnelles. De plus, ils ont souligné des bénéfices, tels qu'une meilleure connaissance et gestion des ressources technologiques, et ont donné un aperçu aux professeurs des outils numériques de travail et d'évaluation les plus et les moins appréciés par les étudiants.

**Mots clés :** COVID-19 ; acquisition d'une langue étrangère ; enseignement d'anglais ; enseignement en ligne; TIC; perceptions des étudiants.

## Introducción

El confinamiento generalizado de la población, al que llevó la eclosión de la pandemia de COVID-19 en España en marzo de 2020, impactó sobre todos los niveles y programas educativos del país. La educación primaria, secundaria y superior pasaron a un modelo virtual de forma casi inmediata y los planes basados en la presencialidad tuvieron que ser repensados de manera urgente. Las ramificaciones pedagógicas de un cambio tan abrupto y de esta magnitud son innumerables y golpean aspectos formativos clave, como la organización de actividades y tareas, la adquisición de destrezas y conocimientos, los métodos de evaluación, las dinámicas de clase o las relaciones estudiante-estudiante y estudiante-docente, entre muchos otros. Al mismo tiempo, el nuevo escenario exige una adaptación al medio que pasa, forzosamente, por un desarrollo exponencial de la competencia digital por parte del profesorado y los discentes.

El presente artículo muestra el impacto de todo lo anterior en un entorno concreto: el de la enseñanza de lengua inglesa en la Universidad de Alcalá (UAH), España, para lo cual responderá a los siguientes interrogantes:

1. ¿Hasta qué punto, según el estudiantado, ha influido el salto virtual en su adquisición de destrezas?
2. ¿Cómo creen que afecta el entorno virtual a las dinámicas de trabajo y la relación docente-discente?
3. ¿Qué grado de utilidad han tenido las distintas herramientas informáticas utilizadas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje durante este periodo?
4. Entre los estudiantes, ¿cuál ha sido el nivel de aceptación de los métodos de evaluación aplicados por el profesorado?

A través de estas preguntas, esta investigación busca ofrecer una instantánea del efecto atribuible al salto repentino a un modelo de enseñanza virtual en el caso de una institución de enseñanza superior concebida como puramente presencial.

El estudio se construye sobre dos puntos axiales: una encuesta, en la que participan estudiantes de distintos grados que cursaron asignaturas de inglés instrumental durante el confinamiento, y un grupo de discusión posterior, en el que se profundizó en los aspectos más dilemáticos y opacos de los resultados.

Somos conscientes de que las respuestas y conclusiones que ofrecen las siguientes páginas surgen en un marco y momento muy específicos. Esto, lógicamente, limita su capacidad de extrapolación a otros contextos y su uso como herramientas universales. Pero no es nuestro objetivo aportar certezas absolutas a problemas complejos, sino trasladar una experiencia para que otros puedan conocerla, analizarla, debatirla y enriquecerla.

Artículos como este responden al llamamiento de Jandrić (2020) para focalizar esfuerzos sobre la mirada de consecuencias de la pandemia y emplear la investigación como instrumento multidisciplinar y comprensivo de profundización, reflexión y cambio. Su voz apela a la responsabilidad de la Universidad para con el entorno y a multiplicar los acercamientos intelectuales a la (ir) realidad que ha creado la COVID-19 en cada esfera de nuestras vidas.

En resumen, se trata de construir, pieza a pieza, desde ópticas varias, una bibliografía amplia y sólida que nos permita comprender cada ángulo de lo ocurrido para, el día de mañana, enfrentar con más garantías escenarios idénticos, similares a esa realidad pospandémica, que acabará llegando tarde o temprano. Desde un pequeño rincón del ecosistema académico, este es nuestro granito de arena.

## Marco teórico

La irrupción de la COVID-19 cambió todo en una ventana de tiempo casi imperceptible. La pandemia tensionó y sigue tensionando el tejido económico-social de muchos países y supuso una prueba de estrés para los Gobiernos de todo el mundo y los pilares sobre los que se sustentan.

La educación es, sin duda, uno de esos pilares y también uno de los ámbitos cuyo orden se ha subvertido en mayor medida. Como muestra, baste decir que, a 31 de marzo de 2020, se contabilizaron en el mundo más de 1500 millones de estudiantes afectados por la suspensión de las sesiones presenciales y el salto a un modelo de enseñanza en línea (Unesco, 2020).

Este nuevo contexto educativo planteó una problemática generalizada, pero especialmente aguda para aquellas instituciones de naturaleza eminentemente presencial, cuyo grado de digitalización y preparación para entornos virtuales dista mucho del de los centros de enseñanza remota. Gran parte de la educación superior en España, un país donde solo 6 de 83 universidades ofertan su docencia completamente en línea (España, Ministerio de Universidades, 2020), se vio afectada por esta situación y obligada a ajustar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje al contexto digital, a través de sus distintas herramientas y posibilidades. Con tiempo y medios limitados y unos docentes y discentes acostumbrados a otros métodos, el reto para la red universitaria española fue mayúsculo.

Aquellos que acepten como válido el mantra de que toda crisis es, al mismo tiempo, una oportunidad, convendrán en que la situación excepcional que se vivió durante el segundo cuatrimestre del curso 2019/2020 y las réplicas que aún nos acompañan a fecha de cierre de este artículo han servido para poner en primerísimo plano el papel de la tecnología en la enseñanza y los potenciales beneficios de una docencia más digitalizada. Las opiniones a favor de una mayor simbiosis entre pedagogía y avances técnicos no son, sin embargo, algo nuevo, sino una postura ya defendida en foros educativos desde hace tiempo.

### La tecnología en la enseñanza universitaria

En las últimas décadas, la incorporación de la tecnología a la enseñanza ha estimulado la innovación en las prácticas docentes e impulsado una transformación de los modelos pedagógicos hacia unas metodologías más dinámicas y flexibles

(Blessinger y Wankel, 2013), apoyadas en una mayor variedad de recursos pedagógicos accesibles y adaptables al aula gracias a las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC).

Entre las ventajas que dimanan de estos avances destacan el acceso más rápido y directo a un amplio abanico de materiales, la posibilidad de combinar varios instrumentos multimedia en una misma acción docente o la dinamización del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje a partir de estrategias como la gamificación y el aula invertida (Durán Medina *et al.*, 2018).

De igual manera, estas nuevas metodologías han dado paso a una enseñanza mucho más centrada en el estudiantado y su autonomía, aspectos íntimamente ligados a un aumento notable de la motivación. Varios son los estudios que han demostrado un incremento en la motivación del alumnado cuando se utilizan este tipo de estrategias basadas en las TIC (Macaro, 2003; Sánchez Calderón, 2020). El refuerzo de este parámetro genera, además, beneficios adicionales para los estudiantes, como una mejor concentración en la tarea, unos niveles de atención más altos y una mayor interacción con otros recursos disponibles y con sus compañeros en actividades grupales (Cacheiro González, 2018; Zheng *et al.*, 2016).

Asimismo, las TIC facilitan la supervisión por parte del profesorado y la comunicación entre docentes y discentes, al tiempo que favorecen la atención a la diversidad. En relación con el primer punto, la tecnología abre nuevos espacios de contacto entre las partes involucradas en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y permite acortar el espacio transaccional entre ellas (Cenich y Santos, 2005). El correo electrónico, las videollamadas y videoconferencias, los foros, los chats y otras aplicaciones de mensajería instantánea permiten articular una interacción más continua y estrecha que puede aprovecharse de varias formas: monitorización, resolución de dudas, mayor colaboración en el desarrollo de la asignatura o aclaración de conceptos, entre otras.

En lo que concierne a la atención a la diversidad, cabe señalar que los distintos tipos de actividades que pueden implementarse en las aulas y los recursos al alcance de discentes y docentes coadyuvan a adaptar los materiales educativos a las necesidades del estudiantado o a cualquier dificultad que este pudiera presentar. Dicho de otro modo, las TIC ayudan a crear y presentar materiales adecuados para toda clase de estudiantes de forma inmediata y más sencilla (Loveless, 2003; Shamir y Margalit, 2014).

### La enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras y las tecnologías

En cuanto a la enseñanza de idiomas en la que se enmarca este artículo, varias voces y estudios han abordado en los últimos años las posibilidades que las herramientas informáticas ofrecen al área en cuestión. Dichas investigaciones son poliédricas y entroncan con distintos planos del complejo proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera (LE). Sin embargo, son muchas las que coinciden en la importancia de la integración de la tecnología en las aulas de LE, ya que, a diferencia de la enseñanza tradicional, la introducción de recursos multimedia enriquece la presentación de la lengua objeto de estudio e incrementa la retención del lenguaje (Yaverbaum *et al.*, 1997).

Para ello, se aprovechan muchas de las ventajas generales de las TIC descritas en párrafos previos. Por ejemplo, la interpolación de recursos en línea en la clase de idiomas permite acceder con rapidez y facilidad a gran cantidad de materiales para practicar todas las destrezas de manera interactiva. Así mismo, los estudiantes pueden estar expuestos con inmediatez a una panoplia de textos válidos, escritos u orales, que les permiten comprobar el funcionamiento de la LE de una forma contextualizada y adaptada a sus intereses, convirtiendo de este modo el proceso de aprendizaje en una experiencia significativa y auténtica.

Otro de los puntos clave de la integración de las TIC en la enseñanza de LE es la posibilidad que

ofrecen de proseguir el contacto con ellas fuera del aula, conectando así el uso real de la lengua con los conocimientos adquiridos en la clase (Al-Mahrooqi y Troudi, 2014). Utilizando cualquier dispositivo con acceso a internet, los estudiantes pueden aumentar el tiempo de exposición y la interacción con la segunda lengua (L2), lo que permite seguir aprendiendo fuera del contexto educativo y promueve una mayor autonomía en el aprendizaje (Yildiz, 2020).

Dicha continuidad igualmente ofrece al estudiantado la posibilidad de incorporar de manera automática el componente cultural, accediendo a materiales auténticos que van más allá de los recursos calificados como “artificiales”, por haber sido específicamente creados para la enseñanza de ciertos aspectos de la lengua en cuestión. Asimismo, el uso de las TIC habilita la práctica sincrónica con hablantes nativos o con hablantes de otras lenguas que también están adquiriendo la misma LE por medio de programas de intercambio virtual, lo cual favorece el desarrollo de habilidades comunicativas interpersonales (Cacheiro González, 2018) y la comprensión intercultural (Marczak, 2013; O’Dowd y Dooly, 2020), incluyendo, además, la posibilidad de exponerse a un entorno más polifónico a través del contacto con variedades diatópicas.

Como se ha subrayado anteriormente, al limitar el papel central del profesor y multiplicar las vías de interacción con la LE, las TIC además hacen posible reducir los niveles de ansiedad a la hora de practicar una L2. Ciertas tareas interactivas, por ejemplo, permiten al alumnado trabajar la expresión oral de forma más natural, sin sentirse observado directamente por el profesorado, con lo que se reduce la ansiedad y el miedo a cometer errores que puede provocar tener que comunicarse en una lengua no materna delante de un grupo de estudiantes o docentes (Al-Mahrooqi y Troudi, 2014). Asimismo, actividades como grabar y escuchar sus interacciones facilitan al estudiantado identificar sus propios fallos (gramaticales, de pronunciación y entonación, o del uso apropiado

del léxico, entre otros), lo cual ayuda a aumentar la precitada autonomía en la adquisición de conocimientos, desarrollar la destreza de aprender a aprender y sentirse protagonistas de su propio aprendizaje con actividades de autoevaluación.

Las reflexiones anteriores enlazan con la visión de la tecnología como herramienta de transformación, elemento democratizador y catalizadora de una realidad más interconectada, libre e inclusiva, que autores como McLaren *et al.* (2020) han defendido recientemente. Sin embargo, sería un error mitificar los horizontes abiertos por las TIC y perder el espíritu crítico que debe acompañar a todo viento de cambio.

La discusión debe ser siempre polifónica y, por ello, conviene traer a este foro voces que subrayen los peligros que plantea el uso de las tecnologías en la enseñanza en general y, por extensión, en la impartición de una lengua extranjera. En este sentido, autores como Ramón-Ruiz (2020) alertan sobre cómo la educación remota puede ahondar en las desigualdades educativas ya existentes. En su opinión, la consolidación de un entorno gradualmente más virtual podría abrir nuevas brechas a nivel de infraestructuras, conectividad y acceso a los recursos tecnológicos y formativos, que complicarían (aún más) el acceso equitativo a una educación que aspira a la igualdad de oportunidades profesionales.

Siguiendo esta línea, estudios empíricos como el de Rodicio-García *et al.* (2020) analizan la huella que los supuestos anteriores han dejado en España tras el periodo de formación a distancia impuesto por el confinamiento. Su trabajo, centrado en estudiantes de todos los niveles educativos a partir de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, muestra cómo las limitaciones de acceso a los recursos no son el único escollo que debe superar el alumnado, sino que son una pieza más engranada a otras muchas, como una competencia digital por desarrollar o las complicaciones a la hora de enfrentarse a un cambio de escenario tan súbito. Conviene subrayar que, además, las dificultades se

agravan en localidades con una población inferior a 10 000 habitantes, lo que amplía la dimensión de una problemática que no es solo económica, sino también geográfica.

Otras propuestas, como la de Almazán-Gómez (2020), enarbolan muchas de las banderas rojas anteriores, al tiempo que ponen el foco sobre un aspecto de la educación digitalizada que suele ocupar planos periféricos en los estudios pedagógicos: el entramado societario que la impulsa y se nutre de ella. Y es que, al margen de los desequilibrios que un entorno virtual puede abrir entre estudiantes de un mismo centro, la tecnologización del sistema educativo supone también el enriquecimiento de industrias y empresas de dudoso compromiso social.

Investigaciones como las de Cobo (2019) profundizan en esta visión de la digitalización como negocio, y señalan que el abuso de la tecnología puede tener, además, consecuencias nefastas sobre el tejido formativo, como un mayor porcentaje de fracaso y abandono escolar. Del mismo modo, una excesiva tecnologización del contexto de aprendizaje entraña el peligro de “industrializarlo”, automatizándolo y asimilándolo a cadenas de producción en serie que, en palabras de Almazán-Gómez (2020), acaban “reduciendo a los alumnos a puros números” (párr. 14).

Los ya citados y otros muchos trabajos nos advierten de que un uso masivo de las TIC tiene importantes ramificaciones dentro y más allá del aula universitaria, no todas positivas, por lo que conviene pensar muy bien la dirección de cada paso que demos en ese sentido. Es posible que la máxima recogida en párrafos anteriores sea cierta y que toda crisis suponga, en efecto, una oportunidad. Pero son también el ecosistema perfecto para abrir heridas profundas y cometer errores de los que arrepentirnos más tarde.

Los argumentos previos revelan lo dilemático de la situación, los desafíos que entraña el acelerado desarrollo tecnológico actual y, de forma



más específica, los retos que plantea para la formación reglada, tanto a nivel de aula como a nivel institucional.

Ante un escenario tan incierto, en el que la crisis sanitaria augura una presencia cuando menos temporal y parcial de la educación a distancia, creemos imperativo conocer el punto de vista del estudiante, sus experiencias y sus reacciones ante un entorno, el virtual, impuesto, pero que muchos consideran parte indispensable del futuro de la docencia universitaria. Sus opiniones en este sentido resultan especialmente valiosas para la práctica docente y para preparar mejor al profesorado y a las universidades ante el más que previsible asentamiento de una realidad formativa posdigital, en la que la tecnología y otras dinámicas más tradicionales deberían conformar un andamiaje consistente que redunde en beneficio del alumnado.

### **Enseñanza virtual de Lengua Inglesa en la Universidad de Alcalá**

Si la problemática presentada hasta ahora resulta de por sí compleja, no podemos obviar el efecto multiplicador que generan las particularidades de cada región y cada centro educativo. En este sentido y de cara a comprender mejor el contexto y los resultados de este estudio, conviene desglosar algunos datos de interés sobre la institución en la que se llevó a cabo.

La UAH es un centro de educación superior eminentemente presencial y el uso de las herramientas informáticas puestas a disposición del profesorado o empleadas por estos últimos a título personal no tiene vocación sustitutiva, sino de refuerzo y ampliación de los conocimientos impartidos en el aula. La plataforma que centraliza los contenidos y las acciones virtuales, y a la que tanto estudiantes como profesores tienen acceso, es Blackboard®.

En un contexto de docencia 100 % remota, el uso de esta plataforma dejó de ser un complemento para pasar a ser, necesariamente, la columna vertebral de la enseñanza. Este cambio de escenario

llevó al profesorado de la UAH en general, y del área de Filología Inglesa en particular, a profundizar en el uso de distintas herramientas disponibles en Blackboard®, cuya naturaleza y funcionamiento conectan con muchas de las utilidades de las TIC descritas en la sección anterior: foros, chats y videoconferencias; sondeos y actividades en línea; grupos de trabajo; compartición y transferencia de archivos... Estos y otros instrumentos se convirtieron en puntos cardinales y asideros recurrentes, ya que fueron los mecanismos que permitieron al profesorado de inglés como LE transformar las aulas en pantallas primero y, posteriormente, repensar y confeccionar actividades para desarrollar las distintas destrezas, abrir nuevos espacios de comunicación, dar continuidad al contacto con la L2 y acceso a materiales relevantes, u organizar acciones docentes combinando varios recursos digitales.

Si bien el entorno virtual es un eje fundamental de este estudio, otros como el social y el geográfico tienen también su lógica incidencia. La UAH es una institución de carácter pública, en la que estudian aprendientes de muy distintos lugares y trasfondos sociales. Este es un detalle importante, puesto que las diferencias entre el tejido familiar y económico son dos de las principales causas de la llamada “brecha digital”, según autores como Dey y Ali (2016) o Van Dijk (2017). En este sentido, las asimetrías en el acceso a recursos tecnológicos e informáticos y el desacompañamiento de los ritmos de aprendizaje que implican son peligros que sobrevuelan aquellas instituciones que, como la nuestra, acogen a estudiantes de perfiles socioeconómicos diferentes.

En lo que respecta a la lengua inglesa, su enseñanza atraviesa múltiples grados de naturaleza diversa. Por descontado, el inglés instrumental es una materia nuclear en programas como los de Estudios Ingleses y Lenguas Modernas y Traducción, donde, además, se profundiza en la lengua desde ángulos más específicos como el cultural, el literario o el traductológico. Sin embargo, esta asignatura también es parte del plan de estudios de grados

como Turismo y Administración y Dirección de Empresas, Humanidades, Magisterio, Estudios Hispánicos o Derecho, entre otros.

Los siguientes apartados presentan la información recabada entre estudiantes de varios de estos grados, con el objetivo de cartografiar el impacto del salto virtual en la enseñanza de inglés en la UAH y responder a las preguntas planteadas en la introducción.

## Método

Este estudio, de carácter mixto (cuantitativo y cualitativo), contó con la autorización del Departamento de Filología Moderna de la UAH.

### Recolección y análisis de los datos

Para llevar a cabo el estudio, se utilizaron dos procedimientos metodológicos coalescentes de recogida de datos: un cuestionario en línea y un grupo de discusión virtual. Antes de lanzar el primero, se informó a los participantes sobre la confidencialidad en el tratamiento de sus respuestas y su utilización únicamente con fines de investigación.

El diseño de este cuestionario se realizó orientando las preguntas a pulsar la satisfacción del estudiantado tras el periodo de docencia virtual sobrevenida, y sus opiniones sobre aspectos generales de la enseñanza en línea y del uso de las posibilidades docentes y de evaluación que ofrece Blackboard.

Una vez elaborado, el cuestionario fue revisado por los integrantes del Grupo de Innovación Docente del Aula de Lenguas Extranjeras (iDEALE) de la UAH, al que igualmente pertenecen los autores de este artículo. Además, para confirmar su validez, se llevó a cabo un pilotaje, utilizando la técnica del muestreo por conveniencia, con un grupo de estudiantes de la población objeto de estudio. Tras recibir sus respuestas, revisarlas y verificar aspectos relativos al buen funcionamiento y visionado de la plantilla, se introdujeron las modificaciones

pertinentes. También se efectuó un análisis de fiabilidad en la escala de percepciones sobre todos los ítems de la escala del cuestionario, obteniendo un alfa de Cronbach que indicaba un alto nivel de consistencia interna ( $\alpha = 0,82$ ). El envío de la versión final y la recopilación de respuestas tuvieron lugar en mayo de 2020.

Dichas respuestas se codificaron de forma numérica para su posterior análisis estadístico. El esquema de codificación se elaboró de manera que las puntuaciones más altas representaran niveles más altos, de acuerdo con la afirmación propuesta. Asimismo, no se introdujeron enunciados negativos en el cuestionario, por lo que todas las preguntas se codificaron siguiendo la misma regla.

El cuestionario se seccionó de la siguiente forma:

- *Valoraciones generales:* sección orientada a conocer la visión de los estudiantes respecto a asuntos generales, como el nivel de motivación propio y del profesorado, la comunicación con los docentes, ventajas e inconvenientes de las clases a distancia, y niveles de participación y aprovechamiento.
- *Herramientas docentes:* incluye preguntas sobre las herramientas disponibles en Blackboard para la docencia telemática. Se pidió a los participantes que valorasen su utilidad según su criterio en una escala Likert impar de 5 puntos (siendo 1 “Nada útil” y 5 “Muy útil”).
- *Métodos de evaluación:* centrada en los métodos de evaluación en línea que ofrece Blackboard. Los encuestados valoraron, siguiendo la escala Likert anteriormente descrita, la adecuación de estos métodos para la evaluación del aprendizaje del inglés como LE en el entorno virtual.
- *Preguntas sobre el nivel de satisfacción general* con los resultados del aprendizaje durante el periodo de clases a distancia.

Tras el análisis de resultados, se ofreció a los participantes la posibilidad de unirse a un grupo de discusión, para profundizar en sus respuestas y

entablar una conversación con estudiantes de otros grados sobre la enseñanza y la evaluación virtuales durante el periodo de confinamiento. Nuestro objetivo era analizar, con más detenimiento, algunas de las conclusiones que arrojaban los resultados del cuestionario.

La implementación de este segundo método de recogida de datos se llevó a cabo en una sesión telemática, tras obtener el consentimiento escrito de los estudiantes interesados en participar para ser grabados.

El encuentro virtual orbitó en torno a los siguientes grandes temas, ya fuera por la disparidad obtenida en las respuestas recibidas en el cuestionario o para ahondar en algunos aspectos clave de la enseñanza virtual en este contexto concreto:

- La aparente contradicción entre la gran utilidad que los estudiantes ven al uso de la tecnología y el malestar que les genera la excesiva dependencia que les produce.
- La dificultad a la hora de practicar la expresión oral en la modalidad en línea.
- La diversidad de opiniones sobre el entorno virtual como factor disuasorio para la participación en clase.
- El aprovechamiento del aprendizaje en la enseñanza remota.
- El trabajo en grupo.
- El escaso uso de las tutorías.
- Las herramientas de la plataforma Blackboard® y su utilidad.
- La valoración sobre los métodos de evaluación empleados.

### **Población y muestra**

El cuestionario se distribuyó entre un total de 270 estudiantes, pertenecientes a 7 titulaciones de grado diferentes, en cursos en los que el inglés

se estudia como lengua instrumental y en los que están implicadas dos facultades distintas: la de Filosofía y Letras, y la de Ciencias Económicas, Empresariales y Turismo.

El número de respuestas recibidas fue 159 (casi un 60 % del total de posibles participantes) y su distribución por especialidades fue la siguiente: Lenguas Modernas y Traducción (51,57 %, el 70,08 % del total de estudiantes matriculados), Turismo/Turismo y Administración y Dirección de Empresas (17,61 % / 52,83 %), Estudios Ingleses (17,61 % / 51,85 %), Estudios Hispánicos (8,18 % / 52 %) y Humanidades/Humanidades y Magisterio (5,03 % / 38,09 %).

La sesión del grupo de discusión se realizó el 24 de junio de 2020, a través de Blackboard®. El encuentro estuvo moderado por los autores de este artículo y en él intervinieron cinco estudiantes de distintos grados. Esta selección se hizo siguiendo criterios de representatividad, que permitiesen incluir participantes de diferentes titulaciones y cursos. Los únicos grados no representados (por falta de voluntarios) fueron el grado en Turismo/Turismo y Administración y Dirección de Empresas y el grado en Humanidades/Humanidades y Magisterio.

A pesar de la variabilidad en el perfil académico del alumnado, el objeto de estudio es comparable, ya que calibra el impacto de la docencia virtual sobrevenida en discentes de asignaturas de inglés con rasgos comunes: primer ciclo de estudios, obligatoriedad y una carga lectiva de 3-4 horas semanales.

Para analizar los datos de este grupo de discusión, se llevó a cabo un análisis cualitativo de contenido, segmentado en dos etapas: primero, se transcribió la totalidad del encuentro, y a continuación, se categorizaron los datos verbales obtenidos y se clasificaron, centrándonos en las variables y los aspectos clave mencionados en el subapartado anterior. Así, mediante la comparación y el contraste de las respuestas de los participantes, pudieron establecerse distintos patrones

de respuesta que ayudaron a matizar y completar la información cuantitativa obtenida en los cuestionarios.

### Resultados y discusión

Los siguientes subapartados recogen, desgranar y evalúan las respuestas a cada una de las preguntas planteadas en el cuestionario, utilizando una serie de figuras y tablas para mostrar los principales datos obtenidos. El análisis de la vertiente cuantitativa de estos resultados se interpola con los comentarios y opiniones del grupo de discusión en los puntos pertinentes.

#### Motivación de estudiantes y profesores

Uno de los aspectos más relevantes en este apartado es que los y las respondientes consideran que la motivación del profesorado, en comparación con la suya propia, es casi un punto superior. Así, mientras la media sitúa el nivel de motivación de estos últimos a mitad de escala (3,025), la de los primeros, atendiendo de manera exclusiva a la percepción del estudiantado, está más cerca del “Bastante motivado” (3,716). Cabe señalar, además, que la asimetría y la curtosis para ambos ítems oscila, como se recoge en la Tabla 1, entre -0,5 y 0, con lo que puede afirmarse que los datos se distribuyen normalmente.

#### Ventajas e inconvenientes de la docencia remota

En línea con lo anterior, una de las mayores ventajas de la docencia virtual, según el alumnado, es el hecho de que esta despierta menor nivel de motivación que las clases presenciales, algo que

parece contradecir las afirmaciones de Macaro (2003) y Sánchez Calderón (2020) recogidas en el marco contextual, pero que matizaremos unas líneas más adelante.

Con el 41,72 % de las respuestas, la pérdida de motivación se sitúa solo por detrás de la excesiva dependencia de la tecnología que lleva aparejada esta modalidad educativa, que el 50,33 % de los encuestados señala como el principal escollo del modelo virtual, y de los problemas de concentración derivados de distracciones domésticas, cuestión que incomoda al 47,66 %.

Cabe destacar que dos de estos aspectos negativos, falta de motivación y de concentración, están íntimamente vinculados al proceso de aprendizaje y que, con posterioridad, el grupo de discusión estableció que la dependencia tecnológica generaba problemas adicionales en ese mismo sentido. Es, por ende, plausible pensar que la pérdida de motivación y concentración no se debe tanto al empleo de la tecnología en el aula como a su uso exclusivo a lo largo del curso.

Este grado de dependencia tecnológica plantea otras derivadas que merecen subrayarse. Tal y como se comentaba en secciones anteriores, uno de los peligros de la digitalización masiva de la enseñanza es la acentuación de asimetrías entre estudiantes, fundamentadas (aunque no solo) en las dificultades de conectividad y acceso a los recursos digitales. Este factor ha tenido una clara incidencia en este estudio, ya que las personas encuestadas señalaron que las dificultades técnicas recurrentes y la falta de medios tecnológicos adecuados incidieron en el normal desarrollo y práctica de destrezas, y en el

Tabla 1 Motivación de estudiantes y profesores

	N	Media	Desviación estándar	Asimetría	Curtosis
Motivación estudiantado	159	3,025	0,947	-0,321	-0,304
Motivación profesorado	159	3,716	1,007	-0,572	-0,121

tiempo útil y el aprovechamiento académico de las sesiones remotas, algo que ha podido influir negativamente en la visión del contexto puramente virtual en el que se desarrolló la docencia.

En el lado positivo, existe un amplio consenso (79,9 %) a la hora de señalar la comodidad como la gran ventaja de esta modalidad de enseñanza. Este dato quizás guarde relación con el contexto socio-cultural que define la docencia de la UAH, que no solo atrae a alumnado del Corredor del Henares, el área geográfica en la que se sitúan sus tres campus universitarios, sino procedente de toda la Comunidad de Madrid, así como de provincias colindantes y otras más alejadas; estos últimos probablemente valoraron positivamente poder seguir con sus estudios sin tener que trasladarse hasta Alcalá de Henares o Guadalajara. Se trata, no obstante, de una variable que habría que estudiar con más detenimiento, puesto que no se tuvo en consideración en este trabajo.

La segunda gran ventaja identificada por el estudiantado es que este periodo de docencia virtual sirvió como medio de evasión. Hay que pensar que los meses en que la Universidad permaneció cerrada (de mayo a junio de 2020), corresponden al periodo de confinamiento duro, cuando en España se produjo un mayor número de fallecimientos por la pandemia. Parece razonable pensar que el alumnado encontró, en la posibilidad de continuar con sus estudios, una forma de mantenerse al margen de la crudeza de los datos.

Por otra parte, durante la discusión en grupo afloró una aparente contradicción respecto a los datos obtenidos en esta sección del cuestionario. Y es que si bien estos últimos apuntaban a que la dependencia tecnológica en la enseñanza virtual

dificulta el aprendizaje, los integrantes del grupo definieron las clases como “provechosas”. Esta opinión, subrayaron, se fundamenta en la metodología por medio de la cual se dio acceso a la materia y en el hecho de que parte del profesorado ofreciese correcciones personalizadas, dejando en segundo plano el grado de tecnologización del entorno de aprendizaje.

**Interacción profesores-estudiantes**

Los datos concernientes a la valoración sobre las relaciones docente-discente permiten afirmar que la falta de contacto directo durante el periodo estudiado no afectó la interacción entre las dos partes del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. La distribución de los datos, cuya asimetría tiende a 0 (-0,108) y que tiene un coeficiente negativo de curtosis (-0,825), indica que la dispersión es muy similar a ambos lados de la media y que las colas son livianas (véase Tabla 2). De forma más específica, el 30,67 % de la muestra ha permanecido neutral respecto a si durante el periodo de clases a distancia se sintió más o menos cómodo trasladando dudas y dificultades a sus profesores, pues eligió el ítem a mitad de escala.

Por otro lado, la diferencia entre quienes dicen estar “Poco de acuerdo” y “Bastante de acuerdo” con la afirmación “Tengo menos reparo a la hora de hacerle llegar mis dudas y dificultades al profesor o a la profesora que si la clase fuera presencial” es de algo menos del 5 %, a favor de los que afirman haberse sentido más cómodos que en las clases presenciales. Esa tendencia positiva se revierte en los extremos de la escala, donde el 16 % marcó el ítem “Nada de acuerdo”, frente al 6 % que marcó el ítem “Totalmente de acuerdo”. En resumen, puede concluirse que el alumnado no refiere

**Tabla 2** Interacción profesores-estudiantes

	N	Media	Desviación estándar	Asimetría	Curtosis
Contacto con el profesorado	159	2,874	1,145	-0,108	-0,825

cambios sustanciales en lo que atañe al contacto con los profesores.

La conjunción de estas cifras con las obtenidas en el análisis de la motivación arroja un dato no menor, en el que conviene detenerse. Que los discentes sientan que el profesorado sigue realmente involucrado en su educación a pesar del cambio de medio y que su relación con ellos y ellas no se haya visto alterada a lo largo del curso, prueba que los peligros señalados por autores como Almazán-Gómez (2020), con respecto a una automatización de la enseñanza a través de su tecnologización, son una advertencia y no una profecía que no podamos sortear. Es cierto que los datos aquí recabados se circunscriben a un contexto muy específico, pero también demuestran que la digitalización de un entorno concreto puede hacerse sin perder (al menos, no del todo) el factor humano, y sin la necesidad de anonimizar o cosificar la figura de estudiante.

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En cuanto a los medios que emplearon para hacer efectivo el contacto con el profesorado, vemos que la comunicación tuvo lugar básicamente mediante dos canales: el correo electrónico y las clases por videoconferencia. Si bien uno y otro establecen una comunicación de distinto tipo (sincrónica y asincrónica, respectivamente), ambos fueron utilizados en similar medida (88,08 % el primero, frente a 87,42 % el segundo), lo que sugiere que el alumnado no necesita que la comunicación con el profesor fuera del horario lectivo dependa de un canal visual.

Sorprende comprobar que, a pesar de las múltiples formas de comunicación que ofrecen la plataforma Blackboard® y las TIC en su conjunto (foros, chats, mensajería, áreas de trabajo compartidas), únicamente son dos los medios escogidos para interactuar con el profesorado. En este mismo sentido, llama también la atención el hecho de que, pese a los numerosos avances y opciones disponibles, uno de estos medios sea, probablemente, el más tradicional de todos.

Asimismo, destaca que solo el 17,22 % afirme haber solicitado una tutoría por videollamada, lo que confirmaría que el estudiantado no considera que la imagen y la inmediatez enriquezcan la comunicación con el personal docente, y eso a pesar de que la pandemia de COVID-19 ha disparado el uso de los servicios de videollamada y videoconferencia. En esta misma línea, la discusión en grupo reveló que muchas veces se recurrió a los últimos minutos de las clases para solicitar la aclaración de conceptos y dudas; de ahí que el alumnado no necesitase tutorías personalizadas, medio que, como señalaron ellos mismos y pueden atestiguar los discentes de los distintos grupos encuestados, tampoco es el preferido para contactar con el profesorado en la modalidad presencial.

### Dinámicas de trabajo

Las respuestas tipo Likert revelan que el estudiantado prefirió las dinámicas de trabajo individual, porque le permitían organizar mejor su tiempo. Así, frente al 15,7 % que no vincula esta modalidad de trabajo a una mayor eficiencia, el 52,2 % de los respondientes la asocian a un mejor aprovechamiento del tiempo. Hubo, además, el 32 % de respuestas en el punto medio, lo que implica que pocos encuestados ven el trabajo colaborativo como alternativa para ahorrar tiempo. La Figura 1 desglosa estos datos.

Paradójicamente, el número de participantes que afirmó “Echar de menos la interacción con los/as compañeros/as y poder seguir realizando

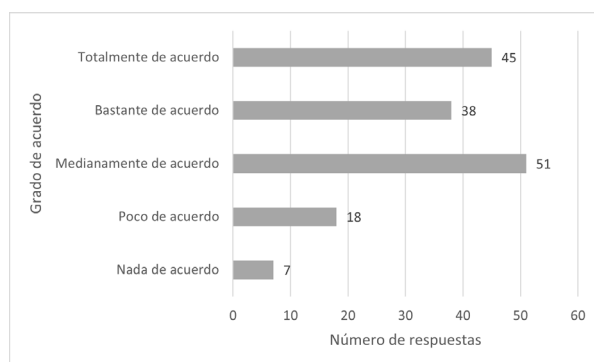


Figura 1 Trabajo individual y mejor gestión del tiempo

actividades en pareja/grupos” es similar al de aquellos que valoraron el trabajo individual como una herramienta eficaz de gestión del tiempo, con una variación de tan solo 3 respuestas. De hecho, la diferencia entre medias asciende solo a 0,13 puntos, como muestra la Tabla 3.

**Tabla 3** Trabajo individual y relaciones interpersonales en el aula

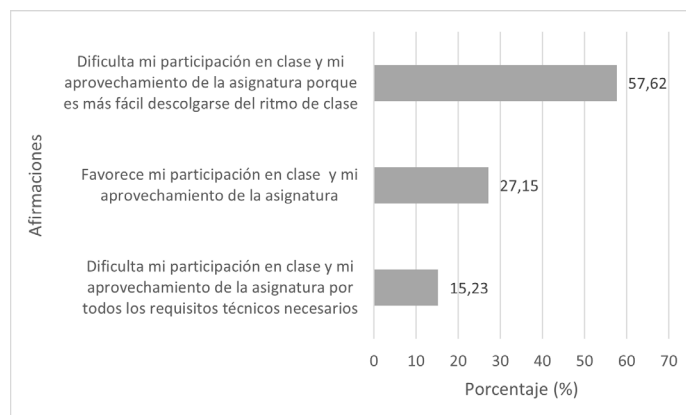
	N	Media	Desviación estándar
Trabajo individual porque organizo mejor el tiempo	159	3,603	1,141
Echo de menos la interacción	159	3,465	1,189

El grupo de discusión ayudó a matizar estos datos y clarificar esa aparente contradicción. Los participantes especificaron que la modalidad en línea dificulta la articulación de actividades grupales. Entre los motivos esgrimidos se cuentan los siguientes: los problemas de conexión, la aleatoriedad en la asignación de los subgrupos a través de la herramienta que ofrece Blackboard® y el impacto que tuvo el confinamiento en las rutinas diarias y, por tanto, en la posibilidad de adaptarse a los horarios de cada uno de los integrantes de un grupo de trabajo. También adujeron razones relacionadas con una carga de trabajo desequilibrada

y con el estilo de aprendizaje de cada estudiante y su interés por la asignatura.

Las cuestiones apuntadas son de tipo operativo, con lo que puede concluirse que la paradoja es solo aparente. Y es que si el problema asociado con el trabajo en grupo reside en que este dificulta la gestión del tiempo, esto no invalida que se eche de menos el contacto personal y la interacción, que son propias de la modalidad de trabajo colaborativo.

De forma similar, la enseñanza virtual que recibió el alumnado también parece ir en detrimento de la participación en clase y del aprovechamiento de la asignatura. Aun conscientes de que se trata de dos aspectos de difícil evaluación por su intrínseco carácter cualitativo, resulta significativo que el 72,85 % considere que esta modalidad de enseñanza jugó en su contra en ambos planos (véase Figura 2). Los motivos, en este caso, no se atribuyen a los requisitos técnicos de los que depende la docencia en línea, sino a la distancia que media entre docente y discente, y a que esa falta de contacto favorece que no se siga el ritmo de la clase. Aunque no se verbalizara, este dato deja entrever la importancia de la interacción que se produce en la clase presencial con el profesorado y el hecho de que los múltiples canales de comunicación que ofrecen los entornos virtuales no parecen ser sustitutivo suficiente del trato cara a cara.



**Figura 2** Impacto de la docencia virtual sobre la participación en clase y el aprovechamiento de la asignatura

### Utilidad de las herramientas que ofrece Blackboard®

Como ya se ha comentado con anterioridad, las TIC, en general, y la plataforma Blackboard®, en particular, amplían las vías de interacción y el abanico de actividades y recursos de los que docentes y discentes pueden hacer uso.

Los resultados obtenidos en relación con las herramientas de Blackboard® utilizadas durante el periodo de docencia 100 % virtual revelan que las mejor valoradas son las siguientes: la sala de videoconferencia y chat (88 %), los materiales de apoyo a la docencia (54 %) y las actividades evaluables en línea (52,67 %) (véase Figura 3).

Si tomamos en consideración que estas tres herramientas facilitan la interacción dentro del aula y dejan fuera aspectos como la evaluación, los resultados de la sección entroncan con el precitado deseo de relacionarse con sus pares y permiten reforzar la conclusión de que, durante este periodo de enseñanza virtual, el estudiantado echó en falta la formación que tiene lugar en el espacio físico del aula.

Ello explica que el chat, que fortalece los lazos interpersonales, sea una de las herramientas mejor valoradas. Junto a esta aplicación destaca también la opción para compartir documentos y compartir

pantalla/pizarra. En los tres casos, la media alcanza los 4,3 puntos.

Conviene, además, señalar que el número de participantes que se pronunció sobre la utilidad de los sondeos, la aplicación peor valorada, fue sensiblemente menor al que ofreció su opinión respecto de las otras utilidades de Blackboard®. En una línea similar, la herramienta de grupos de trabajo, que permite formar equipos de aprendizaje en las sesiones virtuales, fue mayoritariamente calificada de “Poco” o “Nada útil”, y definida en el grupo de discusión como una forma de trabajo que no acaba de convencer al estudiantado.

Existen dos factores que pueden explicar, siquiera parcialmente, las dos últimas reacciones. Por un lado, hay que pensar que el salto a la virtualidad fue tan brusco, que parte del profesorado, sin tiempo para renovar su modelo docente ni hacer ajustes en los objetivos y contenidos, se limitó muy probablemente a transferir al espacio virtual los métodos, las técnicas y las estrategias de los que se valían en sus clases presenciales. Por otro lado, el paso a la enseñanza telemática en la UAH chocó con la limitada familiaridad del profesorado con este modelo. En un entorno de aprendizaje tradicionalmente presencial, el uso de Blackboard® y sus posibilidades suele ser accesorio y puntual, y la destreza en su manejo no es, en términos generales, la que demanda la docencia puramente telemática.

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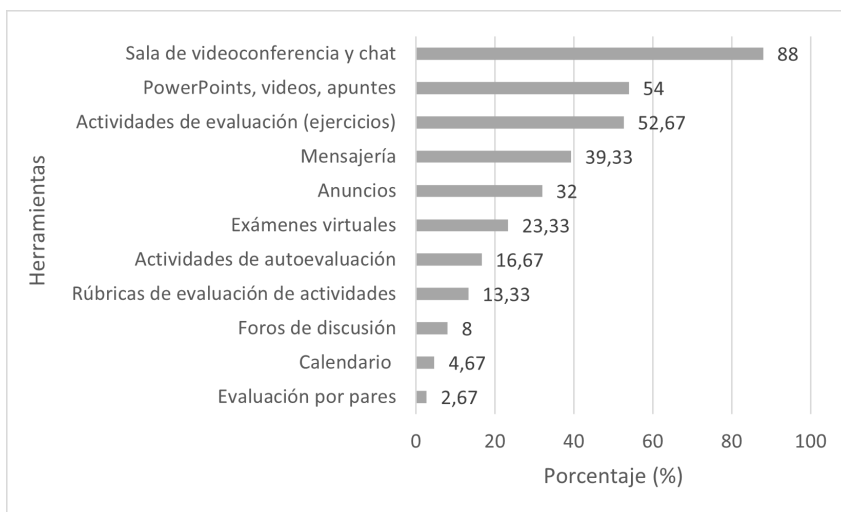


Figura 3 Utilidad de las herramientas que ofrece Blackboard®



Dentro de un escenario como este, con escaso margen para una correcta aclimatación y con una formación adicional que comenzó a recibirse ya avanzado el cuatrimestre, resulta complicado explotar, en su totalidad, las funcionalidades del entorno virtual de aprendizaje, y es muy probable que esto impidiese sacar un mayor partido a herramientas como los sondeos o los equipos de trabajo, potencialmente muy útiles, pero que requieren un conocimiento al menos intermedio de la plataforma.

Tal y como recoge el marco teórico, las TIC permiten la práctica de todas las destrezas relacionadas con el aprendizaje de una lengua. Eso no implica, sin embargo, que todas puedan o vayan a adquirirse con la misma facilidad y fluidez.

Preguntados por las dos destrezas más y menos difíciles de aprender en la modalidad de enseñanza virtual, el estudiantado mostró relativo consenso a la hora de señalar que la más fácil es la comprensión lectora (48,34 %), seguida de la expresión escrita (39,07 %). Ambas tienen en común que su práctica no está necesariamente condicionada por la interacción, lo que facilita el aprendizaje autónomo.

Por el contrario, las dos destrezas que resultan más complicado practicar desde casa son la comprensión oral (39,74 %) y la expresión oral (69,64 %). En este último caso, si exceptuamos la práctica del monólogo, nos encontramos ante una destreza muy dependiente de dos partes que interactúen entre sí. En ese sentido y en especial si pensamos que la tecnología disponible hasta el

momento limita la espontaneidad de la comunicación presencial, parece lógico que se identifique como un aspecto problemático. El grupo de discusión confirmó este punto, que puede explicar también la prevalencia de la práctica oral a partir de grabaciones y presentaciones sobre el ejercicio del diálogo sincrónico.

### Métodos de evaluación

De entre los métodos de evaluación que ofrece Blackboard® hay un favorito evidente: las actividades de expresión escrita redactadas en casa. Esto se desprende de la media que obtiene este ítem, 4038 puntos, como de la asimetría, que tiene un claro sesgo hacia la derecha.

También concitan gran aceptación los ejercicios tipo test, las actividades de expresión oral pregrabadas y los resúmenes y comentarios de texto, todos con medias de 3,8.

Nótese, además, que los dos primeros métodos de evaluación muestran una distribución en la que, al igual que ocurre con los ejercicios de expresión escrita preparados con antelación, la cola se alarga para valores menores a la media, siendo la asimetría para los ejercicios de tipo test de  $-0,629$ , y para las actividades de expresión oral grabadas en casa, de  $-0,777$ .

Además de los datos aquí resaltados, la Tabla 4 recoge la media, la desviación estándar, la asimetría y la curtosis referentes a otros métodos de evaluación empleados en el aula de inglés como LE.

**Tabla 4** Métodos de evaluación empleados en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera

Métodos	N	Media	Desviación estándar	Asimetría	Curtosis
Foros de discusión/Wikis/Blogs	100	3,376	1,028	-0,25	-0,732
Expresión escrita en casa	154	4,038	0,884	-0,764	-0,527
Expresión oral grabada en casa	145	3,868	1,042	-0,777	-0,057
Ejercicios tipo test	131	3,885	0,973	-0,629	-0,086
Presentaciones orales	143	3,363	1,110	-0,448	-0,351
Ejercicios comprensión oral ( <i>Listening</i> )	136	3,588	1,043	-0,496	-0,236
Resumen/comentario de texto	149	3,859	0,870	-0,345	-0,276
Portafolios digitales	77	3,354	1,109	-0,458	-0,126

Los datos obtenidos invitan a colegir que el estudiantado considera que la evaluación del desempeño académico en las asignaturas de inglés instrumental durante el periodo de docencia virtual sobrevenida debió apoyarse en herramientas que miden la ejecución individual, que permiten la realización de actividades asincrónicas y que dejan, por tanto, espacio a cierto grado de preparación.

En relación con esto, un aspecto abordado en el grupo de discusión es que las presentaciones orales en tiempo real no son adecuadas, porque dependen en exceso de la tecnología y generan ansiedad para quienes son tímidos, si bien esta última cuestión no es exclusiva del medio. Ello explica que este método de evaluación, sobre el que opinaron 143 encuestados, tenga una de las medias más bajas: 3363.

Los participantes en el grupo de discusión igualmente mostraron escepticismo sobre la idoneidad de este método, que critican porque es una fuente de nervios. Si a este dato sumamos la antedicha preferencia por las actividades pregrabadas, observamos cómo las opiniones del estudiantado confluyen con el papel central que Al-Mahrooqi y Troudi (2014) dan a la ansiedad, y con su defensa del vídeo y las grabaciones como alternativa, siquiera puntual, al discurso sincrónico.

En lo tocante a los Foros de discusión/Wikis/Blogs y los Portfolios digitales, la media obtenida permite concluir que también se consideran poco apropiados para la evaluación. El factor diferencial respecto a las presentaciones orales es que esta valoración responde a una opinión no informada del alumnado, en tanto son dos herramientas que reconocen no haber utilizado en la clase de Inglés a distancia. Este dato corrobora, en cierto modo, la precitada infrautilización por parte del profesorado de algunas posibilidades de la plataforma. Así, más de un tercio de los estudiantes (36,67 %) afirma no haber tenido oportunidad de utilizar los Foros de discusión/Wikis/Blogs, una cifra que se dispara en el caso de los Portfolios digitales (51,33 %).

Por otra parte, conviene apuntar que, cuando se trata de ponderar los métodos de evaluación, las medidas de asimetría y curtosis no indican una desviación anormal de la media, lo que apunta a un consenso entre los alumnos con relación a este aspecto de la docencia, con independencia de su estilo de aprendizaje.

Ese consenso es aún más evidente a la hora de señalar el sistema de evaluación que mejor se ajusta al aprendizaje del inglés como LE en la clase virtual. El 82,12 % de las respuestas se inclina por la evaluación continua, vehiculada a través de actividades realizadas en clase y en casa. El examen en línea suscita un rechazo generalizado y solo el 3,31 % lo considera la opción más adecuada de evaluación, una cuestión que se reafirmó en el debate mantenido en el grupo de discusión. En ese foro se adujeron las razones principales por las que este método no convence como mecanismo de evaluación: los exámenes se configuraron de forma que no era posible revisar las respuestas una vez completadas las distintas partes del ejercicio; no se dieron instrucciones claras sobre las especificidades de este tipo de examen, y no se dispuso de suficiente tiempo para completar las pruebas.

### Satisfacción general

La distribución muestral de los datos que miden la satisfacción general del estudiantado con su rendimiento durante el periodo de clases a distancia apunta a que están contentos con la formación y la atención recibidas (véase Tabla 5). De hecho, el número de quienes dicen estar “Bastante satisfechos” (46 respondientes) es sensiblemente mayor al de quienes se declaran “Poco satisfechos” (26). Lo mismo sucede en los extremos de la escala, donde los “Muy satisfechos” (17 respondientes) superan a los “Nada satisfechos” (7). Además, el hecho de que el valor de la asimetría se acerque a 0 (-0,202) y que la curtosis se sitúe en  $\pm 0,5$  (-0,382), indica que los datos se distribuyen normalmente.

El grupo de discusión sirvió para reforzar la validez de esta interpretación, en tanto indicó estar satisfecho con la docencia en línea y haberse sentido

Tabla 5 Satisfacción general

	N	Media	Desviación estándar	Asimetría	Curtosis
Satisfacción general	159	3,289	1,014	-0,202	-0,382

apoyado por el profesorado. En concreto, el grupo valoró positivamente la disponibilidad de estos últimos, los conocimientos tecnológicos adquiridos y el uso de una mayor variedad de recursos interactivos, aunque asimismo subrayó aspectos que podrían ser repensados en el futuro, especialmente la carga de trabajo y la evaluación.

### Conclusiones

Como se señalaba anteriormente, la digitalización de la enseñanza es un proceso con anverso y reverso, al que conviene acercarse con espíritu crítico, más si cabe tras su aceleración a raíz de la pandemia que todavía sufrimos. Observar el fenómeno a través de esta lente solo es posible si se cuenta con una bibliografía amplia y nutrida, que explore sus aristas desde ángulos que engloben enfoques integrales, pero también de carácter local.

Es en esta línea donde se enmarca el estudio que aquí concluye y que ha pretendido pulsar las experiencias de los estudiantes de inglés como LE de la UAH durante el periodo de docencia en línea sobrevenida, provocado por la pandemia de COVID-19 y el cierre de los centros universitarios españoles en marzo de 2020. Con ello se buscaba identificar las principales dificultades a las que han tenido que hacer frente los estudiantes al pasar de un modelo puramente presencial a uno virtual.

Cabe destacar que, en general, la valoración es positiva. Así lo avala su grado de motivación, alto, pese a considerarlo inferior al alcanzado en contextos presenciales, y, en especial, su percepción de la motivación del profesorado, que juzgan superior a la propia.

Otro dato que apuntala lo anterior lo encontramos en la propia tecnología de la que depende esta modalidad docente. Y es que tanto la encuesta como la discusión en grupo revelan que el estudiantado aprecia la mayor variedad de recursos que se emplean en este tipo de enseñanza, así como los conocimientos tecnológicos adquiridos como consecuencia de desarrollar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje en entornos digitalizados.

Esta visión positiva del entorno digital tiene, sin embargo, un envés que conviene no olvidar: gran parte de la muestra analizada ve como un problema la excesiva dependencia tecnológica. Esto nos remite a una cuestión subyacente a varias partes del artículo: la dificultad de encontrar ese equilibrio que nos permita implementar la tecnología de modo tal que potenciemos sus beneficios y limitemos sus desventajas.

