



# DIMENSION 2022

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Susana Solera Adoboe  
Teresa R. Bell  
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EDITORS

**Paula Garrett-Rucks**  
**Victoria Russell**

*Dimension* is the annual volume of peer-reviewed articles sponsored by the 2022 Joint Conference of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT), the Southeastern Association of Language Learning Technology (SEALLT), and the Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA).



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Dr. Leslie Baldwin, Executive Director  
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Phone: 336-422-6192  
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## Review and Acceptance Procedures

### SCOLT *Dimension*

The procedures through which articles are reviewed and accepted for publication in *Dimension* begin by the authors emailing manuscripts to the Editors at SCOLT at [Dimension@gmail.com](mailto:Dimension@gmail.com) or [prucks@gsu.edu](mailto:prucks@gsu.edu). The Editors then uses a double blind peer review process to review the manuscripts. That is, the names and academic affiliations of the authors and information identifying schools and colleges cited in articles are removed from the manuscripts prior to review by members of the Editorial Board, all of whom are published professionals, committed to second language education at research universities. Neither the author(s) nor the reviewers know the identity of one another during the review process. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two members of the Editorial Board, and one of the following recommendations is made: “accept as is,” “request a second draft with minor revisions,” “request a second draft with major revisions,” or “do not publish.” The Editors then requests second drafts of manuscripts that receive favorable ratings on the initial draft. These revised manuscripts are reviewed a second time before a final decision to publish is made.

The Editors of *Dimension 2021* invited prospective authors at all levels of language teaching to submit original work for publication consideration without having to commit to presenting a paper at the annual meeting of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching. Starting as a proceedings publication, *Dimension* is now the official peer-reviewed journal of SCOLT that annually publishes national and international authors in the spring. Contributing authors’ research findings and pedagogical implications are shared at the SCOLT conference opening ceremony with attendees and beyond.

To improve visibility of the authors’ work, the Board voted to publish the journal on the SCOLT website in an open access format. SCOLT *Dimension* is indexed with the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education that connects 12 million users—researchers, educators, policy makers, and students from 238 countries. ERIC metric biannual reports indicate that *Dimension* articles are being viewed or downloaded approximately 5,000 times a year. SCOLT *Dimension* is dedicated to the advancement of the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures and warmly welcomes a wide readership.

## **2022 Editorial Board for SCOLT *Dimension***

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Jennifer Paruso, and Michael Vo

## Call for Papers

### *Dimension 2023*

*Dimension* is the official peer-refereed journal of SCOLT. The journal seeks to serve the professional interests of language instructors and researchers across a range of contexts and is dedicated to the advancement of the teaching and learning of world languages, particularly languages other than English.

The journal welcomes manuscripts that document the effectiveness of teaching strategies or address a wide variety of emerging issues of interest within the profession. Submissions that report empirical research and that have clear and significant implications for language teaching and learning will be prioritized, as will submissions received by July 1st, 2022.

**Submissions guidelines can be found at:** <http://www.scolt.org/index.php/publications/dimension>

For additional information on manuscript submission or the publication process, please contact the Editor, Paula Garrett-Rucks at [prucks@gsu.edu](mailto:prucks@gsu.edu) or SCOLT. [Dimension@gmail.com](mailto:Dimension@gmail.com).



## Introduction

### Inclusion is about US all

The Southern Conference on Language Teaching (SCOLT) scheduled its annual conference online March 18-20, 2021, due to COVID-19 precautions, in collaboration with the Foreign Language Association of Georgia (FLAG) and the Southeastern Association of Language Learning Technology (SEALLT). Starting as a conference proceedings publication, *Dimension* has been the official peer-reviewed journal of SCOLT for many years, publishing national and international authors, sharing their research findings and pedagogical implications with conference attendees and beyond. SCOLT *Dimension* is indexed with the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education that connects 12 million users—researchers, educators, policy makers, and students from 238 countries. Bi-annual ERIC metrics reports revealed over 5,600 views of *Dimension* publications during 2021, specifically 3,077 abstracts were accessed and 2,555 articles were downloaded. SCOLT *Dimension* is dedicated to the advancement of the teaching and learning of world languages and cultures, specifically languages other than English.

This volume of *Dimension* is a special issue dedicated to online, hybrid, and flipped language instruction, a vital topic during the global pandemic that has propelled an exponential growth in online teaching and learning worldwide. It is a great honor to co-edit this volume with Dr. Victoria Russell given her experience as an online language educator and researcher in addition to her previous service on the Editorial Board of *Dimension*. Further evidence of her expertise on the topic of communicative online language teaching practices is supported throughout her recent co-authored book published by Routledge, *Teaching Language Online: A Guide to Designing, Developing, and Delivering Online, Hybrid, and Flipped Language Courses* (Russell & Murphy Judy, 2021), a timely guide for helping instructors create meaningful online experiences for their language learners.