En cuanto a las herramientas tecnológicas empleadas para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés como LE, las preguntas dirigidas a conocer las preferencias del alumnado ilustran que, aunque el abanico de recursos del que está dotada Blackboard® es amplio y todos se usaron en alguna medida, hay tres herramientas (Sala de videoconferencia y chat; PowerPoints, vídeos, enlaces y apuntes; y Actividades de evaluación en línea) que parecen monopolizar la práctica docente. Otros, por el contrario, como es el caso de los sondeos o las rúbricas de evaluación de actividades, no fueron explotados en toda su dimensión. Si bien creemos que son herramientas potencialmente útiles para la docencia virtual, hemos de tener en cuenta la excepcionalidad de las circunstancias en las que tuvo lugar la enseñanza en línea en este caso.

El profesorado, cuya docencia se enmarca en una universidad de naturaleza presencial, hubo de adaptar su metodología de manera súbita y hacer de un medio hasta entonces periférico la única vía para materializar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, lo que explica que no contase con el tiempo suficiente para explorar en profundidad sus posibilidades y que recurriese, por lo general, a usar las herramientas que reproducen las interacciones que tienen lugar dentro del aula.

Conscientes de que la realidad se impone y de que, tras la pandemia, es posible que la docencia bimodal gane peso en el engranaje universitario, desde la propia UAH se está trabajando para formar a sus profesores y con ello reducir ciertos problemas detectados por el alumnado en escenarios similares. A la luz de los resultados obtenidos en este estudio, esta formación parece que debiera dirigirse, por un lado, a mejorar las competencias digitales de los docentes, de modo que puedan sacar el máximo provecho de las herramientas puestas a su disposición; y, por otro, a ajustar los métodos de enseñanza y evaluación a las particularidades de esta modalidad. El objetivo último ha de ser crear una experiencia más positiva y fructífera, que permita reforzar los lazos socioafectivos en un entorno que tiende a describirse como frío y distante, y en el que la adquisición de ciertas competencias parece verse perjudicada.

Pasado un año del confinamiento domiciliario en España, creemos firmemente en el valor de seguir impulsando estudios que, como este, se nutren de una experiencia compartida con la que miles de docentes y discentes de todo el mundo pueden sentirse identificados de un modo u otro. Como en un laberinto de espejos, cada lector encontrará ante sí un reflejo distinto de su propia realidad, simétrico, parcial, combado o difuso, pero esperamos que esa comunión, ese reconocimiento, a pesar de las diferencias, pueda conducir a la reflexión y a la acción correlativa. Una acción que amplíe y enriquezca el espacio de debate, que nos ayude a comprender lo ocurrido hace unos meses,

qué hicimos bien, en qué nos equivocamos, cómo seguimos adelante. No nos atrevemos a afirmar si las crisis son una oportunidad, una catástrofe o ambas cosas al mismo tiempo. Pero siempre deberían ser un aprendizaje.

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# “A STRESSFUL UNKNOWN” OR “AN OASIS”?: UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF ASSESSMENT IN AN IN-CLASS AND ONLINE ENGLISH PHONETICS COURSE

"FUENTE DE ESTRÉS" U "OASIS DE PAZ": PERCEPCIONES DE ESTUDIANTES DE PREGRADO SOBRE LA EVALUACIÓN EN UNA CLASE DE FONÉTICA INGLESA PRESENCIAL Y EN LÍNEA

« SOURCE DE STRESS » OU « OASIS DE PAIX » : PERCEPTIONS DES ÉTUDIANTS SUR L'ÉVALUATION DANS UN COURS DE PHONÉTIQUE ANGLAISE PRÉSENTIEL ET EN LIGNE

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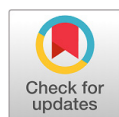
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## ABSTRACT

The sudden need to switch from traditional in-class instruction to online teaching and assessment due to the COVID-19 pandemic has posed considerable challenges to teachers, but also to learners. The mixed method study reported in this article compared Polish undergraduate students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses to assessment provided in two practical English phonetics courses taught during an in-class fall semester and online spring semester. The quantitative data were collected by means of an online questionnaire, which consisted of three categories of semantic differential scales referring to the cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses. The qualitative data consisted of drawings, open-ended surveys, and individual interviews with the students. The t-test results showed significant differences in students' perceptions in terms of cognitive and behavioural aspects. The qualitative data revealed that although the students highly valued formative assessment in the course, the online mode weakened their engagement and interest in receiving feedback. It was also observed that students' perceptions of in-class and online assessment were shaped largely by their individual differences and learning preferences. The study underlies the importance of using anxiety-lowering techniques in both in-class and online classes, and the need for fostering undergraduate students' autonomous learning skills.

**Keywords:** Assessment, English phonetics; students' perceptions; online instruction; ICT; COVID-19; EFL.

## RESUMEN

La repentina necesidad de pasar de la enseñanza tradicional en las aulas a la docencia y la evaluación en línea, por cuenta de la pandemia de COVID-19, no solo ha supuesto retos considerables para los docentes, sino también para los estudiantes.

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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

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El estudio de método mixto que se presenta en este artículo comparó las respuestas cognitivas, afectivas y comportamentales de estudiantes universitarios polacos a las evaluaciones impartidas en dos cursos prácticos de fonética inglesa durante un semestre en modalidad presencial y un semestre en modalidad virtual. Los datos cuantitativos se recogieron mediante un cuestionario en línea que consistió en tres categorías de escalas semánticas diferenciales. Los datos cualitativos se obtuvieron mediante dibujos, encuestas de preguntas abiertas y entrevistas individuales con los estudiantes. Los resultados de las pruebas t exhibieron diferencias importantes en las percepciones de los estudiantes en términos de aspectos cognitivos y comportamentales. Los datos cualitativos revelaron que, si bien los estudiantes valoraron muy bien la evaluación formativa en el curso, el modo virtual debilitó su compromiso e interés en la realimentación. También se observó que las percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la evaluación presencial y virtual se vieron determinados ampliamente por sus diferencias individuales y sus preferencias de aprendizaje. El estudio hace hincapié en la importancia de emplear técnicas para mitigar la ansiedad tanto en las clases presenciales como virtuales y la necesidad de promover las destrezas de aprendizaje autónomo en los estudiantes de pregrado.

**Palabras clave:** evaluación, fonética inglesa; percepciones de estudiantes; enseñanza en línea; TIC; COVID-19; inglés como lengua extranjera.

### RÉSUMÉ

Le besoin soudain de passer de l'enseignement traditionnel en classe à l'enseignement et à l'évaluation en ligne, en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19, a posé des défis considérables non seulement pour les enseignants, mais aussi pour les étudiants. L'étude de méthode mixte présentée dans cet article a comparé les réponses cognitives, affectives et comportamentales des étudiants universitaires polonais aux évaluations données dans deux cours pratiques de phonétique anglaise au cours d'un semestre présentiel et d'un semestre en mode virtuel. Les données quantitatives ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire en ligne composé de trois catégories d'échelles sémantiques différentielles. Les données qualitatives ont été obtenues via dessins, des enquêtes à questions ouvertes et des entretiens individuels avec les étudiants. Les résultats des tests t ont montré des différences importantes dans les perceptions des étudiants en termes d'aspects cognitifs et comportementaux. Les données qualitatives ont révélé que bien que les étudiants aient apprécié l'évaluation formative dans le cours, le mode virtuel a affaibli leur engagement et leur intérêt pour les commentaires. Il a également été observé que les perceptions des étudiants vis-à-vis de l'évaluation en face-à-face et virtuelle ont été largement déterminées par leurs différences individuelles et leurs préférences d'apprentissage. L'étude met l'accent sur l'importance d'employer des techniques pour atténuer l'anxiété dans les cours en face-à-face et virtuels et sur la nécessité de promouvoir les compétences d'apprentissage autonome chez les étudiants de premier cycle.

**Mots-clés :** évaluation ; phonétique anglaise ; perceptions des étudiants ; enseignement en ligne ; TIC ; COVID-19 ; anglais langue étrangère.



## Introduction

Until recently, research on foreign language (FL) assessment tended to emphasise the role of the teachers – their perceptions (Sahinkarakas, 2012), the design of the assessment process, as well as the assessment tools and strategies used (Czura, 2013). Nowadays, in light of the learned-centred and person-centred approaches (cf. Jacobs & Renandya, 2016) to education and educational research, more and more attention is being paid to the role learners play in the assessment process. Current approaches to assessment based on cognitive and constructivist theories underscore the importance of learner agency (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020) and self-regulation (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011), which is central to the ability to derive learning gains from both formative and summative assessment. The meaning learners make of both explicit and implicit presentation of teacher expectations, assessment tasks and criteria, and the form of feedback provision shapes a unique classroom assessment environment (Brookhart & DeVoge, 1999; Stiggins & Conklin, 1992), which, in turn, affects learners' willingness to engage in a task and develop their motivation to learn (McMillan & Workman, 1998). With this in mind, it is necessary to explore learner perceptions of and reactions to the assessment they are subjected to. "Students' points of view are windows into their reasoning" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 60), and consequently, their perspectives need to be considered in the instructional planning, and assessment.

Earlier studies on learners' perceptions of assessment typically adopted a quantitative Dorman and Knightley's (2006) Perceptions of Assessment Tasks Inventory (PATI), or Alkharusi's (2011) Perceived Classroom Assessment Environment Scale. Recently, more and more studies explore learner perceptions of assessment by means of qualitative research methods. For instance, Huhta et al. (2006) used oral diaries in a longitudinal study that focused on Finnish test-takers' perceptions of a high-stakes language test. The qualitative studies

that investigated learners' views of English language assessment and the assessment-related emotions collected data through a critical incident technique (Czura, 2017), or a combination of a draw-a-picture technique, and an interview in primary school (Carless & Lam, 2012) and high school settings (Xiao & Carless, 2013).

The awareness of learner perceptions of and affective response to assessment is of particular importance in times of uncertainty and rapid changes. A sudden switch from traditional in-class instruction to fully online teaching and assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic has posed considerable challenges not only to teachers, but also to learners, and may have affected their participation, performance, and attainment. The different teaching mode necessitated the introduction of new assessment strategies that would allow for evaluating learning objectives in an online environment. The study reported in this article sets out to compare Polish undergraduate students' responses to assessment strategies used in a practical phonetics course in the 2019/20 academic year during regular in-person classes in the fall semester and online instruction introduced as an emergency measure in March 2020. The data in this mixed-methods research were collected by means of semantic differential scales that encouraged a comparative analysis in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses; an interview; a draw-a-picture technique, and an online open-ended survey.

## Theoretical Framework

This section presents several approaches to assessment in online education. In the second part, it discusses the content, and diagnostic, summative, and formative roles of assessing pronunciation.

### Assessment in Online Learning

Since teacher-student interaction in online learning is mediated by computer, the teaching strategies, rather than being transferred directly

from a traditional in-class lessons, should be adjusted to the affordances offered by this mode of communication. The planning process in online education entails different modes of communication (synchronous, asynchronous), the level of student engagement (Dennen et al., 2007) and self-regulation (Vonderwell et al., 2007, p. 323), lack of visual cues, and the possible occurrence of technical problems (Reeves, 2000). Consequently, as Qing and Akins (2005, p. 52) observe, “face-to-face pedagogy can and should be used to inform online pedagogy. But this in itself cannot be the driving force to designing online courses; one must consider e-pedagogy to create a successful and meaningful course.” The same reasoning should inform the design of the assessment process in terms of not only its form, but also the choice of objectives, tools, and strategies.

The implementation of CMC (computer-mediated communication) in education has opened new possibilities of efficient collaborative practice and synchronous and asynchronous communication between peers and teachers. This constructivist turn in online education, characterised by its interactive and participatory nature, necessitated a radical change in course design, teaching, and assessment. Assessment in distance education involving CMC emphasises the role of learner-centred, formative approaches to assessment, which by offering meaningful feedback, guide students’ learning and help them select the most efficient learning strategies.

Beebe et al. (2010) identified the main factors that affected successful transition from in-person to online assessment: (1) efficient time management; (2) student responsibility and initiative in the assessment of learning; (3) structure of the online medium, which involved information about course requirements and assessment deadlines; (4) complexity of content and (5) informal assessment, which was tightly linked to student initiative in asking for feedback. Given the role of learner independence in assessment in online learning, the subject literature also emphasises the need for authentic assessment tools (e.g., Kim

et al., 2008) and assessment that supports learner autonomy and self-regulation (Booth et al., 2003). Designing assessment in online courses should also entail listening to students’ voices. In their study on student satisfaction in online courses, Fredericksen et al. (2000) observed that students appreciate assessment forms that value student learning. “The valuing of student performance” (Fredericksen et al., 2000, p. 36) can take the form of portfolio assessment or a discussion that is not only graded, but also authentic and interactive. Student/teacher and student/student interaction was also indicated as critical to successful on-line learning (Fredericksen et al., 2000).

### Pronunciation Assessment

Irrespective of whether pronunciation is integrated in a FL general course or taught in a course dedicated exclusively to pronunciation improvement, its teaching ought to concern three areas: productive skills, listening/discrimination abilities, and phonological competence (Derwing & Munro, 2015; Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Taking into account that assessment is a crucial element of the didactic process, these three areas should be systematically evaluated, taking the form of diagnostic, formative assessment (FA), and summative assessment (SA) (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2015). In order to determine teaching priorities, it is generally recommended that pronunciation teaching begins with diagnosing the level of productive and discrimination skills, and phonological competence of each student and the group. This initial stage is of utmost importance, since, as several studies show “even experienced L2 learners seem to find it difficult to self-assess correctly their pronunciation skills” (e.g., Dłaska & Klekeler, 2008, p. 506). Furthermore, identification of the priorities supports instructors in designing the treatment and selecting appropriate assessment tools (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2015).

An analytic/atomistic rather than holistic/impressionistic evaluation is recommended

(Harding, 2011) as the basis of diagnostic assessment of productive skills. It is advisable that it takes the form of recording the students' performing tasks that allow for various degrees of speech control, such as reading short passages, sentences, words, describing pictures, and free speech (see e.g., Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Following the atomistic approach, the judge (usually the teacher) identifies which particular areas of pronunciation require improvement. In summative assessment of productive skills, whether conducted after shorter or longer periods of time, the same types of tasks and criteria of assessment are suggested so as to increase the reliability of the observed progress (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Since both perceptive skills (Derwing & Munro, 2015) and phonological competence (Wrembel, 2003) support the ability to progress in pronunciation, they should also be properly diagnosed and developed throughout the course. Both of these abilities can be easily verified with various types of written tasks, such as discrimination, odd-one-out, cloze, dictation, in the case of perceptive abilities, and true/false, open questions, multiple-choice questions, in the case of phonological competence.

Formative assessment is used to determine the effectiveness of instruction and provide students with immediate assistance before the difficulties accumulate. It helps learners become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and makes them more eager to implement new strategies that could facilitate their progress (Fernandes, 2011). Additionally, since it does not involve formal grading, it is less anxiety-generating (Cassady & Griedly, 2005), which is particularly important due to the highly emotional nature of pronunciation learning (Baran-Łucarz, 2014). Finally, FA can be expected to facilitate students' progress in pronunciation, taking into account that it raises self-assessment, self-monitoring skills, and promotes autonomy (Butler & Jiyoung, 2010). Several researchers (e.g., Acton, 1984; Ricard, 1986) stress that self-directed pronunciation learning can significantly boost advancement in pronunciation. Consequently, FA should be applied daily

in general FL courses, pronunciation courses or practical phonetics courses, by means of numerous exercises (see e.g., Celce-Murcia et al., 2010), many of which can be analogous to those used later for formal assessment. As Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) sum up, "The best tool we can provide our students is teaching them how to elicit feedback on their pronunciation from their environment and then how to make constructive use of this feedback" (p. 359).

## Method

The study aimed to analyse the cognitive-affective-behavioural pathway of student response to the in-class and online assessment in a course of practical phonetics. The cognitive aspects referred to students' positive or negative attitudes to the assessment process, its quality, perceived level of difficulty, fairness, and structure. In the second element, we focused on affective response, which included the participants' motivation, anxiety, and the general sense of contentment that the two modes of assessment evoked. Finally, we analysed the expressions of behavioural response to the assessment measures in both semesters, which involved the students' level of active involvement and independence. In particular, we addressed the following research questions: What were the students' attitudes to the in-class and online assessment in the course of practical phonetics? What affective response did the students experience during the in-class and online assessment? What were the students' behavioural reactions to the two modes of assessment?

## Participants

Two groups of undergraduate first-year English majors (23 students) who had just finished their two-semester course (an in-class fall semester and online spring semester) of practical phonetics were invited to take part in the study. Although most of them showed interest and declared eagerness to participate in the project, eventually 10 students completed the questionnaire, seven

of whom provided us with additional qualitative data, by either taking part in the interview (n=4) or an open-ended survey (n=3). The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 24. Six of the participants were females, four were males (interviews: two females and two males; open-ended survey: two females and one male). Except for one female Ukrainian student, the group consisted of Polish students. All participants but one had never taken part in a practical phonetics or pronunciation course before.

### The Practical Phonetics Course

The following sections outlines the aims, content, teaching techniques, as well as the assessment procedures applied in the in-class and online course of practical phonetics.

#### *Aims, Content and Teaching Approach*

The most important aim of the first-year practical course of phonetics was to help students acquire English pronunciation at C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which is one of the requirements of the undergraduate study programme. The course attempted to help students gain the ability to “articulate virtually all of the sounds of the target language with a high degree of control” and to “self-correct if he/she noticeably mispronounces a sound”, controlling at the same time stress rhythm and intonation (Council of Europe, 2018, p.136). Standard models of pronunciation, i.e. modern Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA), constitute the points of reference, which complies with the expectations and needs of most of our students (Baran-Łuczarska, 2013). The detailed course syllabus and course objectives were presented at the very beginning of each semester.

It is recommended that three main aspects are developed in a pronunciation course – phonetic and phonological knowledge/awareness, perceptive/discriminative capacities, and articulatory skills (Derwing & Munro, 2015). In regard to the first domain, the participants were expected to

gain competence in the characteristics of English segments, the articulatory differences between the target language and L1, knowledge on suprasegmentals (particularly word stress and rhythm), basic features of connected speech, and characteristics of RP and GA. Moreover, the ability to receptively and productively use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was systematically developed to increase phonetic competence, discrimination skills, and pronunciation of words. Finally, in both semesters, the participants’ autonomous pronunciation learning skills were gradually developed through different strategies and specific exercises to practice the articulation of particular aspects of pronunciation, perception, and transcription. The online semester additionally aimed at advancing students’ knowledge of and ability to recognize and understand native English non-standard accents.

Each class of 90 minutes had an analogous structure in both semesters. It would focus on 1-2 segments, complemented with basic information and practice of selected suprasegmentals or aspects of connected speech. The lesson usually opened with a game-like warm-up activity, homework checking, and reading aloud words and dialogues practiced during earlier classes. This stage, though rarely involved formal grading, allowed the teacher to monitor how much students worked individually after class. Then articulatory features of a new sound would be introduced, followed by simple gymnastics of articulators, and practice in transcribing selected vocabulary items or phrases. Finally, repetition of words and sentences, and practicing reading dialogues filled with the new sound took place. The class would usually end with a communicative task or relaxing game-like activity and assigning homework. Authentic materials, such as short film excerpts and songs, were also systematically implemented. Additionally, in the online semester, volunteers were invited to prepare a short PowerPoint® presentation on a non-standard English accent.

In the fall semester (October-February), the course was conducted in the classroom. Most of the spring semester (March-June) was taught online: first via Zoom and since April via Microsoft Teams. Neither the teacher nor the students had any earlier experience of distance education.

Concerning the online classes, several difficulties were encountered, particularly at the beginning of the course. Despite the teacher's repeated requests, only approximately 30%–40% of the students would have their cameras switched on. Since the lack of vision, unlike in a traditional class, made it difficult for the teacher to observe students' on-spot reactions that could indicate their attitudes, involvement and motivation, they were encouraged to share their opinions at the end of each class about the exercises, materials used, and any difficulties they encountered. Only occasionally would students share their perceptions and if so, they were usually positive. Additionally, some students were not always audible enough, which they blamed on their microphones or poor Internet connection. Finally, the pace of the online lesson seemed a bit slower, due to, among other reasons, waiting longer for students' answers, technical problems, or time spent on changing the materials shown on the screen.

While most of the in-class written exercises were conducted in pairs and then checked in unison, the online tasks were usually completed individually within a given time limit or done on-spot in lockstep to save time. Chorus repetition of words and sentences, one of the basic activities used in the classroom, was replaced in online teaching by students practicing quiet echo reading while listening together to recordings played by the teacher. This activity was used to practice proper positioning and movement of articulators. To improve ongoing teacher/student communication, the students were also reminded about the possibility of seeing the teacher individually online or sending a message via the chat panel.

### *Assessment in the In-Class and Online Semesters*

Following the CEFR, assessment in this course is understood as any formal and informal measures that aim to respond to students' performance and learning process. The in-class course opened in the fall semester with a diagnosis of the students' pronunciation level and difficulties, and a survey about their needs and targets. During individual meetings they carried out a few tasks, i.e. passage and word reading, picture description and free speech. The learners' performance was recorded and then supplemented with the teachers' feedback. At the end of the in-class semester, a similar procedure was carried out to allow for comparison, and then graded. In another graded task, the participants were asked to prepare and imitate a fragment of their favourite movie. As before, the learners received recordings of their performance and detailed feedback.

During the in-class semester, the students took three written tests verifying their abilities to use IPA (a transcribing task) and phonological competence (true/false statements and cloze tasks). The teacher set some calm, quiet classical music in the background, whose successful application for stress reduction was emphasized in Suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1982), and observed in the phonetics teacher's earlier teaching experience (Baran-Łucarz, 2013). The students could also volunteer to prepare extra credit exercises for their classmates. The results of the oral and written tests constituted each 50% of the final grade.

Formal assessment during the online semester was conducted using analogous tasks and assessment criteria, and was explained to the students as soon as the transition to the online mode was confirmed. Among the graded tasks, which aimed at motivating all the students to work individually at home, was identifying selected consonants and vowels in a text of their choice. To minimize cheating, the written transcription tests and tests on standard/non-standard English accents consisted

of multiple-choice questions with a set time limit. The test was taken simultaneously by all the students and the items were presented in a different order. The students could not return to the previous questions. Before the first test, the format was piloted and as a result a few more seconds were allotted to each task. The scores for both the sample and proper tests were normally distributed and ranged from very high to very low, with the average scores being the most frequent.

In the final online oral test, the same types of tasks (passage reading, word reading, free speech), criteria of assessment (accuracy in segment production, word stress and rhythm, consistency in using RP or GA) and benchmarks were used as in the in-class semester. As before, the outcomes were thoroughly discussed with each student and scans of the feedback were sent back to students. This time, however, the oral performance constituted 60 % of the final score, while written performance 40 %.

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Some differences between the two semesters can be identified in terms of formative assessment. A mainstay during traditional classes – practicing reading dialogues aloud in pairs/small groups, during which the teacher would approach each pair and offer feedback – was replaced by students reading aloud in unison. Since the teacher considered this stressful for the learners, initially the task was performed by a few volunteers and only after some time would other students be nominated to read aloud. The feedback was given on the class forum and was not a basis for formal assessment. Although transcription exercises were also set, not all the students were eager to share their screens or write their answers in the chat. As before, the learners were encouraged to perform optional tasks – written and oral – to receive detailed written feedback or help during online office hours. Whereas in the in-class semester many students eagerly sought additional feedback, here only three students from among 23 took this opportunity.

To promote autonomous learning, the students were encouraged to write weekly diaries with

entries devoted to potential progress, effectiveness of various strategies, and feelings accompanying their pronunciation practice. Although students could get additional credits for diary reflections, none of them followed the teacher’s suggestion. Finally, at the end of the online semester, to encourage reflective practice and to help the teacher grade the students fairly, each student filled out a self-assessment sheet, which focused on the quality of individual work, actual involvement in the online course and classes, level of and progress in IPA use, and accuracy in pronunciation. Students’ evaluations had to be justified, and any further comments were invited.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The data in this mixed-methods research were collected by means of an online questionnaire, which consisted of 18 sets of semantic differential scales that encouraged a comparative analysis in terms of students’ cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses to assessment in two distinctive modes of teaching. Each of these scales represented a dimension with bipolar adjective pairs (cf. Osgood, 1952) and seven points in between, e.g.,

Challenging \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Easy

Commonly used to assess “the 3-dimensional structure of objects, events, and situations” (Bradley & Lang, 1994, p. 50), two identical sets of semantic differential scales were applied in this study to explore students’ attitudes to assessment used in a traditional in-class and an online course of practical phonetics. The instrument addressed three dimensions of students’ responses: cognitive (seven adjective pairs), affective (eight adjective pairs) and behavioural (three adjective pairs). Seven adjective pairs were framed negatively and were reverse coded prior to the analysis. For each pair of adjectives, the participants were asked to indicate the point between the adjective pair that best reflected their attitude to the assessment process in a given semester. The questionnaire was distributed in the form of an online Qualtrics tool after

the end of the spring semester in June 2020. We calculated the statistical significance of results by means of the paired sample t-test in SPSS.

In the next step, we supplemented the quantitative data with individual interviews involving a draw-a-picture technique (cf. Kalaja, & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019; Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018) or an online open-ended survey. The use of graphic and visual imagery in social sciences dates back to Bronisław Malinowski's use of photographs and illustrations in his anthropological work (cf. Kalaja & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2018). In studies on FL education, hand-drawn illustrations have been successfully implemented to explore linguistic landscapes (Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019), multilingual practices (Pitkänen-Huhta & Rothoni, 2018), and teacher and learner beliefs and perceptions (Chik, 2018).

Shortly before the interview, the participants were requested to draw two pictures and formulate corresponding captions on the basis of their thoughts, experiences, understandings of, and attitudes towards assessment in each semester. When participants' attitudes to assessment in the two semesters did not differ, one picture was sufficient. We then asked the participants to elaborate on the pictures at the beginning of the interviews, which lasted approximately 30 minutes each and were carried out by means of a video-conference tool. The remaining interview questions touched upon the participants' perceptions of the strong and the weak points of the assessment process in both semesters, and their investment in completing the obligatory and optional assignments. The open-ended survey contained the same questions as the interview, except for the draw-a-picture technique, and was introduced as an emergency measure given the small number of interview participants. They could decide whether they preferred to be interviewed by their practical phonetics teacher (the second author) or an exterior researcher (the first author). Prior to the data collection, the participants granted their informed consent, which included explicit permission to

use the pictures they produced for the purpose of research analysis and in scholarly publications. The interviews were then transcribed, anonymized, and pooled together with the survey data. The qualitative data, including the pictures drawn by students, were content analysed on the basis of the three dimensions that informed the structure of the quantitative questionnaire: cognitive, affective, and behavioural responses. These three categories, together with the constituent adjective pairs, were used as a framework for deductive qualitative data analysis. First, we coded the data individually, adding any emerging codes when necessary. In the next step, we compared the findings and agreed on the final coding of the data.

## Results

The presentation of the results starts with the quantitative analysis of the data derived from the online questionnaires. In the second step, we attend to the data collected by means of the interview and draw-a-picture technique in reference to the three types of student response: cognitive, affective, and behavioural.

### Quantitative Data

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics illustrating the comparison of students' perceptions of the in-class and online assessment. On the whole the perceptions of the assessment process in both in-class and online semesters are positive. Except for the 'lenient-strict', 'happy-angry' and 'independent – imposed' pairs, the responses in reference to the second semester tended to lean more towards the negatively phrased adjectives.

Starting from the cognitive dimension, the students rather unanimously described the in-class assessment process as clear, fair, and worthwhile. The evaluations of these categories deteriorated in the online semester, whereas the values of standard deviation (SD) increased. In the affective dimension, except for the 'happy-angry' pair, which remained on the same level, the evaluations

**Table 1** Students' Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioural Reactions to In-Class and Online Assessment

N.º	Adjective Pair	In-Class Assessment		Online Assessment	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>COGNITIVE RESPONSE</b>					
1	clear—confusing	1.7	0.67	2.6	1.58
2	easy—challenging	3.3	0.97	3.5	0.97
3	worthwhile—useless	1.8	0.92	2.4	1.35
4	fair—unfair	1.6	0.97	2.1	1.2
5	lenient—strict	3.3	0.92	3	0.94
6	detailed—general	2.3	0.95	2.7	1.16
7	diverse—monotonous	2.3	1.25	3.1	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2.34</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.82</b>
<b>AFFECTIVE RESPONSE</b>					
8	motivating—demotivating	1.8	0.79	2.8	1.55
9	happy—angry	2.5	1.27	2.5	1.27
10	confident—shy	2.4	1.58	3.8	2.1
11	calm—stressed	2.1	1.37	2.9	1.97
12	pleasant—unpleasant	1.8	1.03	2.2	1.23
13	secure—insecure	2.4	1.26	2.9	1.85
14	cheerful—frustrated	2.7	1.49	3.4	2.07
15	exciting—boring	2.6	1.17	3	1.15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>1.13</b>
<b>BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSE</b>					
16	active—passive	1.6	0.84	2.6	1.43
17	organised—chaotic	2.4	1.35	3.3	1.7
18	independent—imposed	3.3	1.34	2.4	0.84
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2.13</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.97</b>

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of the online assessment were more negative in comparison with the first semester, especially with regard to the level of stress and self-confidence. Additionally, the relatively high SD values in the evaluations of the online assessment suggest great variability in students' responses, which is particularly visible in the 'confident—shy' and 'cheerful—frustrated' pairs. In the behavioural dimension, although students indicated that online assessment entailed more independence, they described it as more passive. The analysis of SD values indicates that the students tended to

be less unanimous in their reactions to the online assessment than the one conducted in-class.

Since the assumption of normal distribution was met, paired t-tests were calculated for the whole scale, the constituent subscales, and the individual items to determine whether the students' attitudes to the two modes of assessment were statistically different. With the alpha level set at 0.05, a significant difference was established between the participants' overall attitudes to in-class vs. online assessment ( $df=9$ ;  $t=-3.13$ ;  $p=0.012$ ), as well as in



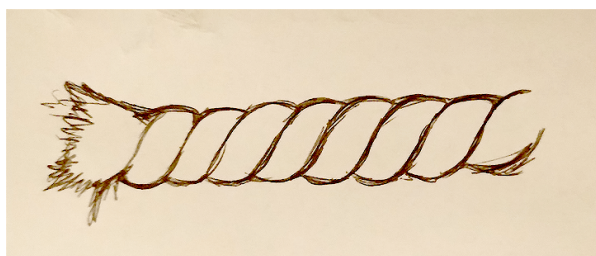
terms of the cognitive ( $df=9$ ;  $t=3.07$ ;  $p=0.13$ ) and behavioural response ( $df=9$ ;  $t= -2.492$ ;  $p=0.034$ ). Similar analyses for individual questionnaire items revealed statistical significance in the following adjective pairs: ‘demotivating—motivating’ ( $t= -0.246$ ,  $p=.015$ ), ‘active—passive’ ( $t=-2.34$ ,  $p=.023$ ) and ‘confident—shy’ ( $t=3.28$ ,  $p=.01$ ).

**Qualitative Data**

The qualitative data analysis was structured around three main categories of students’ responses: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. For the sake of brevity, only selected, most representative pictures drawn by participants will be presented.

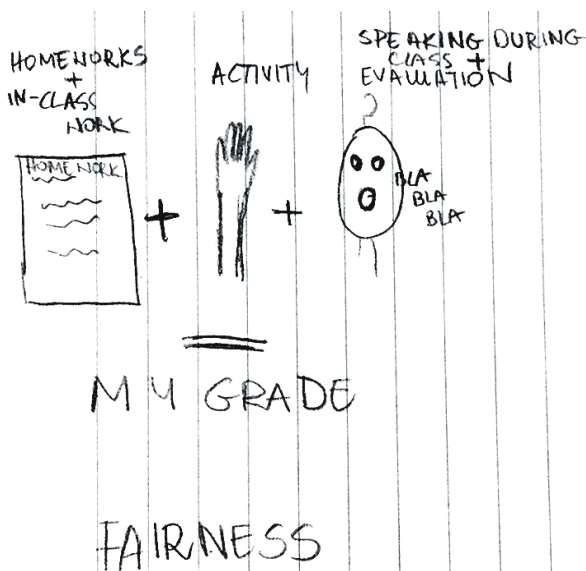
*Fall Semester —In-Class Course*

In terms of the cognitive dimension, Participant 1 [P1] entitled his/her drawing as “The working mechanism” (Figure 1) and explained that “a rope has a beginning and an end. (...) so the whole rope for me was the first semester which was, well, essentially how it was supposed to be.”



**Figure 1** “The Working Mechanism”—A Drawing Illustrating In-Class Assessment [P1]

In their evaluations of the assessment process, most of the participants highlighted that the assessment was fair, which was strengthened by the fact that two out of four illustrations were entitled “Fairness” (one presented in Figure 2). It was emphasised that the assessment was clear, transparent, and involved no ambiguity. All the participants believed that the grades reflected their engagement and/or skills. As P5 pointed out, “my final



**Figure 2** “Fairness”—A Drawing Illustrating In-Class Assessment [P4].

grade reflected my learning efforts because I received quite a high grade which, in my opinion, fully corresponds to the progress I made.” In the statement “in this course I got the real feedback”, P2 underlined that, unlike in some other courses, feedback in the phonetics course was detailed and offered in-depth comments that helped students improve their competences and track progress. One student drew an open door to illustrate that the assessment process would “open [his] eyes to new perspectives and new horizons,” and new possibilities of developing pronunciation skills. On the other hand, P7 perceived the content of assessment as excessively challenging as he/she would rather focus on the basics.

Regarding the affective aspects, the participants expressed predominantly positive feelings towards the subject, the teacher, and the assessment. They underlined that they felt calm and peaceful throughout the process. In the participants’ opinions, the tension was minimised by ongoing, continuous assessment based on clear rules and criteria, individual or group feedback sessions, and such anxiety-reducing techniques as playing music during tests. As P2 explained, “I had this feeling and later I discussed it with my colleagues [that] we went into the assessment and before we

knew it, it was already over.” In contrast, for one person, who considered assessment challenging (see above), it was the source of embarrassment, whereas two persons voiced critical opinions about the written phonetic transcription test which P2 described as “less important, (...) inferior to the oral part, which in my mind was like the real part.”

A few students completed some additional assignments as they were encouraged by the positive atmosphere, an interesting and creative task, the perceived usefulness of feedback, and the clarity of assessment. P5 noted that such tasks served as a driving force “in a time of my laziness.” However, other students admitted that it was the grade that motivated them to engage in extra activities or do homework: “an extra grade is always welcome [laughter] in a positive way” [P3]. Even though P1 was aware of the value of the additional activities, she/he failed to do them: “[it was] an encouragement to try some tasks or try some exercises at home, which would improve one’s pronunciation and I didn’t do those.” Such optional tasks were juxtaposed with the obligatory homework exercises, which P1 did “because when we [the class] meet on weekly basis, you’re constantly, you have more invigilation.” She/he further explained: “In class you’re naked. You can’t really hide anything, so you know everything will be checked, so therefore, well, at least I did motivate myself to do more things.”

*Spring Semester — Online Course*

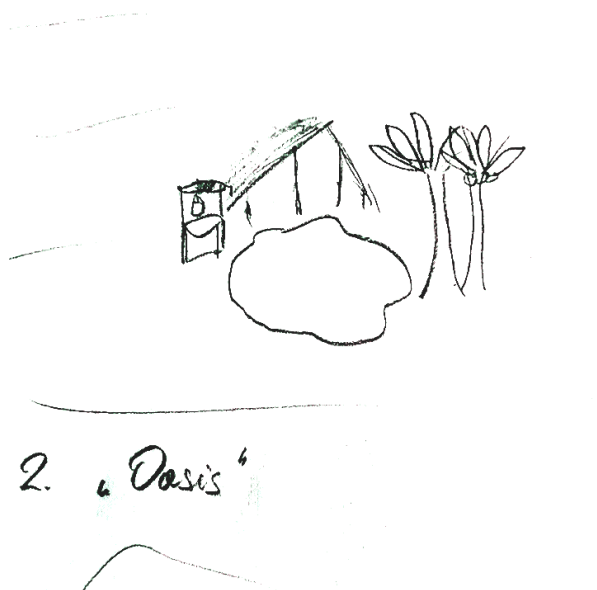
Most of the participants summed up the assessment positively, saying e.g., “I don’t have any major complaints when it comes to assessment. I didn’t see much difference in assessment” [P3]. It seems, however, that many shared the opinion of P1, who used the term “impaired mechanism” in reference to online assessment. As in the case of the in-class semester, the participant drew again a rope (see Figure 3), and explained:

it’s also a rope. It also has a beginning and end, but we can see that it’s being torn apart. We can see that the rope is very tense. It’s likely to be damaged. So there were some difficulties on the way.



**Figure 3** “The Impaired Mechanism” —A Drawing Illustrating Online Assessment [P1]

We will start with the cognitive evaluations of assessment, which at the same time lead to several emotional and behavioural reactions. Regarding the clarity of online assessment, most of the participants claimed it was well-organised and clear. As P2 put it, it “was very clear, very well-explained, (...), nothing surprising,” which contributed to their sense of security. This is reflected in the picture of P2 (see Figure 4), who drew an oasis and commented: “the phonetics assessment was sort of an oasis (...). It was like a safe haven that I knew I could, sort of, rely on.” The student explained



**Figure 4** “Oasis” —A Drawing Illustrating Online Assessment [P2]

the feeling of security by referring again to the lack of ambiguity in assessment. As he put it, "I knew that this assessment would be according to some standard (...), it was familiar to me. I knew from the previous semester what to work on, the form was quite similar, so it was all known and sort of safe. It was a peaceful place amongst the chaos."

P4 had a different impression, stating as follows: "the second semester, as much as I really enjoyed the class, was a bit of (...) an unknown when it came to the final grade." It was further illustrated in a drawing representing a question mark and entitled "A stressful unknown." All the participants claimed the final grade they received at the end of the online semester was fair (e.g. "Yeah, I think I received a grade that reflected my stage of pronunciation skills" [P1]). Some students, however, had the feeling it was more their effort that determined the final grade rather than their skills ("In fact I think the final mark reflected the amount of work and effort I put this semester" [P3]). Others, e.g., P2, believed that "perhaps the grade was more reflective of the skills and less reflective of the actual (...) effort."

The problem of fairness was also indicated by most of the students in reference to the online written tests. Many of them complained that the time for providing the responses was too short, which, as they thought, did not allow them to show their actual knowledge ("I was feeling a bit unfair because I knew I was prepared and still I wouldn't receive max points because of just the time" [P1]) and made them stressed. According to some students, the fairness of the written transcription tests was also negatively affected by their preference for pen and paper rather than online tests, and open-ended rather than multiple choice tests: "seeing it [transcriptions] on the computer is a bit different than transcribing by me. It's easier for me with the IPA to write it down with my hand," said P4. On the other hand, P3 commented on the general weaknesses of multiple-choice tests, claiming as follows: "I think this could not have been avoided, but the grades for this part did not represent the

reality too well, [...] but rather assessed the ability to shoot." Finally, students' doubts about the reliability of the online test were also strengthened by their anxiety related to encountering technical problems while writing. Student P1 explained as follows: "...it was much more tense for me because I was worried not only about my skills in transcription, but also about the condition of my Internet. [...] So it was like extra baggage on the test." However, further analyses of students' responses revealed that the feeling of security during online classes, which some considered even higher than during in-class meetings, was due to yet another factor. As P1 explained, he/she did not do the homework as "it's easier to hide behind the computer (...), hide things we didn't do." She/he added that it is different in class, where "you feel ashamed in a way for not doing them [homework assignments] and you feel responsible in a way because that's your fault." Participant P2 also confessed that she/he rarely did homework assignments not only because she/he did not have time, studying in two faculties, but also because they were not graded. Similarly, the assurance of being secure, of the teacher not punishing the students with fail grades for not having done the homework, allowed P4 to remain more passive and not to do some homework or optional tasks: "We didn't have to send them (...). We just had to have them with us. I sometimes didn't do them just because I would forget, or I wouldn't have the motivation to do them, have the stress or fear that if I don't do them, it's going to be something bad." Since many of the homework assignments were voluntary, it was up to the students whether they would receive qualitative feedback from the teacher. Although P1 considered him/herself an autonomous learner, it is clear that he/she failed to understand that seeking feedback on one's own performance (cf. Cotterall, 2000) is an important element of learner autonomy:

some people will ask for the feedback and some people will not and I think I belong rather to the second group of the people that I [sic] like to work autonomously and I'm kind of scared of remarks sometimes.

So when someone's not giving me remarks directly, I'm not willing pretty [sic] to ask for them, so I probably did receive less feedback. [P1]

Some students, however, especially those who were more grade-oriented (e.g., P3), were still active and motivated to do most of the optional tasks. Moreover, it turned out that this was not only due to extrinsic motivation, but also because certain exercises were considered particularly worthwhile for them. Among these exercises were the presentations on various accents or writing dialogues filled with particular sounds, which “was simply a good, creative, challenging task” that allowed the students to “further develop” (P3).

As regards other emotional reactions, participant P4 expressed feeling weird and unnatural during online assessment: “it wasn't as natural and easy-going as it was in the first semester, because not everyone had the chance to speak up and be heard properly.” Although she/he regarded her/himself to be the most active student, she/he still had the feeling of not having practised enough: “I knew I was speaking the most out of the class because I try to be active, but it was one minute per week or even less. It was a bit weird and stressful.” On the other hand, she/he enjoyed taking assessment at home “I think the assessment online, the final speaking exam was less stressful. You can sit in your own chair, wear anything you want and still be comfortable. [...]. But I just think if it wasn't for the pandemic, I would love to get back to the institute.” Student P5 shared another affective and behavioural response to online on-spot formative assessment, stressing that “feedback of tasks couldn't be as fast as in the case of normal classes” and that she/he favoured formative assessment provided to her/him individually: “it was complicated for me to speak and discuss my mistakes because I felt that everyone has to hear it and spend their time on it instead of doing something more useful.” On the other hand, P7 acknowledged being happy about not having “direct contact with other students” for it made her/him less stressful. Although a few more students claimed they

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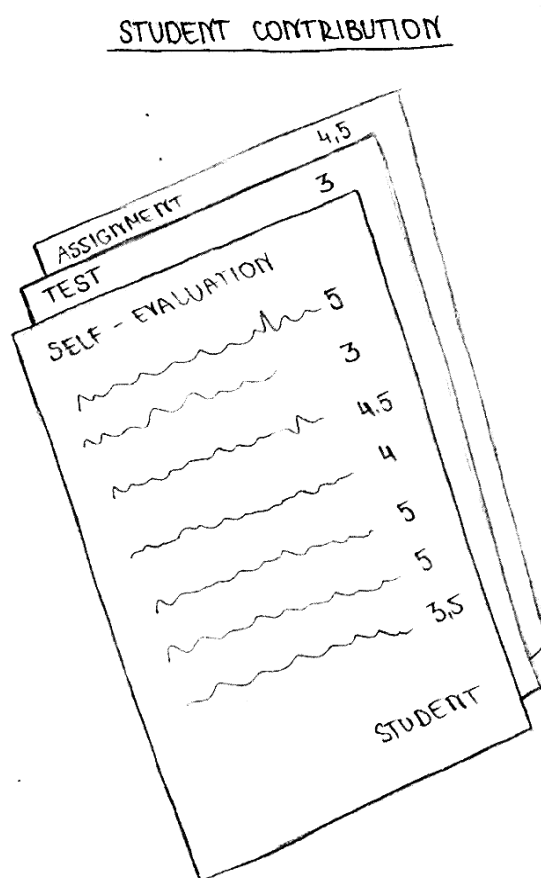


Figure 5 “Student Contribution” —A Drawing Illustrating Online Assessment [P2]

enjoyed working individually, since they could “talk a lot to themselves” [P7] and freely organize their time and work [P1, P2, P3], some found it difficult to motivate themselves to “do anything due to not being able to communicate in real life with others and spending almost all the time at home” [P5] or finding individual oral practice particularly strange and unnatural (“it's a bit weird practicing by myself in my room during the night” [P4]). Finally, one of the participants strongly stressed the value of self-assessment (see Figure 5), which, according to her/him, was a new worthwhile experience, placing the learner in the centre, and encouraging reflection on how much progress was made and what still needs to be worked on to more successfully direct future work.

## Discussion

The quantitative data indicate that the participants held predominately positive perceptions of assessment in the in-class and online teaching modes; however, in most cases their evaluations of being assessed online leaned towards the negative side of the spectrum. This was confirmed by the statistical calculation, which revealed a significant difference in terms of the students’ overall perceptions of the in-class and online assessment, as well as in terms of cognitive and behavioural responses.

The general attitudes towards the assessment process in both semesters expressed during interviews were also largely positive. The students viewed it as well-organised, fair, clear, adjusted to the level of the students, and detailed. It is undoubtful that in their evaluations of the assessment process the students underlined the value of ongoing, continuous feedback, and formative forms of assessment.

However, a deeper analysis of the pictures and responses indicated that some aspects of online assessment were not perceived as sufficiently fair. From the perspective of the participants, the fairness of the written tests was distorted by the very form of the test (multiple-choice test), the anxiety generated by the short time limit to provide responses, and by the anticipation of technical problems while test taking. Such perceptions were revealed by the students despite the fact that the test was piloted, which gave them a chance to familiarise themselves with and voice their opinion about the test type. Moreover, the test results had normal distributions, which suggests they included a balanced amount of good, bad, and average scores. This poses the question of how to collect evidence of learning certain content (here phonetic transcription and phonological competence), which is normally verified in the form of a written test in a fair and stress-free way, in an online form. This may appear difficult, if we want to avoid resorting to proctoring, which raises a number of privacy-related, environmental, and psychological concerns

(Kharbat & Abu Daabes, 2021). This question becomes even more pertinent in grade-oriented contexts, in which students tend to express positive attitudes to cheating (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2013). It also seems that learners need adequate training in how to effectively manage online assessment and the emotions it evokes.

It appears that participants were very much aware that the attitudes they had to assessment were shaped by their individual differences and learning preferences. As student P1 put it, “It’s really about individuals.” Indeed, it appears that several learner-based factors – their self-perceived and actual levels of pronunciation, initial level of anxiety, preferences towards different strategies of learning, and probably also personality – affected their perceptions of assessment. These individual differences could also explain the lack of confidence experienced by some participants during formative assessment of oral performance provided during online lessons. What supports such a claim is the statistically significant difference in the confident-shy subcategory of the affective responses, with the shyness being higher in the online mode. The highly diversified preferences of learners call for the need to offer a variety of approaches to presentation, practice, and assessment in the two modes of learning.

The analysis of the quantitative data suggests that students’ affective reaction to different modes of assessment did not change. This may be attributed to a wide range of teaching techniques the teacher consciously introduced to create a positive atmosphere and reduce the anxiety level such as individualised feedback, music during tests, and voluntary activities. On the other hand, a more detailed analysis of this subscale implies significant differences in the item referring to students’ perceived motivation and self-confidence. Therefore, a more in-depth exploration of the affective domain in the online environment is needed.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data corroborate certain changes in students’ behavioural

response. Some participants, particularly those who were grade-oriented, used the possibility of “hiding” behind the screen during online classes as an excuse not to do regular homework assignments. At the same time, despite considering themselves autonomous and valuing detailed formative assessment, they did not take advantage of the possibility of receiving systematic feedback from the teacher, which, as stressed by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), they could have made constructive use of.

These findings confirm those of numerous studies which indicate that student engagement, understood here as students’ willingness to interact with the teacher, peers and the course content is central to student learning, which is even more pronounced in distance education, which entails the feeling of isolation and disconnection from the group (Dennen, Darabi, & Smith, 2007; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008). Following the assertion made by Vonderwell et al. (2007, p.323) that “assessment as a process requires that online learning activities facilitate self-assessment, peer-assessment, self-regulatory mechanisms, and learner autonomy,” the assessment tasks in the phonetics course encouraged self-reflection and participatory practice. Nevertheless, not all students were interested in engaging in such activities. The emergency, unexpected, and rather abrupt introduction of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was caused by the external situation and was not the mode of learning the students had signed up for; however, it revealed an urgent need to foster learner autonomy and self-regulation in students at the undergraduate level. Given that student engagement and participation had a direct impact on the effectiveness of the teaching and assessment processes, further studies and training opportunities that focus on student motivation and teacher motivational strategies in online classes are called for. The study findings also confirm earlier assertions (e.g., Qing & Akins, 2005) that although in-class pedagogy, especially the successful one, should inform the instructional planning and implementation of online education, it is necessary to take

into account both the affordances, and constraints of learning and teaching in online environments.

The students’ propensity to hide behind a computer screen and remain inactive was also reflected in their unresponsiveness to invitations to the present study. Despite the initial declarations the students made during one-on-one online sessions with teachers, in the end only a fraction of students decided to participate in the project. The poor responsiveness of the students in this online study was somehow surprising, given our positive experiences of data collection in the same institution in the past. This observation indicates a more general problem of conducting online research, and a further search for effective and efficient ways of gathering data online is necessary. Consequently, although the study enriches our understanding of how learners view in-class and online assessment, caution is needed in drawing clear-cut conclusions. Additionally, we are aware that the comparison of students’ perceptions of two different modes of assessment would have been more accurate if the data concerning the in-class assessment had been collected directly after the end of the semester. However, it must be taken into account that the research design and data collection took place in a time of unprecedented uncertainty and exceptionally heavy workload that the transition from in-class to online learning entailed on the part of the researchers and participants.

Considering the methodological choices in the present study, we believe that the three instruments complemented each other and enabled both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and discussion centred around the three types of student response. Of note is that we found the participants’ commentary on the illustrations during interviews essential to fully understand the essence of the visual conceptualisations and the metaphors they used. Finally, the draw-a-picture technique seemed interesting for the interview participants, who eagerly submitted their illustrations and elaborated on the content.

## Conclusions

The present study indicates that despite university students' predominantly positive affective response to the transition from a traditional in-class to online assessment in a practical phonetics course, there was a marked contrast in their cognitive and behavioural response, which was mainly shaped by the level of learner autonomy, agency, motivation, and individual learning styles, and to a lesser extent, anxiety and technological limitations. Whereas the time management, content, and structure of assessment, except for an online test with strict time limits, did not raise the participants' concerns, it appears that students did not fully benefit from the informal and formative forms of assessment offered by the instructor. In light of students' rather passive participation in the online classes and tasks, there is a need to implement a wider systemic approach to fostering learner autonomy at the undergraduate level, as well as to introduce more interim measures of eliciting student work in online classes.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to express our deepest gratitude to all the participants who took part in the study. We are most grateful to them for sacrificing their free time, spending it again in front of the screens, to provide us with all the necessary information. It is only thanks to their involvement that we have been able to shed more light on the matters presented in this paper. Many thanks!

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# LAS TUTORÍAS DE ESCRITURA ACADÉMICA PRESENCIALES Y VIRTUALES: ¿QUÉ PODEMOS APRENDER SOBRE SUS ESTRATEGIAS DIDÁCTICAS?

FACE-TO-FACE AND VIRTUAL ACADEMIC WRITING TUTORING SESSIONS: WHAT CAN BE LEARNT FROM THEIR DIDACTIC STRATEGIES?

LES TUTORATS D'ÉCRITURE ACADÉMIQUE PRÉSENTIELS ET VIRTUELS : QU'EST-CE QUE NOUS POUVONS APPRENDRE SUR SES STRATÉGIES DIDACTIQUES ?

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## RESUMEN

En el contexto hispanico, han surgido los centros de escritura y las tutorías, los cuales se han debido adaptar a la educación a distancia, por causa de la emergencia sanitaria de la COVID-19. No obstante, aún hay pocas evidencias con respecto a cómo funcionan las tutorías en esa modalidad de educación. A partir de lo anterior, este trabajo tuvo como objetivo analizar las estrategias didácticas que utilizaron dos tutoras pares durante las tutorías de escritura presenciales que ofrecieron antes de la pandemia y las virtuales, realizadas durante la pandemia, luego de un programa específico de formación. Para ello, mediante una investigación cuantitativa-cualitativa, se realizó un análisis de contenido, por medio del *software* MAXQDA, de las transcripciones de 16 tutorías (8 presenciales y 8 virtuales). Los resultados dan cuenta de una prevalencia general de estrategias cognitivas, sobre todo la pregunta, junto con instructivas, como la sugerencia y la explicación. No obstante, se perciben diferencias en los tipos de tutorías y se confirma una tendencia a centrarse más en el estudiante y en el proceso en las tutorías virtuales. Estos resultados sugieren que las tutorías virtuales son una alternativa útil en el acompañamiento del proceso de escritura a estudiantes universitarios.

**Palabras clave:** centros de escritura; COVID-19; escritura académica; estrategias didácticas; tutorías presenciales; tutorías virtuales.

## ABSTRACT

In Spanish-speaking settings, newly-emerged writing tutoring centers have seen the need to adapt to emergency remote education due to the health emergency brought about by COVID-19. However, there is lack of evidence regarding how

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writing tutoring actually works under this education modality. Drawing on the above, this article aimed to analyse the didactic strategies used by two peer tutors in both face-to-face writing tutoring sessions that occurred before the pandemic and online sessions taking place during the pandemic, after having undergone a specific training program. Data were collected through a quantitative-qualitative approach, and the MAXQDA software was used to do a content analysis of 16 tutoring session (8 face-to-face and 8 online) transcriptions. Findings show a prevalence of cognitive approaches, mainly questioning; along with instructional approaches, such as suggestion and explanation. Nonetheless, differences are perceived between the various types of tutoring sessions, along with a trend toward a more student-centered approach in online tutoring sessions. These results suggest online tutoring sessions are a useful alternative when accompanying the writing process in university students.

**Keywords:** Writing centers; COVID-19; academic writing; didactic strategies; face-to-face tutoring sessions; online tutoring sessions.

### RÉSUMÉ

Dans le contexte hispanique, des centres d'écriture et leurs tutorats émergents ont dû s'adapter à l'enseignement à distance, en raison de l'urgence sanitaire du COVID-19. Cependant, il n'y pas beaucoup d'évidence sur le fonctionnement des sessions de tutorat dans ce mode d'éducation. Sur la base de ce qui précède, ce travail visait à analyser les stratégies didactiques utilisées par deux pairs tuteurs dans des tutoriels d'écriture en présentiel avant la pandémie et virtuels pendant la pandémie, après un modèle de formation spécifique. Pour ce faire, à travers une recherche quantitative-qualitative, une analyse de contenu a été réalisée, à l'aide du logiciel MAXQDA, des transcriptions de 16 tutoriels (8 en présentiel et 8 virtuels). Les résultats montrent une prévalence générale des stratégies cognitives, en particulier la question, ainsi que des stratégies instructives, telles que la suggestion et l'explication. Cependant, des différences sont perçues dans les types de tutoriels, ce qui confirme une tendance à se concentrer davantage sur l'étudiant et le processus dans les tutoriels virtuels. Ces résultats suggèrent que les tutorats virtuels sont une alternative utile pour accompagner le processus d'écriture des étudiants universitaires.

**Mots-clés :** centres d'écriture ; COVID-19 ; écriture académique ; stratégies d'enseignement ; tutoriels présentiels ; tutoriels virtuels.

## Introducción

Frente a los obstáculos y desafíos de escritura que encaran los estudiantes universitarios al ingresar a la educación superior, son diferentes las iniciativas que se pueden implementar para abordarlos. Así, se despliegan iniciativas puntuales, remediales o de nivelación, como cursos de comunicación escrita al inicio de la carrera, talleres sobre géneros discursivos académicos o recursos digitales que orientan acerca de aspectos formales de la lengua, las fases del proceso de escritura, los géneros académicos o las convenciones específicas de las disciplinas. También se ofrecen soluciones más sistemáticas y transversales, como las asesorías y el trabajo conjunto entre profesores especialistas en la enseñanza de la escritura y docentes de las asignaturas, así como propuestas de escritura insertas en el currículo o desarrolladas en las disciplinas de los programas de formación y las tutorías de los centros de escritura.

Si bien estas propuestas más sistemáticas, en varios casos, se han llevado a cabo inicialmente para elevar la calidad de la formación profesional (Thais *et al.*, 2012), asimismo se han consolidado como dispositivos que promueven la equidad y la inclusión, pues responden a las barreras que enfrenta el estudiantado al tratar de adaptarse a las prácticas de lectura y escritura de las comunidades académicas (Natale y Stagnaro, 2017). Estas iniciativas han sido particularmente relevantes en el contexto iberoamericano, donde la admisión a la educación superior ha tenido un notable crecimiento, debido a políticas públicas de equidad y democratización de la educación, por lo que se ha recibido una mayor cantidad de estudiantes tradicionalmente excluidos o desaventajados por razones socioeconómicas, étnicas, territoriales o de género (Ezcurra, 2013).

Como lo mencionamos anteriormente, dentro de las iniciativas más sistemáticas se inscriben las *tutorías de escritura*, que atienden a los estudiantes en el marco de un centro o programa de escritura, y también en proyectos de innovación docente (Núñez y Errázuriz, 2020). Estas tutorías

corresponden a instancias de atención personalizada o en pequeños grupos de estudiantes, cuya naturaleza en general contribuye a imprimir una mayor calidad y equidad en la formación. Entre los motivos que fundamentan ofrecer estas instancias a la medida para los estudiantes destacan las características personales de cada uno de ellos; la diversidad de sus demandas, dificultades e intereses, así como la falta de formación de muchos profesores en la enseñanza de la escritura en las disciplinas que imparten (Núñez, 2020).

Sin embargo, aún contamos con poca información respecto de lo que ocurre en la instancia de interacción de tutoría en el ámbito hispánico, especialmente en línea, dado que casi la totalidad de las investigaciones disponibles han sido realizadas en el contexto anglosajón. Es más, la emergencia sanitaria de pandemia provocada por la COVID-19 ha ahondado la brecha de desigualdad en educación, debido a la dificultad de acceso a la enseñanza en línea, la deserción estudiantil y la falta de formación de los docentes sobre la enseñanza a distancia (Unesco, 2020). Asimismo, dado que en la mayor parte de los centros de escritura las tutorías son presenciales, estos se han visto en la necesidad de reformular sus prácticas y adaptar las tutorías a la modalidad virtual.

Por ello, el objetivo general de esta investigación fue analizar las estrategias didácticas que utilizaron dos tutoras pares en las tutorías de escritura presenciales antes de la pandemia y virtuales durante la pandemia, luego de un modelo específico de formación. Así, este trabajo pretende dar cuenta de las dinámicas que surgen en las tutorías y que se pueden tener en consideración en la futura formación sobre didáctica de la escritura y, en concreto, sobre la retroalimentación de textos de tutores de escritura y docentes de diferentes niveles académicos.

## Marco teórico

En esta sección, se presenta el concepto de *tutoría de escritura* y se atiende a los fundamentos pedagógicos de las tutorías y sus características,

así como a sus aspectos positivos. Por último, se exponen las diferentes estrategias didácticas que se pueden llevar a cabo en las tutorías

### Conceptualización de las tutorías de escritura

Las tutorías de escritura, cuyos tutores son estudiantes, son consideradas como tutorías entre iguales o pares. En ellas, tutores pares con mayor experiencia en la carrera y en tareas de expresión escrita monitorean el proceso de escritura de un texto de estudiantes menos preparados (Alzate y Peña, 2010). Por tanto, por lo general, los tutores son de cursos y edades superiores.

Además de su mayor experiencia académica, los tutores estudiantes cuentan con una formación explícita para realizar el rol de tutores de escritura en el marco de un centro de escritura, o de programas o proyectos de innovación enfocados en el desarrollo de la escritura. Así, el vínculo que se construye entre el tutor y el tutorado es asimétrico; no obstante, es más simétrico que la relación entre profesor y alumno. Por ende, esta relación promueve un aprendizaje mutuo, debido a que no se califica el texto trabajado y los participantes son alumnos universitarios que están pasando por experiencias similares (Chois *et al.*, 2017).

En consecuencia, la *tutoría de escritura* es una acción pedagógica, en la que un tutor formado interactúa oralmente con un estudiante y acompaña su proceso de escritura de un texto académico o disciplinar. Esto, con el propósito de fomentar la reflexión sobre el texto y el tema abordado, la metacognición acerca del proceso de escritura y las estrategias aplicadas y, así, promover la mejora del estudiante como escritor (Núñez, 2020). De igual modo, la *tutoría en línea* es concebida de manera similar, pero con la particularidad de que este trabajo es mediado por la tecnología, a través de diversas plataformas o recursos, tanto de forma sincrónica como asincrónica (Hewett, 2006; Skagen *et al.*, 2009).

Respecto del rol de tutor, cabe destacar la idea de North (1982) de que este no es un editor ni

corrector de textos. En cambio, sí está entre sus funciones fomentar que el estudiante desarrolle su sentido de autoría, formular preguntas a partir del texto (Alzate y Peña, 2010) y apoyar el aprendizaje sobre la escritura (Cooper, 1994). Así, el tutor no debe imponer su estilo de escritura o presentar el suyo como el único adecuado; por el contrario, debe respetar el estilo ajeno y apoyarse en la conformación de la identidad del estudiante como escritor. Por ende, en la tutoría, el tutor llevará a cabo diversos roles, por ejemplo, de lector, comentarista, aprendiz, consejero, colaborador, entre otros (Ryan y Zimmerelli, 2006).

### Fundamentos pedagógicos y características de las tutorías de escritura

Las tutorías de escritura se basan inicialmente en las teorías constructivista y sociocultural de Piaget (1970) y Vygotsky (1978), respectivamente. En este sentido, serían, de acuerdo con Monty (2013), un espacio en donde se favorece la “zona de desarrollo próximo” —entendida como el espacio entre lo que un individuo es capaz de hacer por sí mismo y lo que puede aprender gracias a la ayuda de otro—, y a través de la interacción oral entre estudiante y tutor, el primero realiza una tarea que no habría podido lograr por sí mismo (Castellà y Aliagas, 2016). De ahí que durante la tutoría se promueva, en palabras de Scardamalia y Bereiter (1992), una transformación del conocimiento mientras se escribe y se reflexiona, y no una simple reproducción de este. Es decir, el conocimiento es reflexionado y mediado por el tutorado y el tutor, a través del proceso escritura y la interacción sobre este.

En cuanto a las experiencias exitosas de tutorías de escritura tanto en España como en Latinoamérica, se han constatado algunos de los beneficios que aportan, dado que: 1) promueven la integración, en la comunidad académica, de estudiantes de los primeros años de la carrera, de quienes presentan dificultades en escritura y de aquellos que tienen diferentes necesidades; 2) brindan la posibilidad de conocer géneros discursivos académicos y dialogar sobre ellos; 3) elevan la motivación hacia la mejora

de la escritura, las actitudes positivas hacia esta, promueven el autoconcepto como escritores, la autoeficacia y, por tanto, el desempeño académico; 4) ofrecen una experiencia de aprendizaje valiosa para ambas partes, pues los tutores toman conciencia sobre su propio aprendizaje al activar procesos de metacognición; 5) fomentan valores de solidaridad y socialización, y aportan al desarrollo personal, académico y profesional de los tutores, 6) flexibilizan el tiempo y el espacio, en el caso de la tutoría virtual (Alzate y Peña, 2010; Bach y Montané, 2016; Castellà y Aliagas, 2016; Choix *et al.*, 2017; Errázuriz, 2016, 2017; Holtz, 2014; Jones *et al.*, 2006; Kirchhoff, 2016; Skagen *et al.*, 2009; Yergeau *et al.*, 2019), y 7) suponen un reconocimiento académico o económico para los tutores.

En relación con el desarrollo de las tutorías, hay diferentes maneras de llevarlas a cabo, por lo que los estilos de los tutores pueden ser diversos (Dinitz y Kiedaisch, 2003). De hecho, la pertenencia del tutor a la misma disciplina del estudiante se ha considerado especialmente importante (Cromley y Azevedo, 2005). En este sentido, se han reconocido diferentes tipos de tutorías (García-Arroyo y Quintana, 2016; Roldán y Arenas, 2016) y, en general, se pueden identificar dos clases contrapuestas: las primeras se focalizan en el estudiante y en el proceso, por lo que es el tutorado quien lee el texto, formula dudas de escritura y recoge las recomendaciones del tutor. En cambio, en las tutorías enfocadas en el texto o producto, y el tutor, es este último quien protagoniza la sesión y lee el texto, identifica los errores y emite preguntas que el estudiante responde. No obstante, si bien estos son dos modelos dicotómicos, entre ambos extremos pueden presentarse diversos tipos de tutorías híbridas, que internalizan ambos modelos, pero en las que predomina uno u otro según las circunstancias, el contexto y la experticia del tutor.

A nuestro juicio, sería recomendable promover un *modelo de tutorías de escritura colaborativo*, en la que el tutor participa en la resolución de las tareas de escritura, monitorea el proceso del estudiante

y apoya su toma de decisiones fundamentadas. En efecto, en las sesiones de tutorías, los tutores suelen destacar la relevancia de fomentar un buen vínculo con los estudiantes y el de estos últimos con sus escritos, el trabajo cooperativo entre ambas partes y la comunicación adecuada de sus reflexiones a los tutorados (Harrington *et al.*, 2007).

En este sentido, de acuerdo con Jones *et al.* (2006), las tutorías en línea de escritura académica en inglés como segunda lengua tienden a ser menos jerárquicas, más igualitarias y menos directivas que las presenciales. Lo anterior es confirmado por Hewett (2006) en el ámbito anglosajón, dado que los cambios positivos en la escritura y la revisión de los textos radicarón en la interacción en línea colaborativa y menos instructiva entre tutor y estudiante. Sin embargo, en el contexto hispánico, las tutorías presenciales han sido más valoradas, dada la posibilidad de establecer una relación directa y personal más valiosa para el desarrollo académico, según el alumnado (Martínez *et al.*, 2016). Por el contrario, Holtz (2014) plantea que las tutorías en línea son una alternativa viable que ofrece apoyos y recursos que pueden ser incluso más eficaces. En consecuencia, cabría indagar qué ocurre en el ámbito hispanohablante al respecto, especialmente si consideramos que las distintas experiencias en relación con tutorías virtuales, sobre todo en la esfera angloparlante, dan cuenta de que son instancias necesarias y deseables para los estudiantes como parte de los servicios que las universidades debieran brindarles para fortalecer el proceso de escritura (Núñez y García, 2018).

A propósito del punto anterior sobre la comunicación con los estudiantes, la investigación sobre la retroalimentación de las tareas de escritura se ha enfocado principalmente en el tipo de comentarios que hacen los profesores en sus devoluciones escritas (Natale, 2016) o los propios alumnos en actividades de revisión de pares en el contexto de los cursos de las carreras. Algunas evidencias exponen el modo en que la retroalimentación que pone el foco en recomendaciones y preguntas provoca una transformación más significativa o profunda

que aquella generada por comentarios directivos (Álvarez *et al.*, 2011).

### Estrategias didácticas de las tutorías de escritura

En relación con las estrategias didácticas para llevar a cabo las tutorías, estas han sido sistematizadas y caracterizadas en varios estudios (Caldwell *et al.*, 2018; Cromley y Azevedo, 2005; Eastmond, 2019; Mackiewicz, 2004, 2005; Mackiewicz y Thompson, 2014, 2018; Roldán y Arenas, 2016). A partir de estas propuestas, nos parece particularmente relevante la planteada por Mackiewicz y Thompson (2014, 2018), debido a su precisión en la categorización. Las autoras plantean dos niveles de análisis: en primer lugar, el *macronivel*, en donde existen las fases de apertura, desarrollo y cierre; y, en segundo lugar, el *micronivel*, que presenta tres dimensiones: la instrucción, el andamiaje cognitivo y el andamiaje motivacional. Con respecto a sus resultados, ellas identificaron un predominio de estrategias instruccionales en diez tutorías analizadas llevadas a cabo por tutores experimentados (Mackiewicz y Thompson, 2014, 2018).

En el contexto del micronivel, en el que nos centramos en este estudio, la *instrucción* es principalmente directiva, debido a que en ella se señala, recomienda o explica qué hacer, y no se promueven

oportunidades para que los estudiantes resuelvan los problemas por sí mismos.

En oposición a la estrategia anterior, la de *andamiaje cognitivo* —propia de tutores más experimentados— fomenta la exploración de soluciones mediante la activación del pensamiento, la reflexión y el diálogo entre el tutor y el estudiante, es decir, a través de la mediación cognitiva del tutor, que puede manifestarse por medio de ocho estrategias: jalonar, leer en voz alta, responder como lector u oyente, mencionar un tema anterior, forzar una elección, incitar, insinuar o sugerir, y demostrar (Molina-Natera, 2019). En efecto, según Calle-Arango (2019), la formulación de preguntas complejas en la instancia de tutoría promueve el aprendizaje profundo y crítico de los estudiantes sobre sus procesos de escritura.

Por último, las estrategias de *andamiaje motivacional* consideran las dimensiones emocionales y afectivas de la tutoría y del proceso de escritura, por lo que los tutores muestran afecto hacia el estudiante o sus logros, para así estimular su participación y confianza, elevar su autoconcepto como escritor y construir un vínculo positivo con el tutorado. Estas estrategias se manifiestan al mostrar interés, elogiar, reforzar la posesión y el autocontrol del tutorado, ser optimista o mostrar humor, y expresar simpatía y empatía (véase Figura 1).

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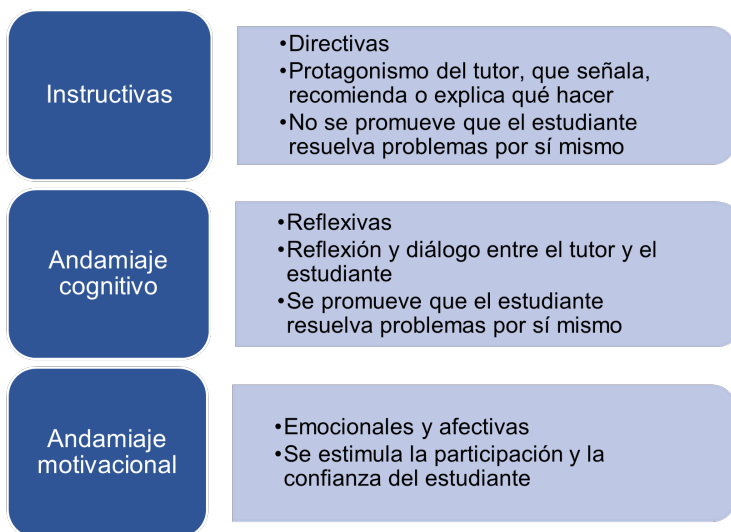


Figura 1 Características de los tipos de estrategias en las tutorías de escritura



## Método

Esta investigación se encuadra dentro de un paradigma de corte mixto, cuantitativo- cualitativo, que se efectuó mediante un análisis de contenido. Esta metodología dispone de tres fases principales (Assarroudi *et al.*, 2018): preparación, organización y presentación. En la primera, se selecciona la muestra y se desarrollan las tutorías, que son grabadas y posteriormente transcritas. En la segunda se establece la matriz de análisis y se definen teóricamente las categorías y los códigos respecto de las estrategias didácticas de las tutorías, que se describirán más adelante. También en esta fase se realiza el análisis de los textos transcritos, que previamente se sometieron a una prueba piloto de codificación. Por último, en la fase de presentación, se exponen los hallazgos del estudio.

Este enfoque ha sido aplicado anteriormente por otras investigaciones que han analizado las tutorías de escritura en centros de escritura (Cromley y Azevedo, 2005; Eastmond, 2019; Mackiewicz, 2004, 2005; Mackiewicz y Thompson, 2014, 2018; Roldán y Arenas, 2016), por considerarse adecuado para comprender la dinámica propia de las tutorías de escritura y la interacción entre tutor y estudiante.

### Participantes

En las tutorías participaron 16 estudiantes y 2 tutoras, que fueron informados del objetivo de la investigación, y todos expresaron su consentimiento explícito, escrito en el caso de las tutoras y oral, registrado mediante grabación, en el caso de los estudiantes.

Las tutorías se realizaron en el Centro de Escritura de la Facultad de Formación de Profesorado y Educación de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

Los estudiantes de las tutorías presenciales cursaban 2.º año del Grado Maestro/a de Educación Primaria; los de las virtuales, 3.º año del Doble Grado de Maestro/a de Educación Infantil y Educación Primaria.

En cuanto a las tutoras, la tutora experta (TE) cursaba el último año (4.º) del Grado de Maestro/a de Educación Primaria en el curso 2019/2020, y en el momento de la recogida de datos había impartido 100 tutorías. Por otra parte, la tutora novel (TN) cursaba 4.º año del Grado de Maestro/a de Educación Infantil y había impartido 27 tutorías.

Las dos tutoras habían recibido previamente una formación de 40 horas de duración en el Centro de Escritura para desempeñarse como tales, centrada en tres módulos: 1) el centro de escritura; 2) el proceso de escritura y los géneros discursivos académicos, y 3) las tutorías.

### Recolección y análisis de los datos

En la investigación, se han analizado las transcripciones de 16 tutorías individuales de media hora de duración, 8 presenciales grabadas en audio y 8 virtuales realizadas a través de videollamada mediante Microsoft Teams. Las tutorías presenciales se hicieron durante el primer cuatrimestre (septiembre a enero) del curso 2019/2020; las virtuales, entre el segundo cuatrimestre (febrero a mayo) del curso 2019/2020 y el primer cuatrimestre del curso 2020/2021.

El cambio de modalidad de tutoría presencial a virtual en el Centro de Escritura se produjo en el mes de marzo de 2020, fecha en la que se decretó el estado de alarma que imponía el confinamiento domiciliario por la COVID-19 y, en consecuencia, las universidades españolas adaptaron su modelo de enseñanza al entorno virtual.

Fueron dos los criterios de selección de los textos de las tutorías: por un lado, eran borradores de la versión final, por lo que se trabajó la fase de revisión del proceso de escritura; por otro, eran ensayos argumentativos, pues este género discursivo es frecuente en los programas de formación docente (Castro *et al.*, 2010; Errázuriz, 2019; Parodi, 2008), lo que es relevante en este contexto, dado que gran parte del desafío cognitivo que implica la literacidad académica se funda en la capacidad de argumentar (Muñoz y Valenzuela, 2015; Van Eemeren, 2001).

Además, la reflexión es una habilidad crucial para la práctica docente (Sun *et al.*, 2011).

Para analizar las estrategias didácticas de las tutorías, se estableció una serie de categorías (véase Tabla 1) a partir de los trabajos de Mackiewicz y Thompson (2014, 2018) y de otras investigaciones (Caldwell *et al.*, 2018; Cromley y Azevedo, 2005; Eastmond, 2019; Mackiewicz, 2005; Roldán y Arenas, 2016; Thompson, 2009). Posteriormente, se efectuó un análisis inductivo-deductivo,

mediante la lectura analítica de los textos transcritos. También se establecieron tres tipos de estrategias (instructivas, cognitivas y motivacionales), que concuerdan en términos generales con la propuesta de Mackiewicz y Thompson (2018): instrucción, andamiaje cognitivo y andamiaje motivacional. Cabe señalar que, a partir del trabajo de Mackiewicz y Thompson (2018), algunas de sus estrategias se han matizado o atenuado, y otras son nuevas; además, presentamos ejemplos propios.

**Tabla 1** Estrategias didácticas de las tutorías de escritura (matriz de análisis)

Tipos de estrategias		Descripción	Ejemplo
Estrategias instructivas	Explicación	Se ofrecen razones, ilustraciones o ejemplos de los consejos ofrecidos	Tutora: "Todo lo que has quitado lo puedes resumir, o sea, puedes decir la misma idea con menos palabras"
	Orientación	Se indica o aconseja al estudiante sobre lo que ha de hacer de forma directa, no mitigada	Tutora: "Estás repitiendo esta idea"
	Sugerencia	Se indica o aconseja al estudiante sobre lo que ha de hacer de forma atenuada, minimizando así la indicación (p. ej. a través de la cortesía negativa)	Tutora: "Yo la quitaría"
Estrategias cognitivas	Completamiento	Se incita a que el estudiante responda, proporcionándole una respuesta o enunciado parcial, y así reducir las posibles respuestas (p. ej. rellenar un espacio en blanco)	Tutora: "Trasmitirle una idea... planteada...". Estudiante: "En una reunión"
	Comprobación	Se comprueba la comprensión del estudiante de algo ya tratado, mediante una interrogación o la solicitud de una explicación	Tutora: "¿Entiendes?", "¿Me explico?"
	Elección	Se ofrecen varias alternativas para que se escoja una	Estudiante: "No tiene uso, más bien". Tutora: "Está en desuso", "no se utiliza"
	Finalidad	Se establece o se busca establecer el objetivo de la tutoría. Se recuerda el objetivo de la tutoría	Tutora: "Vale, entonces, no te interesa quizá tanto la redacción del texto en sí, como saber reducir la extensión"
	Interpretación	Se interpreta el texto del estudiante, es decir, se muestra qué se entiende del fragmento referido. Se parafrasea el texto	Tutora: "Yo, como lectora, al leer esto, me planteo si existe otro gimnasio que no sea el de la planta de abajo"
	Lectura del estudiante en voz alta	El estudiante lee en voz alta fragmentos de su texto con el objetivo de identificar errores de contenido o forma	Tutora: "Pues si te parece, lo vas leyendo tú, que así también te puedes ir dando cuenta mejor de los errores". (Estudiante lee su texto)
	Lectura del tutor en voz alta	Se leen, en voz alta, fragmentos del texto del estudiante, para escuchar lo escrito o la consigna de la tarea de escritura, con el fin de verificar la comprensión del estudiante	Tutora: "Te leo: 'es para transmitirle una idea planteada en un claustro. La idea que hemos planteado [...]'"
	Marcación	Se señala explícitamente un problema, error o aspecto del texto que ha de atenderse	Tutora: "En esa primera oración que has escrito hay algo que falta relacionado con la puntuación"

**Tabla 1** Estrategias didácticas de las tutorías de escritura (matriz de análisis) (cont.)

Tipos de estrategias		Descripción	Ejemplo
Estrategias cognitivas	SopORTE	Se muestra al estudiante un texto modelo, una guía de escritura o una rúbrica, para que aprenda a hacer algo	Tutora: “Mira cómo se plantea en este ejemplo, que es prácticamente igual, pues es un texto argumentativo”.
	Pregunta	Se formulan una o varias preguntas que requieren de la respuesta del estudiante. Las preguntas pueden ser específicas o generales	Tutora: “¿Por qué cambias de párrafo?”
	Recomendación	Se recomienda al estudiante el uso de un recurso para que resuelva el problema, error o aspecto tratado	Tutora: “En la web del centro de escritura hay un recurso sobre cómo escribir un estado de la cuestión”
	Reescritura	Se plantea al estudiante que reescriba un fragmento que contiene un problema, error o aspecto que debe ser atendido	Tutora: “Pues entonces, si no te conviene, reescríbelo como me acabas de decir, y luego vemos cómo queda”
	Remisión	Se remite a un tema, error, problema o aspecto del texto ya tratado	Tutora: “Pero eso ya lo hemos mencionado anteriormente”
	Reticencia	Se hace referencia o se plantea un problema, error o aspecto del texto, mediante una estrategia de cortesía indirecta no convencional	Tutora: “Aun así, lo que yo te quería decir es que si tú dices: ‘porque, según como argumentan...’, así no suena muy bien”
	Solución	Se ofrece la solución al problema, error o aspecto del texto	La tutora lee el texto e indica el cambio: “El motivo por el que nos ponemos en contacto con usted es para transmitirle una idea [coma], que hemos debatido en el claustro [...]”
Estrategias motivadoras	Ánimo/humor	Se anima al estudiante a perseverar en la tarea y mejorar el texto. Se utiliza el humor, mediante bromas relacionadas con el texto o el contexto de la tutoría	Tutora: “Esa tiene tela [que cortar]” (Tras leer una oración, ininteligible, tutor y estudiante se ríen antes y después)
	Elogio	Se señalan los aspectos positivos del texto o de la resolución de los problemas por parte del estudiante	Tutora: “Mucho mejor así. Perfecto”
	Empatía	Se expresa la comprensión de que la tarea es difícil	Tutora: “Este tipo de texto siempre es complicado”
	Identificación	Se hace referencia a experiencias propias relacionadas con la escritura de textos similares	Tutora: “Eso es una duda que yo también suelo tener a veces”. Tutora: “Claro. Yo lo hago igual”
	Interés	Se muestra el interés por el estado emocional del estudiante	Tutora: “¿Ves que no es tan difícil? ¿Estás mejor?”
	Refuerzo	Se incide en que es el estudiante quien debe tomar las decisiones	Tutora: “Entonces, ahora ahí, haces las modificaciones que consideres”. Tutora: “Lo dejo a tu elección”
	Significación	Se mencionan los aspectos aprendidos o trabajados durante o al final de la tutoría, recapitulando lo tratado. Se hace referencia a la relevancia que puede tener lo aprendido en la escritura de futuros textos	Tutora: “Así no estaba en tu texto; esto de la coma entre sujeto y verbo no lo ponías así, y ahora sí”.

Fuente: elaboración propia, con base en Mackiewicz y Thompson (2018).

**Tabla 2** Frecuencia y porcentaje de estrategias utilizadas en las tutorías

Estrategias	Tutorías presenciales		Tutorías virtuales		Total	
	Fi	%	Fi	%	Fi	%
Instructivas	363	35,21	305	30,41	668	32,84
Cognitivas	564	54,70	530	52,84	1094	53,79
Motivadoras	104	10,09	168	16,75	272	13,37
Total	1031	100	1003	100	2034	100

Fi: Frecuencia.

Cada tutoría fue analizada en dos ocasiones por dos investigadores diferentes. Esto permitió triangular y calibrar la codificación, o lo que es lo mismo, señalar, en el *software* de análisis mixto MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020, el uso de las estrategias empleadas por las tutoras y así conocer la frecuencia y la relación entre cada una de ellas.

En cuanto a los análisis, la primera técnica que se realizó fue una matriz de códigos por conjunto de documentos, diferenciando estos según el tipo de tutoría (presencial versus virtual), la tutora (experta versus novel) y los datos totales. Así, se pudo conocer con qué frecuencia se emplearon las estrategias en cada uno de los casos mencionados anteriormente.

Por otro lado, el segundo análisis consistió en un modelo de dos casos entre las tutorías presenciales y virtuales, con el fin de discernir las cinco estrategias más utilizadas en cada tipo de tutoría.

### Resultados

A continuación se presentan los resultados del estudio. En primer lugar, se da cuenta de las estrategias utilizadas en las tutorías presenciales y virtuales. Posteriormente, se muestran los resultados en función del tipo de estrategias (instructiva, cognitiva y motivacional). Por último, se atiende a cómo se relacionan las estrategias más utilizadas en las tutorías.

A partir del análisis efectuado, y con relación al objetivo principal de conocer cuáles son las estrategias didácticas más utilizadas en las tutorías

presenciales y virtuales, en total predominan las estrategias cognitivas, con el 53,79 % de intervenciones, seguidas de las instructivas (32,84 %) y las motivadoras (13,37 %) (véase Tabla 2). Esto muestra que existe una clara consciencia por parte de las tutoras de primar el andamiaje cognitivo, pues estas estrategias constituyen más de la mitad de las empleadas tanto en las tutorías presenciales como en las virtuales. No obstante, se percibe cómo estos resultados varían en función del tipo de tutoría. Así, se produce un descenso en las estrategias instructivas (4,8 %) y cognitivas (1,86 %) en las tutorías virtuales en favor de las estrategias motivadoras (6,66 %).

En cuanto a las estrategias instructivas, la más empleada en el total de los dos tipos de tutoría es la sugerencia (43,56 %), seguida de la explicación (32,33 %) y la orientación (24,10 %). De hecho, esta primera estrategia es la única que aumenta en las tutorías virtuales respecto de las presenciales, ya que de 126 asciende a 165 códigos (véase Tabla 3). Frente a esto, tanto la explicación (-42,33 %) como la orientación (-39 %) disminuyen en las sesiones virtuales.

Con relación a las tutoras, la TN emplea la sugerencia casi el doble de veces que la TE en las tutorías virtuales, diferencia que si bien existía en las presenciales, no era tan acusada. Por otro lado, esta situación se revierte en el uso de la orientación y la explicación, puesto que si bien las dos tutoras reducen la cantidad de códigos en las instancias en línea, esta disminución es mayor en la TN.

Las estrategias cognitivas son, como se ha indicado, las más utilizadas y, tras el análisis, se pueden

**Tabla 3** Frecuencia de estrategias según tutor y tipo de tutoría (matriz de códigos por conjunto de documentos)

	Estrategias	Tutorías presenciales			Tutorías virtuales			Total		
		TE	TN	Tt	TE	TN	Tt	TE	TN	Tt
Instructivas	Explicación	62	75	137	39	40	79	101	115	216
	Orientación	36	64	100	24	37	61	60	101	161
	Sugerencia	53	73	126	57	108	165	110	181	291
Cognitivas	Completamiento	10	5	15	4	8	12	14	13	27
	Comprobación	15	21	36	16	2	18	31	23	54
	Elección	12	30	42	12	23	35	24	53	77
	Finalidad	5	1	6	6	3	9	11	4	15
	Interpretación	29	21	50	19	14	33	48	35	83
	Lectura del estudiante	47	3	50	28	5	33	75	8	83
	Lectura de la tutora	24	66	90	23	45	68	47	111	158
	Marcación	17	23	40	26	44	70	43	67	110
	Pregunta	48	59	107	69	68	137	117	127	244
	Recomendación	9	4	13	13	23	36	22	27	49
	Reescritura	0	3	3	9	1	10	9	4	13
	Remisión	6	1	7	6	9	15	12	10	22
	Retención	14	20	34	8	12	20	22	32	54
	Solución	9	45	54	18	16	34	27	61	88
Soporte	17	0	17	0	0	0	17	0	17	
Motivacionales	Ánimo/Humor	3	4	7	12	9	21	15	13	28
	Elogio	25	43	68	23	40	63	48	83	131
	Empatía	1	0	1	7	4	11	8	4	12
	Identificación	4	10	14	16	6	22	20	16	36
	Interés	0	0	0	10	1	11	10	1	11
	Refuerzo	2	6	8	12	13	25	14	19	33
	Significación	2	4	6	6	9	15	8	13	21
<b>Total</b>		<b>450</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>1003</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>1121</b>	<b>2034</b>

TE: Tutora experta; TN: tutora novel; Tt: suma de ambas.

clasificar en tres grupos, en función de su uso: 1) abundante (> 10 % respecto del total de las estrategias cognitivas), 2) moderado (5 < x < 9,99 %) y 3) escaso (0 < x < 4,99 %). En el primer grupo se encuentran las estrategias de la pregunta (22,33 %), la lectura del tutor (14,44 %) y la marcación (10,05 %). Asimismo, es moderado el uso de la elección (7,03 %), la interpretación (7,58 %), la lectura del estudiante (7,58 %) y la solución (8,04 %). Por último, el uso del resto de estrategias se enmarcaría en el tercer grupo; así, son escasas,

entre otras, las estrategias de reescritura, finalidad y soporte.

Por otro lado, si bien existía una leve disminución de las estrategias cognitivas en las tutorías virtuales, se percibe un considerable aumento de algunas de las estrategias de esta categoría, como: finalidad, marcación, pregunta, recomendación, reescritura y remisión. Al respecto, este incremento es especialmente notorio en la marcación, la pregunta y la recomendación, tanto en la TN como en la experta.

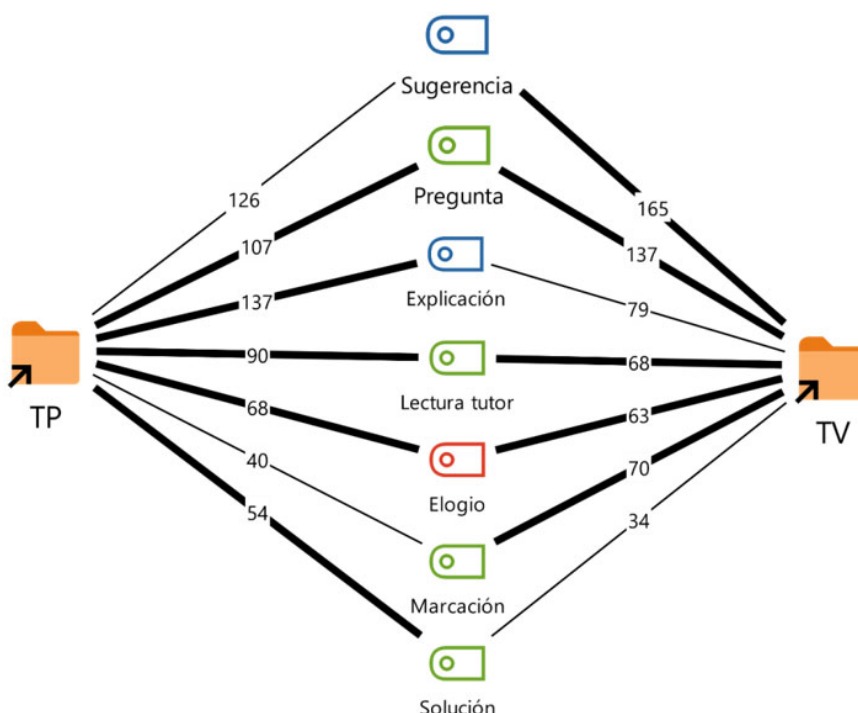
Asimismo, el resto de estrategias disminuye en las tutorías virtuales y este descenso se percibe relevante en las estrategias de lectura del tutor, solución y soporte. Estos datos coinciden con los resultados en función de las tutoras, salvo en el caso de la solución, puesto que la TE aumenta el número de códigos de esta estrategia en las tutorías virtuales. El descenso es notorio, pues dado el considerable menor uso de la solución por parte de la TN en las tutorías virtuales, su frecuencia es del -64,44 %.

En relación con las estrategias motivadoras, la más utilizada es el elogio (48,16 %), con mucha diferencia respecto de las demás, cuyo uso es moderadamente equilibrado, a excepción de las estrategias de empatía e interés. Como se indicó anteriormente, las estrategias motivadoras son las únicas que aumentan en las tutorías virtuales.

Llama la atención al respecto cómo —salvo la identificación— todas las estrategias aumentan considerablemente, de tal manera que en las tutorías virtuales se desarrolla más el ánimo, la empatía,

la identificación, el interés, el refuerzo y la significación. Curiosamente, el elogio —pese a ser la más utilizada— es la única estrategia que disminuye de las siete estrategias de esta categoría. Por otra parte, en cuanto a la diferencia entre la TN y la TE, los resultados muestran que la primera emplea el elogio casi el doble de veces que la segunda. Sin embargo, la TE muestra más empatía e interés por los estudiantes.

Dado que las estrategias más utilizadas varían en función del tipo de tutoría, resulta interesante saber cómo se relacionan estas con el resto de estrategias más empleadas en las tutorías presenciales y virtuales. Como se aprecia en la Figura 2, en las tutorías presenciales, las estrategias más utilizadas en función de su categoría son: la explicación (instructivas), la pregunta (cognitivas) y el elogio (motivadoras). Sin embargo, en las tutorías virtuales —si bien las estrategias cognitivas y motivadoras son las mismas— predomina la estrategia instructiva de la sugerencia frente a la explicación. Estos datos contemplan diferentes



**Figura 2** Estrategias más utilizadas en tutorías presenciales (TP) y virtuales (TV) (modelo de casos). Convenciones: azul: instructivas; verde: cognitivas; naranja: motivadoras.

matices que no se pueden dejar de atender. Así, es pertinente señalar que la orientación y la lectura del tutor son estrategias muy utilizadas en ambos tipos de tutorías. También llama la atención que en las tutorías presenciales predomine la solución, respecto a la marcación en las tutorías virtuales.

A partir de los datos, se puede afirmar que las estrategias más utilizadas permiten observar un modelo de tutoría en donde predomina la sugerencia o la explicación (y en ocasiones la orientación), la pregunta, la lectura de la tutora y, por último, la marcación o la solución. A modo de ejemplo, en la Tabla 4 se muestra una secuencia prototípica de una tutoría por parte de la TE.

**Discusión y conclusiones**

El objetivo de las tutorías de escritura es desarrollar la competencia en expresión escrita de los estudiantes universitarios a partir de sus propios textos. Para ello, se promueve la reflexión, como consecuencia de la puesta en práctica de estrategias didácticas por parte de un tutor.

Al respecto, estas estrategias se podrían asociar con dos modelos dicotómicos de tutorías, uno centrado

en el estudiante y el proceso de escritura, y otro centrado en el tutor y el producto. No obstante, algunos factores como la propia competencia escrita del estudiante, la calidad del texto trabajado o el nivel de experticia del tutor sugieren abogar por un modelo de tutoría híbrida, que permita no asociar unas estrategias a un modelo concreto y “correcto” de tutoría.

En este sentido, el grado de frecuencia de aparición de algunas estrategias no tiene por qué ser elevado. Por ejemplo, la estrategia de finalidad no es necesario que se utilice continuamente; bastaría con contemplarla al inicio de la tutoría o recuperarla en el caso de que el objetivo se difuminara durante la sesión. Por el contrario, llamaría la atención que en un modelo de tutoría que propicie la reflexión y el diálogo no hubiera una presencia considerable de estrategias como la pregunta, la interpretación, la explicación o la sugerencia.

En cuanto a los resultados del trabajo presentado, como se ha indicado, existe una tendencia tanto en las tutorías presenciales como en las virtuales a utilizar en mayor grado las estrategias cognitivas, seguidas de las instructivas y motivadoras. En este sentido, por un lado, los resultados son

**Tabla 4** Secuencia prototípica de estrategias de una tutora experta

Fragmento de tutoría	Estrategia y explicación
Estudiante: “Pero no explicamos esa idea como tal, sino que la hemos explicado en el siguiente párrafo y yo creo que habría que introducirla aquí”	El estudiante reflexiona sobre dónde y cómo plantear una idea en el texto
Tutora: “Mmmm... Vale. A ver, yo creo que lo que podríais hacer, para empezar, antes de ver cómo juntar esos dos párrafos, es decir, la misma información, pero con menos ‘eee’ redacción.”	La tutora emplea la estrategia de la sugerencia. Plantea al estudiante la posibilidad de transmitir la idea de forma más breve, con menos palabras
Tutora: “Tú dices: ‘El motivo por el que nos ponemos en contacto con usted, [...]’, haces una pausa, ‘es para transmitirle una idea...’”	La tutora emplea la estrategia de lectura en voz alta por parte ella y la marcación para señalar un error de puntuación: el uso de la coma entre sujeto y verbo
Tutora: “¿Crees que está bien puntuada esa oración?”	La tutora plantea una pregunta como estrategia para cuestionar al estudiante si el uso de la coma es correcto
Estudiante: “No. Hay que quitar la coma, no hace falta la pausa”	La estudiante responde a la pregunta
Tutora: “O sea, nunca puede separar una coma sujeto de predicado”	La tutoría refuerza la respuesta de la estudiante mediante la estrategia de explicación

similares a los de investigaciones precedentes (Mackiewicz y Thompson, 2014, 2018), dado que las estrategias más frecuentes son la explicación, la sugerencia y la pregunta. No obstante, por otro, en sus investigaciones, estas autoras muestran cómo predominan las estrategias instructivas seguidas de las cognitivas.

Es necesario, por tanto, indagar en las causas y explicaciones de las diferencias de estos resultados, pues han sido recabados en distintos contextos. Una de ellas se puede deber a la formación de los tutores y su ámbito de estudio, ya que las tutoras y tutorados de la presente investigación son estudiantes de programas de formación docente y el centro de escritura es parte de una Facultad de Formación de Profesorado y Educación, en contraste con los tutores que son estudiantes de lengua inglesa de diferentes carreras en el caso de la investigación de Mackiewicz y Thompson. Por tanto, la formación de las tutoras y las tutorías analizadas en el presente estudio pueden tener un mayor foco en la construcción colaborativa y dialógica de aprendizajes, en el andamiaje y en la motivación. Sin embargo, es necesario comprobar con mayores evidencias estas posibles causas.

Con relación a las estrategias cognitivas, conviene subrayar que tanto la estrategia de pregunta como la de lectura del tutor predominan en ambas tutorías, con lo que se busca impulsar al tutorado a percibir los aciertos y falencias de su texto. De hecho, la formulación de preguntas por parte del tutor es una estrategia útil para la promoción de la reflexión y la colaboración (Calle-Arango, 2019). Así, se puede deducir que juntos, tutor y tutorado, entran en un ejercicio social de interacción y colaboración en pos de la mejora del texto. No solo se pretende reflexionar por medio de la lectura en voz alta y la formulación de preguntas, sino que, además, se nutre el pensamiento crítico y el proceso de retroalimentación del tutorado a través de la marcación, la elección, la interpretación y la lectura del estudiante, estrategias todas con un considerable nivel de presencia. Asimismo, estas dos últimas estrategias son más utilizadas por la

TE en las tutorías presenciales, lo que nos lleva a plantear que las tutorías virtuales debieran acercarse más a establecer la interacción y el diálogo sobre el proceso de escritura durante la sesión.

Por otro lado, parece coherente la mayor frecuencia de estrategias cognitivas de marcación, pregunta y recomendación en las tutorías virtuales, dado que al compartir el texto en la pantalla, la sesión se centra más en él y, por tanto, se marcan los errores o problemas. Asimismo, la pregunta es más necesaria al estar en línea y no tener total acceso al lenguaje paraverbal y no verbal de ambos participantes, por lo que es imperativo suplir esta falta a través de preguntas.

Llama la atención, también, que la estrategia de solución sea una de las más utilizadas. Si bien el resultado se debe a un uso elevado por parte de la TN en las tutorías presenciales, la TE la llega a emplear el doble de ocasiones en las virtuales. Esto puede dar cuenta de la dificultad que encuentran los tutores pares de establecer otro tipo de estrategias más significativas con independencia de su nivel de experticia. Al respecto, cabría abogar, en la medida de las posibilidades, por un modelo de formación continua de tutores, en donde periódicamente se revisaran las tutorías realizadas, más aún cuando el cambio de las tutorías al entorno virtual no se haya producido de forma gradual, como ha sucedido en el contexto actual de pandemia.

Asimismo, es necesario profundizar en las estrategias instructivas y motivadoras y su relación con la cortesía verbal, y cómo es esperable que las motivadoras (ánimo, empatía, identificación, interés, refuerzo y significación) estén más presentes en las sesiones virtuales, como una manera de construir un vínculo y motivar al estudiante, al no estar cara a cara. Por ejemplo, es más frecuente la sugerencia en las sesiones virtuales y esta es una estrategia más atenuada que la orientación. Como la sesión es en línea, es crucial construir el vínculo tutor-tutorado de otras maneras, mediante la identificación con el otro, interés en él, el refuerzo de su trabajo y darle sentido a la tutoría a través de la significación,



con el fin de no perder la implicación del estudiante a pesar de que esté distanciado físicamente.

En términos de educación a distancia, algunos trabajos destacan el desarrollo de la interactividad y la colaboración como factores clave para lograr los aprendizajes deseados no solo en cuanto a la interactividad entre los sujetos, sino también del estudiante con el contenido (Hewett, 2006). Así, al observar la construcción de un vínculo con el tutorado en este estudio, por medio de un predominio de estrategias motivadoras en las sesiones virtuales, se busca implementar una interacción en donde no hay coincidencia física. Esto ha sido especialmente relevante y necesario en el contexto de pandemia en el que se han llevado a cabo las tutorías virtuales del presente estudio.

Dicho esto, cabe señalar que existen numerosas investigaciones acerca del funcionamiento de los centros de escritura y de las tutorías, pero a través de encuestas, entrevistas y grupos focales, es decir, a partir de la percepción o satisfacción de los participantes. Sin embargo, son escasos los estudios que indagán sobre las prácticas tutoriales con un enfoque ecológico e *in situ*, en otras palabras, que analizan qué ocurre en ellas y cómo son sus interacciones, para construir aprendizajes en torno a los procesos de escritura, especialmente en Iberoamérica, por lo que esta ha sido la principal aportación del presente trabajo. Nos parece que para construir conocimiento fidedigno sobre cómo son las tutorías de escritura, cuáles son sus aportes y cómo se pueden mejorar, es imperativo estudiar las prácticas tutoriales y, así, conformar un cuerpo robusto de conocimientos que contribuyan a apoyar y andamiar la escritura de los estudiantes y a formar tutores de escritura en educación superior.

Además, como se ha indicado, es recomendable tomar estos resultados con cautela, pues es necesario disponer de un mayor corpus de tutorías. En consecuencia, es preciso continuar con el análisis de una mayor cantidad de tutorías de más tutores noveles y expertos en los dos entornos

objeto del estudio, presencial y virtual. En último término, cabe seguir interrogándose sobre cuáles son las estrategias prototípicas de una buena tutoría. De este modo, estas variables podrían tener relación con otras, en cuanto a las características del estudiante, su competencia previa y posterior en expresión escrita, y su grado de satisfacción, motivación y seguridad tras las tutorías; el objetivo de la tutoría, el género discursivo trabajado en la sesión y la fase del proceso de escritura del texto; y la formación del tutor, su grado de experticia y evolución, y la familiaridad con la disciplina del estudiante.

También consideramos necesario ahondar en el uso y las funciones de los aspectos multimodales en las tutorías virtuales y así atender a la influencia que pueden tener factores como la proyección del texto en la pantalla, el uso de la pizarra digital o del chat en las propias videoconferencias.

Por último, asimismo cabe preguntarse si las tutorías virtuales, cuyo aumento ha sido considerable durante la pandemia, puede asentarse no tanto en una alternativa aislada, cuanto en una opción útil para el acompañamiento del proceso de escritura a los estudiantes universitarios en centros de escritura en donde no eran una práctica habitual.

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# UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS' PREPAREDNESS FOR TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION AND BURNOUT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PREPARACIÓN PARA LA ENSEÑANZA MEDIADA POR LA TECNOLOGÍA Y DESGASTE EN DOCENTES UNIVERSITARIOS DE LENGUAS DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

PRÉPARATION POUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT MÉDIÉE PAR LES TECHNOLOGIES NUMÉRIQUES ET ÉPUISEMENT PARI MI DES ENSEIGNANTS UNIVERSITAIRES DES LANGUES ÉTRANGÈRES LORS DE LA PANDÉMIE DE COVID-19

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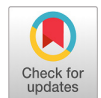
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## ABSTRACT

This quantitative study explored the preparedness of foreign language teachers for technology-mediated instruction and the burnout conditions that characterized their transition from in-person to off-campus second/foreign language education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data were collected from 104 university instructors through a Google Forms® survey and a burnout questionnaire in a Mexican state which was severely hit by the virus in the spring of 2020. The survey elicited information about institutional conditions, teacher education and technology access and use. The burnout questionnaire explored exhaustion, depersonalization and accomplishment during off-campus technology-mediated language instruction. Both survey and questionnaire answers were subject to frequency analyses. In terms of teacher preparedness, data analyses revealed that the participants had a large number of teaching hours; they held sustained computer/Internet access but lacked technology-assisted language teaching training; thus, they independently sought out technological resources for the delivery of their lessons. With regard to burnout, data analyses indicated that many participants experienced exhaustion due to work overload, use of technology, and its proper integration in the lessons. Nonetheless, the use of technology helped them maintain interest in their learners, feel satisfaction and accomplish academic aims.

**Keywords:** Technology-mediated language instruction; COVID-19; language teaching; online teaching; teacher education; teacher burnout.

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## RESUMEN

Este estudio cuantitativo exploró la capacitación de profesores universitarios de lenguas extranjeras para la enseñanza mediada por la tecnología y las condiciones de desgaste profesional que caracterizaron la transición de la instrucción presencial a las clases virtuales durante la pandemia del COVID-19. Por medio de una encuesta en Google Forms® y un cuestionario para sondear el desgaste, se recolectaron datos de 104 docentes de una universidad pública en un estado mexicano que fue severamente afectado por la propagación del virus en el 2020. La encuesta indagó por las condiciones institucionales, personales, la formación de los docentes para la enseñanza y su uso y acceso a la tecnología. El cuestionario exploró tres dimensiones del desgaste docente: fatiga, despersonalización y rendimiento durante la docencia mediada por la tecnología fuera de la universidad. Las respuestas de la encuesta y el cuestionario se sometieron a análisis de frecuencia. En lo que respecta a la capacitación, los análisis revelaron que los participantes tenían un gran número de horas de clase; contaban con acceso permanente a equipos de computación e internet, pero les faltaba capacitación para la enseñanza de lenguas asistida por la tecnología. En consecuencia, de manera autónoma, tuvieron que identificar recursos tecnológicos para sus clases. En lo que respecta al desgaste, los datos revelan que los docentes experimentaron fatiga debido a la sobrecarga laboral, el uso de los recursos tecnológicos e incertidumbre en el empleo de la tecnología. A pesar de estos inconvenientes, la tecnología les permitió mantener interés en sus estudiantes, sentir satisfacción con sus clases y alcanzar los objetivos institucionales.