It is through an informed, compassionate lens that we acknowledge that most language educators lack professional development and/or support in online language teaching, which includes “knowing how to teach language (language pedagogy), knowing how to teach online (online pedagogy), and knowing how to use educational technologies to deliver online teaching (pedagogy for educational technology)” (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020, p. 132). With these fundamental instructional principals in mind, this special issue provides insight on the lived experiences language teachers faced during the abrupt transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19 as well as during the subsequent academic year when the pandemic forced teachers and learners around world into the online environment.

There is no doubt this was a difficult experience for teachers and learners worldwide. At the onset of the pandemic, it rapidly became clear that teachers, at every level and across all disciplines, were largely unprepared for delivering their

instruction online, and world language instructors were no exception. By and large, most language educators were lacking professional development in instructional design and in online language pedagogy—which is the intersection of language pedagogy, online pedagogy, and pedagogy for educational technology (Russell, 2020). Moreover, it takes considerable time and effort to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are necessary to deliver instruction online effectively and efficiently (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021).

Now that two years have passed since the pandemic began, considerable changes have occurred across all disciplines with respect to online teaching; among them was a change in perceptions about online learning. According to a 2021 report by Bay View Analytics (formerly known as the Babson Survey Research Group), opinions about online learning were largely negative among U.S. educators prior to 2020 (Johnson et al., 2021). However, after most instructors gained experiences teaching in digital formats—whether classified as ERT, online, HyFlex, or hybrid—perceptions of online learning became more favorable in the U.S., especially in terms of the flexibility that asynchronous instruction can provide for both teachers and learners (Johnson et al., 2021). Moreover, Johnson et al. (2021) noted that the transition to online teaching prompted meaningful professional development that enabled educators to try out new strategies, digital materials, and open educational resources, which can enhance their teaching regardless of the delivery mode; however, they noted that issues of equity are still a concern with respect to online learning due to unequal access to the Internet, to hardware, technologies, support, and/or a quiet environment in which to work.

The six articles in this special issue of *Dimension* portray a wide variety of formats and instructional contexts, including synchronous, asynchronous, and flipped delivery modes, as well as instructors with varying levels of experience in online language teaching, from no previous experience to veteran online language teachers who led the way for their colleagues and departments to transition to the online environment at the onset of the pandemic. For these reasons, this special issue is organized into three sections: (1) *Design and Development of Online Language Instruction*; (2) *Reflections on Delivery of Emergency Remote Teaching*, and (3) *Reflections on Instructional Delivery from Veteran Online Teachers*.

### **Design and Development of Online Language Instruction**

The two chapters in the first section focus on how to create effective online language courses that are well designed and that support student learning from the first day of classes. The volume begins with authors **Victoria Russell** (*Valdosta State University*) and **Peter Swanson** (*United States Air Force Academy*) who detail how to enact communicative language teaching in the online environment as demonstrated from their transition from traditional, face-to-face instruction to fully online language teaching across multiple sections of introductory Spanish classes. The authors describe a series of pedagogical interventions—such as online integrated performance assessments, lessons infused with open access, authentic materials, and a digital storytelling project—to ensure that students engaged in three modes of communication within a meaningful cultural context. The integration of culture, pragmatics,

and intercultural communicative competence are presented in a way that could be easily replicated by instructors who wish to teach language communicatively online.

In the second chapter, **Sabrina Wengier** (*Middle Georgia State University*) describes how to orient students to the course, the materials, and the instructor on the first day of class in asynchronous online or hybrid classes with the *Start Here* module. The author describes essential information about class expectations, technology requirements, and accessibility resources to support online learners. Additionally, she details ways in which the instructor can establish a community of inquiry (Garri-son et al., 2000) through a strong teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence beginning with a *Start Here* module.

### Reflections on Delivery of Emergency Remote Teaching

The next two chapters focus respectively on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of instructional technologies during ERT and on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of ERT in general. In the third chapter, authors **Dieter A. Waldvogel** (*Samford University*) and **Tiffany Robayna** (*Samford University*) report the results of a large-scale study that included data collection over a two-year period on world language teachers' use and perceived effectiveness of instructional technologies. In general, the majority of L2 educators surveyed in their study embraced the increase of virtual technology.

Conversely, the authors in Chapter 4, **Jarom Hickenlooper** (*Brigham Young University*) and **Teresa R. Bell** (*Brigham Young University*) focused on a small group of German higher education teachers from five U.S. universities and their opinions on ERT at earlier stages of the pandemic when instructors were largely unprepared for online teaching, highlighting the need for professional development in online language pedagogy among language educators at all levels.

### Reflections on Instructional Delivery from Veteran Online Teachers

This last section provides a different story of online instructional practices during the pandemic. The authors in this section describe the ways in which they had successfully worked together prior to and/or during the pandemic. In Chapter 5, author **Nadia Jaramillo Cherrez** (*Oregon State University*) investigated the experiences and perceptions of two instructors while designing, teaching, and evaluating a flipped intermediate Spanish course. By analyzing pre-post semi-structured interviews, curriculum design documents, class observations, and student course evaluations, the author identifies and reports on the instructors' approach to flipped course delivery. The chapter concludes with a meaningful discussion on how the flipped approach can serve to facilitate and sustain communicative, task-based instruction.