**Palabras clave:** aprendizaje de lenguas asistido por la tecnología; COVID-19; docentes de lenguas; enseñanza en línea; formación docente; desgaste docente.

## RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude quantitative a exploré la formation des enseignants universitaires de langues étrangères pour l'enseignement médié par la technologie et les conditions d'épuisement professionnel qui ont caractérisé la transition de l'enseignement présentielle à l'enseignement virtuelle pendant la pandémie de COVID-19. Via une enquête en Google Forms® et un questionnaire pour se renseigner sur l'épuisement, des données ont été collectées auprès de 104 enseignants d'une université publique dans un État mexicain gravement touché par la propagation du virus en 2020. L'enquête a examiné les conditions institutionnelles et personnelles, la formation pédagogique des enseignants et leur utilisation et accès à la technologie. Le questionnaire a exploré trois dimensions de l'épuisement professionnel des enseignants : la fatigue, la dépersonnalisation et la performance lors de l'enseignement assisté par la technologie en dehors de l'université. Les réponses à l'enquête et au questionnaire ont été soumises à une analyse de fréquence. Concernant la formation, les analyses ont révélé que les participants avaient un grand nombre d'heures de cours ; ils avaient un accès permanent à du matériel informatique et à Internet, mais manquaient de formation pour l'enseignement des langues assistée par la technologie. Par conséquent, de manière autonome, ils ont dû identifier des ressources technologiques pour leurs classes. En ce qui concerne l'épuisement, les données révèlent que les enseignants ont éprouvé de la fatigue en raison de la surcharge de travail, de l'utilisation des ressources technologiques et de l'incertitude dans l'utilisation de la technologie. Malgré ces inconvénients, la technologie leur a permis de maintenir l'intérêt pour leurs étudiants, de se sentir satisfaits de leurs cours et d'atteindre leurs buts académiques.

**Mots-clés :** apprentissage des langues assisté par ordinateur ; COVID-19 ; enseignants de langues ; formation des enseignants ; épuisement professionnel des enseignants.

**Introduction**

Prior to the world COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and educators had extensively debated on the feasibility, strengths and shortcomings behind the integration of technology in various second/foreign language<sup>1</sup> education contexts (e.g., classroom-based, online and blended). Research conducted with stakeholders, policy makers, teachers and learners provided evidence of mixed reactions that spanned from interest and enthusiasm, to anxiety and rejection. In light of these results, researchers and educators often agreed that educational systems need to foster proper teacher preparedness should they want to reduce the number of caveats behind the implementation of technology in language education (Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Lord & Lomicka, 2011). In addition to sustained access to and use of technology (Hedayati & Marandi, 2014), teacher preparedness should include educational policies and curricular guidelines, well-planned logistics and infrastructure, technology-enhanced language teacher education, and hands-on experience in the use of technology for language instruction (Bedoya et al., 2018; Lozano & Izquierdo, 2019).

However, vis-à-vis the fast spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, educational organizations had little time to scaffold teacher preparedness, as governments urgently opted for the implementation of human isolation and physical distancing measures. These measures aimed to safeguard the health and well-being of citizens, but they came along with educational, social, and financial downturns. In terms of education, worldwide, the measures abruptly pushed more than a billion learners away from in-person classroom instruction across all layers and areas of education (Escudero, 2021). In Mexico, in more than 6,000 higher-education institutions, approximately four million students and 400,000 professors were pulled out from in-person instruction during the spring of 2020 (Escudero, 2021).

1 In this article “language education” is as an umbrella term that refers to both second and foreign language.

Instead, for the accomplishment of curricular goals, educators and learners migrated to off-campus educational conditions, where they needed to rely on the use of technology as the means of instruction in compliance with health protocols.

Recent research in the general field of education indicates that the conditions under which this migration occurred led teachers, parents, and learners to experience negative psychological reactions (Escudero, 2021). In language education, the various types of psychological reactions that teachers experienced during the abrupt migration to off-campus technology-mediated education require research attention (MacIntyre et al., 2020). It should be noted that prior to the pandemic, only some studies had explored the psychological well-being of teachers in language classrooms (e.g., Nagamine, 2018; M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016). Upon consideration of Maslach and Leiter’s (2008) construct of burnout, a handful of studies had examined language teacher’ exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced accomplishment. In these studies, it was observed that overwhelming teaching conditions led to high levels of burnout, which in turn work to the detriment of language education among teachers and learners (Meidani et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016).

Due to the aforementioned issues, this study examined teacher burnout during the abrupt migration of language educators to off-campus technology-mediated instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it explored the teacher preparedness conditions that characterized such migration towards technology.

**Theoretical Framework**

The following sections review theoretical and empirical research on the two central concepts that set the bases for the current study: teacher preparedness for the integration of technology in language education and language teacher burnout.

### Teacher Preparedness and the Integration of Technology in Language Education

Extensive research has explored the manner in which the use of technology can be optimized for the enhancement of language teaching and learning across different educational modalities (for reviews, see Chapelle, 2001; Felix, 2004; J. Gillespie, 2020). In language teaching, as in other areas of education (e.g., Carrillo & Flores, 2020), there is a need of consensus on the nomenclatures that can be used for the categorization of the technology-enhanced educational modalities. Nonetheless, they can be classified as classroom-based, blended and online/distance, depending on the reliance of language education on technology use and classroom-based interaction.

In classroom-based learning, technology serves to scaffold in-person language teaching and learning. In this modality, inside of the classroom, teachers may have access to technologies either systematically or sporadically throughout the lesson (Izquierdo et al., 2017). In blended learning, teachers implement language tasks that need to be carried out through different phases (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008). In this modality, for instance, teachers focus on the initial stages of the tasks in the classroom. Then, they ask the learners to complete the remaining stages of the task outside of the classroom through the use of technology. Different from classroom-based and blended teaching, distance language education takes place entirely outside of a classroom, usually through a learning platform or environment (Manegre & Kashif, 2020). In this modality, all learning goals, instructional tasks, and materials are conceived upon the principle that the course is delivered remotely with the aid of technology. Also, different from the other two modalities, in distance education, the integration and selection of technological resources adhere to institutional regulations, curricular aims, a student learning approach, and outcome evaluation principles.

Across these contexts, the number of resources for the enhancement of language learning have increased with the fast development of technology, as computer-assisted language learning (CALL) research reveals (see Golonka et al., 2014; Bedoya et al., 2018; J. Gillespie, 2020). The available resources span from technologically intricate environments, such as virtual reality, online games, and virtual classrooms to less technologically demanding resources such as video communication, mobile texting, and emails. While the wide array of technologies continues to increase, teachers and learners do not necessarily share the same viewpoint about the use of technology in language education. Learners, on the one hand, often value technology-enhanced education as long as the integration of technology in the language lessons and tasks comes with proper teacher guidance and support (Bedoya et al., 2018; Felix, 2004; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005). Teachers, on the other hand, often display reactions that may range from enthusiasm to rejection (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Manegre & Kashif, 2020).

Negative feelings and attitudes among language educators can be associated to lack of preparedness for the proper use of technology (Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Lord & Lomicka, 2011; Yoon & Gruba, 2019). Language teacher preparedness involves different readiness conditions. In this regard, teachers would first argue that the institutional conditions play a key role in their decision whether technology could be implemented in their lessons. Often, teachers emphasize that educational stakeholders need to consider the provision of proper physical, technological, and curricular infrastructure, in addition to support and logistics (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Izquierdo et al., 2017). Once these aspects have been taken care of, teachers would advocate for another condition: access to technology. This involves not only the availability of technological resources such as connectivity, hardware and software at school and at home. It also encompasses the institutional and personal



allocation of time for the preparation, implementation, and follow-up of the technology-enhanced lessons (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Hedayati & Marandi, 2014).

Proper institutional conditions and technology access are valuable conditions of teacher preparedness. Nonetheless, language teachers may yet struggle with the actual use of technology when they lack techno-pedagogical competencies (Bedoya et al., 2018; Yoon & Gruba, 2019). These competencies involve knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the identification, selection, adaptation, implementation, and evaluation of technological resources that can help teachers create the necessary conditions for language acquisition (Bedoya et al., 2018; Chapelle, 2001; Lord & Lomicka, 2011). These conditions encompass ample opportunities for language exposure, production and form-meaning mapping in the language tasks that teachers implement by means of technology (Izquierdo, 2014). The development of these competencies is a complex process, but it can be effectively scaffolded through CALL teacher education where teachers gain technological knowledge, knowledge of the process of language acquisition, hands-on training on the design, and implementation of technology-based language tasks, as well as reflective skills and peer collaboration experience (Bedoya et al., 2018; Lozano & Izquierdo, 2019).

This section addressed the relevance of various teacher preparedness conditions for the integration of technology in language education. To this end, it provided insights into the institutional conditions of teachers (Izquierdo et al., 2017; Chambers & Bax, 2006), technology access and use (Hedayati & Mirandi, 2014; Managre & Kashif, 2020) and CALL teacher education (Bedoya et al., 2018; Dooly & Sadler, 2020) which deserve consideration for the implementation of technology-enhanced education under regular instructional circumstances. To further explore these conditions, empirical data are needed when the implementation of technology

in language education is not a matter of choice. Since the teacher preparedness conditions that circumscribe the use of technology may lead teachers to experience various types of psychological reactions. The following section discusses the importance of the study of teacher burnout when technology is implemented under unconventional language educational circumstances.

### Teacher Burnout in Language Education

Reference to the construct of burnout can be traced back to the 1960s in the healthcare system. Early explorations of burnout were conducted with nurses and physicians to identify the deterioration of their psychological well-being in their work environment (Freudenberger, 1974; Rotenstein et al., 2018). Results often pointed to exhaustion, depersonalization and absence of work commitment (Maslach et al., 2001). These findings led Maslach et al. (1997) to conceptualize these negative reactions as the dimensions of the burnout syndrome, which results from the interaction of service providers with individuals in the workplace. The first dimension, exhaustion, constitutes a response to working conditions that lead to chronic physical and emotional fatigue. The second dimension, depersonalization, relates to the absence of concern for people in the work environment. The last dimension, reduced accomplishment, is circumscribed to low self-realization and productivity at work.

The concept of burnout was later extrapolated beyond the healthcare system to institutional and organizational contexts where other service types are provided and which require contact with people (Meidani et al., 2019). In educational institutions, burnout and its three dimensions are explored through the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1997), or minor adaptations of this inventory. In language education, this inventory has been administered in various education contexts which include elementary schools (Mukundan et al., 2015), secondary schools (Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016), high schools (Heidari & Gorjian, 2017),

private language institutes (Meidani et al., 2019) and higher education (M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017). As in other areas of education, results indicate that teachers experience substantial levels of burnout which work not only to the detriment of their well-being, but also to the detriment of their professional interest and teaching performance (Meidani et al., 2019). They also negatively affect the well-being of the learners, as learners become sensitive to teacher burnout and experience negative reactions such as stress and anxiety (M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017), low achievement, and learner-teacher rapport deterioration (Heidari & Gorjian, 2017).

As for the manifestation of burnout itself, research reveals that language teachers do not necessarily report similar effects across the exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced accomplishment dimensions. For instance, some teachers experience exhaustion and depersonalization, but may maintain commitment with academic achievement in their classrooms (M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017). Other studies reveal that, as teacher exhaustion increases, teacher empathy with the learners and teacher accomplishment decrease (Heidari & Gorjian, 2017). Furthermore, teacher burnout is sensitive to specific aspects of the teaching context such as the workplace, infrastructure, work overload, high job demands, and institutional expectations (Meidani et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016). Language teachers in higher education, for instance, experience less burnout than teachers in secondary schools. Likewise, the amount of workload is another aspect of the teachers' context which is closely tight to emotional exhaustion. Other aspects of the context that contribute to teacher burnout are poor student performance or misbehavior. These learner characteristics have a negative impact on teacher interest in the lessons and contribute to depersonalization and low academic achievement.

Particular aspects of the profiles of the language teachers themselves have been identified as teacher

burnout predictors. In this regard, teachers' viewpoints of their own experiences influence their level of burnout (Meidani et al., 2019). Teachers with positive perspectives of their past experiences are less likely to experience burnout, and thus, more likely to display high achievement levels. Nonetheless, teachers with fatalistic views of their present conditions are prone to experiencing higher levels of burnout. Another teacher characteristic which can predict burnout is the number of years in the teaching profession (Mousavy et al., 2012). While teachers may display similar levels of depersonalization and accomplishment irrespective of their number of teaching years, they tend to experience more exhaustion as the number of years in the teaching profession increases. The educators' ability to reflect upon their teaching practice constitutes another important teacher characteristic that may predict burnout effects (Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, 2019). Reflective teachers, for example, are less susceptible to burnout, as their reflection ability heightens their teaching confidence and efficacy.

In sum, teacher burnout is a complex psychological reaction which has received research attention in regular language classrooms. In these educational settings, research points to contextual and personal conditions that promote teacher burnout; furthermore, the empirical evidence substantiates that some conditions may affect some burnout dimensions more than others. Due to the ongoing situation of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed teachers to halt in-person instruction overnight, questions arise with respect to teacher burnout and other psychological reactions in the context of technology-mediated education (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Escudero, 2021). In language education, recently published research reveals that teachers from various international contexts have experienced high levels of negative psychological reactions, such as stress and anxiety during off-campus instruction delivery. These and other psychological reactions deserve research attention, as they interfere

with the language educators' ability to teach and promote disengagement, denial and distraction (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

**Method**

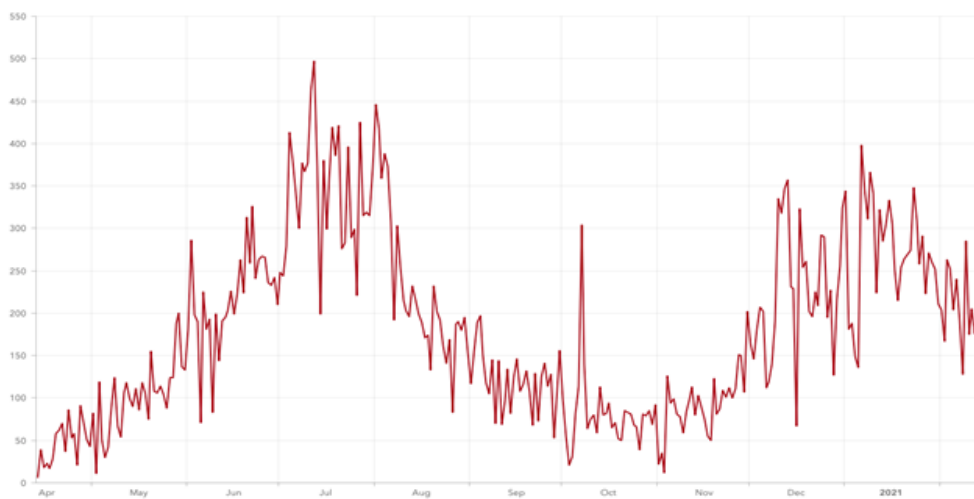
To achieve the study aim, a quantitative descriptive design was used. This design enables the collection of numerical data without an alteration of the natural conditions of the study participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Field, 2013). Subsequently, in this study, numerical data was collected about teacher preparedness and teacher burnout conditions during technology-mediated language instruction. Based on the research design, the data was analyzed for a description of the conditions of interest. The following sections describe the participant selection, instrument organization, data collection, and analysis procedures of the research.

**Context and Participants**

In Mexico, the national and state governments called for a halt to non-essential activities in the spring of 2020; by the end of April 2020, all 32 Mexican states had ceased in-person education. Facing the rapid spread of the virus in the state of Tabasco (see Figure 1), the state authorities suspended all types of activities across the levels of education for three weeks around Easter break.

After this time, the state authorities asked teachers to resume their teaching duties from home. To this end, the public university where this study was conducted, granted all teachers access to Microsoft Teams for the delivery of instruction. Nonetheless, the use of this platform remained optional and teachers were allowed to implement the technological resources that best suited their teaching needs. All university instructors were required to submit their lessons and lectures weekly, but the principles behind the integration and selection of technological resources, the learning-teaching approach and outcome evaluation remained institutionally undefined.

At the start of the pandemic, the university's language center counted with approximately 150 instructors; they taught Chinese, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, and Russian to more than 12,000 students in a total of 577 groups. They attended 495 groups in the weekday option and 82 groups in the intensive Saturday program. During regular in-person teaching conditions, instructors in the weekday program would daily teach each group a one-hour lesson from Monday through Friday, whereas teachers in the intensive program would work with their group for four hours every Saturday. The teachers deliver their lessons on the main campus



**Figure 1** Spread of covid-19 in the Mexican State of Tabasco

Source: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/c7776ae836434ffb9659e9cfdda71b22>

of the university or on one of the university language center's seven campuses which are located in various geographical areas of the state. With the in-person teaching prohibition, the entire teacher population had to migrate to off-campus technology-mediated instruction under the technological circumstances previously mentioned.

In order to carry out the study, the research team contacted the language center dean and vice-dean for academic affairs and informed them of the study purpose, data collection instruments and ethical procedures. Upon approval from the dean's office, the vice-dean for academic affairs contacted all the teachers via the instant messaging service WhatsApp. For compliance with ethical regulations, in the text message, the teachers were informed that participation was voluntary. Teachers who were interested in the study accessed the data collection instruments through a link to Google Forms. On the welcome page of the Google Forms site, they were informed of the study purpose and ethical regulations. They were also provided with an email address should they later wish their data to be removed from the study.

A total of 104 teachers of English (85%), French (7%) and other languages (8%) were included in this study. They all consented to participate in the study and electronically completed the data collection instruments. This sample provides a high level of representativeness, as it constitutes approximately 70% of the entire language center teacher population. From the total number of participants, 53% of them were female teachers. While the age of the teachers ranged from 25 to 59 years old, 80% of the respondents were within the 30 - 40 years-old range. Approximately 50% of the teachers were affiliated with the main campus of the language center, whereas the other half of the teachers were affiliated with one of the other campuses across the state of Tabasco. The largest number of teachers (50%) taught weekday courses only, whereas the others would teach in the intensive program (25%) or in both modalities (25%). In terms of their health conditions during the transition to off-campus technology-mediated

language instruction, 20% of the participants indicated that they or a family member with whom they lived had contracted COVID-19. Further details on their institutional conditions are provided in the teacher preparedness result section.

### Data Collection

The data were collected via Google Forms (see Appendix). After the welcome page, participants were presented with the teacher preparedness survey and teacher burnout questions in Spanish.

### *Teacher Preparedness Survey*

Based on the consideration that surveys constitute a valuable instrument for the collection of factual information in education (Cohen et al., 2007), this instrument was selected for the exploration of the teacher preparedness conditions for technology-mediated language instruction and the teacher socio-demographics. In terms of teacher preparedness, the institutional conditions, teacher education and technology access/use were explored. These areas of exploration emerged from the theoretical and empirical research that was reviewed in the sections above (e.g., Chambers & Bax, 2006; Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Lord & Lomicka, 2011).

The survey questions, in the Appendix section, included 21 prompts which were presented in the form of close-ended ( $n = 19$ ) and open-ended ( $n = 2$ ) questions; the questions were distributed across three sections. Section 1 included nine questions about the socio-demographics of the participants, their on-going COVID-19 situation and one aspect of teacher preparedness (i.e., their institutional condition). Section 2 included three questions that explored other aspects of teacher preparedness: language teacher training, educational technology knowledge and CALL teacher education. Section 3 investigated teacher preparedness in terms of technology access and use during language teaching. In this section, six close-ended questions elicited information about teacher access to connectivity, hardware, and software at home.

Through two open-ended questions, this section also inquired about the technological resources that teachers relied upon for the development of their lessons prior to and during the pandemic. Additionally, a teacher education question was included in this section and asked for the manner in which teachers had gained experience with the resources they were using in the technology-mediated lessons.

### *Burnout Questionnaire*

For the exploration of teacher burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1997) was considered. Adapted versions of this instrument have been used in previous language investigations and have yielded high reliability coefficients (e.g., Meidani et al., 2019; Mukundan et al., 2015; Nagamine et al., 2018; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016; Shirazizadeh & Karimpour, 2019). In these studies, the three dimensions of teacher burnout have been examined. Within the dimensions, researchers have modified some elements of the sentences for each item or for items excluded for compliance with ecological validity during the study realization.

In the current study, the three dimensions of the burnout questionnaire were retained as well: exhaustion, depersonalization, and accomplishment (Maslach et al., 1997). The burnout questions that our participants completed included similar numbers of items ( $n = 8$ ) in each dimension, and thus, the total number of items added up to 24 (see questions 26-49 in the Appendix). Modifications were made in the items' sentences for their contextualization within technology-mediated language instruction. For instance, Depersonalization Item 2 stated, "In my technology-mediated language lessons, I feel less interest in my students." Within each dimension, all the items were verified for adherence to semantic direction (Field, 2013; Hodge & D. Gillespie, 2007). Upon this consideration, the items held a negative semantic load for exhaustion (I work too much, I feel more stressed-out, I experience frustration) and depersonalization (e.g., I feel less interest, less

tolerance, less sensitive, etc.). Nonetheless, within the accomplishment dimension, the items carried a positive semantic load (e.g., I feel satisfied, the university values my use of technology, etc.).

In the original questionnaire, the level of participant burnout is documented through a series of items with a Likert-scale in which the participants express their level of agreement with the situation in the items (Maslach et al., 1997). In the versions of the questionnaire which have been used with language educators, the number of agreement levels has varied, with some authors including a neutral point. In our version of the questionnaire, the participants were presented with a four-value scale where they could select: I disagree, I partially disagree, I partially agree, or I agree. The use of a four-value scale favored the elicitation of a more concise participant viewpoint in comparison to scales that include a larger number of values (Field, 2013; Hodge & D. Gillespie, 2007). Moreover, the exclusion of a neutral point forced the participants to take either a positive or negative position while allowing them to express this position through two magnitude levels (e.g., I disagree or I partially disagree). For the reliability analyses, the answer choice accounted for 1 (disagree), 2 (partially disagree), 3 (partially agree), or 4 (agree) points.

### *Instrument Validity and Reliability Analyses*

The initial versions of the survey and of the burnout questionnaire prompts were prepared by the first author. Then, the co-authors and a sample of teachers from the language center acted as judges who analyzed both instruments for construct and ecological validity. As for construct validity, the judges analyzed the congruence between each section or dimension and its questions (Cohen et al., 2007). As for ecological validity, the judges examined the pertinence of the survey and questionnaire prompts considering the study participants and their context (Cohen et al., 2007). After this process, five questions were added to the initial version of the survey; additionally, the semantic direction of some items from the exhaustion ( $n = 3$ ),

depersonalization ( $n = 4$ ), and accomplishment ( $n = 3$ ) dimensions of the questionnaire was revised, as well as their adherence to the principles of univocity and unidimensionality (Field, 2013; Hodge & D. Gillespie, 2007). The final version of the burnout questionnaire prompts were further subject to reliability analyses, which yielded favorable Cronbach alpha coefficients (see Field, 2013) for the three dimensions: exhaustion (.90), depersonalization (0.72), and accomplishment (.87).

*Data Analysis Procedures*

Google Forms automatically generated an Excel spreadsheet with the survey and questionnaire answers. A research assistant checked the Excel document to identify missing data or confusing answers. The research assistant and the first author also analyzed the answers to the two open-ended survey questions to identify the technological resources reported by the teacher. Using the statistical software, SPSS version 25, frequency analyses were run on the answers to the close-ended questions of the survey (Field, 2013) and the resources reported through the two open-ended questions. As for the burnout questionnaire, independent Cronbach analyses were run with each dimension to identify reliability coefficients (Field, 2013). Then, for each item, frequency distribution analyses of the participants' answers were performed across the Likert-scale values.

**Results**

In the following sections, the results for the various aspects of teacher preparedness are first presented. Then, the results of the burnout questionnaire are provided for each dimension.

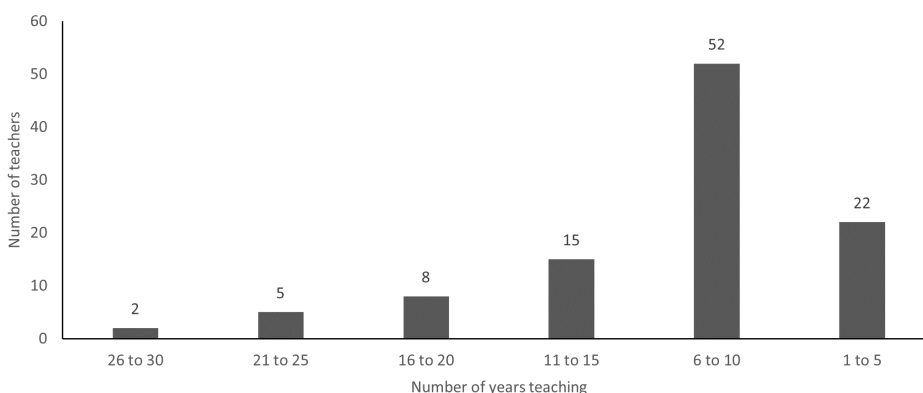
**Teacher Preparedness**

The upcoming sections present the frequency analysis results for the three teacher preparedness conditions that were explored in the survey.

*Institutional Conditions*

In this survey section, the data revealed that the majority of the teachers had taught at the language center for fewer than 10 years. Specifically, Figure 2 illustrates that half of the participants had been in the language center between six and 10 years ( $n = 52$ ) and that the most recently hired instructors constituted the second largest group ( $n = 22$ ). The most experienced group of teachers (between 20 and 30 teaching years) accounted for 6% of the population. In terms of age, the survey data indicated that the most senior teachers (50 - 60 years old) were the smallest age group ( $n = 3$ ), followed by the youngest group of instructors ( $n = 9$ ; 25-30 years old). The age of the largest group of teachers ranged between 31 and 40 years old ( $n = 65$ ), followed by the 41 - 50 years-old teacher group ( $n = 27$ ).

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**Figure 2** Distribution of the Language Teachers According to the Number of Teaching Years

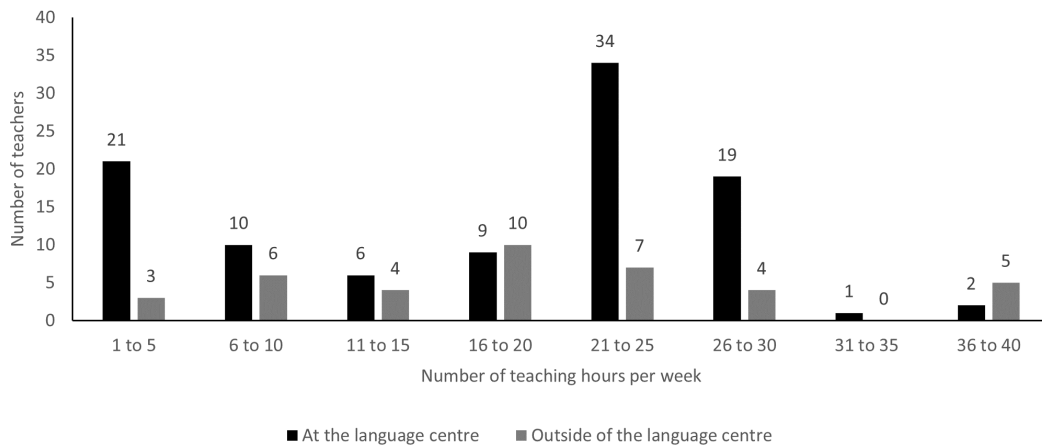


Figure 3 Teaching Workload of the Participants

As for the weekly workload, at the time of the study, the vast majority of the teachers worked at the language center only (62%), whereas other teachers held additional teaching appointments in other institutions. Figure 3 reveals that, approximately, half of the participants ( $n = 53$ ) taught between 20 and 30 hours per week at the language center. Outside of the language center, about 25% of the teachers would work for more than 16 hours per week.

*Teacher Education Conditions*

With regard to language teacher education and training, the majority of the participants had earned an undergraduate degree only ( $n = 60$ ). Other participants held either an advanced diploma ( $n = 2$ ) or an MA ( $n = 41$ ) that was related to language pedagogy. None of these studies included training on educational technology or

CALL. However, some teachers had independently attended seminars or workshops in educational technology ( $n = 48$ ), and fewer participants had undertaken some kind of professional development that focused on CALL ( $n = 28$ ).

*Technology Access/Use Conditions*

In terms of the technology access conditions that characterized off-campus technology-mediated language instruction, Figure 4 shows that access to hardware, home Internet and mobile Internet for the delivery of the lessons from home was not a limitation. Moreover, approximately 70% of the informants had a designated workspace at home and did not share their equipment with family members.

As for technology use, the two open-ended questions inquired about the technological resources that the language teachers would use for teaching

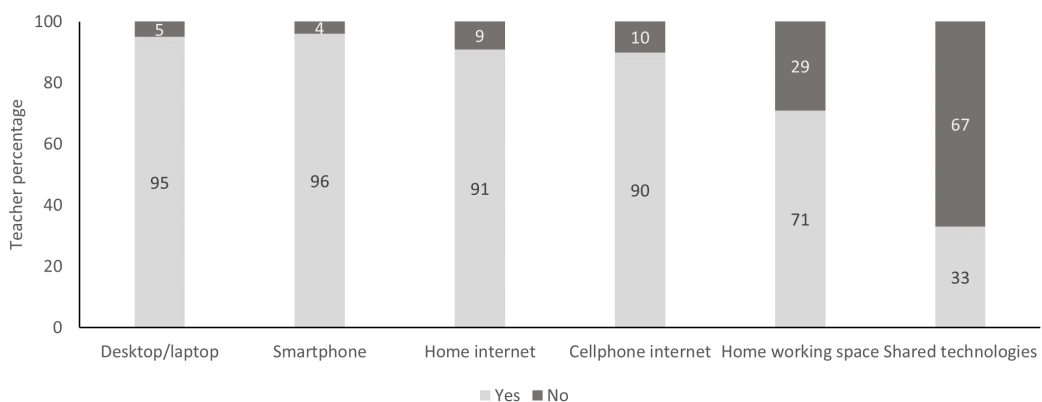
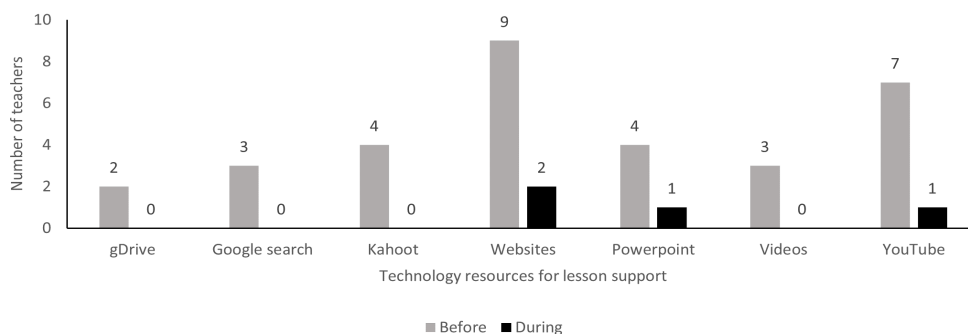
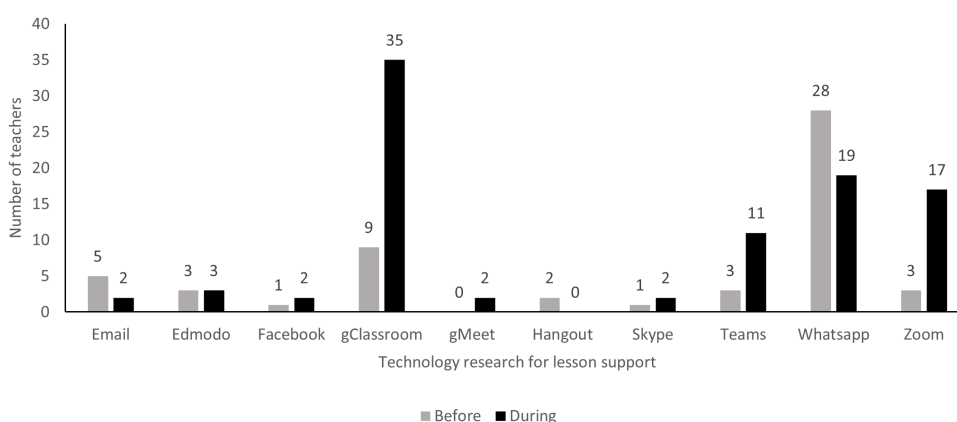


Figure 4 Teacher Technology Access During the Pandemic



**Figure 5** Technology Resources for Language Teaching Support Before and During the Pandemic



**Figure 6** Teacher-Learner Interaction Resources Before and During the Pandemic

before and during the pandemic. The resources were identified as technologies for lesson support or for teacher-learner interaction. Figure 5 shows that, in the former category, some participants ( $n = 32$ ) reported using Google Drive®, Google® search, Kahoot®, language websites, MS PowerPoint® files, videos, or YouTube® videos prior to the pandemic. Nonetheless, during the pandemic, the teachers infrequently relied on their use.

Figure 6 displays the resources that the majority of teachers ( $n = 93$ ) used for interaction with their learners during the pandemic. Among these resources, Google Classroom®, WhatsApp®, Zoom®, and Microsoft Teams® were the most popular choices. Prior to the pandemic, with the exception of WhatsApp®, teachers did not much favor their use. In the survey, one-third of the participants reported that they had used these resources during in-person language instruction. However, the vast majority (64%) of the

informants had not used them before the pandemic and, had to autonomously learn about them and figure out their use. Only a small number of teachers (3%) received assistance from peers, relatives, or friends for the implementation of these resources.

### Teacher Burnout

Figures 7 through 9 display the distribution of the participants' answers across the Likert-scale values for the items in each dimension. In the upcoming descriptions, the number of participants who reported agreement and partial agreement were added. Likewise, the participants who indicated disagreement and partial disagreement were pooled.

### Exhaustion

For this dimension, Figure 7 shows that, from the eight items, three of them elicited negative reactions



amongst the participants. Specifically, the majority of participants agreed that they felt the pressure to integrate technology in their lessons (67%), experienced work overload for the integration of technology in language instruction (71%), and felt worried about the proper use of the technology they

were relying on (58%). Nonetheless, in the items that explored the effects of institutional demands, many participants expressed disagreement with the idea that institutional demands had led them to experience stress (60%), exhaustion (75%, 70%) or anguish (70%).

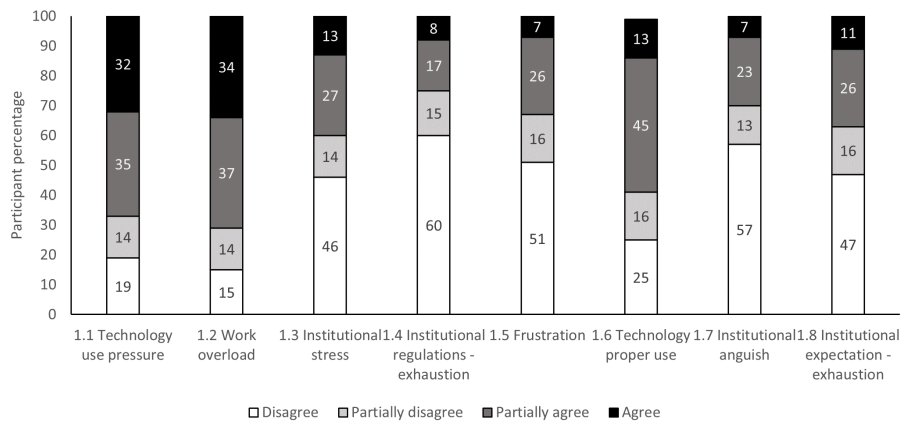


Figure 7 Teacher Exhaustion During Technology-Mediated Language Instruction

*Depersonalization*

Figure 8 shows that, from the eight depersonalization items, five of them elicited high levels of disagreement. A large number of participants rejected the idea that they felt less interest (87%), concern (94%), tolerance (97%) and understanding (98%) towards their learners during technology-mediated language

instruction. In comparison to these numbers, the lack of personalization (57%), flexibility (66%) and closeness (58%) during the language lessons elicited less rejection.

*Accomplishment*

The items in this dimension systematically elicited agreement in terms of accomplishment. In

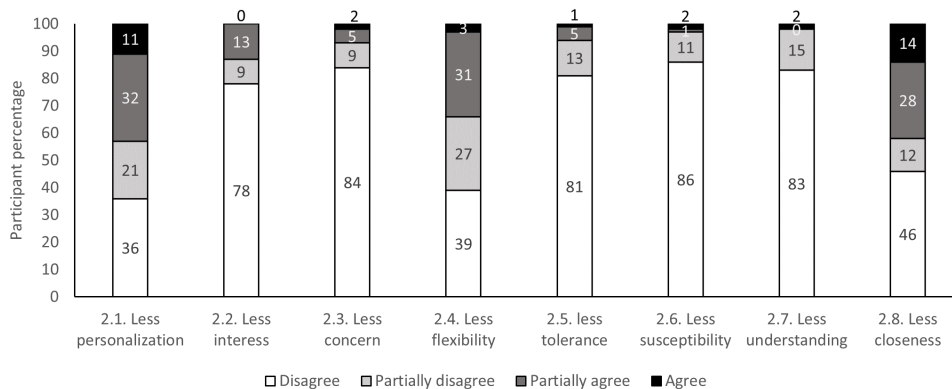
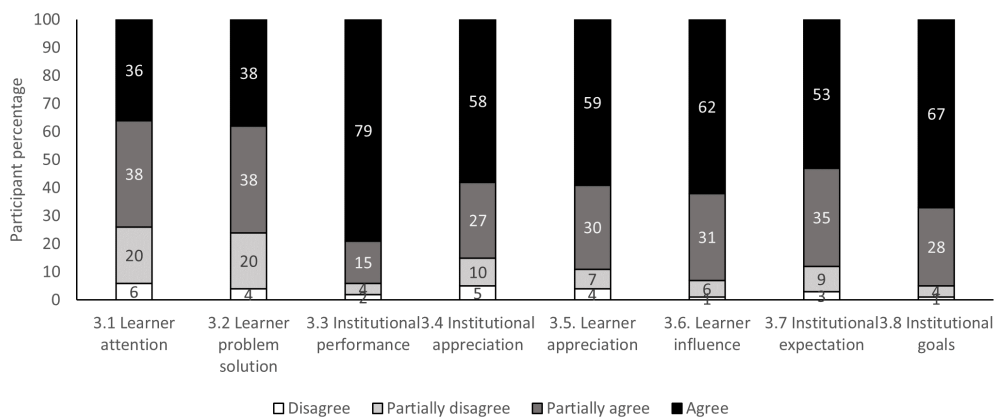


Figure 8 Teacher Depersonalization During Technology-Mediated Language Instruction



**Figure 9** Teacher Accomplishment During Technology-Mediated Language Instruction

this respect, Figure 9 illustrates that the participants felt that they paid attention to learner needs (74%) and provided solutions to their problems during technology-mediated instruction (76%). Moreover, they felt that their teaching performance with the use of technology helped them gain learner appreciation (85%) and positively influenced the performance of the learners themselves (93%). At the institutional level, the respondents felt they had complied with guidelines (94%), met expectations (88%) and goals (95%), and gained appreciation (88%).

### Discussion and Conclusion

This section first summarizes the participants' teacher preparedness and burnout conditions around the use of technology for off-campus language instruction delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, the potential interface between these conditions is discussed.

In terms of teacher preparedness for technology-mediated instruction delivery, the participants faced institutional challenges related to a heavy workload in their teaching context. As for technology, they held sustained access to hardware and Internet. However, they lacked teacher training, or knowledge and experience on the use of software and applications for language education. Thereafter, they autonomously worked on the identification of technological resources for the delivery of their lessons' content and figured

out their use. With regard to burnout, the participants experienced exhaustion during the delivery of technology-mediated language instruction, pressure for the identification of technologies that could facilitate instruction delivery, and concerns about the proper use of the selected technologies. Institutional regulations did not lead the participants to experience exhaustion, however. The depersonalization data indicates that the participants rejected the idea that the use of technology had had a negative impact on teacher-learner rapport. As for accomplishment, the teachers felt their use of technology helped them accomplish their teaching duties and gain institutional and learner appreciation.

The teacher preparedness conditions for technology-mediated instruction in this study can partially explain some of the burnout effects that the teachers experienced during off-campus technology-mediated language instruction. The data analysis results made evident that the university instructors enjoyed a privileged technological status due to their sustained access to hardware and connectivity. This access to technology differs from the conditions of teachers in other sectors of Mexican public education who showed limited access to hardware and the Internet during the pandemic (Escudero, 2021). Moreover, it diverges from the limited access to technology and connectivity that language teachers had often reported in other levels of public education (Izquierdo et al., 2017).

Their technology access is even remarkably different from the technology and Internet which are available to teachers for language instruction in Mexican rural schools (Izquierdo et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, despite favorable technology access, other aspects of teacher preparedness brought about major challenges for the integration of technology in off-campus language instruction at the start of the pandemic. The first challenge related to the participants' institutional conditions. As in other international contexts (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Hedayati & Marandi, 2014), the participants faced the demand of technology use for language instruction with an overwhelming number of teaching hours in addition to the lack of time allocation for lesson preparation/follow-up and assignment marking. The second challenge emerged from the lack of technology-oriented teacher education (Dooley & Sadler, 2020; Lord & Lomicka, 2011). In the absence of educational technology or CALL teacher education, the teachers were in need of technological knowledge, pedagogical principles and expertise for the creation of optimal language acquisition conditions through the use of technology (Chapelle, 2001; Lozano & Izquierdo, 2019). These findings substantiate the argument that educators often lack the necessary teacher preparedness conditions for the enactment of institutional and curricular policies that demand innovation in public language education through the use of technology (Hedayati & Mirandi, 2014; Izquierdo et al., 2017).

Prior to the pandemic, some teachers were accustomed to technological resources for supporting in-person language instruction. For instance, they were at ease with resources such as PDF files, videos, PowerPoint presentations and websites. For in-person instruction, these resources are becoming normalized in public classrooms (Izquierdo et al., 2017, 2021). Teachers have been observed to rely on PowerPoint slides and videos for the provision of grammar and pronunciation rules, in addition

to vocabulary. PDF files serve for the provision of grammar-oriented sentence completion activities. Their use is often regarded as an element of technological innovation in public language education although they merely constitute a replacement of traditional printed and audio-visual classroom materials, or input for structure-based instruction.

The change in technological resources that teachers faced during the pandemic points to the need of complex technological platforms and networks such as Microsoft Teams®, Google Classroom®, and Zoom®. These resources constitute valuable options for remote language instruction, as they embody several tools for class management, material repository, and teacher-learner interaction through written, oral, and video-based communication in a synchronous and an asynchronous fashion (Bedoya et al., 2018; Hsu, 2016; Peeters & Pretorius, 2020). Nonetheless, their functionality requires that users develop advanced technological knowledge and acquire a sound understanding of their pedagogical use (Hsu, 2016; Peeters & Pretorius, 2020).

Bedoya et al. (2018) indicate that these types of platforms serve various pedagogical purposes of which language teachers need awareness. One of them relates to the development of the class dynamics. That is, teachers may use platforms for the provision of reminders and information about assignments, the class pace and feedback on the class performance. Another function is information management. This allows teachers to use the platform as a material repository, from which learners could access material that scaffolds lesson content delivery. Finally, the platform can function as a communication means between teachers and learners, and among learners themselves. The communication function of platforms is highly valued in CALL (Hsu, 2016; Peeters & Pretorius, 2020), as during technology-mediated interaction, learners have opportunities for negotiation of meaning and attention to form with peers and teachers in the target language (Chapelle, 2001; Izquierdo, 2014).

Under these circumstances, the migration to technology-mediated instruction brought about major teaching challenges, and thus, created burn-out conditions that seem to have emerged from the pressure that teachers experienced for the identification and proper use of technological resources for remote language instruction. It then comes as no surprise that teachers needed to invest impressive amounts of time and work in off-campus language teaching preparation and follow-up. The feelings of work overload, exhaustion and pressure that were documented among our participants have also been reported in previous CALL research which has explored teacher attitudes towards the integration of technology in language education (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Izquierdo et al., 2017; Yoon & Gruba, 2019). In burnout research, these feelings constitute aspects of chronic fatigue that are associated with demanding language teaching conditions (M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017).

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Burnout research provides evidence that language teachers who experience exhaustion also tend to show less empathy with their learners and less academic accomplishment (Heidari & Gorjian, 2017; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016). Nonetheless, our informants indicated that they did not experience reduced accomplishment or depersonalization during instruction delivery. These findings confirm that language teachers exhibit different tendencies across the burnout dimensions (e.g., M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017; Heidari & Gorjian, 2017), and that teacher exhaustion is susceptible to contextual demands (Meidani et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Kezrlou, 2016). One possible explanation for this finding is that the technological resources upon which the language teachers relied helped them maintain effective communication with their learners, as in previous research (Bedoya, et al., 2018). It may also be that the teachers were able to cover all the units of the language class through the use of the technological resources for which they opted.

It should be noted, however, that the remote instruction that our teachers delivered during the pandemic did not adhere to the pedagogical

principles, curricular aims, student learning approaches and evaluation criteria that should characterize proper online/distance language education (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Manegre & Kashif, 2020). Moreover, different from the use of technology in other language education contexts (Chambers & Bax, 2006; Hedayati & Marandi, 2014; Hsu, 2016), our participants did not have specific institutional regulations and demands for the use of technology during language instruction. These findings corroborate results from other areas of education that show that, during the pandemic, educators were left to their own devices in terms of pedagogical and technological guidance for the proper use of technology (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Escudero, 2021). Thereafter, it remains debatable whether the remote instruction that was delivered during the pandemic should be classified as distance/online education (Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Escudero, 2021). Moreover, in the absence of guidelines and principles for the use of technology in remote language teaching, each teacher established discretionary levels of academic accomplishment and patterns of teacher-learner interaction. Due to these circumstances, the depersonalization and accomplishment levels that accompanied teacher exhaustion among our language teachers deserve further exploration.

In conclusion, this study provided some initial insights into the preparedness and burnout conditions that seem to have characterized the use of technology in off-campus language education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, further research is needed to better understand the interface between teacher preparedness and the level of depersonalization and accomplishment of the participants during off-campus technology-mediated instruction. One alternative for the exploration of these issues could be the inclusion of different quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. Previous research shows that learner dissatisfaction with the interaction and academic conditions of distance language education leads to high learner dropout rates (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005). Thereafter, learner dropout statistics and the conditions that lead to learner

dropout should be considered. Furthermore, language learner anxiety scales can provide insights into the effectiveness of teacher-learner interaction, and its potential impact on depersonalization (M. Rezvani & S. Rezvani, 2017). Observations also constitute a valuable data collection instrument for the identification of effective teaching practices and teacher-learner interaction in language education (Izquierdo et al., 2016). Moreover, learner and teacher interviews can be integrated in future research designs (Cohen et al., 2007) for the exploration of depersonalization and reduced accomplishment during remote language instruction. Research that includes diversified data collection and triangulation procedures could provide a different perspective on the teacher preparedness and burnout conditions that have characterized the unexpected integration of technology in language education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## Appendix

### Online Form with Teacher-preparedness Survey and Burnout Questionnaire

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

#### Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la Pandemia Covid 19. Semestre Febrero – Junio 2020

\* Required

#### Objetivo:

El objetivo de este cuestionario es identificar el impacto a nivel personal, profesional y emocional que ha tenido el empleo de la tecnología en las clases que han impartido los profesores de lenguas del Centro de Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras durante la pandemia del COVID 19, Abril – Junio 2020.

Untitled Section

#### Instrucciones:

Por favor, responda de manera honesta a las siguientes situaciones. La información que nos brinde será manejada de manera confidencial y anónima. Los resultados se podrían emplear de manera anónima en reportes institucionales y de divulgación. Si después de haber enviado el cuestionario, desea que sus respuestas sean excluidas de la base de datos, favor de remitir su solicitud a: [ruben.zapata@ujat.mx](mailto:ruben.zapata@ujat.mx).

Datos Laborales:

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

1. 1. Edad (en años): \*

2. 2. Género: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Masculino

Femenino

3. 3. Año de ingreso laboral al CELE: \*

\_\_\_\_\_

4. 4. Por favor indique en qué modalidad tuvo asignadas horas durante el ciclo Febrero – Junio 2020 en el CELE. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

De Lunes a Viernes

Sabatinos

Ambas modalidades

5. 5. Por favor indique cuantas horas de clases tenía asignadas durante el semestre Febrero – Junio 2020 en el CELE (incluyendo cursos sabatinos): \*

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

6. 6. Idioma que impartió durante el semestre Febrero – Junio 2020 en el CELE (En caso de haber impartido más de un idioma, indique el idioma donde tuvo su mayor carga laboral): \*

Mark only one oval.

- Inglés
- Francés
- Italiano
- Portugués
- Alemán
- Japonés
- Ruso
- Chino-mandarín
- Hebreo

7. 7. Indique la sede del CELE donde laboró de Febrero – Junio 2020. Si laboró en dos sedes, seleccione aquella donde tuvo su mayor carga laboral. \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sede 1 Zona De La Cultura (DCELE)
- Sede 2 Chontalpa
- Sede 3 Centenario
- Sede 4 Comalcalco
- Sede 5 DACA
- Sede 6 DAMRíos
- Sede 7 Biológicas
- Sede 8 Bicentenario
- Sede 9 Salud
- Sede 10 Ciudad Del Conocimiento
- Sede 11 DAMJalpa

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

8. 8. Si durante Febrero - Junio 2020 tuvo diversos empleos como profesor de lenguas, por favor indique el total de horas de clases semanales que tenía asignadas fuera del CELE (en caso de no laborar en otra institución indique 0): \*

\_\_\_\_\_

9. 9. Durante el periodo de confinamiento que impartía clases de lenguas en línea para el CELE: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Contrajo usted COVID
- Algún familiar muy cercano contrajo COVID
- Usted y algún familiar cercano contrajeron COVID
- Ni usted, ni algún familiar cercano contrajeron COVID

Formación en la Docencia de Segundas Lenguas

10. 1. Máximo grado de estudios (Favor de considerar sólo los grados relacionados con Idiomas, Lingüística, Lingüística Aplicada, Estudios del Lenguaje, Enseñanza de Lenguas): \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Técnico
- Licenciatura
- Especialidad
- Maestría
- Doctorado
- Ninguno de los anteriores

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

11. 2. Por favor indique si ha tomado cursos mayores a 30 horas relacionados con el empleo de aplicaciones tecnológicas en la educación. \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sí  
 No

12. 3. Por favor indique si ha tomado cursos mayores a 30 horas relacionados con el empleo de aplicaciones tecnológicas en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sí  
 No

Recursos Tecnológicos

Durante el confinamiento Abril – Junio 2020, para la planeación e implementación de sus clases:

13. 1. ¿Contó con un equipo de cómputo de escritorio o una laptop? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sí  
 No

14. 2. ¿Contó con un Smartphone o Cellphone? \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sí  
 No

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwiRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

15. 3. ¿Compartía estos equipos frecuentemente con familiares? \*

Mark only one oval.

Sí

No

16. 4. ¿Contó con servicio de Internet en casa? \*

Mark only one oval.

Sí

No

17. 5. ¿Contó con servicio de Internet a través de su celular? \*

Mark only one oval.

Sí

No

18. 6. ¿Contó con un espacio para trabajar sin distracciones al momento de interactuar en línea con sus estudiantes? \*

Mark only one oval.

Sí

No

7. Por favor indique las tres aplicaciones tecnológicas, herramientas, recursos en línea, etc. que empleaba más frecuentemente en sus clases de lenguas del CELE antes de la pandemia.

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwiRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

19. a.

20. b.

21. c.

\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Por favor indique las tres aplicaciones tecnológicas, herramientas, recursos en línea, etc. que empleó más frecuentemente en sus clases de lenguas del CELE en línea durante la pandemia.**

22. a.

\_\_\_\_\_

23. b.

\_\_\_\_\_

24. c.

**685**

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwiRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

25. 9. Estas aplicaciones tecnológicas que usó para interactuar con sus alumnos durante la pandemia: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- No las conocía, y tuvo que aprender a utilizarlas por su cuenta.
- No las conocía, pero le explicaron como usarlas.
- Las conocía, pero no las había utilizado.
- Las conocía y ya las había utilizado.

Las TIC y el trato a los estudiantes

**Instrucciones:** Por favor, elija la respuesta que mejor represente su opinión.

26. 1. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho tratar a los alumnos de manera menos personalizada en mis clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

27. 2. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho sentir menos interés en los alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

28. 3. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho preocuparme menos por los alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

29. 4. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho más estricto con los alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

30. 5. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho menos tolerante con los alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

31. 6. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho menos sensible con los alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

32. 7. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho menos comprensivo con mis alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

33. 8. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología me ha hecho sentir menos cercano a mis alumnos en mis clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Las TIC y desempeño académico

**Instrucciones:** Por favor, elija la respuesta que mejor represente su opinión.

34. 1. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología en mis clases de lenguas me ha hecho sentir que logro satisfacer las necesidades de aprendizaje de mis alumnos. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

35. 2. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología en mis clases de lenguas me ha hecho sentir que soluciono los problemas que se le presentan a los estudiantes para aprender la lengua. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

36. 3. Durante la pandemia, he percibido que mi desempeño con la tecnología en mis clases de lenguas es importante para la universidad. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

37. 4. Durante la pandemia, he percibido que la universidad valora mi empleo de la tecnología en mis clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwiRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

38. 5. Durante la pandemia, he percibido que mis estudiantes valoran mi empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

39. 6. Durante la pandemia, he percibido que mi empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas influye positivamente en mis estudiantes. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

40. 7. Durante la pandemia, me he dado cuenta que mi empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas cubre las expectativas de mi institución. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

41. 8. Durante la pandemia, me he dado cuenta que mi empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas contribuye de manera positiva al alcance de los objetivos institucionales. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Las TIC y carga laboral

**Instrucciones:** Por favor, elija la respuesta que mejor represente su opinión.

42. 1. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología con mis alumnos en las clases de lenguas me ha generado mucha tensión. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwIRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

43. 2. Durante la pandemia, considero que estoy trabajando demasiado para emplear la tecnología con mis alumnos en las clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

44. 3. Durante la pandemia, las indicaciones emitidas por mi institución para el empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas me han generado mucho estrés. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

45. 4. Durante la pandemia, la presión ejercida por mi institución para favorecer el empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas me ha desgastado. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores del XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/d/1F4gupwiRzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

46. 5. Durante la pandemia, el empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas con mis estudiantes me ha generado frustración. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

47. 6. Durante la pandemia, siento que trabajo demasiado para emplear satisfactoriamente la tecnología con mis alumnos en las clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

48. 7. Durante la pandemia, me he sentido angustiado con respecto a las acciones emprendidas por mi institución para favorecer al empleo de la tecnología en las clases de lenguas. \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

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Anonymized Empleo de las TIC en los profesores de l XXXX durante la ... <https://docs.google.com/forms/tu/0/d/1F4gupw1RzkA954PqpAZPTS4W9...>

49. L. Durante la pandemia, he sentido desgaste para alcanzar las expectativas de mi institucion con respecto al empleo de la tecnologia en las clases de lenguas. \*

Mark only one oval.

- En desacuerdo
- Algo en desacuerdo
- Algo de acuerdo
- De acuerdo

Preguntas de consentimiento:

50. I. Por favor indique si está de acuerdo en participar en una entrevista en línea de aproximadamente 30 minutos para profundizar en algunas de las respuestas que ha vertido en este cuestionario. \*

Mark only one oval.

- Sí
- No

51. L. Por favor si esta de acuerdo en participar en la entrevista, dejenos un numero de teléfono donde podamos comunicarnos con usted para programar la fecha y hora de la entrevista. Si no desea ser entrevistado indique 0. \*

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# PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATORS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES POSED BY EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ESTRATEGIAS PEDAGÓGICAS USADAS POR LOS FORMADORES DE DOCENTES DE INGLÉS PARA SUPERAR LOS RETOS IMPUESTOS POR LA ENSEÑANZA REMOTA DE EMERGENCIA DURANTE LA PANDEMIA COVID-19

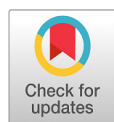
STRATÉGIES PÉDAGOGIQUES UTILISÉES PAR LES FORMATEURS D'ENSEIGNANTS D'ANGLAIS POUR RELEVER LES DÉFIS IMPOSÉS PAR L'ENSEIGNEMENT À DISTANCE EN SITUATION D'URGENCE PENDANT LA PANDÉMIE DE COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

The crisis in the education system generated by the appearance of COVID-19 revealed the multiple gaps that exist due to the diversity of contexts to which students and teachers belong. This article reports on a case study which explored the challenges English teacher educators (TES) at a public university in Neiva, Colombia faced during the pandemic due to the imposition of emergency remote teaching (ERT), the pedagogical strategies they used to respond to these challenges, and the ones that remain. To do this, data were collected from a questionnaire and a focus group with TES and pre-service teachers (PSTs) from the language teacher education program. The main findings show that the transition from classroom teaching to ERT brought some challenges for TES and their trainees related to the social realities existing in the context of the latter. To respond to these challenges, TES had to adjust their teaching strategies and learn to use some technologies such as videoconferencing software and educational apps. Still some challenges remain for the future, such as enhancing PST's motivation, autonomy and classroom interaction. The study suggests the need to continue training language TES on the use of ERT technologies and to find more and better ways to promote autonomous learning processes to adapt teaching practices to current times.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; emergency remote teaching; ICT; English teaching; teacher education; pedagogical strategies.

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## RESUMEN

La crisis en el sistema educativo generada por la aparición del COVID-19 puso de manifiesto las múltiples brechas que existen debido a la diversidad de contextos a los que pertenecen estudiantes y docentes. Este artículo informa sobre un estudio de caso que exploró los retos que enfrentaron los formadores de docentes de inglés de una universidad pública en Neiva, Colombia, durante la pandemia debido a la imposición de la enseñanza remota de emergencia, las estrategias pedagógicas que usaron para responder a estos retos y los retos que quedan por enfrentar. Para ello, recolectamos datos de un cuestionario y un grupo focal con docentes y estudiantes de un programa de formación de docentes. Los principales hallazgos muestran que la transición de la enseñanza presencial a la remota de emergencia trajo algunos desafíos para educadores y docentes en formación relacionados con las realidades sociales existentes en el contexto de los estudiantes. Para responder a estos desafíos, los formadores de docentes tuvieron que ajustar sus estrategias de enseñanza y aprender a utilizar algunas tecnologías, como el software de videoconferencia y las aplicaciones educativas. Aún quedan algunos desafíos para el futuro, como mejorar la motivación, la autonomía y la interacción en el aula de los docentes en formación. Las conclusiones apuntan a la necesidad de seguir formando a los docentes de idiomas en el uso de tecnologías de enseñanza remota de emergencia y de encontrar más y mejores formas de promover procesos de aprendizaje autónomo para adaptar las prácticas docentes a los tiempos actuales.

**Palabras clave:** COVID-19; enseñanza remota de emergencia; TIC; enseñanza de inglés; formación de docentes; estrategias pedagógicas.

## RÉSUMÉ

La crise du système éducatif engendrée par l'apparition du COVID-19 a révélé les multiples lacunes qui existent en raison de la diversité des contextes d'où les élèves et les enseignants proviennent. Cet article rend compte d'une étude de cas qui a exploré les défis rencontrés par les formateurs d'enseignants d'anglais pendant la pandémie en raison de l'imposition de l'enseignement à distance d'urgence dans une université publique à Neiva, Colombie, les stratégies pédagogiques qu'ils ont utilisées pour répondre à ces défis et les défis qui restent à relever. Pour ce faire, nous avons collecté des données à partir d'un questionnaire et d'un groupe de discussion avec des professeurs et des étudiants d'un programme de formation de professeurs de langues. Les principaux résultats montrent que le passage de l'enseignement en classe au mode à distance en situation d'urgence a posé plusieurs défis aux enseignants et aux élèves en raison des réalités sociales existant dans le contexte des élèves. Pour relever ces défis, les formateurs d'enseignants ont dû ajuster leurs stratégies d'enseignement et apprendre à utiliser certaines technologies telles que les logiciels de vidéoconférence et les applications éducatives. Il reste encore des défis à relever pour l'avenir, tels que l'amélioration de la motivation, de l'autonomie et de l'interaction en classe des enseignants en formation. Les conclusions suggèrent la nécessité de continuer à former les professeurs de langues à l'utilisation des technologies d'enseignement à distance en situation d'urgence et de trouver des moyens plus nombreux et meilleurs de promouvoir des processus d'apprentissage autonomes pour adapter les pratiques d'enseignement à l'époque actuelle.

**Mots clés:** COVID-19; enseignement à distance en situation d'urgence; TIC; enseignement d'anglais; formation des enseignants; stratégies pédagogiques.

## Introduction

On December 31st, 2019, the world's citizens were officially informed of the first case of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China. By March 2020, while Europe, especially Italy and Spain, experienced rapid growth in deaths caused by the virus, Colombia reported its first case of coronavirus disease. The pandemic brought drastic changes and emergency responses from governments to control the high-speed spread of the virus and the increasing number of deaths. Some of the measures included the closure of schools and universities, quarantine periods, border closures, and restrictions on mass events.

Although the prospects generated by the pandemic seemed devastating for education, the National Ministry of Education of Colombia (known in Spanish as MEN) ordered schools to establish plans under provisional measures to ensure educational continuity. Faculty across the country agreed on a standard procedure for teaching their lessons remotely using information and communication technologies (ICT). In some ways this involved taking a leap of faith into the unknown for many with little digital skills or no technology access. In particular, the faculty from the Universidad Surcolombiana had two weeks to restructure the course syllabi and two more weeks to attend conferences and accelerated workshops on how to use ICTs for educational purposes. Indeed, many aspects were left behind in preparing teacher educators (TES) and pre-service teachers (PSTs) for virtual learning, teaching, and assessment.

As these conditions were favorable to look into undisclosed truths, we decided to answer the following research question: What are the pedagogical strategies and technological resources that English language TES use to overcome the challenges posed by the transition from the classroom to emergency remote teaching in times of pandemic? The results show that TES' awareness of PST's contexts increased, their strategies changed, and that they are still facing challenges regarding knowledge and use of technological tools and the promotion of autonomous learning. Thus, this article presents

a profound reflection on the case of a language teacher program providing emergency response to the pandemic in a public university in Colombia.

## Theoretical Framework

This research study is based on sociocultural theories regarding emergency remote teaching, ICTs in education and English language teaching, and teachers' pedagogical practices.

### COVID-19 and Emergency Remote Teaching

Several authors have agreed upon the term Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to describe the temporary shift from face-to-face instruction to a virtual mode due to a crisis such as the one provoked by COVID-19 (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Golden, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Mae-Toquero, 2021; Olasile Babatunde & Emrah, 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2020). Hodges et al. (2020) prevent us from confusing ERT with online learning. The authors state that ERT's main objective "is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis" (para. 13). According to Mae-Toquero (2021), ERT might offer practical but unreliable access for learning to continue. Despite not being as refined as online education, it presents itself as challenging to guarantee quality education, especially for institutions in countries that never transitioned to distance education delivery.

Barbour et al. (2020) are probably the most fervent group of scholars that propose a thorough reflection on the differences between online teaching and emergency remote teaching. They establish as the main differences the time for planning, preparation, and development. Regarding time for planning, the authors set three to six months for online learning and just a few weeks for emergency remote teaching. Moreover, they contend that:

many of the online learning experiences that teachers will be able to offer their pre-service teachers will

not be fully featured or necessarily well planned, and there's a high probability for suboptimal implementation. We need to recognize that everyone will be doing the best they can, trying to take just the essentials with them as they make a mad dash during the emergency. Thus, the distinction is important between the normal, everyday type of effective online instruction and that which we are doing in a hurry with bare minimum resources and scant time: emergency remote teaching. (Barbour et al., 2020, p. 6)

Bozkurt and Sharma (2020) also call researchers to pay conscious and careful attention to the use of the terms distance education and remote education, since any omission in this explanation can cause long-term consequences that would lead to unfair comparisons. For the authors,

distance education is characterized by the distance in time and/or space between learners and learning resources. While remote education refers to spatial distance, distance education considers distance within the perspective of different angles and strives to explain it through transactional distance". (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020, p. ii)

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Although distance is presented as a confusing term here, we should interpret it as either just spatial distance (common in remote learning) or transactional distance, which is provoked by the lack of rapport, communication, or autonomy among the actors: teachers and students.

All in all, we understand that distance education and especially online education differ dramatically from ERT. In fact, ERT should be understood as the first attempt to do online teaching without adequate time and preparation due to the unexpected and drastic changes in the circumstances of the educational modality. After the first attempt, ERT can evolve to distance and even online teaching as long as the planning, execution, and evaluation conditions return to what was considered the usual teaching conditions.

### ICT in Education and English Language Teaching

ICTs have been defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate,

and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information" (Burton, 2002, n.p.). Sarkar (2012) explains that they "consist of the hardware, software, networks, and media for collection, storage, processing, transmission and presentation of information (voice, data, text, images), as well as related services" (p. 32). The author classifies ICTs into two components: (a) infrastructure, which refers to the physical telecommunications systems, and networks and the services that utilize those; and (b) technology, which refers to the hardware and software of information collection, storage, processing, and presentation (Sarkar, 2012, p. 32). ICT use makes it possible to extend educational opportunities because they transcend in time and space.

In terms of computer use in education (one of the most used devices in education), ICTs date back to the late 60s and 70s when computers were first used to deliver material for students to practice the language through drill repetition (Tafazoli & Golshan, 2014). Many authors have classified the development of the gradual use of computers for educational purposes under three distinct phases: Behavioristic CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), Communicative CALL, and Integrative CALL (Barson & Debski, 1996; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer & Healey, 1998, Warschauer, 2000). Although there was no consensus about the times in which each one of them took place, the authors agreed upon their main characteristics. For example, the behavioristic phase is related to the use of computers under a grammar-translation and audio-lingual approach. Its main purpose was to drill and practice because it was focused on accuracy. The Communicative CALL phase emerged from the change to a cognitive paradigm in language; therefore, personal computers' main objective became accuracy and fluency. Finally, the Integrative CALL phase included multimedia and internet use as well as a shift to a socio-cognitive view on language because the focus was to provide students a space to exert their agency.

Bax (2003) contested Warschauer's phases by pointing out some inconsistencies in time and

definitions as well as proposing different terms for each of them: Restricted, open, and integrated CALL. The author mentions that restricted CALL refers to the software, activity types, teachers' role, and feedback, and other restricted dimensions; for the author, even if they were all 'relatively restricted,' they were not all behaviorists. All the same, the term Open CALL refers to a more open approach to the previous dimensions. He presents Integrated CALL as a key point that differs from Waschauer's phase because the author acknowledges its lack of completion to a significant degree. To conclude, Bax argued that the future of CALL depended on the progression from Open CALL to Integrated CALL.

Chambers and Bax (2006) proposed that CALL practitioners should work towards a state of 'normalization' that was understood as:

when computers (...) are used every day by language students and teachers as an integral part of every lesson, like a pen or a book ... without fear or inhibition, and equally without an exaggerated respect for what they can do. They will not be the centre of any lesson, but they will play a part in almost all. They will be completely integrated into all other aspects of classroom life, alongside coursebooks, teachers and notepads. They will go almost unnoticed. (Bax, 2003, p. 23)

Chambers and Bax list four factors that may hinder CALL normalization and effectiveness: Logistics (facilities should be not placed outside the "normal" classroom); stakeholder's conceptions, knowledge, and abilities (to feel confident enough to use computers, they need to have enough knowledge of and ability with them); syllabus and software integration (CALL should be integrated into the syllabus; teachers should be allowed the use of 'authorable' materials); and training development and support (best if offered in collaborative mode). Back in 2006, the authors did not count on a pandemic to accelerate the process of normalization, nor did they conceive that the virus causing the pandemic would make those factors' effects more evident than ever.

### Teachers' Pedagogical Practices

For the purposes of this study, pedagogical practices will be defined as "a dialectic interaction

between the English language teacher and the sociocultural and educational setting which permeates the roles he or she [the teacher] is expected to play in the language classroom" (Insuasty & Jaime-Osorio, 2020, p. 67). Pedagogical practices are also a social, objective, and intentional praxis (Fierro et al., 1999) or, as Huberman (1999) defined them,

A conscious, deliberate, and participatory process implemented by an educational system or an organization to enhance performances and results, encourage the development for the renewal in academic, professional, and labor fields and to cultivate the spirit of commitment of each person with society, especially with the community in which he or she is immersed. (p. 25)

As an interaction or a process, pedagogical practices can be transformed. Their character and the influence of the many factors that surround teachers' decision-making processes can affect teachers' actions before, during, or after implementing their lessons. Teachers' behavior can be better explained by the metaphor of an iceberg (Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999), whose tip is what we see in a classroom. Below the water's surface, there is planning and reviewing, selecting, and learning. At a deeper level, teachers' behavior is affected by the knowledge of their pupils, language form and use, activities, and process skills, as well as conceptualizations of education, teaching, learning, professionalism, language teaching, language, language policy. In times like these, experience also plays a significant role. So, considering the pandemic forced teachers to experience a drastic change in educational conditions, their teaching practices were transformed as well.

### Method

As this study intends to explore the pedagogical strategies and technological resources used by English TES to overcome the challenges posed by the transition from face-to-face to ERT in pandemic times, we decided to use a qualitative approach to research. Qualitative research pursues examining thoroughly the experiences people live

in different contexts (Kincheloe, 2003; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the transition to ERT, the English TE's experiences constitute part of the social construction of realities that are susceptible to being interpreted and understood through qualitative research (Flick, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, qualitative research allows interpreting these experiences from a subjective perspective without ignoring the research rigor and trustworthiness. As researchers, we are committed to linking the experience with each participant's personal view, acknowledging them as those who know and not focusing only on what they know (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009).

This research is part of an exploratory case study that attempted to comprehensively analyze the challenges faced by English TES using new strategies and technological devices that emerged during this time and have not been seen in context (Duff, 2008). According to Yin (2002), a case study is a "contemporary phenomenon within real-life context" (p. 1). It is composed of a particularity (changes caused by confinement), a contextualization (ELT program at a public university in Neiva, Huila, Colombia), and interpretation (researchers analyzing the phenomenon experienced).

The ELT program within which the study took place aims to educate pre-service English language teachers to work in rural or urban schools in the region. Within its curriculum, three components contribute to achieving that: Specific disciplinary knowledge, didactics of the discipline, and pedagogy. The program is 100% face-to-face, but during the mandatory confinement all classes were held remotely. This dramatic change resulted in an interruption of the processes that were taking place within each class. Additionally, some PST had problems due to a lack of technological resources or connectivity that led them to make some unfortunate decisions, such as dropping out of some classes. However, classes continued to develop until the semester ended on September 5, 2020; then, the collection of information for this study began.

### Participants

The participants in this study were 11 full-time and four part-time TES. Four of them have completed their doctoral degrees, while the other 11 have their master's degrees (see Table 1). Furthermore, three of these educators had been working in the ELT program for about 30 years, four of them had more than ten years, and the other eight had been in the program for 4 to 7 years. The program instructors were there throughout the transition process from face-to-face to ERT. They had to reorganize the academic spaces and adapt them to the PST's current needs. This activity demanded many hours of work and constant meetings to come to agreements that would benefit the trainees without sacrificing the academic content or the quality of the educational processes.

Participants also included, 26 teachers in preparation—19 women and 7 men—who voluntarily answered a questionnaire and took part in the focus group organized by the direction of the program. They were enrolled in separate semesters, ensuring that the study had broad coverage. Thus, four of them were in the fifth semester, seven in the sixth, four in the seventh, four in the eighth, six in the ninth semester (Table 1). Moreover, some live in the city (77%), where conditions are different from those in small distant towns (66%).

### Data Collection

As mentioned above, data collection took place after the end of the academic semester. Two questionnaires were used to collect data: one for TES and one for PSTs. These instruments contained questions designed to get information about TES' strategies and the changes that emerged from the transition to ERT. The first questionnaire, answered by TES, looked into the strategies and virtual resources they used during the ERT mode and their evaluation of such strategies and resources. It also intended to examine the classes' interaction and mediation while using such strategies. The second questionnaire, applied to PST, was

**Table 1** Participants' profiles

Type	Association	Education	Count
In-service teachers	Part-time	Magister	4
	Full-time	Magister	7
	Full-time	Ph.D.	4
Pre-service teachers	Student	Fifth semester	4
	Student	Sixth semester	7
	Student	Seventh semester	4
	Student	Eighth semester	4
	Student	Ninth semester	6
Total			40

focused on getting insights about the TES' use of strategies and the possible changes they could perceive in this process. Additionally, a focus group with both groups of teachers was conducted via Google Meet®. The main goal of this was to hold a dialogue with them about the experiences of the former and the perspectives of the latter.

**Data Analysis**

For this case study, we decided to use grounded theory as a method to analyze data. Following the guidelines of grounded theory, the data are subjected to repetitive inspection, coding, and categorization according to their recurrence level and saturation (Glasser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We used Atlas.ti software to organize the questionnaire responses and the focus group transcription and to conduct the open, axial, and selective coding, as proposed by grounded theory. As a result, three core categories connected to this study's main objective emerged: what the pandemic and confinement brought to initial education, changes in the strategies used in classes, and challenges that remain for the future.

**Findings**

As the main objective of this case study was to explore the pedagogical strategies and technological resources used by English TES to overcome the challenges posed by the transition from classroom

teaching to ERT in pandemic times, we decided to present the results in the following order: First, we describe the new challenges and difficulties brought by the ERT modality. Subsequently, we present the changes in the strategies used by English TES during the transition from classroom to ERT mode. Finally, we highlight the future challenges that this experience leaves from the perspective of both groups of teachers.

**What the Pandemic and Lockdown Brought to Initial Education**

This first category attempts to provide an overview of the challenges that English TES encountered during the transition to the ERT mode. The first challenge that these teachers faced in this transition was becoming aware of the PSTs' particular circumstances. Before mandatory confinement, these teachers' realities were not relevant or visible when both groups of teachers met in the classroom. This lack of relevance was due to the fact that TES could not perceive the difficulties that affected the trainees in their classes. When moving to the ERT mode, the walls that delimited the classroom disappeared, making visible some of the circumstances and particular dynamics that the trainees were undergoing in their homes, as expressed by an English teacher educator:

The only thing that I highlight as unfavorable is when there is some interruption due to some situation at home, especially by the children. These situations cause a loss of concentration, and pre-service teachers can not follow the thread of the class. Also, the failures on occasions of the technological equipment and the Internet connection.<sup>1</sup> (First questionnaire, TES, October 13, 2020).

Trainees also contributed to the understanding of this first challenge, as it is shown in the next extract from the focus group:

One pre-service teacher spoke on behalf of those who did not communicate with teachers. He stated that

1 The instruments were answered in Spanish, the researchers translated all the quotes literally.

some of his classmates did not attend due to particular family situations that triggered their economic or psychological instability and led to some apparent disinterest among pre-service teachers in virtual meetings. (Focus group, TE2, September 29, 2020)

The dynamics reported here by the English teacher educator and her/his? pupil reflects the reality of many trainees in the program. First, the lack of dedicated spaces to attend classes from home and the family dynamics made it difficult for many trainees to concentrate. For many of them, it was not easy to find a private place to attend their classes, either because they lived with their siblings or other relatives who also took classes or worked remotely, or because they lived in small houses or rural areas. Secondly, the pandemic and confinement resulted in economic hardship for families. Many people lost their jobs, including some of the trainees, who had to support their parents and relatives.

Each of us lives in different circumstances and environments. It is one thing to be in the classroom where there are less than 20 students and the teacher, and another is to be at home, with family, siblings, and the difficult economic situation caused by COVID. (Questionnaire, PST15, January 29, 2021)

Thirdly, some of the trainees came from nearby towns or regions, therefore they had to travel long distances to go to the university. When the pandemic was declared, they were suddenly forced to return to their places of origin where connectivity conditions were precarious.

Due to confinement restrictions, I returned to Rivera (a town near Neiva), where the Internet signal is terrible, and the family situation is worse. (Questionnaire, PST22, February 4, 2021)

I live on a farm, and when it rains, the Internet crashes, which affected my performance in my classes. (Questionnaire, PST18, February 2, 2021)

Besides, many of them used technological devices (personal computers or laptops) granted by the university. However, being outside campus, it was essential for them to buy their own equipment, which was unaffordable for some.

I know that many families share a cell phone with four children and that often there is no computer at home or connectivity is poor. (Questionnaire, PST15, January 29, 2021)

Lastly, this pandemic situation changed everyone's life, and this brought about psychological consequences for many. These were some of the realities PSTs had to endure during the transition; possibly, there were many others that we could not account for in this paper. Their situations mirrored those of many other students across the country, or even in the world.

And the TE stated: It was the confirmation of the social gaps that exist and how we teachers should look for ways to promote inclusive learning environments. (Second questionnaire, TE7, February 10, 2021). Therefore, English TEs found themselves in the need to become aware of those issues and consider them when planning their classes.

Other educators added,

I learned that in our context, we were not yet ready to transition that quickly. Circumstances forced us to do so, but many teachers and students had difficulties accessing and using these technologies. (Second questionnaire, TE4, February 10, 2021).

Sometimes we are not aware of the reality of our students or the effort they make. (Second questionnaire, TE2, February 2, 2021).

One of the great takeaways this experience has brought with it is that neither the institutions nor the English TEs can take it for granted that their pupils have all the resources at hand to learn from home. Thus, empathy became essential during these critical times, as noted by one of the TEs:

After applying a questionnaire to her students, the teacher highlights the teachers' empathy towards her students. This empathy was expressed in the teacher's understanding and sensitivity to the demanding situations students went through (problems of a personal nature, attitude, connection, etc.). (Focus group, Teacher 1, September 29, 2020)

A PST during the focus group assures something similar:



One of the students claims that the teachers took the time and paid attention to each student despite the situation, which is something to note. (Focus group, Teacher 5, September 29, 2020)

Although English TES' empathy was present in the transition from face-to-face to ERT mode, class dynamics were affected in terms of interaction. These changes in interaction among and PST became the second challenge. As an English TE explained:

The interaction was notably affected, especially between students and students' low participation in the two courses. (First questionnaire, TE4, October 13, 2020).

Interaction is a fundamental part of classes, especially those aimed at learning the language or those related to pedagogical foundations. However, due to the realities explained in the first challenge, this interaction was significantly reduced. Some of the trainees saw it this way:

Once homeschooling started, I feel like most teachers tried to adapt quickly. However, there was no good teacher-student connection initially, and there were difficulties in terms of class agreements. (Questionnaire, PST6, January 27, 2021).

Presentations were frequent. I think it happened as a way of "interacting" since the students had little participation when the teacher spoke. (Questionnaire, PST4, January 27, 2021).

Despite their best efforts, interaction was still a big problem within the class dynamics. This situation caused adverse feelings in the English TES, as shown below:

The saddest thing for me has been not knowing my students, that if I see them on the street, I will not recognize them. That human part is invaluable, and that has not happened in this modality. (First questionnaire, TE2, October 13, 2020)

Suddenly, we find ourselves trying to develop classes in front of a screen without receiving any kind of feedback from the students. It gets frustrating. (First questionnaire, TE1, October 13, 2020).

In these comments, English TES state that they have experienced some negative feelings such as

sadness and frustration. These emotions reflect how bad they felt for not being able to interact with their students. It was not merely due to having them face-to-face to instruct them, but to strengthen the interpersonal relationships that contribute to the community of practice construction.

Consequently, this new reality brought a feeling of helplessness. English TES stated their intention to contribute to improving interactions; although, given the circumstances, it was impossible for some of them:

Although I have sometimes tried to get them to turn on their cameras, it is impossible because the Internet is failing, or they use it as an excuse to not be seen. (First questionnaire, TE2, October 13, 2020)

Many students also claimed not to be able to participate in the sessions due to connectivity problems. However, due to the restrictions imposed by isolation and strict quarantine, not much could be done. (First questionnaire, TE1, October 13, 2021).

This constant concern of improving interaction has been coupled with issues associated with the constant use of technology. For some of them, being in front of a computer and using programs or web pages has been a huge challenge.

Although many English TES had already included some other technological tool or other digital resources in their classes, the sudden change in circumstances made many of them realize that they were not really prepared to teach under the ERT modality. This third challenge is manifested as follows:

I learned that in our context, we were not yet ready for such a rapid transition. Circumstances forced us to do so, but I think that many teachers and students had difficulties accessing and using these technologies. (First questionnaire, TE3, October 13, 2020).

He wasn't ready for the transition, and actually, I don't think he's used to it yet. Sitting in front of a computer for more than two hours has been difficult to handle. (Questionnaire, PST11, January 27, 2021)

I was not prepared, nor do I want to be prepared, since I do not see myself in the world of virtual education.

I feel that I do not learn the same way, nor do I have enough motivation, since the environment often does not help. (Questionnaire, PST8, January 27, 2021)

As this English TES and these trainees explain, none of them were ready for the change. This lack of preparation reveals another gap within the educational system.

For many people, it is easy to take for granted the existence of the digital native/immigrant dichotomy and assume that students are digital natives. At the same time, teachers are digital immigrants, as the following excerpt shows:

Collaboration between native digital students/teachers with knowledge about the pedagogical use of technological tools with digital immigrant teachers who showed interest in developing digital skills in record time. (Focus group, Teacher 7, September 29, 2020)

However, in many cases, this is a baseless assumption. During the first months in the ERT mode, the experience showed that both English TES and their pupils lacked enough training to conduct virtual education. Indeed, the former reported having to struggle with designing or adapting activities, and many of the latter had difficulties trying to use the different programs, platforms, and web pages to develop class activities:

It was difficult for the students and for me to learn to use the technological tools better. (Second questionnaire, TE6, January 11, 2021)

Additionally, as in previous challenges, using technologies permanently brought some issues to both English TES and trainees. In the case of the former, preparing the activities, giving feedback to the latter, and attending the synchronous sessions led to work overload. Therefore, extreme exhaustion, feelings of uncertainty, and anguish surfaced:

If it is considered that [the confinement] was something sudden and unknown, some emotional problems arose that somehow affected the academic processes. Sometimes feelings of uncertainty, doubts, and insecurity about skills arose. Added to this, the fatigue and stress generated by being connected for

100% of the academic and professional activities without physical contact with people also contributed to the generation of negative emotions. (Second questionnaire, TE7, January 11, 2021)

It has been an especially complicated process since motivation is disappearing due to mediated education. Furthermore, it is intellectually exhausting to be in front of a computer all day and even in free time while working. All this together, in turn, generates physical fatigue. (Questionnaire, PST21, February 2, 2021)

Technology-mediated education has personally increased my past issues, such as anxiety, stress, and frustration. (Questionnaire, PST12, January 27, 2021)

Despite this and other challenges run into by English TES and students during the transition of face-to-face to the ERT mode, we must recognize the extraordinary efforts they made to go on. These efforts included changes in teaching strategies by English TES to contribute to trainee teachers' educational process.

### Changes in the Strategies Used in Classes

Undoubtedly, the transition from face-to-face classes to ERT mode required English TES' strategies to change. To determine this change, it is necessary first to show some of those strategies that TES were using before the transition and then the ones used during the transition to ERT (see Table 2).

Based on TES' answers in the questionnaire, the most common strategies used to be collaborative work, group discussions, presentations and lectures, ludic activities, ICT, classroom projects, role play, and reflection questions. Some PST agreed and explained which strategies their teachers used in classes:

In face-to-face classes, some teachers were quite creative. They made us create posters and present the subject before the class. They had debates, group discussions, and many other cooperative activities within the classroom. (Questionnaire, PST25, February 4, 2021)

Face-to-face classes used to be more dynamic. Most of my teachers were in charge of explaining the theory

**Table 2** Changes in Teaching Strategies and Tools

Teaching Strategies Before covid-19	Teaching Strategies During covid-19	Tools Used During the Transition
Collaborative Work	Use of a repository or LMS	Infographics
Group Discussion	Adaptation of Activities to Virtual	Interactive Books
Presentations and Lectures	Environments	Videos
Ludic Activities	Collaborative Work	Forums
Limited ICT Use	Group Discussion	Break-up Rooms
Classroom Projects	Presentations	Voice Threads
Role Plays	Unlimited ICT Use	Google Docs
Reflection Questions		Meeting Rooms
		WhatsApp Groups
		Facebook
		Virtual Classrooms

of the class and putting it into practice through meaningful activities for us. They made use of different resources and materials that will help to have a better understanding of the problems. (Questionnaire, PST12, January 27, 2021)

Explain the topics on the board, bring teaching materials such as books, photocopies, slides, etc. These activities reinforce what is seen in class, make work-groups, put forward topics in class, and interact with our classmates. Most of the teachers have us work in groups. They taught through games. Reading in groups and giving our opinion or having discussions in class were the most common in most of my courses. (Questionnaire, PST14, January 27, 2021)

The excerpts above show that the TES' strategies in face-to-face lessons were diverse and aimed at learning in a meaningful way, promoting interaction and reflection. Below we present the results of the exploration of pedagogical strategies and technological resources used to overcome the challenges mentioned in the previous section.

The first change found was the adaptation of what was planned for face-to-face to the ERT mode. One of the English TES expressed it in the following way:

The changes made had more to do with the means used for teaching and access to information resources than with the nature of the strategies described above. Reflecting on this, the biggest challenge was finding the appropriate virtual means (platforms, applications,

etc.) to carry out the sessions so that these strategies could continue to be present in the classes. (Second questionnaire, TE4, February 10, 2021)

As shown in the excerpt, the first action was simply to put the information that was designed for face-to-face classes in a repository or LMS in which it could be administered and delivered to PST. However, later on, TES saw the need to redesign the activities they had planned and adapt them to virtual environments, as the following quote indicates:

The main changes occurred in the search for tools other than videoconferencing that allowed students to interact and contribute to different activities and provided one-way communication (teacher-students). The search involved verbal communication strategies and ways in which students could interact and contribute to the different activities with synchronous and asynchronous tools (forums, blogs, Google docs, meeting rooms, etc.). Another change occurred in the presentation of the materials. Formats such as videos, interactive books, and infographics were included to avoid that the teacher only presented the material. (Second questionnaire, TE7, February 11, 2021)

The above excerpt shows how English TES needed to transform their academic discourses so that they were easy to adapt to digital media. This process required an effort from them, as they used to construct knowledge in the classroom, and now they were limited to virtual means. For example,

as TE7 points out, it was necessary to transform the content of his subject area and adapt it to infographics, interactive books, videos, forums, etc.

PST highlight these same strategies as contributions to their learning process in those tough times of learning across the distance:

The teachers tried to find tools and solutions that would allow them to adapt the contents that had to do with this new modality. Most of the teachers told us about flexibility when it comes to assignments and assessments. You could see the effort made by several teachers so that the classes were not tedious or only the teacher was the one who spoke. Many of them adapted the technological tools to promote a real learning environment. (Questionnaire, PST5, January 27, 2021)

When virtual classes began, teachers had more resources. The activities continued to be similar except that it was through a computer. It was discussed in groups (in different rooms), a topic was presented, we recorded our analysis of a poem and uploaded it to Voicethread, we wrote diaries, the teacher shared the recorded class with all his students, etc. I think it was a great advantage in that regard, given that there were more resources available. (Questionnaire, PST25, February 4, 2021)

These efforts to address PST's needs were ongoing. The use of different web pages designed for collaborative work was essential in their learning. The level of involvement of PST was also evident since they went from being passive at the beginning of the transition to active when participating in the different activities and through the different websites proposed by their TE.

Additionally, social media were implemented as a strategy to increase interaction and improve communication between TES and PST. This is the second change that stands out within the process, as the following quotes indicate:

I created a WhatsApp group as an information strategy and didactic alternative, and I used Facebook groups with the same purpose. (Questionnaire, TE6)

Facebook was used by a teacher educator who claims that he communicated effectively with the students and sent them information about the class. (Focus group, Teacher 2, September 29, 2020)

Other TES added that these strategies were practical even when they requested activities or when they had to evaluate PST:

WhatsApp has helped me a lot to communicate with them. It was what everyone had and the least complicated for them. Even the tool I used the most for oral reports with English 1 when they were individual. (First questionnaire, TE2, October 13, 2020)

However, the use of these social media implied taking care not to go beyond the limits related to personal life and time:

Now the interaction is constant because we continue to communicate by email. I also opened a new account in WhatsApp Business with a different number than the personal one to interact with my students in real-time or when they need it but setting limits. (Second questionnaire, TE5, February 10, 2021)

Though, others allowed a closer approach by considering it necessary to pay attention to personal needs:

In addition to the strategies that were used (virtual classroom), other means of communication were opened even through social networks that were used more frequently. The interaction was not limited to encounters, but almost daily, the students communicated for consultations or questions of an academic and even personal nature with those students who presented difficulties. (Second questionnaire, TE7, February 11, 2021)

In short, social media use was a remarkable success during the transition; it made it possible to contact even those who had connection difficulties or did not have enough resources to stay connected to virtual classes and classrooms.

### Challenges for the Future

After analyzing the changes that happened during the transition from face-to-face classes to ERT mode, some challenges remain. The first challenge is keeping updated with technology. As many of the TES recognized, their technology skills were not as strong as this ERT mode required. Even after these first experiences in ERT mode, TES

recognized that it is necessary to deepen the use of technology, web pages, and remote learning to boost learning in their classes:

We must learn and keep up with world changes (in terms of technology), that we must not put ourselves in negative positions, we cannot, but how can I do it. (Second questionnaire, TE2, February 9, 2021)

Both teacher educators and pre-service teachers must be constantly updated in the use of teaching tools and pedagogical strategies, and thus adaptability to change is a little easier. (Second questionnaire, TE5, February 10, 2021)

Nevertheless, English TEs and PST highlighted that they expected the university to provide more support in this respect:

It is important to have institutional support for the guidelines and policies delivered regarding the inclusion of virtual, blended, remote methodologies, etc. (Second questionnaire, TE7, February 11, 2021)

Train more students and teachers on ICTs, I am not very familiar with that topic (Questionnaire, PST22, February 4, 2021)

The university can teach teachers how to use different platforms. (Questionnaire, PST9, January 27, 2021)

These requests for more training in the use of ICTs could contribute to design strategies and activities that foster learning and professional development.

A second challenge for the future is boosting trainees' motivation, fostering autonomy, and enhancing interaction. Although this challenge is connected to the previous one, it is possible to strengthen education processes in all dimensions to understand virtual strategies and resources better. In terms of motivation, TEs suggested that they continue looking for alternatives to engage PST in classes and feel comfortable with their learning process.

It is essential to continue working to search for strategies to motivate and maintain pre-service teachers' interest in academic processes. (Second questionnaire, TE5, February 10, 2021)

Suppose the PSTs can motivate themselves in the right way. In that case, they will surely make

a more significant effort to carry out the activities and find an alternative to continue learning independently. Also, as part of this challenge, TEs must do as this TE suggests:

It is necessary to innovate and promote spaces where the pre-service teacher has greater responsibility in their training processes, autonomous and independent learning strategies so that the academic processes do not depend 100% on the teacher. It is also necessary to strengthen communication strategies. Since there is a different mediation, the messages must be more direct and precise for effective communication. (Second questionnaire, TE7, February 11, 2021)

Finally, regarding interaction, TE2 expressed:

The interaction between teacher-student and student-student is a fundamental element to improve in technology-mediated classes. In the virtuality experience, this aspect is too complex to manage. (Second questionnaire, TE2, February 9, 2021)

This quote shows how complex it can be to improve the interaction during the classes. However, it also shows that some TEs are willing to work for it since part of the teaching work is to analyze the difficulties and find strategies that fit the context. Nevertheless, there is still some uncertainty about whether it will be possible to achieve:

A teacher educator expresses concern about how teachers can promote changes in the aspects we are reflecting on while we are on the other side of the screen. For example, what can we do to improve communication with those pre-service teachers who do not want to communicate with us? (Focus group, TE3, September 29, 2020)

These feelings are the norm, all the more so when we go through uncertain times.

## Discussion and Conclusions

This case study aimed to explore the pedagogical strategies and technological resources used by TEs in a Foreign Language Teacher Education Program to overcome the challenges posed by the transition from face-to-face teaching to emergency remote teaching in times of the COVID-19

pandemic. Three main categories emerged from the data analysis. Findings showed that TES faced challenges early in the transition to ERT that led to rapid changes in their technology-mediated teaching practices and strategies; still, other challenges that arose from those changes continue.

One of the most critical challenges for TES is related to the awareness of the PST's realities. Knowledge and understanding pose a challenge for TES because they force them to go from the mere perception of reality to being part of it through a dialectical exercise involving PST personally through a computer screen. As Insuasty and Jaime-Osorio (2020) suggest, this "dialectical interaction between the English teacher and the sociocultural and educational environment" (p. 67) permeates teachers' roles, bringing about a transformation of teaching practices. For this case, the teacher's role changed because being exposed to a closer look at PST's reality in times of pandemic, a more profound reflection took place in, on, and for action (Schön, 1987; Hawkrige, 2000). These reflections led TES to explore new practices derived from their trainees' feelings of frustration, sadness, and helplessness.

Another challenge faced by TES and PSTs that remains for the future has to do with teachers' experience with online teaching. Although the tip of the teacher iceberg is blurred for PSTs when viewed from a black background screen (Malderez & Bodóczyk, 1999), findings show that even though TES are familiar with the use of ICTs, they recognize that their knowledge was not and is not enough to keep PSTs genuinely connected to a virtual environment (Blake, 2008). Therefore, TES must help each other save time and effort and assess their core beliefs to generate insights that serve as a foundation for their transformed practices. In fact, although the means of interaction such as Google Meet® or Learning Management Systems were 'normalized' (Bax, 2003) in the times of COVID-19, TES realized that online learning takes time.

The development of new and attractive activities and the evaluation of ready-made resources on the web requires that the TE be aware of PSTs' needs and prioritize learning, leading to professional development. For this, the TE must recognize that PSTs are not entirely digital-natives and that they require training to use technologies just like them. However, this training is not the TES' sole responsibility; the university also offers spaces to learn about the proper use of technologies in education (Castañeda-Trujillo & Rincón, 2018; Herrera, 2017).

Chambers and Bax (2006) argued that knowledge and skills, integration of curricula and software, and training development and support are merely some of the factors that can hinder CALL standardization, which simply reaffirms what we have found. It should not be forgotten that individual efforts to improve teacher-student interaction should be minimized and that TES should assume a more critical role instead. Just as we seek activities for PSTs to work collaboratively, teachers must look for ways to work together and be "critical of the ways in which these virtual environments can be used and exploited effectively to enhance language learning." (Castañeda-Trujillo & Cruz Arcila, 2012, p. 87). As the authors put forward, TES could foster trainees' autonomy, collaboration, and interaction. Together, they would reflect and redefine how technologies are used, gradually integrating these processes into the educational project of the context in which they are immersed. In the words of De Zubiría (2020, para. 11), the responsibility of teachers is to know the new digital skills that will help them rethink education. They must guide parents in the new skills they will temporarily assume, evaluate training processes, and monitor each PST's academic and social-emotional development. We believe that TES have already heard this call, however, this is only the beginning of the journey.

Finally, evidence shows that TES' teaching strategies changed despite time constraints during ERT conditions using reflection derived from this group's well-founded research practices. That was a direct

cause for PSTs to become more involved in the activities they prepared. Rather than an imposed process, there was some sort of negotiation or mediation between the more digital-savvy PSTs and TES. They showed a willingness to learn from them during the transition time. Social media integration was recognized as the most powerful tool to improve communication with PSTs, especially with those who had little or no access to the Internet, who could only attend their lessons via a smartphone. Social networks and media evoke some of the four metaphors proposed by Reinhardt (2020): windows, mirrors, portals, and playgrounds. Until now, they have served as a window to look at PSTs' realities, as mirrors to see our own reality, and as doors that have led us to different paths of trying and failing or achieving. Following Alavi and Leidner's (2001) call, we believe it is time to bring together all the research we have conducted on this topic to see how technology can enhance learning.

### Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study's major restrictions and drawbacks are related to the sample size and the conditions under which the data were collected. Unfortunately, due to the limited interaction with PSTs, their participation in the focus group was reduced. In addition, given that the conditions of ERT in this particular context were limited (four months), time constraints might have affected the collection of a greater amount of information; nonetheless, the quality of the data analysis process was not affected. Therefore, we think that future research should consider the use of narrative interviews since an in-depth look at English TES' and PSTs' personal experiences could provide a broader understanding of the changes and challenges lived during confinement.

We believe that further research on the matter could focus on a deeper exploration of the interaction of factors such as context, psychological processes, technological capacity, and instructional strategies. It is time that ERT and all

the informed teaching experience in times of COVID-19 help us reaffirm our role as thoughtful researchers and practitioners. Similarly, it is crucial to lay the foundations for transforming the educational system by consolidating and systematizing the TES' practices that have been changing and strengthening within this adverse context of the pandemic.

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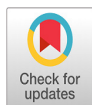
# TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE TO STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND DOWN SYNDROME DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS EN LÍNEA A ESTUDIANTES CON TRASTORNO DEL ESPECTRO AUTISTA Y SÍNDROME DE DOWN DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE LA COVID-19

ENSINO DE INGLÊS ON-LINE A ALUNOS COM TRANSTORNO DO ESPECTRO AUTISTA E SÍNDROME DE DOWN DURANTE A PANDEMIA DA COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

The unprecedented reality of the COVID-19 pandemic has led students and teachers to adapt to new routines and technological resources so that they can meet the pedagogical requirements generated by this world sanitary emergency. This case study explored a methodological intervention with students from an English school for special needs students in Manizales (Colombia). Our team of two university professors and seven pre-service teachers provided online English lessons to 17 students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and 13 with Down syndrome (DS). To do it, we used the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) and an eclectic method which combines strategies from three specific approaches: The Presentation, Practice, and Production approach (PPP), the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH) approach and a behavioral management approach. The purpose of this study was to establish the impact of the implementation of such strategies on the English Language Learning (ELL) process of the ASD and DS learners. Three data collection techniques, including two surveys to parents and a researcher journal, were used. Findings indicated that: (a) the combination of various stimuli and methodological strategies from a variety of approaches enhanced learning, (b) the use of images and pictograms fostered memory, (c) setting clear routines promoted self-regulation skills, and (d) the families and students' challenges were turned into opportunities. It was concluded that teaching English online to ASD and DS students requires knowledge of their conditions and suitable strategies from an eclectic instructional approach.

**Keywords:** Autism spectrum disorder; Down syndrome; special educational needs; English teaching; ICT; COVID-19.

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## RESUMEN

La realidad sin precedentes de la COVID-19 ha llevado a estudiantes y profesores a adaptarse a nuevas rutinas y recursos tecnológicos con el fin de cumplir con los requerimientos pedagógicos generados por esta emergencia sanitaria mundial. El presente estudio de caso exploró una intervención metodológica con estudiantes de un instituto de inglés para estudiantes con necesidades educativas diversas en Manizales, Colombia. Nuestro equipo de dos profesores universitarios y siete docentes en formación impartió clases de inglés en línea a 17 estudiantes con trastorno del espectro autista (TEA) y 13 con síndrome de Down (SD). Con este fin, usamos los principios de diseño universal para el aprendizaje (UDL, en inglés) y un método ecléctico que combina estrategias de tres enfoques específicos: el enfoque de Presentación, Práctica y Producción (PPP), el Tratamiento y Educación de Niños con Autismo y Problemas Asociados de Comunicación (TEACCH, por sus siglas en inglés) y un método de manejo comportamental. El propósito del estudio fue establecer el impacto de la implementación de tales estrategias en el proceso de aprendizaje del idioma inglés (ELL) de los estudiantes con TEA y SD. Se utilizaron tres técnicas de recolección de datos, que incluyeron dos encuestas a padres y un diario de investigación. Los hallazgos indican que: a) la combinación de varios estímulos y estrategias metodológicas de una variedad de enfoques facilitó el aprendizaje, b) el uso de imágenes y pictogramas fomentó la memoria, c) el establecimiento de rutinas claras promovió las habilidades de autorregulación y d) los retos que enfrentan las familias y los estudiantes se convirtieron en oportunidades. Se concluyó que la enseñanza de inglés en línea a estudiantes con TEA y SD requiere el conocimiento de sus condiciones y estrategias adecuadas desde un enfoque educativo ecléctico.

**Palabras claves:** trastorno del espectro autista; síndrome de Down; necesidades educativas especiales; enseñanza del inglés; TIC; COVID-19.

## RESUMO

A realidade inédita do COVID-19 tem levado alunos e professores a se adaptarem a novas rotinas e recursos tecnológicos para atender às necessidades pedagógicas geradas por essa emergência global de saúde. Este estudo de caso explorou uma intervenção metodológica com alunos de um projeto de ensino de inglês para alunos com necessidades educacionais diversas em Manizales, Colômbia. Nossa equipe de dois professores universitários e sete professores em treinamento ofereceu aulas de inglês *online* para 17 alunos com transtorno do espectro do autismo (TEA) e 13 com síndrome de Down (SD). Para isso, utilizamos os princípios do Design Universal para a Aprendizagem (UDL, em inglês) e um método ecléctico que combina estratégias de três abordagens específicas: o modelo de Apresentação, Prática e Produção (PPP), o modelo Tratamento e Educação de Crianças com Autismo e Problemas de Comunicação Associados (TEACCH, em inglês) e um método de gestão comportamental. O objetivo deste estudo foi estabelecer o impacto da implementação de tais estratégias no processo de aprendizagem da língua inglesa (ELL) de alunos com TEA e SD. Três técnicas de coleta de dados foram usadas, incluindo duas pesquisas com os pais e um diário de pesquisa. Os resultados indicam que: a) a combinação de vários estímulos metodológicos e estratégias de uma variedade de abordagens facilitou a aprendizagem, b) o uso de imagens e pictogramas promoveu a memória, c) o estabelecimento de rotinas claras promoveu habilidades de autorregulação, e d) os desafios para famílias e alunos se transformaram em oportunidades. Concluiu-se que o ensino de inglês online para alunos com TEA e SD requer o conhecimento de suas condições e estratégias adequadas a partir de uma abordagem educacional eclética.

**Palavras chave:** transtorno do espectro autista; síndrome de Down; necessidades educacionais especiais; ensino de inglês; TIC; COVID-19.

**Introduction**

The field of special educational needs (SEN) has recently played an important role in Colombian education. Teaching English to students with SEN represents a challenge and commitment from institutions, teachers, support staff, and anyone else who deals with this target population. Therefore, it is imperative to search for the most suitable strategies for SEN students to reach their potential during the teaching and learning process. One tool that may facilitate this process is a methodological adaptation in the form of reasonable adjustments regarding English language learning (ELL) strategies, time and behavioral management, and working routines inside the school setting. The initiative of creating a project, named *Escuela de Inglés para Estudiantes con Necesidades Educativas Diversas* (EINED), emerged from the need of providing a new opportunity for students with SEN, from different municipalities, to learn a foreign language. Our purpose is to utilize an instructional approach which entails reasonable adjustments aiming at pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Down syndrome (DS).

The purpose of EINED is to offer English classes virtually with an adapted methodology aiming to develop the four communicative skills in students with ASD or DS. Initially, having face to face classes was our goal, but because of the unprecedented emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our plan had to change unexpectedly. Thus, online English classes were the compulsory answer to such a complex situation, and we implemented our methodology online. Such a process has meant not only to include the adapted methodology but also to modify resources and materials by using technology. Teaching a foreign language to SEN students is a challenge itself, and addressing it virtually makes it even more demanding.

The main issue has been to find one English teaching method that could be adjusted to SEN students' needs since they require specific strategies according to their conditions. Other concerns

relate to poor connectivity, low technological literacy, and students' short attention span which is aggravated by the extended use of their devices. This new venture came with the opportunity to employ the case study approach with those SEN pupils in order to explore a variety of methodological issues in real life as indicated by Crowe et al. (2011). The purpose of this case study is to utilize an instructional approach which entails a combination of reasonable adjustments from diverse methods when teaching English online to pupils with ASD and DS. This methodological article outlines a description of the context, participants, procedure, a literature review of ASD and DS conditions and an overview of the working method along with the analysis of findings and their implications. Moreover, at the end of this paper, we would like to suggest some possible teaching alternatives for English instructors who are working with learners with either ASD or DS.

**Theoretical Framework**

We would like to revise three main constructs in this section. Firstly, we will give a brief overview of the conditions of our students. Secondly, we will describe the principles of two approaches for planning and delivering our lessons. Finally, the concept of information, communication and technology (ICT) for students with SEN will also be reviewed.

**The Conditions**

This section describes ASD and DS, the main conditions that the students in this study presented.

*Autism Spectrum Disorder*

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Autism Speaks, 2013), the subjects who have ASD present persistent difficulties in communication and social interaction in diverse contexts. Moreover, repetitive patterns and restricted interests or activities are manifested, and the development of their executive functions (ED) and self-regulation skills is seriously affected. Although they have a low

working memory, they possess an excellent memory for areas of interest and for subjects they want to master. The majority of subjects with ASD have a photographic memory; therefore, they are able to remember a lot of information through visual stimuli. According to Steffie et al. (2020), when teaching students with ASD, it is important to remember that they have special educational needs. This means that, depending on their level of severity, ASD students can either be in special classrooms or mainstream ones where a variety of resources such as visual aids or special instruction can be provided. Fortunately, this latter inclusive model has increased over the last two decades in several countries including Colombia. However, as Lindsay et al. (2014) report, research has shown that educators still find teaching ASD students a challenging task, especially due to the heterogeneity they face when they have students with ASD along with neuro-typical students in their regular classrooms. That is why utilizing different strategies in inclusive classrooms is a must for every teacher. Lindsay et al. (2014), describe a number of ideas such as the use of visual aids, the management of time and routines, the setting of goals and rewards, the adaptation of spaces when in crisis, and the training of pupils about disability awareness.

The aforementioned techniques are a mandatory step to help ASD learners to engage actively in a regular classroom. Sparapani et al. (2016) conducted a study to measure the level of active classroom engagement in ASD students in elementary school. The results showed that measuring individual factors such as emotional regulation, classroom participation, social connectedness, and initiating communication, as well as flexibility, were the best ways to find out students' active engagement.

### *Down Syndrome*

According to Amjad and Muhammad (2019), DS is "a genetic disorder which delays motor, language, and cognitive skills of an individual... Down syndrome is caused by the presence of abnormality in

chromosomes, that is, 47 chromosomes rather than 46 are developed for some reason" (p. 128). Down syndrome is generally diagnosed at an early age, either before or after birth. The majority of individuals with DS are usually healthy. In some cases, there may be correlated issues with their mental health which can lead to a double diagnosis as autism spectrum disorder, which might appear in a 10% of the worldwide population with DS. However, that figure is likely to increase depending on the country of residence of the individuals with DS.

Individuals with DS can thrive in any academic environment providing reasonable adjustments are put in place. In order to provide those modifications, Moreno and Tejada (2018) propose to focus the classroom intervention on four main areas: the objectives, the methodology, the activities and the evaluation. Studies have also shown that executive function (EF) has an impact on math, reading, and literacy performance in both DS and typically developing (TD) students. In addition, EF positively affects their ability to interact with their peers and to properly behave when performing a variety of tasks. Therefore, becoming aware of the relationship between EF and school performance may support methods to boost academic standards in learners with DS (Will et al., 2016).

From our participants with DS, 3 students show severe oral communication problems, 4 lack motivation to develop their tasks, and 5 become easily distracted. Although the majority of them have problems with their working memory, suitable visual aids allow them to retain vocabulary effectively; hence the importance of using them in every single class.

### **Teaching Approaches**

This section reviews three main teaching approaches: UDL, TEACCH, and ICT for SEN students. The following models not only comprise the pillars of our experience and the data analysis of our study, but also reflect the impact of the

combination of such models on the SEN students' learning process.

*Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*

The UDL framework emphasizes three paramount principles: the why, the what, and the how of learning. In keeping with that framework CAST (2018) Guidelines suggest three pillars with their defined features:

1. Multiple Means of Engagement, which refers to offering students the opportunities to self-motivate and regulate. It encompasses various engagement options that allow students to participate actively depending on their personality, capacities, background knowledge, culture, and neurological conditions.
2. Multiple Means of Representation, which deals with the possibility to provide numerous ways of suiting students' learning styles. Offering different options to approach the content is essential for students to comprehend the concepts and their connections.
3. Multiple Means of Action and Expression, which entails the development of communication skills and executive functions. Hence, taking into consideration the learners' capacities to express their knowledge, it is vital to provide them with various options so as to freely display what they have learnt.

In short, there is no one perfect model for learners to engage, represent, and express their understanding; but there are numerous methods that emerge from their individual differences. In our project we have integrated the three principles of UDL through activities, Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) tools, didactic resources, strategies, lesson plans, and online sessions. One of our goals is to generate awareness, equity, inclusion, and opportunities for the pupils and their families. Another goal is to provide our students with various ways to access learning in order to enhance their abilities.

*The Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH)*

This method is the first program of services not only for children and adults with ASD but also for individuals with other comparable developmental conditions and disorders (National Autistic Society [NAD], n.d.). To illustrate such a model, Taylor and Preece (2010) show how beneficial it was for them to use some aspects of TEACCH with students with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. The authors' findings confirm that there was an improvement in students' receptive and expressive communication as well as an increase in independent work. TEACCH involves promoting learning and development of people of all ages and skill levels. This method fosters various abilities such as independence as well as communication, social, and daily life skills. The purpose of TEACCH is to educate children in order to maximize their strengths taking into account their difficulties. In addition, acknowledging TEACCH values would also boost a sense of community and ASD awareness. For instance, as the National Autistic Society manifests, there are certain TEACCH values that must be recognized, namely, teaching, expanding, appreciating, collaborating and cooperating, and adopting a holistic approach aiming at the individuals, their families, and their community. Moreover, the method encourages students to develop a concept of achievement and teachers to individualize the students. To exemplify this, children with ASD and other conditions can learn together through the different daily activities which are programmed depending on their individual needs (Raising children.net.au, n.d.).

The educational techniques include: the development of visual information, spatial organization and flexible routines. Its components entail a structured teaching approach concerning the adaptation of facilities, working systems, agendas, and visual information (Cuadrado, 2006; Mulas et al., 2010). Taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic,

we opted for implementing new ways of applying this approach during the online classes. This meant focusing more on the visual aids and agendas, timed and systematic working tasks, as well as flexible routines, which facilitates not only the learning of the target language but also the development of executive functions and self-regulation skills. The next section contains a more thorough explanation of the techniques used from this method.

### Information, Communication, and Technology for Students With SEN

Although technology entails all aspects of modern life, the utilization of ICT tools is still incipient in our working context, let alone using such resources to teach students with SEN. Migliaresi (2018) affirms that technology “offers the opportunity to learn in different ways, visually, aurally, kinesthetically, but also it can provide information in ways that make it more accessible [...] that would be difficult to achieve in other ways” (para. 6). This refers to the use of a variety of technological tools with students with special educational needs in order to facilitate their access to education despite their condition. Technology in most cases becomes a great strategy to deal with challenging behavior as well since it enables the pupils to develop other abilities and look for different channels to engage themselves in the activities. Furthermore, technology offers the chance to get involved in online sessions and thus generate an arena for interaction and communication with their peers. Other skills that can be developed in the learning process are cooperation, problem-solving, and mutual respect. Competences that go further than the ICT knowledge (Migliaresi, 2018).

Another advantage of utilizing technology is to provide the students with multiple representations of knowledge which help students to retain all the acquired information received in their long-term memory. Therefore, “computerized learning environments may serve as more effective support tools for the instruction of SEN students precisely because they are characterized by multiple representations of knowledge” (Shamir & Margalit, 2011, p. 279).

The explanation rests on the idea that each concept has a reciprocal relation making up for other needs the pupil may experience (Moreno & Durán, 2004). It is well known that there is little research on the area of ICT when dealing with SEN students. Firstly, literature about this field is scarce, especially in Colombia. Secondly, having very few systematized experiences on this approach may not have permitted a major impact on research. Finally, the misconception of ICT being a hurdle has been an obstacle in the use of technology.

The emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has urged educators, institutions, families, and students to concentrate their efforts on the quest to access knowledge through the use of technological tools. The reason for such a venture was that, during the lockdown decreed by the Colombian government in 2020, technological devices became the only means to make contact with others, and they also served as the bridge between both counterparts: students and teachers. Thus, our project with our SEN pupils had to adjust to this new reality in terms of planning, delivering our classes, creating and designing resources as well as using and adapting our methodology in order to meet our learners’ needs. Although initially this experience represented a challenge for all of us, we have managed to accommodate to the new contingency.

### Method

This project emerges from a personal experience of both researchers and their students in a very specific context: the virtual English classes taught at EINED, which is an extension project from a public university in Manizales, Colombia. This qualitative case study intends not only to understand the significance of a variety of ELT methods and the students’ reactions to them but also their role in improving the conditions of students with SEN when learning English. This is a case study because it attempts to analyze a number of complex situations that may occur in their natural context in order to have a better appreciation of the facts.



Case studies provide an opportunity to describe participants, methods, settings thoroughly and more naturally (Crowe et al., 2011). In them, data are collected through various techniques with the aim of having a more holistic approach when analyzing the information gathered.

**Participants**

EINED’s team is composed of two professors, five support teachers, and a group of 30 students with ASD, DS, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Rett Syndrome, along with their families. This population includes 19 students with ASD, out of which one pupil has a double diagnosis of ASD and ADHD. Among them, 14 pupils are diagnosed with ASD Level 1 (requiring support), 3 of them with Level 2 (requiring substantial support), and 2 with Level 3 (requiring very substantial support), as Figure 1 illustrates. Moreover, there is a learner diagnosed with Rett Syndrome who is the unique diagnosed case in Manizales, Caldas. Finally, there are also 9 students with moderate DS. Participants’ ages range from 7 to 36 years old. Due to the level of severity of their conditions and the heterogeneity of their capacities, students show low working memory, attention deficit, and lack of self-regulation skills.

It is important to highlight that the standard of oral communication of some of our learners goes from verbal to very restricted as it is described in Figure 2. This implies that our instructional approach needs to suit the students’ varied

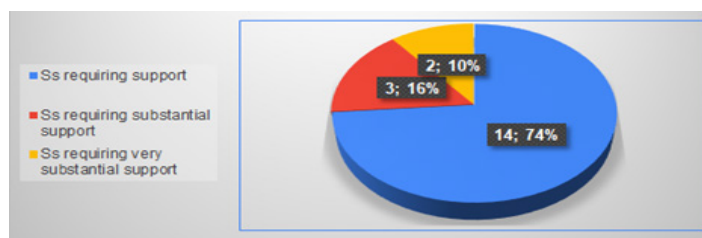
competences. In addition, while some of our students are literate, others are not, which means that the use of visual aids is beneficial for all students.

Another essential aspect is that this group of students with ASD requires constant support to develop the class activities; therefore, the accompaniment of their families is paramount. These families come from low to medium strata, leading to a disparity in terms of obtaining the necessary resources. In addition, their technological literacy differs a great deal which means that coping with technology and devices is not a simple task for some of them. Despite all these difficulties, the students and their families have become acquainted with the tools through their continuous use in class.

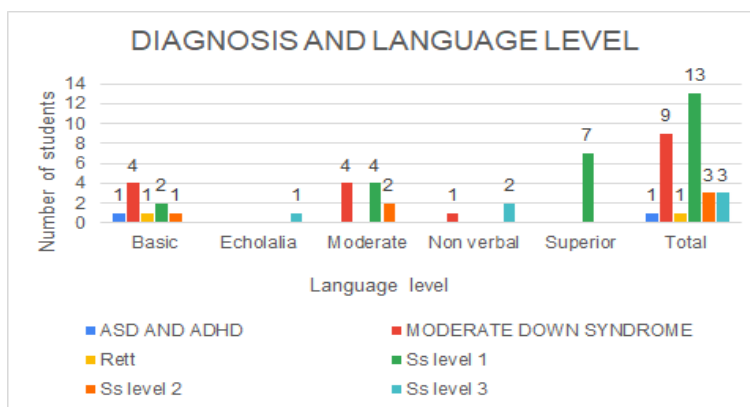
**Data Collection**

The first data collection technique was a needs analysis through a parent survey in which data about the students’ preferred input for learning was gathered. This information was important because it gave the researchers useful insights about the way students learn best.

These data were used as an essential tool for planning the strategies and activities during the research process. The second instrument implemented was a researcher’s diary. Here, the process of the classes was described in detail as well as analyzed and interpreted by the researchers so that some recurrent categories could emerge from such interpretations. This diary was useful to both collect their researchers’ perceptions and have a better understanding of



**Figure 1** Severity Levels of ASD Students According to Support Needed



**Figure 2** Diagnosis and Language Level

*Note:* The figure presents the total number of students' diagnosis and language level.

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the process. The data collected through this instrument was also handy throughout the triangulation stage. The final data collection tool was a second survey for parents after the application of a variety of teaching methods in order to determine their usefulness and relevance. This tool was significant since it evidenced the SEN students' progress in the English language learning.

High ethical standards of research were followed by respecting the individual differences and dignity of the participants of the study. Additionally, the informed consent of the participants' parents was obtained before starting the research process. Also, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was maintained at all stages of the study. Finally, all the instruments administered were analyzed with honesty and transparency.

### Instructional Approach

Before discussing our approach, it is important to remember that in order to achieve inclusion, institutions and teachers must focus on providing pupils with reasonable adjustments. This concept was coined by the World Health Organization (2011) when they emphasized the importance of putting in place a number of accommodations to suit the students' needs. In Colombia, the government decreed the adoption of a law that implies positive

actions and reasonable adjustments (Colombia, Congreso de la República, 2013).

The first approach we utilized is the PPP, which comprises a structure of planning classes following specific stages leading to a clear progression and a way to favor anticipation and avoid anxiety. The presentation stage is the moment to display all the new information, vocabulary, and grammatical structures by means of multiple channels. It aims at activating students' schemata (Weller, 2019) or previous knowledge as well as introducing new concepts in context, breaking the complex language into smaller chunks (Pimentel et al., 2014). In the practice stage, the pupils had the chance to use what they had learnt in a semi - controlled environment. It is vital to remember that some SEN students might always need the teachers' assistance. However, such aid may diminish when the learner shows some signs of independence. The final stage is called production, a phase in which students were provided with activities in order to use the language more freely.

A second approach used was TEACCH which has been more commonly used as an intervention method for individuals with ASD. However, there is some evidence around the world that this model has been effective with individuals who

have other conditions as well, although there is not much evidence of its use for English language teaching (ELT). Therefore, we used this approach with the SEN students in an attempt to find more strategies to ameliorate their SLA and cognitive development.

Since students with ASD and DS are predominantly visual (Lybarger, 2017; Ruiz, 2009) we focused on the design and adaptation of visual aids. We used augmentative and alternative communications systems (AACs) as a means of visual support. As stated by Burkhart (n. d.) for the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, AACs are “a set of tools and strategies that an individual uses to solve everyday communicative challenges” (para. 1). The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (2019) suggests that the AACs can include (a) gestures, (b) symbols: pictograms, photos, images, amongst others, (c) word boards, (d) books, and (e) voice output communication aids.

The pictograms used are downloaded freely either from a web page called ARASAAC or from a program called Picto Selector. Hart (2015) affirms that “for students with special needs, pictograms provide shortcuts to meaning” (p. 3). According to Hart, these tools can be considered a temporary support to motivate the students to utilize other resources such as the relationship among sound, letter, and context so as to recognize new words. Such pictograms are used in English and Spanish

as a way to promote a supplementary aid in the acquisition of EFL. Cioè-Peña (2015) argues that the use of the native language should not be shown as an impediment but as an opportunity to incentivize the learning of various languages. Rodríguez (2016) points out that the EFL learning process of students with special needs can be successful in either their mother tongue or the target language; thus, she believes that the information can be addressed in both languages.

The pictograms were not modified but adapted to a format framed in red with a yellow filler and red words as seen in Figure 3. This method facilitates the reading of texts and the retention of vocabulary. A study carried out by Pan (2010) “showed that partial matches between Working Memory (WM) and attention displays could guide attention, while color had a stronger effect than shape did. This finding supports the idea that color can be more efficient than shape in biasing attention” (p. 127). In a previous year (Pan, 2009), the same author also highlighted that warm colors, like red, yellow, and orange undoubtedly have a higher effect on attention compared to cool colors such as brown and grey. Dzulkifli and Muhammad (2013) declare that the importance of color cannot be underestimated. In educational settings, for instance, color can be a motivating factor in the learning process as it facilitates the development of cognitive abilities which are paying attention, perceiving, remembering and understanding

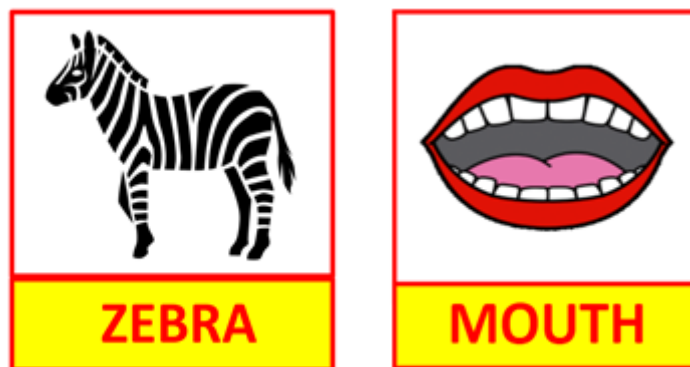


Figure 3 Example of Pictograms Used in the Presentation Stage.

various kinds of information. Moreover, in clinical settings, studies have shown that color can be beneficial in patients with different conditions such as Alzheimer, dyslexia, and ASD since color can help them to grasp the learning programs more easily as colors have the potential to attract people's attention. Another important use of pictograms was the creation of visual agendas which supported the recognition of the class steps by students who were not able to read.

Another strategy used during this project was the adoption of class routines and set agendas. This technique was useful to fight anxiety and motor restlessness, and to benefit the development of skills. It was paramount to establish positive routines that helped the students to understand and predict the exact class steps and be ready to react to changes.

When providing students with a teaching structure, it was also needed to consider time and behavioral management. For SEN students, time is a paramount aspect. Hence, the use of a clock with beginning and finishing times increased students' attention span and reduced their agitation.

During this project it was vital for instructors to identify their learners' unique characteristics and particular abilities which defined them as individuals. Although they shared features of the condition, in this case ASD and DS, each pupil showed their own personality, beliefs, preferences, and thoughts. This meant that we provided them with the possibility to freely express their opinions concerning the activities being developed in our classes. Therefore, giving them constant positive feedback permitted them to have a feeling of achievement and comfort. We also took students' individual skills into consideration when they were required to complete a task since their outcomes were only measured by means of what they managed to do throughout the whole class.

Implementing strategies to favor the students' sensory integration was also paramount. One of the shared characteristics of students with ASD and

DS is the inability to process the sensory stimuli from their surroundings. By this term, we mean all the information received through the senses. As Lashno (n.d.) affirms, "information is processed through the brain. The brain then interprets, organizes, and directs the body to respond appropriately to that sensory information" (para. 2).

This instructional approach included a behavioral management technique. One of the useful methods implemented to manage students' behavior in the lessons was Brain Gym® (BG). According to Spaulding et al. (2010), this technique mixes simple exercises and body movements to "remediate learning problems and help the subject reduce psychological and emotional stress" (p. 10). Vázquez (2020) also pointed out that BG helps to link the right and left-brain hemispheres, enhancing concentration and imagination as well as improving motor coordination which fosters understanding.

Additionally, a variety of interactive tools were used throughout the process. Firstly, every session was developed through the use of visual aids provided via Google« presentations. Secondly, we used an application called Jamboard® which facilitates the manipulation of images and language as well as the synchronous collaboration from students and instructors. Thirdly, interactive web pages and worksheets were a great tool for teaching SEN learners. Moreover, YouTube® videos and tutorials also played a meaningful role in the sessions. Online tutorials offered the opportunity to provide the SEN students with more detailed explanations and instructions, having the support of music, animation, and language. Finally, we used Excel® sheets to create and present games didactically since images and rules can be customized.

## Findings

The findings emerged from this case study showed the impact of a variety of strategies implemented on the ELL online process of students with ASD and DS. Firstly, after administering the data collection instruments, namely, two parents' surveys and a teacher's

journal from each researcher, it can be concluded that the combination of various stimuli facilitate student's learning. Secondly, based on the data analysis, the students improved their executive function and self-regulation skills by means of the implementation of a variety of methodological strategies based on different approaches. Thirdly, the data collected showed that memory was fostered through the use of images and pictograms. Additionally, the interpretation of the instruments concluded that one way of promoting self-regulation skills is the setting of clear routines during the classes. Finally, information from the three data collection techniques explained how all the ICT challenges families and students had at the beginning of the study, became opportunities in the long run.

### Combining Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic Stimuli Facilitates Learning

The data from the first parent survey revealed that visual stimuli was the preferred way of learning since 25 out of 30 students preferred to learn through images, graphs, and pictograms (Figure 3). The second most frequent way of learning was the combination of verbal instructions with images and the use of activities in which they had to deal with different materials (20/30). Finally, the least preferred kinds of input were songs and videos since only 8 parents chose this option.

It was evident that parents thought that their children learn best by using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli. Visual aids are advantageous since they facilitate the retention of vocabulary, enhance the concentration span, and allow the association of images with concepts. Moreover, the auditory resources help students reinforce the visual input with the notions to be learnt. Finally, kinesthetic activities are an asset to develop fine and gross motor skills; also, we can promote creativity and encourage motivation in our students. As journal entry N.º 5 from one of the researchers illustrates, the core of the classes is not only teaching a foreign language, but also, developing a number of competences.

Journal entry N.º 5 Researcher A<sup>1</sup>: "The class is not just focused on learning English. Ss can also develop some creativity" - "One of the mothers said she and her son found this type of activity very good for concentration."

### Methodological Strategies Based on Multiple Approaches Enhance Learning

The methodological strategies used in class provided students with the opportunities to learn via numerous approaches and foster their executive functions and self-regulation skills. The former ability "refers to our ability to put things we need to achieve in an order of hierarchy which impacts organization, planning, working memory, time management, and prioritization" (Lybarger, 2017, p. 4). Whereas the latter skills include the capacity to adjust to any circumstance and control their emotions and reactions by reducing the students' anxiety when coping with different contexts. Both researchers' journal entries display these aspects as follows:

Journal entry N.º 4. Researcher A: "During the lesson, most of the Ss were smiling" / "Some parents said that their children were interested in today's class."

Journal entry N.º 7. Researcher B: "Although instructors called out some names to participate, some Ss did it voluntarily and spontaneously."

Journal entry N.º 17. "He, using a doll (realia) pointed to a part of the body and the Ss said it. Some Ss were assisted by their parents. Afterwards, the Ss did an exercise using an online tool in which they had to drag a word (a part of the body) and put it in the right place on an image of a human body."

### Images and Pictograms Foster Memory

Pictograms in L1 and L2 were used during all stages of the classes. They were a great tool since they present concepts and information in a simplified yet memorable way. It was noticeable that students with SEN had an ability to understand pictograms and associate them with words or concepts more easily and rapidly. In question N.º 4 from a second

1 All entries are translations by the authors from Spanish.

survey for parents, it was evident that for 83.3 % of the families as shown in Figure 4, the use of images and pictograms was useful because “they facilitate and complement the English language learning. These resources suit the needs and the individual learning styles of the SEN population” (journal entry N.º 419).

Pictograms also facilitate the retention of vocabulary, especially when they are accompanied by words framed in bright colors. Pan (2010) reports that warm colors have a greater impact on memory than cool colors. As Dzulkipli and Muhammad (2013) state, color stimulates cognitive processes such as attention, memory and understanding. Evidence of this can be found in the following journal entry:

Journal entry N.º 23. Researcher A: “The students can remember words more easily when they are accompanied by pictograms” “The Ss can associate images to words easily” / “Images can stimulate memory.”

In a parents’ survey one of the parents expressed: “The color of the pictograms has helped my son to memorize more words, since I used to work with pictograms in black and white and he had a lot of difficulty to retain the words”.

### Setting Clear Routines is Essential to Develop Self-Regulation Skills

Since one of the characteristics of ASD and DS students is their inflexibility, we established clear routines through visual and written agendas in every class in order to accommodate the activities to suit this particular characteristic. Anticipation helped control anxiety and motor restlessness (Lybarger, 2017), and it enhanced the development of self-regulation skills. To exemplify, parents were asked about the impact of the strategies used in class in their children’s life: Parent survey, Question 3: *¿Have the strategies used in the English classes had an impact in different areas of your child’s life? If so, in which ones?*

Most of the parents responded positively to this question, and they also reported examples of the impact generated in their children’s life as follows: The first parent stated: “The strategies help them self – regulate”. Another parent claimed: “The strategies used by the teachers help them with their concentration and attention”. Another mother said: “The classes foster the students’ wellbeing”. Finally, one of the parents commented: “My son feels calmer during the classes

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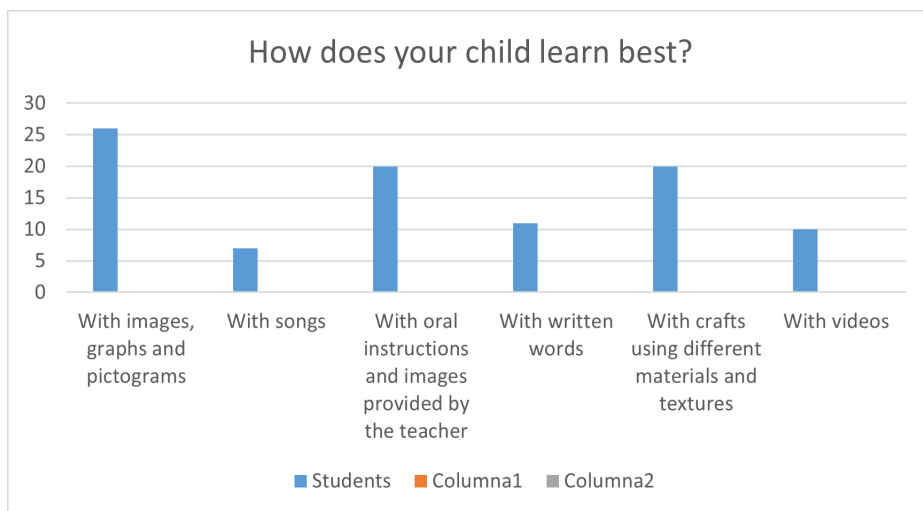


Figure 4 Students Preferred Input for Learning

because he knows their structure very well since it is always the same”. this is also shown in journal entry N.º 16:

Researcher A says: “Class agenda for the day was presented in L1 and L2 and using pictograms. Then, the steps of the class were presented again in L2 using pictograms. Then, each step was presented again in L1 and L2 using more pictograms (...) Students seemed completely at ease with the structure of the class.”

The excerpts from the researcher’s journal evidenced the usefulness of agendas in both languages to reinforce the steps of the class and prioritize anticipation.

Another strategy which favored the development of self-regulation skills was the implementation of BG at the beginning of the classes as a preparation step for the process ahead. Vázquez (2020) states that using BG in class fosters concentration, attention and these factors facilitate learning, as seen in the following journal entry:

Journal entry N. 16. Researcher X: “Today, THE BG exercises were a success! The students were smiling and doing the exercises very well”. Those exercises were motivating for the students since they felt relaxed and more alert to start the class.”

Using BG offers several advantages. Firstly, learners seemed to enjoy the proposed exercises, and they expressed their joy whilst doing them. Secondly, BG enhances the development of their motor skills which leads to steady progress. Thirdly, it was noticeable that BG improved their behavior during the session. Additionally, the students had the opportunity to release the stress evidenced in their motor restlessness and were able to feel more self-confident in the completion of the activities.

### ICT Challenges Were Turned Into Opportunities

As the study was carried out during online sessions through the Google Meet platform, different ICT tools were used. When the virtual sessions started,

we thought it would be a huge challenge for the students and their families. However, gradually, various technological resources were introduced, and the learners and their families became more acquainted with this new reality. The following journal entries illustrate this fact:

Journal entry N.º 17. Researcher A: “little by little students and families became familiar with the use of live worksheets” – “Interactive tools have helped the students to associate and complement the topics studied in the lessons.”

Journal entry N.º 25. Researcher A: “It was interesting to see how easy students and their families found ICT tools such as Jamboard and live worksheets.”

## Discussion

As stated by Crowe et al. (2011), the main objective of a case study is to examine a situation thoroughly in its inherent setting. Thus, this case study supports the latter concepts since various English teaching methods were analyzed in light of ELT online practices with ASD and DS students. Firstly, the main problem was to find one specific English teaching method that suited the needs of SEN learners based on their particular conditions. After implementing a set of strategies from a combination of ELT methods, we claim that there is not one perfect method for teaching English to this population. Instead, we argue that an eclectic instructional approach is the key to address SEN students from a multifaceted approach. This claim can be validated with the three pillars proposed by CAST (2018) guidelines which are multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression. Despite the limitations originated by ASD and DS in terms of learning, these students have the potential to develop their communicative skills in English, especially listening and speaking.

Additionally, another issue that arose from this study was the scarce knowledge of ICT tools and devices from the part of students and their families in order to develop the activities of the online

English lessons. Even though the use of technological resources was somewhat challenging for students and families who were not ICT literate, one unexpected result is that they are successfully coming to terms with these new virtual resources. Such aids represent a benefit since they provide different perspectives to access knowledge as stated by Migliaresi (2018). Furthermore, because of the synchronous characteristic of our sessions, students have been able to fully complete their ICT tasks along with the teachers' guidance in a more dynamic environment.

There was another matter regarding the short attention span ASD or DS students present. Having used a variety of strategies to develop self-regulation skills such as TEACCH and BG, we affirm that those techniques contribute to foster self-control and enhance readiness to learn in the proposed activities as Spaulding et al. (2010) affirm. Moreover, based upon the data collected, we claim that learning through visual stimuli helps our SEN students to focus their attention on the images and associate them with words or concepts, even if they are not able to read or write. The majority of our SEN learners have a photographic memory which facilitates their learning process as Lybarger (2017) states.

Additionally, since inflexibility is one of the difficult areas of ASD and DS, we have confirmed that keeping a strict agenda and following specific routines help these students diminish their anxiety triggers. However, it is paramount to provide them with slight routine changes to foster flexibility progressively.

One of the limitations we identified at the beginning of the process was the need for their families' constant support; however, such constraints became an opportunity as their families have been more involved in the sessions leading to generating a sense of community within the team. Moreover, we have been able to facilitate the development of independent activities which might gradually augment their autonomy.

## Conclusions

Teaching English online to SEN students requires knowledge of the main features of the learners' conditions and the reasonable adjustments that can help them attain their full potential. In this methodological article, we examined an instructional approach with the aim of proposing several strategies to facilitate the acquisition of the foreign language (FL), the development of EF and self-regulation skills and the behavioral control of ASD and DS students.

We have described a number of techniques from three perspectives namely the 3Ps model, the TEACCH method and a behavioral approach based on BG. When implementing all these strategies we took into consideration the principles of UDL which, from our point of view, should be the SEN teaching foundations. We suggest the aforementioned approaches since we have realized the advantages arising from their implementation. Firstly, the 3Ps model helps ASD and DS pupils to reduce their anxiety triggers owing to its solid structure. Secondly, the TEACCH method provides a very complete set of classroom management techniques so as to meet SEN students' needs. Thirdly, the BG approach represents an appropriate manner to train the students in their behavioral management skills. Thus, we invite our colleagues to consider the mixture of multiple approaches which might be beneficial to their SEN learners in various developmental areas.

Even though we have found certain limitations, we have also encountered positive outcomes which have become our inspiration to offer a more suitable quality teaching process. Such an experience has led to our pupils' steady progress regarding the foreign language learning (FLL), their families' constant involvement as well as support and a better understanding of the ASD and DS conditions. According to the findings, we believe that our intervention may be relevant for teachers and students not only in times of the COVID-19 pandemic but also for regular online teaching practices. All in all, the



most significant lesson we have learnt through this experience is that “teaching SEN students with compassion, love, and respect must be the key to fostering their desire for self-improvement.”

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# POWERFUL PEDAGOGIES IN TIMES OF COVID: AN ONLINE PEDAGOGICAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN EFL STUDENTS AND ESL TEACHER CANDIDATES

PEDAGOGÍAS PODEROSAS EN TIEMPOS DE COVID: UNA COLABORACIÓN PEDAGÓGICA  
ENTRE ESTUDIANTES DE ILE Y DOCENTES EN FORMACIÓN DE INGLÉS COMO SEGUNDA  
LENGUA

PÉDAGOGIES PUISSANTES DANS LES TEMPS DU COVID : UNE COLLABORATION PÉDAGOGIQUE  
PARMI DES ÉTUDIANTS D'ANGLAIS LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE ET ENSEIGNANTS EN FORMATION  
D'ANGLAIS LANGUE SECONDE

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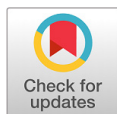
## ABSTRACT

In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, educators at all levels had to re-imagine their teaching practices to respond to the necessity of conducting all courses on-line. This article reports on the collaboration of two university instructors to create a trans-national model of learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. By virtue of this collaboration, the EFL students based at a large public university in Colombia were engaged in four online sessions and paired with teacher candidates taking an ESL endorsement course in the United States. This online collaboration afforded the Colombian EFL students an authentic opportunity to practice their English learning and the US teacher candidates a meaningful context in which to conduct authentic language assessments. Using interview and questionnaire data, this qualitative case study explored the experiences of the EFL students. The data demonstrate that online exchanges can afford students meaningful opportunities for language development. The results further show that online learning can be enriched through mutually beneficial collaborations across universities and transnational contexts.

**Keywords:** English language learning; online teaching; transnational collaborations, EFL; ESL; teacher education; COVID-19; ICT.

## RESUMEN

En el contexto de la pandemia global de COVID-19, educadores de todos los ámbitos se vieron en la necesidad de reimaginar sus prácticas docentes para responder a la necesidad de dictar todas sus clases en línea. Este artículo presenta la colaboración entre los instructores de dos universidades para crear un modelo transnacional de



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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.  
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Jorge Pineda, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia.

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aprendizaje en el contexto de la pandemia de COVID-19. Gracias a esta colaboración, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) de una importante universidad pública en Colombia participaron en cuatro sesiones en línea y se unieron con docentes en formación que tomaban un curso de certificación para la enseñanza de inglés como segunda lengua en Estados Unidos. Esta colaboración en línea brindó a los estudiantes colombianos de ILE una oportunidad auténtica de practicar lo aprendido del idioma inglés y a los candidatos a docentes en Estados Unidos les brindó un contexto significativo para realizar evaluaciones de lengua auténticas. Con datos tomados de entrevistas y cuestionarios, el presente estudio cualitativo de caso exploró las experiencias de los estudiantes de ILE. Los datos demuestran que los intercambios en línea pueden brindar a los estudiantes acceso a oportunidades significativas de desarrollo de la lengua. Los resultados también muestran que el aprendizaje en línea puede enriquecerse mediante colaboraciones entre universidades y contextos transnacionales para beneficios de ambas partes.

**Palabras claves:** aprendizaje del idioma inglés; docencia en línea; colaboraciones transnacionales, ILE; inglés como segunda lengua; formación de docentes; COVID-19; TIC.

### RÉSUMÉ

Dans le contexte de la pandémie globale de COVID-19, les enseignants de tous les horizons ont jugé nécessaire de réinventer leurs pratiques d'enseignement pour répondre au besoin d'enseigner tous leurs cours en ligne. Cet article présente la collaboration parmi les instructeurs de deux universités pour créer un modèle d'apprentissage transnational dans le contexte de la pandémie de COVID-19. Grâce à cette collaboration, des étudiants d'anglais langue étrangère d'une université publique très connue en Colombie ont participé à quatre sessions en ligne et ont été jumelés à des enseignants en formation suivant un cours de certification pour l'enseignement de l'anglais langue seconde aux États-Unis. Cette collaboration en ligne a fourni aux étudiants colombiens de l'ALE une opportunité authentique de mettre en pratique leurs compétences en anglais et aux enseignants en formation aux États-Unis un contexte significatif pour passer des évaluations linguistiques authentiques. À l'aide de données extraites d'entretiens et de questionnaires, cette étude de cas qualitative a exploré les expériences des étudiants de l'ALE. Les données montrent que les échanges en ligne peuvent donner aux étudiants l'accès à des opportunités significatives de développement linguistique. Les résultats montrent que l'apprentissage en ligne peut être enrichi grâce à des collaborations mutuellement bénéfiques entre des universités dans des contextes transnationaux.

**Mots-clés :** apprentissage de l'anglais ; enseignement en ligne ; collaborations transnationales ; anglais langue étrangère ; anglais langue seconde ; formation des enseignants ; COVID-19 ; TIC.

**Introduction**

Using a qualitative case study methodology, this article presents a study based on a pedagogical collaboration at the university level across the transnational contexts of a large midwestern city in the US and a large city in Colombia. Facing the necessity of transitioning from face-to-face to online education because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the two instructors (also authors of this article) collaborated to use the virtual teaching environment to support their respective course goals and outcomes. One group of students were master’s level secondary pre-service teachers at a private university in the US enrolled in a course about authentic assessment for emergent bilingual learners taught by Sarah as part of the English as a second language (ESL) endorsement. The other group of students, at a large public university in a city in Colombia, were undergraduates enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course taught by Daniel, as part of their required coursework. The ESL teacher candidates were paired with the undergraduate EFL students to conduct authentic assessments of their English language development once a week for 4 weeks in a virtual synchronous environment via Google Meet®. The US-based teacher candidates implemented authentic assessments in speaking, writing, reading, and listening they developed specifically for their English learner partner.

Mediated learning opportunities were developed (van Compernelle & Williams, 2013) through this online collaboration to create a context where ESL teacher candidates could apply their theoretical learning in meaningful interactions with English learner students to replicate the non-Covid field-based learning environment. The teacher education program uses a field-based model that situates theoretical learning and skill development as joint endeavors through a participant apprenticeship orientation (Davin & Kushki, 2018). Given that PK-12 students were also being taught remotely, Sarah was unable to rely on field-based school partnerships commonly available to foster

learning in action for the ESL teacher candidates (Cohen et al., 2018). Typically, school-based partnerships provided these venues to interact with an English learner crafting and administering authentic assessments to gather information about their funds of knowledge and English use across language domains (Heineke & Giatsou, 2019).

Development of the assessments was grounded in a funds of knowledge theoretical approach (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997), building on the experiences and resources students bring with them. Similarly, the EFL students who Daniel taught were given access to meaningful and authentic interactions in English in this online community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Our aim was to support the communicative language teaching approach of creating meaningful linguistic input and negotiation of meaning through authentic tasks (Mayo & Pica, 2000) for the EFL students.

The study reported in this article focused on the experiences of the EFL students in relation to this collaborative online learning experience. Our aim was to explore their language learner identities and learner experiences as seen through interview and questionnaire data based on the cross-cultural online collaboration. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and written questionnaire responses of EFL student participants. The research questions were as follows:

1. How did the EFL students experience themselves as language learners in their interactions with the US-based student partners?
2. In what ways did the online collaboration shift the EFL students’ perception of the language learning experience?
3. How did this online collaboration change the experience of EFL students’ learning in the pandemic-imposed online university language classroom?
4. In what ways did the online nature of the project contribute to the students’ experiences of language learning?

## Theoretical Framework

We situate this project within sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) which understands learning to be socially mediated and embedded in the learning context. In the context of this project, the EFL students had had their course moved online unexpectedly within the socio-political context of a global pandemic. Seeing learners as “members of social and historical collectivities” (Norton & Toohey, 2002) acknowledges and builds on the agency of learners to influence their learning and their learning environments. Through this study we seek to understand EFL learners’ identities and their perspectives on their learning and participation in the online exchange with their US-based peers. The relationships formed between the ESL teacher candidates and their EFL partners were seen through the lens of mediator-learner interaction described by Poehner et al. (2016) in which interactions assist the learners in their acquisition of new skills by virtue of mediated task-based activities with a more expert “other” (Vygotsky, 1986).

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While online education has been employed for several decades in one form or another including the EFL teaching context (e.g., O’Dowd & Ware, 2008; O’Rourke, 2005; O’Dowd, 2011), the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unplanned opportunity to transform previously in-person courses to online platforms virtually overnight in most countries around the world. In many cases, students faced inequitable access to technology, and instructors had to create online courses with little preparation to use remote teaching technology much less in ways that were specifically oriented toward their subject matter (Shin, 2020). This study contributes to the field of research in foreign language teaching online (e.g., García, Díaz, & Artunduaga, 2017; Gimeno, 2018; Canals, 2020; O’Dowd, 2011). For our study, we are specifically interested in the arguments of O’Dowd (2011) regarding the need to create a more embedded online exchange focus for foreign language teaching. We are also interested in the literature supporting mutually beneficial

partnership for cross-cultural learning (e.g., Belz, 2003; Fuchs, Hauck, & Müller-Hartmann, 2012).

Norton and Toohey (2011) explain the important role that learner identities play in any analysis of motivation or learning experience, which bears on the online environment as much as any other. A further consideration in studying learner identity is the value placed on English as a global language and the role it takes as a form of linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah & Ben Said, 2011; Phillipson, 1992). Because the EFL learners in this project were put into partnerships with English-speaking students from the US, the perceived dichotomy between native vs non-native English speakers (Holliday, 2006) feature in our analysis of the data. Canals (2020) found that while online exchanges that involve interactions between language learners and native speakers, can elevate anxiety, there is also a high level of motivation from those students who typically opt to participate in such projects. Recent research has examined the role of the virtual learning environment to promote communicative interaction and negotiation of meaning (Belz, 2002; Yanguas & Flores, 2014). We look to the data from this study to understand how this project interacted with EFL students’ English learner identities and the role that the online exchange played in their learning and motivation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Method

This study is grounded in qualitative case study methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to explore learner data from this online pedagogical collaboration (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The project involved two different groups of students; however, for the purpose of this paper, our data, analysis, and discussion focus solely on the perspectives shared by the students in the EFL class at the Colombian university. This study consisted of three main phases including the pedagogical collaboration, the invitation for students to participate in the research study, and the subsequent data collection and analysis. For the pedagogical collaboration, the undergraduate Colombian

students were paired one on one with the graduate-level pre-service teachers from the US. Below, we outline each of the phases and elements of the study.

### Participants

Of the twenty-five students in the English II (A2 level per the CEFR) course, seventeen students opted to participate in the collaboration with the US teacher enrolled in the ESL assessment course. Out of the seventeen EFL students who participated in the English language exchange with their peers from the US university, 10 agreed to participate in the follow up study. Those who participated in the questionnaire were 5 female and 5 male students aged between 19 and 24. They belonged to different schools in the university and were pursuing a range of professional degrees including Topographic Engineering, Forestry Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Systems Engineering, Elementary Education, Social Sciences, and Biology. Of those 10 participants who responded to the online questionnaire, four agreed to be interviewed. Below, we outline the timeline that the project followed.

### The Courses

During the four weeks of the project, students from the two courses met once weekly. For the Colombian EFL students, this meeting time came during the last hour of their English class using a Google Meet that they created with their partner for this purpose. The partners had been organized in collaboration between the two instructors. Once Daniel had received word from the 17 students who agreed to participate in the project collaboration, he sent their names to Sarah with information about their interests from a project they had created for his course. Based on this information, she matched students' backgrounds, majors, and interests to partner with her students. She shared the background information from the EFL students with their pre-service teachers partners so that they could use it to help prepare their materials and activities for their first meeting with their Colombian EFL student partners.

The content of the online sessions focused on using authentic assessments to promote the development of the four language domains while developing rapport and sociocultural exchange and learning between the partners. Prior to each session, Sarah guided her students in the creation of authentic language assessments that were based on the theories which they were learning. For the first meeting the pre-service teachers were asked to create interactive activities using a funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 1997) lens for the to learn about their EFL student partner. During the next three sessions, the pre-service teachers created authentic oral language (listening/speaking), reading, and writing assessments (in that order) to both promote their partner's use of English, and, in so doing, gather data on their partners' language and literacy development to enable future instructional recommendations.

### Data Collection and Analysis

At the end of the course, the EFL students received an invitation via email to participate in an online survey and to be interviewed to gather information about their experiences and insights about the online exchange. Data were collected through written questionnaires using a Google Form® (see Appendix A) sent by Daniel to all seventeen EFL students who had participated in the project. After the questionnaires were returned, both Sarah and Daniel analyzed the students' responses to gain an initial and overall perspective of the students' experiences and insights after the online pedagogical collaboration. Following the collection of questionnaire responses, Daniel sent invitations to request their participation in individual semi-structured interviews. Responses in the affirmative were received from four students and Daniel organized a schedule for interviews. These were then conducted in an online format.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of 13 different open-ended questions (see Appendix B) including general perspectives on the online exchanges with their US pre-service teacher

partners, initial expectations, challenges, and benefits, and more. The interviews were carried out in Spanish via a Google Meet® online forum and lasted on average 30 minutes. Two of the interviews were conducted by Daniel, and two were conducted by Sarah. The interview data were transcribed and translated into English by Daniel and reviewed and analyzed by both researchers. Data were coded following a grounded theory approach; that is, building the analysis based on the patterns that emerged from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Following the identification of recurrent patterns, the transcribed interview data were grouped into corresponding thematic categories for further analysis to respond to the initial research questions. In the following section, we elaborate on our findings and discuss our analysis.

## Findings

The findings of this study indicate that online student exchanges can offer rich language learning opportunities when there are meaningful goals for interactions between the partners. We concentrate our analysis on the language learning experiences and identities of the EFL students based on the questionnaire and interview data. We draw on a sociocultural framework of learning to examine the role that the online exchanges played in the EFL students' perceptions of themselves as learners and speakers of English as a new language.

### Students' Feelings Within the Project: From Apprehension to Success in the Language Practice

Our first research question sought to understand the EFL students' feelings about themselves as language learners within this collaborative online project. Of the 10 survey respondents, eight of them shared that this experience was relevant for their objectives as language students, and the other two said that it was partially relevant. While the overwhelming sentiment of the study's participants was of a positive nature, there were many

nuances to their responses from the questionnaire and the interview data that we share below.

Several students disclosed that they began the project with a degree of anxiety and apprehension. The nature of this anxiety was varied but several themes emerged including the novelty of interacting in English with a non-Spanish speaking person as well as the anonymous nature of the first meeting. For instance, Solanyi shared that, "At the beginning it scared me a lot. It is like being paired with a person that we *don't* know and who *doesn't* speak Spanish. [I worried that] we will not understand each other" (Solanyi, Interview on February 19, 2021 Lines 2–5). Duván also ascribed his feelings of anxiety to the fact that prior to this project he had never interacted with someone who spoke only English and no Spanish, explaining that he "felt nervous since the first thing one wants to do is to be able to understand. [...] In my personal case, I had never had the opportunity to talk to a native person of that language." (Duván, Interview on February 18, 2021, Lines 2–5).

Interestingly, while both Solanyi and Duván expressed their apprehension in relation to the newness of the experience, they also both explained their concern as being centered around the importance of being able to understand and be understood. They also both singled out the novelty of speaking in English with someone who was a "native speaker" (Holliday, 2006) and who did not also speak Spanish. On the other hand, some students, such as Nicolás, asserted that his initial reaction to the project was one of excitement about the possibility of engaging in a collaborative online learning practice with a peer from the US university. He explained his initial reaction this way:

When you mentioned the idea in class, at first, I felt quite excited [...] because it is an opportunity that [...] I have always wanted. One acquires certain knowledge of the language and so, but they *don't* really matter if one *doesn't* have anyone whom we can practice or talk. (Nicolás, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 2–6).



Nicolás' excitement seemed to stem from his interest in putting into practice previously learned classroom knowledge in a more authentic manner particularly highlighting the opportunity to practice. Of note is his sentiment that the knowledge acquired in the classroom *doesn't "really matter"* without the prospect of additional practice or authentic conversation. The data support a view of learning as a dialectical form of change based on learners' appropriation of new forms through mediated tasks (Poehner, 2016).

Those students who noted that they were concerned about their ability to understand what was being said in their first interactions also explained that their fears diminished as they gained experience with their US student partners. For example, Manuel described the ways that his US partner supported his English usage:

At the beginning it was very difficult but with the passing of the sessions he also helped me how to say some things and the meaning of some words. In fact, he sent me texts in English for us to read in the sessions. That really helped me a lot. He was way understanding with me since at the beginning I [...] didn't know how to say some things in English, but he understood me, and he told me the meanings. [...] He gave me some examples and that really helped. (Manuel, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 42–49)

According to Manuel, his anxiety and sense of challenge was allayed by the way that his partner interacted with him to build meaningful interactions and rapport between them. Sebastián's quotation similarly suggests that the interactions were constructed in a way that supported his learning and diminished his anxiety.

I liked the kindness, willingness and empathy of the students from [the US]. From the first session they were patient. They corrected us. They knew that we were learning English...but despite the fear, there were nice talks in which we could share our likes, interests, plans [...], and everything was done at our pace and in English. (Sebastián, Questionnaire submitted on February 16, 2021, Question 7)

The quotations shared from Sebastián, Manuel and Solanyi support the idea that while anxiety

can be present in EFL students partaking in such online exchanges, their fears can be mitigated by effectively guided interactions. These findings align with the research reported by García et al. (2017) who found that students in their study increased their level of participation in English due to the interactive nature of the online learning exchanges.

### From Theory to Practice: Students' (Self-) Perceptions of English Language Learning and of Themselves as Language Learners

Our second research question sought to learn what shifts the EFL students experienced in relation to themselves as English learners based on their online interactions with the ESL teacher candidates. In the EFL students' accounts of their experiences, there were clear references to a differentiation between theory and practice in relation to language learning. Several of the students described this online collaboration as an opportunity to transition from theory to practice in their learning of the English language. Interview data revealed that students' represented theory and practice as dichotomous aspects of English language learning, indicating that their prior experience in language classes had felt like a theoretical language learning experience compared to their one-on-one interactions with their US partner. For example, Manuel shared, "(...) I had to put my English into practice. And I was thrilled with the experience since I could use English. One oftentimes learns it but only in the notebook and one doesn't practice it." (Manuel, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 50–53). Sebastián's comments also indicated his sense of a distinction between theory and practice in his characterization of the benefits of this project "If you *don't* practice, all the theory is worthless. I could correct *lacks* that I had, I improved in different aspects, and I even made a friend" (Sebastián, Questionnaire submitted on February 17, 2021, Question 6).

For these students then, this online collaboration served as an opportunity to move from theoretical and decontextualized linguistic knowledge

that may remain in their notebooks to a praxis in which language had specific communicative and social purposes. Their comments also illustrate the dialectical nature of their learning in a mediated context with their more expert peers (Vygotsky, 1986). Take, for example, Devi's assertion.

Learning really occurs when speaking with a person that doesn't speak Spanish because that forces you to study and to maintain a fluid conversation. It is frustrating when the [other] person doesn't speak Spanish, but I could learn because oftentimes during the conversation there are many repeated words, and then you start thinking in English and saying words in English as an obligation. It was good for me because it was such a challenge. (Devi, Questionnaire submitted on February 16, 2021, Question 6)

In addition to comments from Devi and Manuel drawing a perceived distinction between theory and practice in their English use in the online exchange versus their university language classes, they also indicated that they found themselves obligated to speak English with their teacher candidate partners. Within their accounts, English language learning was made possible when they had the imperative to interact with their teacher candidate partners. Therefore, this collaborative online experience provided the EFL students with a situation that required their output (Swain, 1993) with a partner with whom they felt pushed to use their English language even when there were initial anxieties. This project therefore created a more authentic scenario in which language was used as a social and mediating tool (Vygotsky, 1978), enabling the EFL students to put into practice previously acquired theoretical insights about language. Sebastián shared the following:

It was quite important. It was the first time that I was going to have a conversation with a native and I could take the advantage of those chats to continue learning and practicing which is the most important thing. (Sebastián, Questionnaire submitted on February 16, 2021, Question 6).

However, in his discussion about the interaction, Sebastián also brings up the notion of an idealized "native" speaker (e.g., Davies, 2004). For Sebastián,

this opportunity was more meaningful to him because he could interact for the first time with a person who was a "native" English speaker which he asserted would help him improve and correct his self-perceived inaccuracies in the English language. Nicolás also referenced the importance of practicing with an English "native speaker" explaining that, "Speaking with a native student made me realize and self-assess my own level, my strengths, and drawbacks when listening to and speaking with a native." (Nicolás, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 67–69). Solanyi touched on this issue with a slightly different perspective commenting that neither she nor her partner spoke the dominant language of the other which gave her some comfort about the interaction:

I realized I could do it. Sometimes one has the fear that it is impossible, or that doesn't know, and nobody is going to understand you and it is going to sound bad. [...] But I guess the exercise was about to leave those fears and prejudices behind. I also realized that she *didn't* understand Spanish either. We were both at the same level and at an exercise to mutually learn. She [her peer] as a teacher and I as a student. (Solanyi, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 24–29)

Several themes emerge from those data, including the perception of native vs non-native speakerism as a binary for some of the students as well as the mutually beneficial nature of the online exchange that served to offset some of the anxiety for the EFL students. For Nicolás and Devi, they saw the interaction with a native speaker as an advantage to help further their English learning. While Solanyi initially positioned herself in a deficit stance, her perspective shifted to a recognition that this was an opportunity to leaving "fears and prejudices behind." While all 3 of these students seem to fall into a binary vision of native vs non-native speakerism, their comments also suggest the positive nature of an online exchange such as this one to benefit from the different strengths that each group of students bring with them. For Nicolás and Devi, that meant being in a situation where they could gain more insight into their strengths and weaknesses in English and push their language development further. While

much research has pointed to the devaluation or demotivation that can occur because of the native vs (non)native construction (e.g., Arboleda & Castro, 2012; Mariño, 2011; Viáfara, 2016), these findings suggest that some students may take the opportunity as a factor that motivates them in their learning. Additionally, Solanyi's comments showed us that by virtue of an exchange that is deliberately constructed to be mutually beneficial it is possible reach beyond binaries such as those of native vs. non-native speaker of teacher vs. student and theory vs. practice.

### Linguistic and Sociocultural Learning From the Online Collaboration

Our third research question asked how the online collaboration contributed to the students' experiences of language learning. We were specifically interested in how the EFL students interacted with their US peers to negotiate their learning and what they thought about this collaborative exchange. participants' language learning. From the questionnaire data, we learned that one student had asked questions of their US student partner regarding their desire to be a teacher explaining the value she felt by connecting with someone who was passionate about supporting their future bilingual students. For this EFL student, learning went beyond solely the development of English skills to sharing in the educational goals of their US student partner. In his interview, Nicolás shared, "I could work on the four [language] skills (...). However, the one that I think I worked on the most [...] was the one that I wanted to work on, speaking and listening." (Nicolás, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 60–63). While he specified that he worked on speaking and listening the most, Nicolás also said that these were the language domains that he *wanted* to focus on the most. In his interview, Duván also cited that the language domains of speaking and listening were those most impacted in the online exchanges.

Definitely, speaking and listening. Speaking because *that's* when we are forced to think about what and how

to say it. It's like thinking about all of those classes that I have had and to see that they're worthy and put it into practice. (Duván, Interview on February 18, 2021, Lines 53–56).

These participants' comments point to the role that motivation plays in student learning (Canals, 2020); although the collaboration was intended to promote the four language domains, the EFL learners expressed their agency in making the experience one which reflected their own needs and interests. These data also indicate the ways that a collaborative exchange such as this one can promote negotiation of meaning through the interactive learning context (Mayo & Pica, 2000).

Data further revealed that participants' experiences of the project collaborations came to be about more than language learning to include social connections and the development of cross-cultural understandings (Davin, 2016). Results from both questionnaire and interview data suggest students gained additional supports from their teacher candidate partners by engaging in other dimensions of life in their language meetings. Solanyi shared the following:

It was like an exchange of what she was living in the pandemic. (...) We both shared that because of being inside all the time, sometimes we were bored, and it was suffocating (...), but it was like talking to someone who was experiencing the same thing. Interacting was better because it was not only a person far away who was talking to me, but like a friend. It was like making a friend in another part of the world. (Solanyi, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 43–49)

Solanyi's experience highlights that this project created a space in which students could engage in more socially and contextually embedded dialogue regarding the global pandemic. The language learners could move beyond decontextualized practices of language learning and acknowledge the socio-historical and political conditions that they and their US partners were experiencing. Solanyi's quotation also noted that this exchange allowed her to learn about another culture and gain respect for the time and care that her partner took in creating

the activities for practicing English. Manuel also commented on the social dimensions that permeated through the online sessions:

Beyond learning English, we could create good empathy between us because he asked me how I was, how things were going in Colombia, how everything was going, and how I felt during the lockdown. (Manuel, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 31–33)

Manuel and Solyani's words remind us that language learning does not occur in a vacuum; our own subjectivities and backgrounds shape our learning experiences and the inextricable nature of the sociocultural context in which learning occurs is highlighted. Being asked by their partner to discuss their lives during COVID-19 indicates the power of being listened to as a learner as well as the ability of the partners to identify with each other's lives due to the common experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Students' Experiences Regarding Online Learning: Benefits and Challenges Within Remote Learning

Our last research question asked how this collaboration changed the experience of learning in the pandemic-imposed online university language classroom. The data discussed in this section focuses on the medium and the structure of this project. Data indicate that the online project carried both advantages and disadvantages for the EFL participants. Through the questionnaire data, we found that while all respondents had a positive reaction to the online project, 3 respondents were critical of having had only 4 sessions in which to interact with their US student partners, and 1 respondent expressed a wish for the sessions to have lasted longer than they did. In response to the questionnaire, another participant shared that this project gave her a new outlook about online classes, showing her that online classes could be personalized in contrast with all her other online courses included no interaction with peers or instructors. Another student, Ximena, shared that this experience made her change her mind about online learning.

It changed my perspective, since I considered that online education was not good. However, with this experience I realized that it can bring many benefits such as communicating and interacting with people who are long distances away. (Ximena, Questionnaire submitted on February 17, 2021, Question 12)

As in her questionnaire responses, Leidi explained the benefits of the collaboration saying, "It gave me the opportunity to talk to people who are not nearby and this supported my learning" (Leidi, Questionnaire submitted on February 16, 2021, Question 12). While the use of the Internet fostered meaningful learning interactions for Ximena and Leidi, the online collaboration had complications for others. Manuel explained, "It was hard. I had to stay here at home with all my family while speaking in English, a language that I do not control." (Manuel, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 86–87).

Manuel's comments remind us that this project was not just a fun online exchange; it took place in the context of a global pandemic requiring that students be in their homes (typically their family homes) with other family members and activities going on around them during class time. In addition to the potential disruptions and/or lack of a private space for the Colombian students during their meetings, for many the technical aspect of using the Internet for video classes and meetings caused significant and repeated issues. Solanyi's underscored this:

"The biggest hindrance was the [Internet] connection because I had a quite unstable connection. There were some moments when the Internet shut down and the [video]call was off. (...) There was another time when there was no electricity here at home." (Solanyi, Interview on February 19, 2021, Lines 55–58)

Aspects such as connectivity problems and the transformation and adaptation of students' homes to serve as their classroom space created obstacles for some students during this project. At the same time, the type of rapport that students reported from their online exchanges may have been created in part because of the home-bound

nature of their online work, especially since students from both countries were familiar with these same challenges. For example, Solanyi shared that she could hold her dog during her and her partners' meeting times, something not possible during non-COVID and in-person learning times. And although each student's experience was different and challenges varied from student to student and from country to country, they all had in common that they were living through a global pandemic, that their learning contexts had shifted dramatically from in-person to online due to the pandemic, and the vulnerabilities that the pandemic had created on a personal and societal level.

### Discussion and Conclusions

We begin this section by discussing the overarching results of our study and the ways our findings align with and/or diverge from other studies. While anxieties were present initially for the EFL students, they diminished after the first meetings with their US partner. Participants indicated several reasons for this, including their ability to connect with their US partner about topics of interest and the realization that there was an element of parity regarding the language knowledge of each partner: one not knowing Spanish and the other not knowing English. For other participants, their anxiety was overshadowed by their desire to meet the challenge of the exchange. This is consistent with Canals' (2020) research showing a relationship between anxiety and motivation for EFL students in online partnerships with English speakers. Participants highlighted the project's shift in their learning experience from decontextualized theoretical stances of the English language toward authentic opportunities for language practice (O'Dowd, 2005). These findings underscore that learning went beyond language skills to include sociocultural insights by virtue of the online peer interactions. The data also demonstrate a range of perspectives regarding EFL students' language learner identities including a focus on native vs (non)native speaker identity

and learner agency regarding their desire to use this opportunity to challenge themselves.

While the project was developed out of a sense of urgency for authentic connections to support remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, we believe these results have broader relevance. Data indicate the potential of transnational collaborations to promote meaningful interactions between students from different countries, to provide language learners an opportunity to push their skills to new levels, and to promote authentic language practices and increased motivation for EFL students (Belz, 2002; García et al., 2017). We concur with O'Dowd's (2011) argument for online intercultural learning exchanges to be more than a peripheral activity in language teaching contexts. We see the potential for online exchanges to contribute to intercultural communication in foreign language teaching (Belz, 2003). We also argue that whether courses are taught online or in person, EFL pedagogy could incorporate a (re) consideration of the imagery and discourses that language students may perceive around the idea of native speakerism. Including this topic as well as the issue of linguistic imperialism in classroom discussions could provide salient opportunities for reflection and discussion. Bringing this type of issue into the language classroom is especially relevant in the context of the worldwide pandemic which brought global inequities into full view. Although teachers and students around the globe faced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw that the creation of online connections can overcome physical barriers to promote language development and pedagogical praxis, leading to both language skill development and enriched sociocultural understandings.

In spite of its importance, the study had some limitations. Firstly, due to the small number of participants in this study, we cannot assert generalizable claims. Another limitation is that the Colombian EFL undergraduate students were the only participants. While this was a deliberate choice, it is

also a limitation regarding the study's ability to speak to the interactive nature of the project. A further limitation relates to the researchers' close relationship to the data given our dual roles as both instructors and researchers. Nevertheless, we assert that the insights gained can contribute to the literature and inform those interested in similar pedagogical and research questions (Donato, 2003). The above limitations also point to ideas for further research.

In sum, this study opens possibilities for continued projects that include cross-national exchanges building reciprocal learning opportunities that expand pedagogical and learning modalities. In relation to this specific project, future research should look to include data from both student groups enabling a more three-dimensional analysis of the mediated learning dynamic. It would also be of interest to focus research on issues raised by the EFL learner students regarding native vs. (non)native speakerism, motivation, and learner anxiety from the point of view of their US-based partners. Future studies could also include work samples from both student groups to facilitate analysis across a more varied and expanded data set. Finally, it would be interesting to examine the collaborative dialogue (Swain, 2000) that was enacted between the students of different language backgrounds to enable a closer analysis of the ways the learners use their language to mediate their understandings (Swain, 2006).

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## Appendix A. Powerful Pedagogies in the Time of COVID: An Online Pedagogical Collaboration With EFL Students and ESL Teacher Candidates: Google Forms Questionnaire

What is your institutional email?

What is your professional degree?

How old are you?

What is your gender?

Please carefully read the following questions. Take your time while reflecting and submitting your responses.

1. What are your goals for learning English?
2. How do you consider your learning English process has been? (Mention, for example, how the process was at school, university, language courses, autonomous study, etc.)
3. Before the exchange program with the students from (name of the university), and apart from your English classes at the university, have you ever had any experience of interaction with other people in English?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. In case you selected “Yes” in the previous question, please describe an experience of interaction with another person in English.
5. Do you consider that the exchange with the students from (name of the university) was relevant for achieving your goals as an English student?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Partially
6. Considering the previous question, describe the relevance for you of this exchange with the students from (name of the university).
7. What did you like the most from the exchange with the students from (name of the university)? Why?
8. What did you dislike the most from the exchange with the students from (name of the university)? Why?



9. What do you think was the biggest challenge when interacting online with the students from (name of the university)?
10. What do you think was the main asset when interacting online with the students from (name of the university)?
11. Do you consider that this exchange experience with the students from (name of the university) changed your perception/experience of online learning?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
12. In case you have selected “Yes” in the previous question, please mention how this exchange changed your perception toward online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
13. Utilize this space to write and share any other aspect that you think was not included in this questionnaire (suggestions, comments, experiences, etc.) \*Optional

### Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

How do you assess your experience of practicing/learning English with a person from the United States as part of this project?

- What were the main hindrances and/or benefits of this collaborative project for you?
- How did you feel during the collaborative project with your peer at the University?
- Was this collaborative practice pertinent for your language learning and practice? How and why?
- What were the main insights you gained from this experience?
- What did you learn from your University peer through this experience?
- What language skills could you practice and develop the most through this collaborative practice? [speaking, listening, reading, or writing]
- What sociocultural perspectives and insights do you think you gained from this experience?
- What were your expectations of this collaborative practice before it began?
- Did you face any challenges in terms of technology when carrying out this collaborative practice? Which one(s)?
- Would it be important to continue this collaborative practice with future students? Why? Why not?
- Did you feel that the University students were engaged in getting to know you?
- In what ways do you think the activities responded to/built on your own interests as a language student/person?

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# ADAPTING AN UNDERGRADUATE MULTILITERACIES GERMAN CURRICULUM FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ADAPTACIÓN DE UN CURRÍCULO DE ALEMÁN BASADO EN PEDAGOGÍA  
DE LAS MULTILITERACIDADES PARA LA INSTRUCCIÓN EN LÍNEA A ESTUDIANTES  
UNIVERSITARIOS DURANTE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19

ADAPTATION D'UN PROGRAMME DE LANGUE ALLEMANDE SUR L'APPROCHE DE MULTILITTÉRATIES  
POUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT EN LIGNE D'ÉTUDIANTS D'UNIVERSITÉ PENDANT LA PANDÉMIE  
DE COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

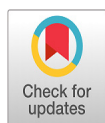
This article reports on the adaptation of an undergraduate German curriculum for a distance language education (DLE) context. Understanding that DLE has evolved over the course of decades, the article reviews literature describing pedagogical and technological developments that are fundamental to understanding current practices in DLE. Against this backdrop, a detailed methodology is presented that explains the pedagogical practices that were adopted and adapted following the pandemic-induced shift from classroom-based teaching to DLE. Special attention is devoted to the role of synchronous instruction, as well as asynchronous tools that support multiliteracies instruction. The article concludes by considering those curricular innovations that are likely to have a long-lasting impact on the delivery of instruction following a return to classroom-based teaching.

**Keywords:** distance language education; online instruction; ICT; multiliteracies pedagogy; German instruction; teacher education; COVID-19; curricular adaptations.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo reporta cómo se adaptó un plan de estudios de alemán en pregrado para la enseñanza a distancia. En el entendido de que la enseñanza de lenguas en línea tiene décadas de evolución, este artículo hace una revisión de la literatura que describe los desarrollos pedagógicos y tecnológicos básicos para comprender

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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

Editors: Marta González-Lloret, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA; Laia Canals, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain; Jorge Pineda, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia.

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las prácticas actuales de la enseñanza de lenguas a distancia. En este contexto, se presenta una metodología detallada que explica las prácticas pedagógicas adoptadas y adaptadas tras el cambio impuesto por la pandemia de la enseñanza presencial a la instrucción a distancia. Se presta especial atención al papel de la instrucción sincrónica, así como a las herramientas asincrónicas que soportan la instrucción basada en la pedagogía de las multiliteracidades. El artículo concluye con una consideración sobre las innovaciones curriculares que pueden tener un impacto duradero en la práctica pedagógica tras el retorno a la enseñanza presencial.

**Palabras claves:** enseñanza de lenguas a distancia; instrucción en línea; TIC; pedagogía de las multiliteracidades; instrucción en alemán; formación de docentes; COVID-19; adaptaciones curriculares.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cet article rend compte de l'adaptation d'un programme d'études d'allemand de premier cycle à un contexte d'enseignement des langues à distance (DLE). Étant donné que l'enseignement de langues à distance a évolué au cours des décennies, l'article passe en revue la littérature décrivant les développements pédagogiques et technologiques qui sont fondamentaux pour comprendre les pratiques actuelles en DLE. Dans ce contexte, une méthodologie détaillée nous aide expliquer les pratiques pédagogiques qui ont été adoptées et adaptées à la suite du passage de l'instruction présentielle vers l'instruction à distance. Notamment on dévoue d'attention sur le rôle de l'apprentissage synchrone, ainsi qu'aux outils asynchrones qui étayent l'instruction multilittératie. Le rapport conclut en examinant les innovations curriculaires susceptibles d'avoir un impact durable sur la prestation de l'enseignement après un retour à l'enseignement en classe.

**Mots clés:** enseignement des langues à distance; instruction en ligne; TIC ; pédagogie des multilittératies; instruction en langue allemande; formation d'enseignants ; COVID-19 , adaptations curriculaires.

## Introduction

In parallel with rapid developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) during the previous two decades, distance language education (DLE) has also grown in both scale and availability. Whereas early efforts at DLE relied on print-based materials and the postal service, nowadays learners all over the world can take advantage of the multiplicity of options for communication and collaboration that are afforded by interactive and multimodal web-based environments. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying shift to DLE in many postsecondary contexts, there exists a new imperative to instill relevant skills and ways of thinking among pre-service and in-service teachers. At the same time, this episode invites us to examine our “techno-pedagogical competences” (Guichon & Hauck, 2011, p. 191) with a critical eye, so that we are not simply replicating current instructional orthodoxy or reverting to outmoded pedagogies, but instead are approaching the use of technologies with an eye towards increased creativity and deepened student engagement.

In this light, the pandemic-induced shift to DLE presents a unique opportunity to examine one department’s efforts to adjust its undergraduate curriculum so as to adapt to the exigencies of this new instructional landscape. Accordingly, this article will detail aspects of CALL teacher education in the Georgetown University German Department (GUGD), as well as curricular adaptations that resulted from an ongoing process of discussion and discernment. Moreover, with the prospect of students’ imminent return to the physical classroom, there has begun a second reorientation: as we look towards the time when classroom instruction will once again be possible, it has become clear that curricular innovations resulting from the shift to DLE have strengthened aspects of the GUGD instructional approach pertaining to communication and collaboration amongst students and between students and instructors. As such, this article will also envision how a return to in-person teaching can

benefit from the lessons learned during our time away from the physical classroom.

## The GUGD Undergraduate Curriculum

In March 2020, faculty members and instructors of the GUGD received notice that all courses would henceforth be taught at a distance due to the rapidly worsening public health situation. Although the presence of COVID-19 in the United States had been established prior to this announcement, and whereas the GUGD had anticipated the possibility of a shift in instructional context, the actual transition to an online teaching environment took place with greater urgency, pushing the department to act swiftly and reactively. Initially, the GUGD turned to its instructional inclemency plan, which provides for the continued delivery of instruction using internet-based communication technologies (ICTs) during temporary—often weather-related—situations when physical access to the campus would no longer be possible. In the weeks and months that followed, the GUGD implemented a more proactive and systematic approach to adapting its multiliteracies curriculum for delivery in an online instructional environment. In order to understand this transition, it is first necessary to describe the nature of the undergraduate German program at Georgetown University.

The GUGD undergraduate program consists of a literacy- and genre-oriented, task-based curriculum. Courses are offered at five distinct levels: I-III (Introductory, Intermediate, Advanced) are sequenced and intended to be taken consecutively, whereas courses in Levels IV and V (Advanced+) can be taken in order of preference, with the recommendation that at least one Level IV course be completed prior to taking Level V courses. In conjunction with language development, the curriculum emphasizes the development of humanistic knowledge (Cunningham et al., 2018) as an essential element of a liberal arts education, with the aim “to enable students to become competent and culturally literate users of German by combining a focus on content with carefully conceived pedagogical interventions

that reflect the best available knowledge in classroom-based second language acquisition research” (Georgetown University, Department of German, 2020, “Curriculum” section). In order to understand how this goal is realized, I will first explain what is meant by the notion of (multi)literacy. Second, the role of tasks in the curriculum will be elucidated; in this regard, it will be important to see how the department ties these pedagogical interventions to the notion of genre. Lastly, given the central role of ICT in adapting the curriculum for DLE, it will be helpful to understand the role these technologies play in the program.

### A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

Drawing on Gee’s (1998) distinction between primary discourse (i.e., language acquired by children in the context of their home and familial relationships) and secondary discourse(s) (i.e., language acquired and used in public settings, such as school, work, etc.), the GUGD curriculum seeks to develop multiliterate users of German. Whereas everyone (barring some sort of impediment to learning) is able to acquire the primary discourse of the language they hear at home, it is not the case that all speakers of a language are equally facile in secondary discourses. Literacy, if understood as control of secondary discourses (Gee, 1998), is therefore not an inevitable outcome for a speaker of any particular language and must be gained through an ongoing process of socialization, acculturation, and formal education. Noting the increasing range of communication contexts, especially in light of technological developments and the changing nature of work, the New London Group (1996) has called for a “pedagogy of multiliteracies” that is enacted through four pedagogical moves: critical framing, overt instruction, situated practice, and transformed practice (see also Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Paesani et al., 2016). These pedagogical moves are instantiated in the GUGD curriculum through carefully designed courses at all curricular levels, wherein distinct instructional sequences culminate in a variety of speaking and writing tasks.

### Texts and Tasks

Regardless of the level of instruction, all courses in the GUGD curriculum use as their central organizing principle the connection between text and task (Byrnes et al., 2006). Instructional units are designed around particular content themes, in which learners are exposed to texts of various modalities. As learners engage with texts through the pedagogical acts of multiliteracies instruction, they are led to understand how these texts are representative of particular genres in the way they are structured at the discourse, sentential, and even word level. This knowledge, together with careful preparation and detailed instructions, then scaffolds the learners as they appropriate the linguistics features of the focal text(s) to create their own texts that typify the genre (see also Crane, 2006).

In keeping with an understanding of genre as “staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of a culture” (Martin, 1984, p. 25), task instructions are always presented in three parts: *task*, *content*, and *language*. The *task* section of the instruction sheet states the genre and mode (i.e., written or spoken) of the text, as well as providing additional details that help the writer or speaker to contextualize the text they are about to produce. The *content* section of the instruction sheet details the particular themes that should be present in the text, often making explicit connections to the text(s) that the learners have engaged with prior to the introduction of the task. This section frequently features a list of questions that are designed to stimulate the learners’ thinking on the topic and to ensure that relevant themes are addressed in a fulsome way. The *language* section of the instruction sheet provides specific linguistic features that should be present in the text at the discourse, sentence, and word level. Discourse-level features are often presented as speech acts (e.g., share an opinion, express gratitude, etc.) or so-called ‘discourse markers’ (i.e., short, fixed phrases such as “One the one hand...on the other hand”) and generally help to focus the student’s attention on the communicative purpose(s) of the text.



Sentence-level features address language use at the clause level, often noting some particular word order or sentence structure that is genre typical. At the word level, students are encouraged to use thematically relevant vocabulary and are given guidance regarding the morphology of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.

### The Role of Technology

Recognizing the importance of digital literacy as a component of a multiliteracies instructional framework, the GUGD has sought to integrate technologies that support expanded learning contexts. Chief among these efforts are a range of telecollaborative projects in upper-level courses, which have featured both synchronous text-based chat (Ryshina-Pankova, 2018), as well as synchronous audiovisual communication (Cunningham, 2019). Such virtual exchange projects even extend into our graduate program, where Master's and PhD students of the GUGD have connected with students at the University of Trier in Germany in order to select narrative texts and develop related teaching materials according to the principles of multiliteracies instruction (Cunningham & Ryshina-Pankova, 2020). Here it bears once again emphasizing that it is chiefly the design of the tasks(s) in such digitally-mediated exchanges that will ensure their success (Blake, 2009). In addition to these projects, the undergraduate curriculum relies on a range of technologies that are now increasingly common in postsecondary education, including the learning management system (LMS) Canvas and various Web 2.0 applications (e.g., VoiceThread, Google Apps, etc.).

Having provided this brief overview of the GUGD program, we now turn to a discussion of DLE so as to better understand the changes that were made to the program and the outcome of those changes.

### Theoretical Framework

The framework for the methodology proposed here is provided by distance language education and task-based language teaching.

### Distance Language Education

DLE can be understood as planned learning that takes place in a context where there is spatial and/or temporal distance between the teacher and learners, and which can entail a range of tasks, modalities, and technologies (Kraemer, 2008). Key to the evolution of DLE was the concurrent development of technologies that enabled the provision of instruction despite geographical distance (White, 2017). In other words, "technology has always been seen as an ally in maximising the benefits and counteracting some of the challenges of distance learning" (Hampel & de los Arcos, 2013, p. 160).

One of the earliest postsecondary institutions to institute a broad and sustained effort at DLE was the Open University in the United Kingdom. Starting in the 1990s, the Open University sought to harness available technologies to enable geographically dispersed students to receive online instruction. Beginning with telephone conversations and progressing through computer-based text and audio chat to the present use of audiovisual voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP), the overriding goal in using these technologies was to provide "opportunities for spoken interaction that [are] deemed essential for language development" (Hampel & de los Arcos, 2013, p. 161). This perspective would prove prescient, as widening access and greater bandwidth soon contributed to a fundamental shift in the way individuals interacted with and through internet technologies. Whereas the nascent years of the World Wide Web were characterized by a passive transmission model with many consumers and few content creators, within a short amount of time, content creation and social interaction became the purview of any interested netizen. With the advent of social media, what we now refer to as Web 2.0 has become even more explicitly community oriented, with user interaction, group membership, and identity as core principles that motivate individuals to participate.

With the shift to a more social and user-oriented Web 2.0, computer-mediated communication (CMC) and its attendant technologies have helped to connect learners and teachers for meaningful interaction in both asynchronous and synchronous modalities (Hampel, 2009). In addition to the critical role that CMC can play as the “glue” (Blake, 2005) that binds a class together, White (2017) notes that through CMC it has become increasingly “possible for distance language education to focus on communication and learning as a social process” (p. 134). The social process of learning is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the use of CMC as a gateway to language communities that extend beyond the course participants themselves. During so-called telecollaboration/virtual exchange, participants have the opportunity to engage directly with members of the target culture for language, culture, and content learning (Cunningham, 2016; Cunningham, 2019; Lewis & O’Dowd, 2016).

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#### DLE and Teacher Education

As impressive as the technological developments are that make DLE possible, we must also bear in mind that such instructional environments necessitate concomitant “shifts in pedagogies...requiring both learners and teachers to rethink their practices” (White, 2017, p. 140). Accordingly, research has generated new insights regarding ways to maximize instructional effectiveness in this learning context. The ideal arrangement regarding teacher education in DLE involves a combination of technical and pedagogical training, the exact dimensions of which will depend on the experience level of the teachers (Hampel, 2009; Hampel & de los Arcos, 2013; Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Hubbard & Levy, 2006; Guichon & Hauck, 2011). Thus, the goal of teacher education in DLE should be that teachers have not only sufficient knowledge of information and communication technologies (ICTs), but they also should be able to engage creatively with these digital environments (Hampel, 2009; Hampel & Stickler, 2005), as well as communicate their

pedagogical functions to learners (Hampel & de los Arcos, 2013).

Due to the lack of physical proximity in DLE, it is incumbent upon teachers to support student interaction and collaboration, with particular attention to social and affective factors that are unique to the computer-mediated environment. Centering student interaction becomes all the more critical due to the influence of the medium itself: “Despite the calls for learner autonomy and a transformed tutor role...online classroom settings (especially synchronous environments that allow for speaking) are often characterised by a tutor-centred approach to teaching” (Hampel, 2009, p. 36). Solutions for encouraging learner-centered teaching include putting teachers in the role of students, helping teachers understand proper task design, generating appropriate model tasks, and creating a space for reflection and sharing of experiences (Hampel, 2009). As a final consideration, successful teacher education for DLE requires the buy-in of its intended beneficiaries. It is not enough to mandate that such professional development should occur, but instead teacher educators should cultivate “an atmosphere where difficulties are not set aside but confronted and addressed, where in true socio-constructivist spirit everyone contributes their skills and knowledge” (Guichon & Hauck, 2011, p. 190).

#### DLE and Task-based Language Teaching

The importance of proper task design in DLE cannot be overstated. Research of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has long recognized the value of using tasks to foster language learning in both asynchronous CMC (Appel & Gilabert, 2002; Hampel, 2006; Kitade, 2008; Lamy, 2006; Oskoz & Elola, 2013; Yilmaz & Granena, 2009) and synchronous CMC environments (Adams & Nik, 2013; Cunningham, 2019; Collentine, 2009; Hampel, 2006; Jauregi, de Graff, van den Bergh, & Kriz, 2012; Lamy, 2004; Levy & Kennedy 2004; Oskoz & Elola, 2013; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005). Given the longstanding and productive history

of task-based approaches in researching CMC, González-Lloret & Ortega (2014) argue for a well-considered fusion between Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and CALL, identifying five key features of tasks in “technology-mediated TBLT”: (a) *a primary focus on meaning*; (b) *goal orientation*; (c) *learner-centeredness*; (d) *holism*; and (e) *reflective learning*. By adhering to these features, one can productively integrate recognized task design principles that foster language development with appropriate technologies that support learning in DLE contexts.

To sum up, the past decades have witnessed explosive growth in ICTs. In parallel, language teachers—especially in the context of DLE — have sought to leverage these new technologies to provide enhanced learning opportunities to their students. In particular, the rise of a more user-oriented Web 2.0 affords new opportunities for communication and collaboration amongst learners, between learners and teachers, and with speech communities extending well beyond the “walls” (be they physical or digital) of the classroom. In order to teach effectively in this new milieu, instructors must purposefully engage with relevant technologies, not only in order to understand their various pedagogical uses, but also so as to communicate to learners how to use these tools to make meaning in a second language. At all times, the integration of technology should be guided by sound pedagogical thinking wherein well-conceived tasks provide a means to engage learners and foster ongoing language development.

**From Here to There: The GUGD model of DLE**

Having discussed the salient features of DLE, I now explain the approach to DLE that has emerged in the GUGD. Rather than frame this discussion as a sequential process with discrete steps, it is perhaps more useful to conceive of this model in terms of its interrelations. As such, I will discuss the model in terms of the following non-sequential

components: (a) needs analysis; (b) synchronous engagement; (c) asynchronous engagement; and (d) tasks.

Given the rapidity of the transition to distanced instruction, the GUGD —and indeed the university at large—was initially pushed into a reactive posture. Accordingly, the GUGD implemented its existing instructional continuity plan. This plan stipulates that in the event of an unforeseen closure to the campus, all classes are to be taught online using digital technologies. In practice, this policy had meant that when the university would shutter due to inclement weather, instructors had the means to connect with their students and teach the scheduled lesson without impacting the instructional sequence too severely. The instructional continuity plan had always been intended as a temporary answer to a temporary problem; it was not meant to serve as a long-term solution to a severe instructional disruption such as that caused by the pandemic. Moreover, the instructional continuity plan was not supported by ongoing and dedicated training. Rather, instructors were notified of the plan at pre-semester orientation meetings and advised to familiarize themselves with the relevant technologies. Given this state of affairs, the success of the instructional continuity plan was highly dependent on individual instructors’ skills, training, and experience. It was clear that a more systematic approach would be necessary to ensure the delivery of high-quality language instruction at a distance.

**Component 1: Needs Analysis**

In keeping with the tenets of technology-mediated TBLT, one of the department’s first moves in more purposefully implementing a DLE framework was to implement a process of needs analysis (González-Lloret, 2014). The aim of this process was not only to identify how best to support our students in this new instructional environment, but also to equip instructors with sufficient knowledge of those digital tools needed to successfully teach in a DLE environment. Most

immediately, we had to ensure that both instructors and students had the necessary infrastructure to participate in synchronous instruction from their respective geographic locations. Once this basic need was met, we began a series of ongoing meetings (at a distance, of course) that all instructors were encouraged to attend. During these “Friday check-ins,” we reflected upon successes and challenges in our teaching efforts, disseminated knowledge, shared effective practices, and identified new or ongoing needs of instructors and students. Additionally, in order to elicit the learners’ perspectives, we invited all students enrolled in an undergraduate course to complete a questionnaire regarding the efficacy of instructional practices they had encountered in both their language classes and other courses they were enrolled in. In the same vein, we queried instructors as to their level of knowledge and the perceived value of various digital tools. Lastly, we encouraged instructors to attend any of a number of workshops, lectures, and teach-in events sponsored by the *Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship* at Georgetown University (<https://cndls.georgetown.edu/>).

In sum, the initial weeks following the closure of the physical campus entailed a process of realignment that was informed by needs analysis and supported by university resources both within and outside the GUGD.

Through a continued process of discernment and reorientation during the remainder of the semester, the department was able to move from a more reactive to a more proactive posture. One outcome of this new footing was the implementation of a systematic and collaborative teacher education module following the end of spring term. Dubbed “The GUGD Summer Institute,” this program was designed to provide in-service support for instructors who were teaching during the summer, but also to prepare instructors for the fall semester when all courses would be taught online for the duration of the entire semester. The overriding goal of the Summer Institute was to ensure

a high level of multimodal digital literacy among instructors so that they were able to “represent meaning in more than one mode at a time, understand each mode and how to use different modes constructively, while remaining aware of...the affective demands of the new media” (Hampel & de los Arcos 2013, p. 168). In addition to the previously discussed needs analysis, the Summer Institute was informed by empirical research of DLE, especially as it pertains to teacher education, and which has been reviewed extensively in the background section of this article.

### Component 2: Synchronous Engagement

For several reasons, the decision was made that the GUGD would, to the extent possible, maintain the existing teaching schedule through synchronous instruction via the audiovisual communications platform Zoom®. First and foremost, understanding that affective factors can have an impact on learning and willingness to participate in DLE (Guichon, 2009; Hampel, 2009; White, 2017), the department felt that it was important to maintain regular synchronous contact with our students so as to give encouragement, monitor their emotional outlook, and provide an overall positive learning environment, especially during such a volatile and stressful period.

From an organizational perspective, the decision to maintain scheduled, synchronous instruction helped to ease disruptions to the curricular environment. Particularly in Levels I-III of the curriculum, the day-to-day focus of each lesson is tightly outlined through a series of unit plans; any deviation from these planned learning sequences can inhibit students’ continued progress through the course and curriculum and are to be avoided when possible. Indeed, the very nature of these learning sequences lend themselves to adaptation for synchronous instruction. Since students of the GUGD are accustomed to learning in a “flipped” environment where out-of-class work serves to prepare them for active engagement during instructional periods, we were able to continue

this approach via synchronous computer-mediated instruction. Finally, as the undergraduate curriculum serves as a locus for ongoing education of graduate student instructors, the use of synchronous instruction enabled this important aspect of teacher education to continue. To that end, graduate instructors whose classes would normally be visited by a more senior member of the GUGD could instead provide a recording of a lesson and receive feedback on it. In fact, the ability to view recorded teaching episodes affords opportunity for the provision of very detailed feedback to the instructors, often accompanied by actual clips of the instructors teaching. As Guichon (2009) argues, this kind of “self-confrontation produces a magnifying effect on crucial aspects of online teaching and draws trainees’ attention to them” (p. 179).

Having established the rationale for implementation of a synchronous instruction model, it is important to describe the instructional environment in detail. The hub for all synchronous instruction was the audiovisual communications platform Zoom®. The typical Zoom® room interface is a grid of “tiles” each showing a participant’s video stream. In this interface, the active speaker has yellow highlighting around his/her tile, so that other participants can both see and hear who is speaking. This “gallery view” can be substituted by the “active speaker view,” where the person who is currently speaking is shown in a comparatively larger tile. While participants had the option of not activating their video stream, learners of the GUGD were encouraged to show themselves if technical issues did not prevent it. Regardless of the selected view, and whether the participants show their video stream, Zoom® also supports synchronous audio communication, so that students and instructors could communicate orally/aurally with one another.

In cases when audiovisual communication proved problematic or not feasible, instructors or students in a Zoom® room could avail themselves of the chat function. Here, messages could be shared with all members of the class or directed more privately to

individual participants. Additionally, Zoom® chat has other functionalities that support synchronous DLE. Since hyperlinks are fundamental to navigation of digital spaces, such links could be easily shared through the chat function. Even files of moderate size could be sent through the chat, easing the distribution of handouts and other learning materials.

Importantly, the chat also served as a space for learner-initiated side conversations. By posting a question or comment in the chat, learners could help one another to explore hypotheses, synthesize information, and generate additional questions without the direct intervention of the instructor. As such, the chat functionalities of Zoom® supported both teacher-directed and learner-centered inquiry in DLE. It must be said, however, that the chat function also has the potential to distract, diverting instructor or student attention from information that is being shared via another modality. Additionally, it is important to orient correctly to the intended recipient of a chat message. Sending the wrong message to the wrong person has the potential to confuse or embarrass those involved, further distracting from the aims of the lesson.

A hallmark of learner-centered language instruction is the use of partner and small group work. Such learning configurations were also possible in the Zoom® environment via the use of breakout rooms. Through random selection, host-selection, or self-selection, learners could be sorted into spaces that are “digitally adjacent” to the main room, enabling communication with one another and collaboration on tasks. The instructor could then move from breakout room to breakout room in order to monitor and assist. Unlike group work in the classroom, where everyone occupies the same physical space and group membership can be porous, Zoom®-based groups are not in immediate contact with the instructor or other groups, so side conversations are less possible. As such, clear directions and modelling during the set-up phase were paramount.

During actual group work in this environment, the teacher could set time limits when breakout rooms would automatically close or “broadcast” messages to all groups simultaneously. In turn, the learners could signal the teacher through the use of the help button, if necessary. Although the breakout rooms fulfilled their function as a space for smaller group work, it was only possible for the instructor to be present in one room at a time. As a result, it was sometimes the case that certain groups received more instructor attention than others or were unable to communicate their need for assistance to the instructor.

Due to the interconnection between text and task in the GUGD curriculum, substantial class time is devoted to scrutiny and analysis of texts. When it comes to written texts, it is often the case that an instructor will lead students through a detailed mark-up and annotation of a text in order for learners to understand how the generic stages of the text unfold and what linguistic features are present in the various stages of the text. Whereas textual analysis in classroom-based instruction occurs using a document camera and overhead projector, in the Zoom®-based environment, the “screen share” function fulfilled this role. The instructor could show a document using word processing or text annotation software and elicit responses from the students through careful and deliberate questioning. The responses provided are added to the document in real time and are immediately visible to all students. In this way, the students’ attention can be directed in a very deliberate way that contributes to a deep understanding of texts and the meanings they construe.

The screen share function was also used to support learner-centered engagement. For instance, learners could share their screens with one another during group work and then again with the whole class during presentations following group work. The exact dimensions of how the screen share function was utilized depended on the specific learning objectives, but a word of caution is in

order. Many learners connect through a laptop or PC with only one monitor, and their screen space is consequently limited. When screen share is activated, the portion of usable screen space may be reduced as a result. Screen sharing should hence be deliberate, targeted and not continuously activated.

In classroom-based instruction, key information is often written down on a whiteboard or blackboard. In DLE, electronic means must be used to achieve this same effect. To that end, the GUGD adopted the use of Google Docs in order to replicate and expand upon the typical uses of the classroom whiteboard. Not only could instructors record notes on the shared class Doc, but the multimodal nature of Google Docs allowed for the integration of hyperlinks, visual information and other materials that support synchronous instruction. Used creatively, the shared class Doc also served as a locus for collaboration. When given editing permissions, students could write responses to questions directly on the Doc, while the instructor was able to provide immediate feedback through the comments function. For example, if students focused on construing meaning through particular linguistic forms, the instructor could leave a comment that notifies a learner when an incorrect form has been used, but then leave it up to the learner to make the correction herself. Conversely, if the focus of a particular task was on engaging with the content and themes of a text, then the instructor could leave comments for individual students that stimulate additional thinking or problematize simplistic responses. In such an environment, students could even direct comments or questions on their work to the instructor.

An additional advantage of using a shared class Doc is that it can reduce the need for screen sharing, which, as previously noted, has potential downsides. Instead, instructors could direct everyone to the Doc by sharing a link in the chat; class members’ presence was indicated by

both a distinct icon in the toolbar at the top of the Doc, as well as color-coded cursors that show where they currently were working in the Doc. A final advantage to using a digital white board via Google Docs is the perpetuity of the information. In other words, unlike a classroom-based whiteboard, the Google Doc does not get erased at the end of the class session. Instead, with every meeting the Doc grows in length, thereby serving as a record of the work that has been done in previous class sessions. This functionality enabled learners to review previous lessons easily, while also providing a sense of continuity to the course.

By the end of the term, the shared course Docs were quite lengthy; it is therefore advisable to use the built-in navigation features and instruct the learners in their use as well. If distinct headings are used for each class period, the app will automatically generate an outline of the Doc that can be viewed in an adjacent menu and navigated correspondingly.

Although the provision of synchronous instruction was a touchstone throughout the undergraduate curriculum, certain aspects did not always unfold smoothly. For example, despite our attempts to establish a baseline for technological requirements, some students still found themselves unable to participate equitably due to lagging internet speeds or other connectivity issues. This inequitable access to instruction serves as a warning that the infamous “digital divide” separating students based on region, socioeconomic status, or other factors did not automatically disappear because everyone started attending class online. As such, it became important for instructors to provide alternate means for connecting with students, including through asynchronous modalities or individualized synchronous meetings (i.e., office hours).

### Component 3: Asynchronous Engagement

If an audiovisual platform like Zoom<sup>®</sup> serves as the hub for synchronous engagement, the asynchronous corollary would be a learning management

system (LMS). The GUGD has utilized the LMS *Canvas* for a number of years now, but the platform took on newfound importance with the transition to DLE. *Canvas* has a range of built-in functions and integrates a number of third-party apps that help facilitate course organization and asynchronous pedagogical engagement. This flexibility means that documents, hyperlinks and other apps used for teaching and learning can be linked together into a larger ecosystem where learners are able to locate the necessary files or links that are required to complete their out-of-class work.

Due to the ease with which Google Docs can be shared and collaborated upon, many GUGD instructors utilized this app in connection with out-of-class work. Using the “collaboration” function of *Canvas*<sup>®</sup>, students completed their homework using a Doc that is shared only with the instructor.

This approach brought a number of advantages. Not only did it cut down on the degree of paper shuffling between students and teachers, but it supported collaboration in a way that was superior to paper-based homework. As previously noted, students and instructors can make productive use of the comments function of Google Docs while participating in synchronous instruction. This same function supported asynchronous communication between a learner and her instructor when completing out-of-class work. For instance, if a learner had a question or felt uncertain about a response, she could leave a comment for the instructor. The instructor could then respond to these comments, providing speedy and targeted help. In the same vein, an instructor could give unsolicited feedback that stimulates additional thinking or helps to clarify concepts.

These sorts of asynchronous activities ended up personalizing instruction to a degree that is simply not possible when students submit paper-based homework. On the other hand, such a set up led some instructors to feel less separation between

in-class and out-of-class time, which resulted in increased levels of fatigue.

#### Component 4: Tasks

As previously discussed, the GUGD emphasizes the connection between text and task at all levels of the curriculum. Using the linguistic and discourse conventions of texts that have undergone previous analysis, learners complete a variety of writing and speaking tasks that are linked to specific genres. Whereas the completion of writing tasks was not greatly impacted by the shift to a DLE environment, the delivery of speaking tasks required significant adjustments.

Procedurally, the completion of writing tasks is a relatively straightforward affair. Students are given a detailed task sheet and compose their texts according to the guidelines given in three categories: task, content, and language. The completed texts are then submitted to the instructor, who gives feedback. In the case of linguistic infelicities, coded feedback indicates the presence and nature of an error, without providing actual corrections. It is then up to the learner to engage their metalinguistic awareness in order to address the coded feedback and submit a second draft of their text. In classroom-based instruction, students can submit either hard or e-copies of their writing tasks, depending on their instructor's preference. After beginning DLE, the only change to these procedures was that all writing tasks would be submitted electronically, and feedback would be provided via digital means.

Unlike writing tasks, the GUGD speaking tasks were originally designed to be completed live in class. These tasks are generally performed as a monologue by individual students or as a conversation between two or more students. Moreover, the performance of speaking tasks is often accompanied by a small listening task for members of the class who are acting as the audience. For example, in the second-semester course, *Introductory German II*, students give a short monologic presentation

about one of the federal states of Germany, integrating specific content and language foci. While in the role of an audience member, students are expected to take notes about one of their classmates' presentations in order to write a paragraph in which they compare the federal state that they presented on with the federal state that their classmate presented on.

Although it would have been possible to preserve the live presentation of speaking tasks through synchronous means, the decision was made that such tasks could be productively adjusted for asynchronous distribution and consumption. In the case of most monologic speaking tasks, such as the aforementioned presentation of a federal state, students were instructed in the use of *VoiceThread*, a platform that allows participants to upload visual media as "slides" where audio comments can be recorded and played back. These slides can then be shared with the whole class, thereby preserving the related listener task. Alternately, certain speaking tasks (e.g., present a recipe for a television audience) may be better presented as a video recording. As it turns out, watching a video of students cooking in their kitchens while explaining recipes in German provided a far more authentic context than a *VoiceThread* or even classroom-based presentation of the same activity! For conversation-based speaking tasks, fluent interaction between participants is a prerequisite. To enable this interaction, students recorded such speaking tasks in the Zoom® environment. In essence, students created their own Zoom® rooms, practiced the speaking task as many times as desired, and finally recorded themselves. These recordings were then disseminated to the instructor and other students via the LMS.

Given the additional procedural layers and technical capabilities required to complete speaking tasks through digital means, it is important to introduce the tools gradually and in a low-stakes way (Hampel, 2006). One way to do so is by setting up a "practice task" that familiarizes the students with the affordances of the technology.



For example, in order to acquaint themselves with the content creation and sharing functionalities of VoiceThread, students in certain courses created and shared a brief self-introduction at the beginning of the term. These self-introductions were not assessed but supported affective aspects of instruction that are crucial in DLE. On a final note, by completing the speaking tasks in an asynchronous modality, class time that would have otherwise been dedicated to in-class performance became available for other instructional purposes.

While the use of asynchronous technologies helped to support the creation and delivery of monologic and dialogic speaking tasks, such was not the case when it came to group-based speaking tasks. For example, in Level III of the curriculum, students are increasingly pushed to use their language in public-facing genres via a number of “talk show”-style

speaking tasks in which participants assume the role of prominent public figures. The Zoom® environment, with its more regimented style of communication, was not an ideal environment for completion of such tasks because it did not support the fluid back-and-forth and overlapping speech that is common for the genre of talk show.

To summarize, the GUGD model of DLE (see Table 1) leverages ongoing needs analysis, research-informed teacher education, and a thoughtful blend of synchronous and asynchronous technologies to support the provision of instruction in a multiliteracies framework. Students collaborate and communicate with their classmates and instructors through regularly scheduled synchronous instruction. Students also use asynchronous technologies to complete out-of-class work and to support their participation

**Table 1** Components of the GUGD Model of DLE

Component	Description	Tools used
Needs analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confirm technical capacities, including Internet connectivity, for instructors and students</li> <li>identify new and ongoing needs of instructors and students via electronic questionnaires and discussion</li> <li>disseminate knowledge, share instructional practices, and reflect upon successes and challenges via regular meetings</li> <li>implement tailored professional development module “The GUGD Summer Institute”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zoom®</li> <li>Google Docs®</li> <li>Google Forms®</li> <li>VoiceThread®</li> <li>iMovie®</li> </ul>
Synchronous engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain existing instructional schedule</li> <li>engage in iterative teacher education</li> <li>pursue learner-centered instruction</li> <li>analyze texts functionally and critically</li> <li>integrate textual and graphic information</li> <li>share and collaborate on electronic version of class notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zoom®</li> <li>Google Docs®</li> </ul>
Asynchronous engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>organize and deliver instructional materials</li> <li>engage in threaded discussion of relevant topics and themes</li> <li>share, comment on, and revise out-of-class work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canvas®</li> <li>Google Docs®</li> <li>VoiceThread®</li> <li>Zoom®</li> </ul>
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete multiple drafts of writing tasks</li> <li>rehearse and record speaking tasks</li> <li>share, comment on, and revise speaking and writing tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canvas®</li> <li>Google Docs®</li> <li>VoiceThread®</li> <li>Zoom®</li> </ul>

in synchronous sessions. Critically, integration of appropriate technologies enables students to draw meaningful connections between texts and tasks, thereby fostering a move from primary discourse to secondary discourses (Gee, 1998) that is the hallmark of language development across the curriculum.

### **There and Back Again: Returning to Classroom-based Instruction**

The GUGD transition from classroom-based instruction to DLE has at times been fraught, but it has also provided a fertile environment for instructional experimentation and curricular renewal. As we envision a return to classroom-based instruction, it is crucial to capitalize on the affordances that digital learning contexts can provide in the post-pandemic era (Guillén et al., 2020). Two principles often linked to such contexts, communication and collaboration, can help to determine the shape of foreign language instruction in the GUGD going forward.

The fact that instructors and students could maintain a level of face-to-face contact through the audiovisual platform Zoom® was crucial to class cohesion and course coherence. When again seated together in a physical classroom, it will no longer be necessary to log on to Zoom® to attend class; however, the chat functionality that Zoom® enables in DLE should be preserved. For instance, students and instructors who are learning together in a classroom can simultaneously use a text chat program to support side conversations. So long as all students are able to log on easily and the comments are visible to all participants, this technology can foster a level of communication that expands upon the traditional discourse patterns of classroom communication.

Many instructors in the GUGD have found the use of Google Docs® facilitative for communication and collaboration. When linked to the completion of out-of-class work, students can seek assistance by initiating an asynchronous

conversation with their instructor at the moment they have a question. Instructors benefit in that they can better grasp the particular struggles that individual learners face and offer targeted help. Given the pedagogical value of this “upgraded” interface for completing out-of-class work, the GUGD will seek to maintain a similar level of communication with students as they complete such work in course sections that are not intended for DLE. An additional benefit to this way of operating is a reduction in the quantity of paper used by students and instructors, thereby contributing to environmental sustainability efforts.

The use of a shared class Google Doc as a digital whiteboard and repository for course notes has proven to be an effective pedagogical strategy. Will such usage also be practical for classroom-based instruction? The answer here is likely to involve a negotiation based on teacher and student preferences. While there are a number of advantages that come with using a “digital whiteboard,” in a physical classroom, the teacher should also be free to move about and not feel tethered to a computer. Perhaps a solution to this tension would be to use both the classroom-based whiteboard together with a Google Doc. In such a scenario, it could become the purview of the students to carefully record the notes taken on the whiteboard and then transfer these notes to the Google Doc following class. The instructor can then monitor, clarify and confirm the students’ entries, thereby providing a digital through-line between physical meetings of the class.

Recognizing that the technologies described herein are essential for DLE to function. We must also remain cognizant that sound pedagogical thinking and critical reflection are just as essential to the success of technology-enhanced classroom-based language instruction. This awareness should also acknowledge that an increasing reliance on technology presents a new set of problems we must grapple with. For example, whereas language curricula are generally designed with explicit reference to

proficiency level, there is currently little thought as to how we can ensure a roughly equivalent level of *technological proficiency* among student cohorts across the curriculum. Similarly, our assessment practices must innovate to include the effective use of technology for communication and collaboration. Here, we can perhaps look for inspiration to practitioners of virtual exchange who have long tied evaluation of learning to not only language development and intercultural competence, but also to the growth of (critical) digital literacies (e.g. Helm & Guth, 2010; Hauck, 2019).

In closing this report, it is hoped that the needs analysis, teacher education and pedagogical adjustments described herein can serve as a source of inspiration for language departments seeking to provide quality language instruction at a distance. Although the pandemic has caused tremendous hardship in the academic and personal lives of instructors and students, let us also hope that the pedagogical innovations it has triggered will lead to an enhanced relationship between language teaching and technology going forward.

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# DUAL IMMERSION DIGITAL INSTRUCTION: A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

INSTRUCCIÓN DIGITAL EN DOBLE INMERSIÓN: UN MODELO TEÓRICO PARA AULAS  
EQUITATIVAS E INCLUSIVAS

ENSEIGNEMENT NUMÉRIQUE À DOUBLE IMMERSION : UN MODÈLE THÉORIQUE  
POUR DES SALLES DE CLASSE ÉQUITABLES ET INCLUSIVES

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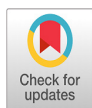
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## ABSTRACT

Dual immersion programs have proven effective in achieving biliteracy for all students. However, maintaining equitable practices at the core of such programs has become more challenging in remote learning due to the pandemic. It is necessary, therefore, to revise some of the benefits and challenges of digital instruction mediated by technology in these settings. Using a middle school Dual Immersion (DI) program in Southern California as a background, and from the perspective of bilingual education teachers and professors, this article presents a theoretical model called Dual Immersion Digital Instruction (DI2) that could serve that purpose. The model includes the five dimensions involved in just, equitable, and inclusive education: Technological, content, social, linguistic, and pedagogical. The article also analyzes the pedagogical opportunities and challenges that teachers in DI programs face in regards to each of these dimensions when all instruction becomes fully online. Finally, the article discusses how the shift to online teaching in DI classrooms could impact bilingual teacher education programs.

**Keywords:** Dual immersion; digital instruction; inclusive classrooms; teacher education; remote learning; COVID-19; K-12; online instruction.

## RESUMEN

Los programas de doble inmersión han demostrado ser efectivos en lograr la alfabetización bilingüe para todos los estudiantes. Sin embargo, mantener la equidad en tales programas se ha vuelto más complicado por el aprendizaje a distancia debido a la pandemia. Es necesario, por tanto, revisar los beneficios y retos de la Instrucción Digital mediada por la tecnología en contextos bilingües. Con un programa de Doble Inmersión (DI) de una escuela media situada al sur de California como base, y desde la perspectiva de maestros de escuela y profesores universitarios, este artículo presenta un modelo teórico llamado Instrucción digital en doble inmersión (DI2) que

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Special issue on *The Role of Technology in Language Teaching and Learning amid the Crisis Generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

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permitiría lograr este objetivo. El modelo aborda las cinco dimensiones necesarias para una instrucción inclusiva, justa y equitativa: tecnológica, social, lingüística, de contenido y pedagógica. El artículo también analiza las oportunidades pedagógicas y los retos que los docentes de programas de DI enfrentan en cuanto a estas dimensiones cuando la enseñanza se vuelve completamente en línea. Finalmente, el artículo presenta una reflexión sobre cómo el cambio a la instrucción en línea en programas de DI podría afectar a los programas de preparación docente.

**Palabras clave:** doble inmersión; instrucción digital; inclusión en el aula; preparación docente; COVID-19; educación primaria y secundaria; aprendizaje a distancia.

### RÉSUMÉ

Les programmes de double immersion se sont avérés efficaces pour atteindre la bilittératie pour tous les élèves. Cependant, le maintien de pratiques équitables, au cœur de ces programmes, est devenu plus difficile dans l'enseignement à distance en raison des épidémies. L'extension de cette phase d'urgence à distance implique la nécessaire révision des avantages et des défis de l'instruction numérique médiée par la technologie. En utilisant un programme de double immersion (DI) au collège dans le sud de la Californie comme contexte, et du point de vue des enseignants et des professeurs d'éducation bilingue, cet article présente un modèle théorique (DI<sup>2</sup>) qui aborde cinq dimensions impliquées dans une approche juste, équitable et une éducation inclusive: technologique, sociale, linguistique, de contenu et pédagogique. Nous explorons les opportunités pédagogiques DI lorsque toutes les instructions deviennent entièrement en ligne, mettant en évidence les pratiques et les implémentations fiables qui devraient améliorer l'enseignement dans les salles de classe di inclusives une fois la phase à distance terminée. Nous analysons comment les programmes de préparation des enseignants bilingues devraient revoir leurs cadres, le contenu des cours et les outils d'évaluation.

**Mots clés:** double immersion ; instruction digitale ; inclusion dans la salle de classe ; formation des enseignants ; COVID-19; enseignement primaire et secondaire; apprentissage à distance.



## Introduction: Dual Immersion Equity Beyond Remote Learning

The global pandemic that struck the world in the spring of 2020 has changed the landscape of education as we knew it. In a time when a large number of school districts in the United States transitioned to remote learning, its reverberation appears to be broad and complex for all stakeholders. The educational response to the pandemics has been diverse all across the United States, but public safety and health principles have been put at the forefront. According to the California Department of Education (CDE) directives for school reopening, more than 90% of the students continued in the distance learning modality as of February 2021 (CDE, 2020), although the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) stated that “schools throughout the state are currently in various stages of instruction including distance learning, in-person learning, and hybrid instruction based on local conditions” (CDPH, 2021, p. 1). From the very beginning, administrators and teachers scrambled to balance the risks of feasible K-12 instructional models amidst the worst pandemic of the century, revisiting the educational principles and practices that defined the very foundations of the school system. Analogously, students and parents struggled with the lack of support systems that a physical school provides beyond the design, implementation, and supervision of learning instruction such as nutrition services, childcare, social, and emotional needs. Further concerns regarding technology access, equitable learning environments, academic progress, or the socio-emotional costs have arisen.

The first response to the wave of school closures was to default to some sort of distance learning. Many states, California being one of them, have kept this option as the most prevalent, adjusting to the needs while navigating the surge of infections. While there is no agreement yet on how to call this type of (often improvised) instruction (Fisher et al., 2020), in this article, we will use the term “remote digital instruction”<sup>1</sup> (Hassel &

Hassel, 2012; Lester & King, 2009). We opted for the more inclusive concept of Digital Instruction (as opposed to analog instruction), which has a less negative bias than other similar concepts such as online instruction. We may use “online instruction” when embedded in the literature cited. Both forms of instruction are enabled by technology and might be included within the realm of distance learning, which is a more comprehensive concept that includes all instruction not delivered face to face. Distance learning has a long history that goes back to the first mail courses created in the 19th century and has become progressively mediated by the incorporation of new technologies. Other related concepts exist: web-based learning, e-learning, blended or hybrid learning, virtual learning, cyber-learning, etc. With the outbreak of the pandemic, denominations such as emergency or temporary remote learning, online learning, or distance learning have been used interchangeably.

Moving all learning operations from the traditional brick and mortar schools to the digital realm has produced a whole gamut of outcomes, some closer than others to the ideal virtual class—a group of students in cyberspace, as opposed to a classroom as a physical space—. As an ideal concept, it is understood as the interaction of teachers and students applying knowledge to problems utterly mediated by telecommunications and computers in the virtual space (Tiffin & Rajasingham, 1995). Although the closest reference for these outcomes was online education, the instruction during the initial remote digital instruction phase was a reaction to a dire necessity more than well-designed, digitally oriented instruction. As remote digital instruction settled and became, for many school districts, the widespread option for the fall of the new school year, a revision of its potentialities and challenges as pertaining to dual immersion becomes essential. Certainly, as a type of distance education, K-12 online instruction has endured a dubious reputation; with a somber history since its inception in 1996 (Ferdig et al., 2009). Online instruction was previously reserved to solve aspects such as the lack of remedial courses,

alternative student placement, crowded schools, or shortage of qualified teachers (Cavanaugh et al., 2009). Nonetheless, in this new reality, online instruction has emerged as the most feasible form to facilitate instruction. Although in education nothing compares yet to non-remote, face-to-face human interaction between teachers and students (Paechter & Maier, 2010), technology-mediated instruction was increasingly present in the physical classrooms before the pandemic. According to Blake (2013), this type of instruction promoted a shift in the instructional paradigms, from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. At the same time, concerns about equity and learning outcomes have been raised during the remote learning phase (Chandra et al., 2020).

Since Dual Immersion (DI) programs were conceived with equity as their core (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017), as dual immersion researchers and practitioners, we wanted to explore if the benefits of bilingual education can somehow be transferred equitably on to online learning and be maintained even after the emergency remote phase ceases to exist. The increasing digitalization of K-12 instruction has undeniable potentialities and benefits to enhance the already well-knit DI communities that can be transferred into post-pandemic phases. There is a consensus that, despite its potentialities, online classes cannot supplant face-to-face instruction just yet (Su & Foulger, 2019). But can the challenges of online instruction at least be buffered through best practices in a way that ensures the essential objectives of dual immersion? As practitioners and scholars in the field of bilingual education in Southern California, we are enthusiastic about the opportunities of the digitalization of learning as well as concerned with the practical assertions in biliteracy development and the instruction of world languages.

### **The Five Dimensions of Just, Equitable, and Inclusive Education**

The next sections present an exploratory analysis from five dimensions —technological, content,

social, linguistic, and pedagogical- filtered by the sieve of equity. Then, we introduce a theoretical model called Dual Immersion Digital Instruction (DI<sup>2</sup>), pondering its implications in language arts and content instruction in the target language, as well as teacher preparation for dual immersion programs.

### **Technological, Content Instruction, and Social Dimensions**

The technology dimension epitomizes a long-standing myth in education that technology alone would enhance learning (Goodchild & Speed, 2019, as cited in Komoski, 1969) which coexisted with the 19<sup>th</sup> century luddite fear that machinery would dehumanize and harm our society. We have witnessed this same dialog during the emergency remote phase; educational institutions touted that technology-mediated instruction would save the day during the pandemic while others quickly announced the failure of this type of instruction. The reality lies closer to technology being a tool, a powerful one when combined with well-prepared teachers, quality materials, and engaging learning spaces a necessary cog in the wheel of quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Equity concerns due to the digital divide have been at the forefront during remote learning (Chandra et al., 2020), where instruction is mediated by technology, limiting the scope, access, added services, and the effectiveness that analog schooling provides. Distance learning can also produce social and emotional deprivation and can limit engagement (Dorn et al., 2020; Schwartzman, 2020)

Early reports on remote distance learning have pointed to inequalities in accessing technology and content that widens the digital divide and worsens the achievement gap (Chandra et al., 2020). Minorities and deprived groups have a bigger burden when instruction becomes fully online and may have long lasting effects afterwards (Dorn et al., 2020). These authors argue that low-income, black, and Hispanic students are exposed to higher contingencies, at risk of a higher learning loss. From this perspective, it seems that distance learning acts as an

amplifier of previous problems. Furthermore, physical access to technology is not the only obstacle for certain students and families. Research has pointed out a second and third level to digital divides in terms of types of use of different higher thinking skills, and quality outcomes of educational technology in students with the same digital skills (Scheerder et al., 2017). Precisely, the uneven outcomes of digital instruction have led California legislators to create new legislation, such as the Education finance education omnibus budget trailer bill (CLI, 2020), to guarantee technology access as well as some sort of daily live instruction during the pandemic's remote phase. These and other considerations convey an extra layer when applied to DI programs, where the delivery of content in the target language alone will not suffice.

In general terms, one can argue that technology enhances all levels of instruction and all types of content when used wisely, a tendency that also benefited DI programs. Due to its singularities (Solsona-Puig, 2019), DI programs may present added challenges in translating equitable and inclusive practices into remote digital learning: access and digital literacy of technological tools; the role of students, parents, and teachers; and digital professional development for docents. Along with unequal access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in underprivileged groups, digital instruction requires a more active and mature learner profile (Blake, 2013), positioning the student at the center of its learning process (Rice, 2012). In the family sphere, stay-at-home and digitally literate parents may better facilitate this transition to digital instruction. Conversely, the assumption that technologically savvy students are better learners has been often challenged (Kolikant, 2010; Neumann, 2016), citing aspects such as information illiteracy, shortened attention span, inferior writing skills, predominance of visual over reading information, and technology being a distraction as major pitfalls. Students are not exempt of these technology shortcomings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century despite K-12 students being labeled as "digital natives," and most of their parents and teachers "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001).

Interestingly, technology may not always be closing the digital divide for all but deepening the chasm in equity, affecting all three educational spheres; family, school (teachers, students) and community (Epstein et al., 2009). In their qualitative study on technology access in California high schools, Warschauer et al. (2004) noted that despite having access to similar computer-student ratios, their respective uses, performance, and technology access differed between high and low incomes students. The affectation on low-income students was expanded in an ulterior study of three one-on-one programs in California, Alabama, and Colorado (Warschauer et al., 2014). Apart from curtailing student engagement, which we will address in the next section, it appears that minority parents seem to be less involved or knowledgeable of the school system than affluent families (Machado-Casas et al., 2014).

In the school sphere, proficient teaching during remote digital instruction implies a tech-savvy instructor that masters student engagement without face-to-face interaction (Archambault & Kennedy, 2014; Hicks, 2011). Teachers are not alien to technology pitfalls: resistance to technology of docents is well documented in literature (Hicks, 2011; Howard, 2013 Tiffin & Rajasingham, 1995), especially in veteran teachers who comprise up to 40% of staff (Orlando, 2014). Invariably, however, there is the need for proactive teaching (Fisher et al., 2020). On top of the aforementioned challenges, there is an increasing tendency to digitalize content from print to the virtual format that may forever change the traditional way of teaching and learning: digital literacies may require new strategies and instructional tools to tackle the content both from teachers and students (Hodges & Matthews, 2020).

In the content dimension, teaching and learning academic content utilizing a world language (sometimes referred as foreign language) is what defines DI programs (CAL, 2021). Due to its specificities, some types of content instruction delivered online have an easier instruction delivery when compared to other subjects, being

foreign languages (Oliver, 2012; Blake, 2013) and mathematics (Oliver et al., 2010; Sugilar, 2020) more difficult to be taught digitally, resulting sometimes in lower student achievement.

It appears that the transition to a remote digital instruction in DI could potentially hinder the teacher's immediate influence (Ray, 2009) on language learning naturally occurring in face-to-face instruction, which is enhanced by social interaction (Blake, 2013), as well as the live rich interaction between two groups of emergent bilinguals that defines Dual Immersion (Palmer, 2009). Research on DI has frequently stressed the fact that educators in these programs bear an added weight in the attainment of the objectives these programs pursue. DI teachers must utilize an array of resources and strategies that help facilitate content, language, and literacy acquisition in the target languages given the hue of linguistic repertoires and learning stages of emergent bilinguals. These challenges might grow exponentially when instruction cannot be face-to-face instruction.

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However, to compensate for the shortcomings of content delivery in digital instruction, technological potentialities may come in handy. One possibility is delivering individualized content through digital means that allows student-paced learning. Once the content is designed and delivered, the immersion students can access it any time provided they have adequate access to it. Pre-recorded lessons, webinars, or other in-class resources are kept in the learning environment to be retrieved as many times as necessary, as opposed to live instruction, that is gone when finished. Additionally, interactive content, multiple media avenues (audio, video, etc.), and open access to enriched content would enhance the learning possibilities. Another option is to ensure that virtual time and space is set up for immersion students to interact (through break-out rooms, collaborative projects, chat or video rooms). There are plenty of possibilities to virtually connect students, schools, and families to enhance the content through the social aspect of immersion programs.

The social dimension is especially important since the students in a dual immersion program rely on social interaction to improve their language skills. Conversely, parent and community involvement are a key component of the success of these types of programs. Frequently, students remain in these programs for many years, and this helps create strong bonds among students, parents, and teachers. Students value this long-term relationship, which becomes a cultural and linguistic investment regarded as positive (Bears & de Jong, 2008). Furthermore, parents create a group of strong advocates for quality instruction (Solsona-Puig, 2019). However, DI stakeholders must be vigilant to counterbalance the often referred as "domination of *Anglo-white parents*" in these programs (Scanlan & Palmer, 2009; Burns, 2017). Recreating these social interactions digitally has been proven as challenging as necessary. Feelings of isolation or disengagement should be counterbalanced with virtual socialization among students (like birthdays, scavenger hunts, social breaks, etc.), flexibility, and meaningful work (Pretti et al., 2020). Digital student-teacher interaction other than instruction is also necessary in order to maintain and enhance this social dimension. This can be achieved through virtual parties, chat, check-in time before or after class, or other alternative digital interactions.

In the intersection of the technological, content, and social dimensions mentioned above, it seems probable that teachers have a greater influence in the physical classroom to compensate for the existing English cultural dominance (Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). This is especially true at the early stages of DI programs, where teachers and peers are the main language and cultural role-model for one another. Language and literacy resources used as visual cues (such as images posters, maps, realia, word walls, etc.) or cultural references used as background language are limited to a small two-dimensional screen. Also, limited access to language variations in the class (generally, students share less oral language in online environments with their peers), difficulties in giving immediate individual oral feedback, and the lack of

student interaction to enhance peer learning might hinder the language and social exchange.

Additionally, the lack of human face-to-face interaction might hinder the well-knit DI social networks that are an essential variable in the success of these programs (Linholm-Leary, 2005). Another added difficulty arises with the lack of ability to influence the language settings in digital platforms; these rarely allow the use of a language other than English. During regular DI instruction, on the contrary, instruction and communication (verbal, written or visual) happen in the target language only. In face-to-face instruction the teacher can better control, expand, or compensate for target language production. In this sense, during the remote digital instruction the precise gauging of content delivery in the target language by the DI teacher -balancing language, culture and content- might be affected.

### Equity Through the Linguistic Dimension

Digital teaching and learning of world languages is by no means a new educational practice. Globalization, travel, and world trade, combined with the need to learn a second language, oftentimes as working adults, have favored the development of a broad variety of online language programs. There are numerous methods, platforms, programs, and applications that, over the years, have developed and implemented more, and improved, virtual spaces and teaching strategies with increasingly better outcomes in language teaching and acquisition (Blake, 2013). Still, world language is one of the disciplines that presents greater challenges in digital learning (Oliver, 2012). Moreover, it is important to remember that the DI classroom requires a twofold focus: the need for target language development and a strong emphasis on literacy development in that target language (Babino & Stewart, 2017; Ray, 2009). It must also keep its focus on culture maintenance and cultural competence (Palmer, 2009). In that sense, the challenges of digital teaching and learning of world languages are combined with the challenges that pertain to the language arts virtual classroom.

Student engagement is arguably one of the main factors in language learning gains (Zilvinskis et al., 2017). It is also one of the main challenges of the digital classroom in any subject matter. In the DI classroom, though, it is through student verbal participation, oral and written, that the educator is able to check for understanding, assess learning, and adjust instruction for oral language development. Speaking in the target language serves all those functions, but it is also a goal in itself that happens mostly between teachers and students, and less among peers (Ballinger & Lyster, 2011). Encouraging verbal interaction among students in the DI classroom and providing spaces for it is as essential as challenging.

Dual immersion programs strive to achieve student literacy as well as proficiency in all skills of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Of the four language skills, speaking in the target language requires the strongest teacher support (Potowski, 2004), consequently, it might be the one suffering the most in digital instruction. Thus, getting emergent bilingual students to use the target language in the classroom with consistency should be at the heart of all efforts in digital instruction. In a context of emergent bilingualism, in which teacher and student verbal input is an integral part of learning, student participation and communication are paramount. Communication with peers and teachers is both an essential source of learning as well as one of the most engaging elements in the DI classroom. Thus, in order to meet the linguistic goals of DI, teachers must focus on what is arguably the most challenging aspect of digital teaching: student participation and engagement in the target language.

Accordingly, educators must capitalize on the situation and exploit digital learning to the best of their ability as a tool for academic growth and equity, both social and educational. The bright side of digital instruction is that it can offer students and teachers an array of possibilities for engagement, linguistic growth, and cultural competence (Blake, 2013; Hafner et al., 2015). The alteration of non-verbal communication (Bailenson, 2021),

context cues, or body language in the physical classroom can be compensated with enhanced digital DI instruction. Interactive voice and video applications, both synchronous and asynchronous, can help teachers and students have a more comprehensive understanding of the language iterations and engage students in both productive and receptive skills. Thus, the four domains of language (reading, speaking, writing, and listening) can be combined in project-based activities, or problem-based tasks that mimic real life, using the target language both as a tool and as a goal (Hampel, 2006.)

An almost infinite amount of real language samples (audio, video, text) is available, providing also a broader variety of accents, lexis, and regional or national linguistic variations that are paramount to the inclusivity of the various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the classroom. Moreover, the plethora of digital interactive applications for language production (voice, video, etc.) and instructional online games (iCivics, Minecraft, Kahoot, Jeopardy, interactive maps, etc.) help student engagement and enhance their productive and receptive language skills (Chik, 2014).

Online production, whether verbal or written, minimizes student affective filters and maximizes flexible and relaxed synchronous and asynchronous language production and student interactions (Chametzky, 2013). Digital work offers students the possibility of multiple oral attempts through video and audio, self and peer correction, and edition. It is also a way to increase accountability for daily language production for all students, who will be able to produce language and participate at their own time much more often than in the regular classroom setting (Evans, 2009). Analogously, it also grants teachers a number of possibilities for group, small group or individual modifications as well as faster, more frequent and targeted assessments and student self-assessments.

Finally, another important aspect in which digital instruction can serve as a device for equity is that it enhances all students' exposure to cultural information (Evans, 2009) that expands their

immediate world experience and cultural capital. For one, it opens the possibility of virtual world travel that gives them access to experiences veiled for some of the students: visits to museums and sites throughout the world, access to art performances in the target language, or ability to connect with people from other countries with whom they can interact in the target language. Language teachers need to be aware of the equalizing opportunities that digital instruction has to offer given that it can help reduce some effects of the socio-economic divide that is, at times, present in the DI classroom.

### **Pedagogical Dimension: Preparing Teacher Candidates for Just, Equitable, and Inclusive DI<sup>2</sup>**

In the previous sections, we examined the opportunities and challenges from the technological, linguistic, social, and content dimensions of development and instruction of DI programs. Here, we analyze how the shift to online teaching in Dual Immersion classrooms could impact Bilingual Teacher Preparation Programs (BTTP). Currently, the focus of BTTPs is to enlighten the next generation of culturally and linguistically responsive educators around four guiding principles: (a) bilingualism and biliteracy, (b) academic achievement, (c) socio-cultural competence, and (d) critical consciousness (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017; Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Howard et al., 2018).

Adding to these four pillars, teacher candidates learn how to embed technology in their lesson design, implementation, and assessment. The integration of technology is guided by the Common Core State Standards Technology Skills (CDE, 2013). These principles guide the design of courses that include, nurture, and foster the candidate's skills in three major areas: language competency, methodology, and culture. It could be argued that once the bilingual teacher candidates have completed a BTTP, they are ready to: (a) work with and learn from students in face-to-face classrooms (Meidl & Meidl, 2011), (b) use technology as a tool that enhances their practices (Heitink et al., 2016), and (c) prepare students for a global society where multilingualism and technology stand as two key pillars

(Kelly-Holmes, 2019). Yet, with the new 100% digital learning reality, these sets of skills will need to be adapted, modified, and enhanced in order to create a just, equitable and inclusive digital learning environments for all DI students and families.

Moreover, BTPPs will have to redesign their structure to ensure candidates are equipped with the tools for DI<sup>2</sup>. An additional challenge will be to prepare candidates to effectively teach in the target language (i.e., Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Khmer, Hmong) in online settings. Regardless of the teaching and learning setting (online, hybrid, face to face), the outcomes for DI programs have not changed. Students must acquire high levels of biliteracy across all the subject areas --mathematics, history, science-- and to become critical users of languaging (Carpenter et al., 2015).

Before the pandemic, a large number of BTPP in California programs offered these courses via face-to-face. Traditional teaching is based in orality (Kern & Schultz, 2005), and teaching and learning online still relies predominantly on the use of voice, but many other communication avenues have opened (chat, icons, smileys, etc.). In that scenario, shifting teacher preparation from face-to-face to online models brings exciting opportunities to ensure just, equitable and inclusive learning in teaching preparation programs. One of the areas in which online learning could enhance the array of opportunities for candidates is the area of clinical work. Before the pandemic, candidates completed their clinical work conducting in-person visits to Dual Immersion classrooms. With this face-to-face possibility out of the map, clinical work must turn virtual. In this virtual set up, candidates may virtually visit and observe Dual Immersion classrooms from any school district across the state. Having more school districts available is especially important for candidates who speak languages such as Vietnamese, Mandarin, Korean, Khmer, and Hmong, among others. The key factor in the effectiveness of this virtual clinical work is to ensure that candidates have access to the same depth and breadth than

the one obtained in face-to-face observations (Caprano et al., 2010; Cliffe, 2017).

Another area where possibilities for teacher candidates could increase is the opportunities for virtually conducted ethnographic research. As part of their culture course, candidates have to collect data from a neighborhood and/or community to further understand how cultures and languages are constructed, used, and validated by their inhabitants. The knowledge gained in this exercise serves as the foundation for the candidate's cultural competence and critical consciousness (Paris & Alim, 2017). The mandate of virtually based practices may open spaces that otherwise would be resistant to an in-person visit and research. As underlined when talking of virtual fieldwork, the key aspect would be to ensure that research, observation, and learning are run within a humanizing framework in which the researcher and participants are open to share, question, and expand their views

To conclude, BTPPs have an exciting opportunity to expand how they have been preparing candidates for the last five decades. The drive to continue preparing culturally and linguistically proficient educators will call for seeing technology not as a mere tool to enhance teaching and learning practices but to amplify and empower the opportunities for all language learners to stretch their linguistic repertoires. On the other hand, the TPACK model (Archambault & Crippen, 2009) presents itself as a concentric Venn diagram that revolves around the knowledge application from three dimensions: Technology, Pedagogy, and Content. Both models can provide equitable education, but as a means to close the opportunity and achievement gap. It would also require teachers to develop, implement, and assess practices that guarantee all DI students develop high levels of bilingualism and acquire subject area biliteracy.

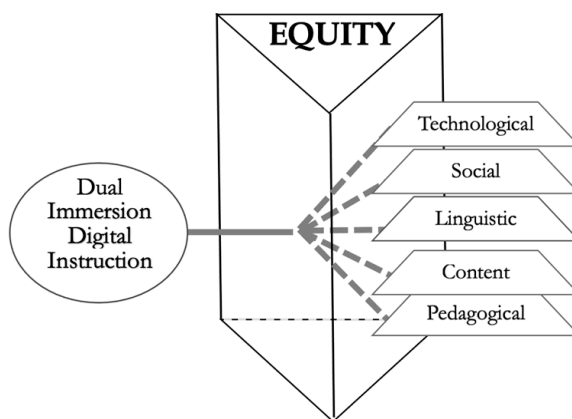
Up to this point, we have examined the five dimensions of just, equitable, and inclusive education in Dual Immersion settings. We have also presented

the need for Bilingual Teacher Preparation Programs to review and transform their practices. In the next section, we pose what we visualize as a valid model for digital instruction moving forward in the post-pandemic era.

### Dual Immersion Digital Instruction (DI<sup>2</sup>): A Theoretical Model for Equity

Since its beginnings more than two decades ago, the experience in online instruction mostly at the college level (Fish & Wickersham, 2009) has not produced yet a widely shared model of online distance learning. The attempts to define the types of digital learning have encountered a wide array of variations and constant innovations (Means et al., 2014). Beyond the four online learning categories/filters outlined by the authors (context, design features, implementation and outcomes), we argue that technology unequivocally determines this type of instruction (Tiffin & Rajasingham, 1995). Parallely, there has been a process of digitalizing (Pettersson, 2020) both content and instruction that has affected the way knowledge is delivered and the way teachers plan its delivery. Two models have been recently applied when analyzing the digitalization of instruction: the SAMR and TPACK models (Puentedura, 2014). The SAMR model defines four evolving stages in the application of technology and how its application enhances instruction: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition. Often conceived as a linear model, can actually be seen as complementing the TPACK model, and help together to better understand the digitalization of instruction.

Nonetheless, when applied to DI, both models lack a crucial perspective that lies at the core of these programs: equity (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2007). In Figure 1, we outlined our model for an equitable Dual Immersion Digital Instruction (with five dimensions: technological, social, linguistic, content, and pedagogical. Thus, each and every interaction for DI<sup>2</sup> should be sieved by the prism of equity, that projects its influence on the five dimensions. Through the social dimension, DI programs should consider the utterances and potentialities of



**Figure 1** Five Dimensions of the Equitable Dual Immersion Digital Instruction (DI<sup>2</sup>) model.

social interaction mediated by technology. Through the linguistic dimension, DI programs intertwine the cultural and socioeconomic, as well as the language-related aspects of these types of programs when turned into digital instruction. Our theoretical model, DI<sup>2</sup> provides a better answer to the unique technological, pedagogical, and content challenges, adding the linguistic and the social dimensions, which are at the core of these programs.

The linguistic dimension is in itself both a goal and a tool paramount to ensure quality instruction and program success. The social dimension is also two-fold. It supports the completion of the third pillar of DI, the sociocultural competence (Howard et al. 2018) that is also embedded in the linguistic and content dimensions. At the same time, and equally important, the social environment in DI creates the necessary support structure that helps validate the individual and the community, promotes the sense of belonging, enhances the connection with the educational system and thus, the overall success (Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008). It is well researched that DI programs are more than mere second language programs, since the language of instruction comes inseparably coupled with the need to maintain and advocate for the often minoritized student culture, and to challenge the raciolinguistic ideologies and coercive relations of power in an English dominant environment (Cummins, 2017; Palmer, 2009; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). To this end, we



present a theoretical model (Figure 1) for just, equitable, and inclusive digital instruction.

Using this new model, practitioners can reflect on educational best practices to digitally counteract the irremediable loss that comes from lack of person-to-person physical interaction. Furthermore, they can impact online instruction may have on the main foci of these programs: linguistic, cultural, and educational equity. We also believe there needs to be a reflection on the idea of building virtual communities in a program that has long relied

on an active community building process (Alanis & Rodríguez, 2008) that is mostly created around in-person interaction.

### Recommendations for DI<sup>2</sup> Practitioners

In this section, and using Table 1 as vehicle, we summarize the most important recommendations for an equitable digital instruction in dual immersion programs covered in this article. We combined the four pillars of DI with the five dimensions of the (DI<sup>2</sup>) model in Table 1.

**Table 1** Summary of DI<sup>2</sup> recommendations

DI <sup>2</sup> dimensions/ DI pillars	Technological	Content	Social	Linguistic	Pedagogical
Bilingualism/ biliteracy	Teachers, families, and students need to be proactive to enhance bilingualism and biliteracy.	Digitalize content. This may not decrease its quality but enhances its access by interactive multimedia and biliteracy tools.	Increase asynchronous access and engage families with recorded meetings or videoconferences and translation applications.	Think of different instructional strategies and tools, under the light of digital biliteracies.	Maximize flexible and relaxed language production, as verbal or written digital production, minimizes the student affective filter.
High academic achievement	Consider the three digital divides: access, production quality, and critical thinking.	Plan for student-paced content, multiple access, and enhanced organization of knowledge	Enable peer learning and socializing outside class time through collaborative virtual projects.	Plan activities balancing all skills of the target language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.	Prioritize digital student engagement and wellbeing without overlooking academic achievement.
Cross-cultural Competence	Compensate for students (low-income, Latinx, Black) that may suffer bigger inequalities	Increase opportunities for virtually conducted cultural exchange, teacher collaboration, or ethnographic research.	Gauge cultural and linguistic bias by designing social events and content, avoiding virtual fatigue.	Compensate the loss of non-verbal communication, context cues, or body language in the physical classroom or cultural exposure with enhanced digital DI instruction	Enhance digital instruction to improve equity by increasing students' exposure to cultural information that expands cultural capital.
Critical Consciousness	Teachers should counteract digital platforms' English dominance and equalize the "white-Anglo" preponderance.	Design lessons with a culturally respectful, multimodal approach to narratives, individualized and interactive relation with literary texts and content.	Create virtual spaces for parent and community involvement and participation.	Utilize online real language samples (audio, video, text) to promote a critical view, more inclusive of the various cultural and linguistic background	Intentionally and strategically design instruction that compensates cultural bias, limited non-verbal communication when teaching online or hybrid.

## Conclusions

The DI<sup>2</sup> theoretical model embodies a transformative approach for critically enhancing instruction. From a lens of an equitable, just, and inclusive teaching and learning approach, the five dimensions of the DI<sup>2</sup> model ensure a comprehensive understanding of the DI classroom. Indeed, ICT's have enhanced most aspects of our lives, including education. Once this emergency remote learning phase fades out, and if we take the potentialities mentioned in previous sections, educators will be left well-equipped with a hue of engaging, inclusive and equitable enhanced digital practices.

However, there is yet much to be done. Opportunities and challenges will be equally present in the months and years to come. The models and strategies designed, implemented, and to some extent assessed during this pandemic stretch have been contextualized within a sort of piloting mode. Teachers and administrators working in Dual Immersion schools adapted their practices to first survive, and later to build the first layers of comprehensive, successful, and inclusive digital instruction.

We are in a much better position now to learn from past experiences. We must continue developing digital teaching and learning practices to enhance the programs and platforms mediated by technology with equity as the main lens. Using and rephrasing the words of Bettina Love (2020), digital teaching beyond survival should be “the practice of working in solidarity with communities of color [in this context multilingual students and families] drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing...” (p. 2). Now, it is time to continue exploring, designing, implementing and evaluating new practices.

What is next is a process of growth for the DI community at large. Each participant will attain extra layers of responsibility in the digital instruction era. Among these charges, parents will have to continue to face the need to step in and become active

partners in supporting students and teachers in digital learning from the home. Students will have to face the challenges of digital instruction and make every effort to boost their focus and develop their time management skills.

At the same time, they will enjoy the benefits of this self-pacing, student centered, and highly engaging learning system that might be better suited for their needs and age. DI teachers will embody a language role model and become reinforcers and safeguards of the linguistic, cultural, and educational equity promoted in DI programs (Solsona-Puig, Capdevila-Gutiérrez, Rodríguez-Valls, 2018). They will also take the lead of developing all these opportunities for parent involvement and student engagement. Lastly, administrators will be faced with the task to continue to create opportunities for teacher professional development and family digital literacy, as well as to support the potential economic divide that could be affected by the demands of digital instruction.

BTTPPs must also review their practices to strengthen their outcomes in order to offer adequate preparation for the next generation of DI teachers. New standards for teacher readiness need to endorse the design and implementation of technology mediated equitable practices. We argue that the DI<sup>2</sup> model would greatly help in guiding these efforts.

It is time for all of us to regain credibility as just, equitable and inclusive multilingual educators. As Heifetz and Linsky (2017) point out,

We never know how an intervention is received unless you listen over time. Therefore, just as critical as the quality of your actions will be your ability to hold steady in the aftermath in order to evaluate how to move next. (p. 139)

The aftermath is here, thus, we have to continue questioning ourselves to ensure Dual Immersion programs remain and grow to meet the high expectations students and families have when they enter multilingual classrooms.

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## AUTHOR GUIDELINES

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With the aim of making room for diverse voices and languages, and looking to maintain conformity with international standards in scientific journals, *Íkala* advises authors to follow the guidelines below, which are designed to make file uploading easier, and get a prompt review of your manuscript.

### General Guidelines

To guarantee a transparent editorial process for authors, editors, reviewers, readers and indexing systems, *Íkala* uses the online Open Journal System (OJS) publishing platform, which follows international standards for scientific journals. Before uploading your manuscript to this platform, please note the following:

1. *Íkala* publishes original and unpublished material related to research, practice, and reflection in the areas of language and culture, linguistics, literature, translation, and language teaching and learning. Manuscripts

that do not fall within this scope or those that have been previously published in other journals, in part or in full, or are in the process of being published elsewhere, will be rejected regardless of the channel used for publication.

2. Manuscripts submitted for consideration to a regular or special issue must meet the highest standards of academic excellence, advance theoretical knowledge, address current and cutting-edge topics in applied linguistics, and contribute to or stimulate current discussions in the field, while offering new and original interpretations on issues within the focus and scope of *Íkala*.
3. Regardless of the type of manuscript, authors are expected to demonstrate rigor in the collection and analysis of data; present interesting results, discussions and conclusions; display a great depth of analysis; and write with sophistication, precision and conciseness, avoiding biased or prejudicial language.
4. *Íkala* publishes articles in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. Authors

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of manuscripts written in other languages or those with sections using non-Romance languages will not be accepted, as the journal does not have the human and technological resources to evaluate and publish content in those languages.

5. *Íkala* only accepts empirical studies, literature reviews, theoretical articles, methodological articles, case studies and book reviews. Manuscripts that do not fall within these categories (e.g., reflections, pedagogical experiences, and translations), will not be accepted.
6. Manuscript reception does not imply its acceptance or publication. Following the criteria of the refereed scientific publications, journal editors will be in charge of judging the relevance of the submitted manuscripts according to their field of knowledge. After a preliminary editorial review, the manuscripts that they consider not publishable (outside the scope of the journal, with serious methodological flaws, etc.) will be rejected and returned to the authors. Only those manuscripts that conform to the characteristics described in this section will be submitted to a double-blind peer review process.
7. Accepted manuscripts may not be published in the following issue, since *Íkala* publishes the articles in order of acceptance, with the exception of those that have been selected for publication in a special issue.
8. The journal's editor-in-chief is responsible for the final decision regarding the acceptance or rejection of a manuscripts. This decision is final.
9. Once accepted by the reviewers for publication, the manuscripts will undergo an additional review by the editors. Once this is done, the manuscripts will be sent to the copy editors so they can adapt them in structure and form to the journal guidelines, make them more visible in the indexing systems, and make sure that their strengths are highlighted, and they meet the highest standards of the wider linguistic and academic community. In this

process, copy editors will be able to make changes that refine the clarity and conciseness of ideas, unify terms and formats, and improve style.

10. After authors receive their manuscripts with the suggested changes, they are expected to accept the recommendations and expand or clarify the information requested in the clearest and most expeditious manner. Authors who do not agree with the changes will have the opportunity to discuss these with the journal Editor. In any case, they are expected to return the manuscript within a maximum period of two weeks. However, any modifications will be subject to a new revision by the copy editors so that an acceptable version of the manuscript is achieved. If the corrections are not received in the indicated time, the manuscript may be published in a later issue, other than the one previously agreed upon.
11. Changes in the number or order of the authors will only be accepted in the first phase of the submission and review process, and must be duly justified and supported. The Assignment of Rights and Declaration of Authorship form that all authors must sign is a binding document or agreement in this regard.
12. When the peer review process is completed, but before copy editing, the accepted manuscripts will be checked with a similarity detection software called Crosscheck (based on iThenticate). Manuscripts with a similarity percentage greater than 25% will be rejected and this decision will be final. In the case of suspicion of redundant or duplicate publication, *Íkala's* team will also carry out a survey in other languages.

### Style Guidelines

The writing style of manuscripts submitted to *Íkala* is reviewed several times in the publication process: when initially received, during peer review, and during copy editing and layout. To ensure that your manuscript passes the first review, consider the following:

1. The manuscript must be in an editable file, such as OpenOffice, Microsoft Word or in rich text format (.rtf).
2. Manuscripts should fall within one of the following categories: empirical study, case study, literature review, methodological article, theoretical articles, and book reviews. For more information on the structure of each of these articles, please refer to the *APA Publication Manual* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed.), numeral 3.3.
3. All manuscripts, with the exception of literature reviews and book reviews, should be between 8,000 and 8,500 words, including the abstracts in three languages and the references. Literature reviews should be no longer than 11,000 words long, with no less than 50 bibliographic references. Book reviews should be in the range of 2,500 to 3,000 words and must be about recent scientific publications (publications made within the last two years) related to the profile of the journal.
4. Abstracts must appear both in the manuscript and in the manuscript's metadata on the platform and have a maximum of 200 words. It must be written in the language of the manuscript and in two other languages of the four declared by the journal as Working languages (French, Spanish, English and Portuguese), and must be adequately structured. To know how to structure the abstracts properly, depending on the type of manuscript (literature review, empirical study, case study, etc.), please refer to the Writing the Title, Abstract and Keywords section.
5. Keywords must be a minimum of five words or phrases and follow the guidelines provided in the section *Writing the Title, Abstract, and Keywords*.
6. The line spacing must be 1.5. The font size must be 12 points.
7. The italic font attribute should be used instead of underlining (except in URLs) and only to denote terms written in languages other than the main text, or terms on which you want to draw attention.
8. All manuscripts must include a title, an abstract, five keywords and a list of references. In addition, empirical or case studies must include clearly defined introduction, theoretical framework, method, results, discussion and conclusions sections.
9. The references must be sufficient, relevant, current, and reliable, and follow the norms proposed by *APA Publication Manual* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed., chapter 9).
10. All illustrations, figures, and tables must be inserted in the text (body of the manuscript), not at the end of it or separately, and follow APA guidelines for presentation.
11. Footnotes should be used instead of endnotes. However, as suggested by the *APA Publication Manual* (chapter 2, 2.13), these should not include complicated, irrelevant, or nonessential information, or be used to provide bibliographic references because all these can be distracting to readers. Also, they should convey just one idea and be less than a paragraph.
12. The headings must present a clear hierarchy that accounts for the structure of the manuscript according to its type and the required sections. They should not be numbered. Due to the length and type of texts published in *Íkala*, three levels of subordination for headings should be sufficient to develop the authors' ideas. However, there may be exceptions.
13. Paragraphs should be well structured (develop an idea, have a logical connection with the previous paragraph and the one that follows, use logical connectors to show the relationship between sentences, etc.) and keep the format as simple as possible. This means without indentation, unless there are direct quotations with more than 40 words; and without bullets, page breaks, justification, or enumerations, since the journal has its own style sheet.

## Guidelines for Writing Specific Sections of the Manuscript

### *Writing the Title, Abstract, and Keywords*

The title, abstract and key words are the most visible parts of an article. They are used by abstracting and indexing services to cross reference. As such, they must be written carefully and strategically.

**The Title:** The title is perhaps the most important part of an article, as it acts as an advertisement for the article, can lead readers interested in the topic to your article, and can help them predict its content. (*How to get your Research Published... ..and then Noticed*, Elsevier). Therefore, when writing their manuscript's title, please to take into account the following:

1. Ensure that it accurately reflects the content of the manuscript so that readers can easily identify if it is of relevance to them or not.
2. Make sure that it is clear, specific, brief, and where possible, complete.
3. Avoid unusual abbreviations or jargon.
4. Refrain from using phrases such as: "a study of", "investigations of", "observations on".
5. If it is becoming difficult to write it, identify the research problem and start from there.
6. Try to make it interesting, attractive and ingenious so that people are motivated to read the article (*How to Get your Research Published.....and then Noticed- Elsevier, and APA Publication Manual-American Psychological Association*).

**The Abstract:** The abstract plays a vital role in effectively cataloging research in many online databases accessible to scholars around the world such as *Google, PubMed, Academic Search Premier, Thomson Reuters* (now *Web of Science*), *EBSCO Host*, and many others. These databases allow work to be more easily discovered, read, used, and cited by scholars who might not otherwise be able to reach it. Therefore, it is very important to be strategic when writing this section. When doing it, please remember to:

1. Include many, if not all, of the keywords associated with the manuscript;
2. Use accessible language that is easily understood by a wide audience and avoid both non-standard abbreviations and citations;
3. Highlight the most interesting elements of your work;
4. Use numbers, not their names, except for numbers at the beginning of a sentence;
5. Use double parentheses and the letter (a), if they include lists in English; and a single parenthesis and number, if they include lists in Spanish, French or Portuguese;
6. Faithfully represent the article, so that it can be used by indexing and documentation services, and other stakeholders in the field of scientific publication;
7. Summarize the problem, state the purpose of the research, clearly define where and with whom it was done, the methods of data collection and analysis employed, the main results and implications of the study, if it is part of a research article;
8. Be accurate and detailed (i.e., express, where, how, with whom, when, for what purpose) so that readers can easily decide whether or not to read the entire article.
9. make sure it is written in a single paragraph and is self-explanatory since abstracts are often separated from the article (*APA Publication Manual*, Chapter 3, 3.3).

To learn more about how abstracts are written, depending on the type of article, you can consult the *APA Publication Manual*, Chapter 3, 3.3.

**The Keywords:** They are important words that, along with those in the title, capture the essence of the article effectively and are used by abstracting and indexing services to make cross references. Therefore, choosing the correct key words can increase the chances that other researchers will find your article. In general, when writing your keywords, please remember that these should:

1. Be specific and avoid general terms such as "philosophy" or "philology," plural terms, and multiple concepts (for example, "and", "of").

2. Include only abbreviations that are firmly established in the field (e.g., EFL, ESL, SFL).
3. Number at least five, be written in small caps, in any order, and separated by semi-colon.

For more information about how to define the keywords of a manuscript, authors can consult the following sites which provide lists of terms used for retrieving documents and publications in different academic field: *Unesco Thesaurus* and *ERIC online* (<http://vocabularies.unesco.org/browser/thesaurus/en/> and <https://eric.ed.gov/?ti=all>)

### *Writing the Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion Sections*

**The Introduction:** In research articles, in general, the introduction begins with a broad topic that narrows as the reader progresses. Then, it presents the following aspects in a clear and concise manner: (a) the research problem, (b) the importance of the research for the field (c) the research or theoretical gap), (d) the research purpose and question, (e) the context, the type of study and the participants, and (f) a preview of the following sections.

**The Theoretical Framework:** In research articles, this section clearly outlines the perspective(s) from which the research is being done, and the specific theories and key concepts on which it is based. In addition, it includes a synthesis of similar studies conducted on the subject in the context of the study and around the world, and a summary of the main issues surrounding the topic under discussion.

**The Method:** In Íkala, all research articles must include a Method section. In general, this Method section includes a brief description of the following: (a) the research tradition or type of study that was conducted, (b) the participants of the study, if any, and (c) the data collection and analysis procedures used (e.g., what, when, how, how

often, how many, from whom and for what purpose). Besides, following guidelines from APA, which state that “Authors [should] be required to state in writing that they have complied with APA ethical standards in the treatment of their sample, human or animal, or to describe the details of treatment.” (*APA Certification of Compliance with APA Ethical Principles*); the section should also include this note.

**The Discussion and Conclusion:** In Íkala, these two sections can be presented together. Whether they are presented together or separately, they should contain: a summary of (a) the results obtained and the main arguments and a statements made, (b) the inconsistencies between the results presented and those of other studies, and (c) possible causes for this. Besides, this section should contain an explanation of the following: (a) how the study clarifies, expands or contradicts what others have done; (b) the meaning of the results or the “so what?”; (c) the value or contribution of the results for the field; (d) the theoretical or practical consequences or implications for professional development, research, or language policies, etc.; (e) the limitations of the study, if any; and (f) the questions for further research stemming from the findings.

### *Writing the Acknowledgements Section*

This is an optional part of the article which is not added until the manuscript has been accepted for publication, and is already in copy editing. This way, anonymity is maintained during the review process. In writing it, please take into account the following:

1. It should not contain more than 100 words.
2. In it, contributors, including funding sources or editing services should be clearly identified.
3. The role of the sponsor in the following aspects should be briefly described, where appropriate: research design; data collection, data analysis and interpretation; preparation of the manuscript.

## The Editorial Process

Once your manuscript is received, *Íkala* will follow several steps which can be divided into five key stages: reception, peer review, editorial preparation, publication, and post-publication. It is important that you are familiar with these stages and follow them on the platform OJS, as this will indicate if the article has passed through any of them.

### Reception

This stage includes the following steps:

1. The journal editor does a preliminary reading of the manuscript to verify that it meets the minimum requirements in terms of content, format, number of words, etc.
2. If the manuscript does not meet the minimum requirements, it will be rejected and the author(s) will be notified via email.
3. If the manuscript meets the minimum requirements, the editor will do an initial review to decide if it meets the journal's criteria for selection. The editor can take up to two weeks to do this review, depending on the number of new submissions.
4. If after the initial review, the editor considers the manuscript not worthy of a peer review, it will be rejected and the author(s) will be notified by email.

### Peer review

If the manuscript is deemed worthy of a peer review, the following steps will be taken:

1. The editorial team will search for scholars who are considered experts in the topic to do the review and notify the author(s) that the process has begun. This process may take up to four weeks. If peer reviewers are not ensured within this time, the author(s) will be notified to decide whether to continue waiting or to withdraw the manuscript.
2. Peer reviewers who receive an invitation will be given three weeks to complete the review.

3. If one of the peer reviewers does not complete the peer review within this time, the manuscript will be sent to a third peer reviewer.
4. If, when both peer reviews have been submitted, a contradictory recommendation is noticed, the editorial team will search for a third reviewer. However, the final decision could be made by the editor based on the available reviews and the editor's academic judgement.
5. If the manuscript is accepted by the two reviewers, and at least one of them suggests modifications, the manuscript will be returned to the authors for correction. They should follow the suggestions and send a revised version of their manuscript along with a letter to each reviewer explaining the modifications made. A period of three weeks is usually provided for this.
6. If the revisions are accepted by the two peer reviewers, the manuscript will be sent for copyediting.
7. If the manuscript is accepted without modifications, it will be sent straight to copy editing.

### Editorial Preparation

The duration of this stage depends on the number of manuscripts accepted for publication. As *Íkala* publishes issues four times a year (quarterly), it must prioritize the manuscripts that will be published first. In general, this stage includes the following steps:

1. Before sending the manuscript to copy editing, the editor will do a second review of the manuscript, and then, she will send it to copy editing.
2. The copy editor will ensure that the manuscript conforms to APA publication standards and may ask that the authors to make some corrections related to the following aspects: content (to complete or clarify a passage); grammar (punctuation, use of passive and active voice, verb tenses, syntactic organization of sentences); lexical

(use of some words or expressions, referents); textual (cohesion, coherence, flow of ideas, construction of paragraphs, etc.); para- and extra-linguistic features (italics, bold, exclamation marks, citations, footnotes, titles, subtitles, citations, references, acknowledgements, figures, tables, etc.). These corrections will follow the norms of the language in which the manuscript was written. At this stage, authors will only be allowed to correct aspects suggested by the editor or by the copy editors.

3. After all the suggested corrections have been made, the manuscript will be sent for layout design.
4. Once the layout is done, the editor will make a final review of the manuscript and send it to the authors for their approval, along with the Assignment of Rights and Declaration of Authorship form, which must be signed by all authors.

### Publication

Once all the authors have signed the Assignment of Rights and Declaration of Authorship, the manuscript will be ready for publication in the corresponding issue.

### Post-Publication

After the article is published, it is necessary that the authors take several steps to guarantee its diffusion through media and that their work reach a wide audience.

Some of these steps are the following:

1. Upload your article to ResearchGate.net and Academia.edu. These two networks are designed to help researchers increase their

readership and citations which are two key aspects of measuring the impact of their work. Having the information and articles on these websites is very easy and it takes only a few minutes. Also they are free. If you already have an account, you just have to upload the article. If you don't have one, click on the links below to register and share your work.

<https://www.researchgate.net/signup.SignUp.html>

<https://www.academia.edu>

2. Obtain an Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID ID) if you don't have one. ORCID is an open and independent registry that helps identify and connect researchers around the world. It provides researchers with an ID number so they are clearly identifiable by others. Sharing this ID number with colleagues around the world will enable them to track your work. Also, journals can connect your publication DOI to your ORCID account, omitting the need to upload anything. To create an account in this registry, go to the following link: <https://orcid.org/login>
3. Share your article in the following spaces and media:
  - At conferences
  - In a classroom for teaching purposes;
  - With your colleagues
  - On your personal blog or website
  - In the institutional repository
  - In a subject repository (or another non commercial repository)
  - In academic collaboration networks such as Mendeley o Scholar Universe
  - On social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.