The last Chapter examines the ways in which institutional support helped prepare a department for remote instruction success. In Chapter 6, authors **Gwendoline Aaron** (*Southern Methodist University*), **Aria Zan Cabot** (*Southern Methodist University*), **Daniele Forlino** (*Southern Methodist University*), and **Susana Solera Adoboe** (*Southern Methodist University*) detail the types of resource and support that their institution provided prior to the pandemic, resulting in pre-existing online curricula and developed online instructor skills to support the teaching and learning of languages during the shift to emergency remote instruction and beyond.

This special issue aimed to showcase empirical and theoretical papers that focus on effective online, hybrid, and flipped language teaching and learning using communicative approaches, ACTFL's World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), and high leverage and/or core teaching practices (Glisan & Donato, 2017). We intentionally organized these chapters into three sections, starting with an overview of how to design optimal online teaching. This is compared to the second section in which many of us might commiserate with the daunting task of forced emergency remote instruction. The volume concludes with the voices of experienced online instructors who shared the ways in which they individually and/or collectively created meaningful online instruction for their students. As noted by the authors in the concluding chapter, it is helpful when institutions provide training and support for online instruction so that instructors and students alike can experience success in their language learning journey.

As editors, we worked collaboratively with members of the SCOLT Dimension 2022 Editorial Review Board in a double blind, peer-review process and we would like to extend our gratitude for having their knowledge and expertise while reviewing articles. These individuals are leaders in the field and we greatly appreciate their time and energy. On behalf of the editorial team, I believe that readers will find the articles in this edition informative and inspiring. Whether you are physically present or attending synchronous sessions at the SCOLT 2022 conference, please be sure to thank: (1) attending authors for contributing their work to *Dimension*, (2) members of the Editorial Review Board for assisting their colleagues in the preparation of the articles, and (3) the SCOLT Sponsors and Patrons for their ongoing financial support that makes *Dimension* possible.

The Editors,

Paula Garrett-Rucks  
*Georgia State University*

Victoria Russell  
*Valdosta State University*

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# 1

## Communicative Online Language Teaching in Disruptive Times: A Redesign of the Introductory Spanish Curriculum

**Victoria Russell**

*Valdosta State University*

**Peter Swanson**

*United States Air Force Academy*

### *Abstract*

*In this article, the authors describe the redesign of a first-semester Spanish course at the United States Air Force Academy due to the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent transition from traditional, face-to-face instruction to fully online language teaching during the fall of 2020. More than 200 learners were enrolled across 11 course sections that were taught by eight different instructors who were required to use the same syllabus, learning platforms, lesson plans, and assessments under the supervision of a course director. The developers integrated a series of pedagogical interventions—such as online integrated performance assessments, lessons and content that were infused with open-access, authentic materials, and a digital storytelling project—to ensure that students engaged in three modes of communication within a meaningful cultural context. The instruction of culture, intercultural communicative competence, and pragmatics figured predominantly into the course design, which could be replicated by instructors who wish to teach language communicatively online.*

**Keywords:** *authentic materials, instructional design, online language pedagogy, open access materials, pandemic*

### **Background**

While an empirical study, this article focuses on practice and provides a conceptual framework for designing and delivering an online language class rapidly. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, instructors were forced into online teaching with no lead time to obtain the knowledge and skills that are necessary to design effective and efficient online language courses. However, over the summer of 2020, instructors had a short period of time to receive training in online pedagogy and instructional design and to develop their online classes prior to the start of the fall of 2020, where most of the instruction that took place across the world was delivered online. The purpose of this article is to provide a framework that other language educators could follow if they need to transition their courses online rapidly due to pandemics, natural disasters, or other unforeseen circumstances.

## **Introduction**

Over the past several decades, a paradigm shift has taken place in the teaching of world languages. Formerly known as learning the four skills in the target language (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, and writing), the teaching and assessing of second language acquisition is now conceptualized in communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches (Nunan, 1991; VanPatten, 2016) that place emphasis on intertwining the three modes of communication: interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational (The Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Such approaches to teaching languages focus on learner proficiency in the target language instead of simply learning about the language one skill at a time. First conceptualized theoretically as the difference between learning and acquiring the target language (Krashen, 1982), the goal of second language acquisition is for learners to be able to use the language for specific purposes. Thus, the assessment of acquiring a second language is best measured through performance-based assessments. Via such assessments, students either work individually or collaboratively, using their abilities and knowledge of the language and culture(s) in order to create responses to prompts (i.e., complex questions or situations) that usually have more than one correct response (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Wiggins, 1998). Rubrics are generated and used to gauge learner performance that reflect the tasks and challenges language learners will face in real world scenarios.

### ***Institutional Background***

At the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado, faculty in the Department of Foreign Languages and International Programs (DFF) offer eight world languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Each year the new class of admitted cadets take placement exams in the language(s) of their choice to determine the language and level that they will study their first year at USAFA. Based on the scores from the placement exam in each language, cadets are placed into the eight languages and all cadets must take one year of the same world language.

The course sequence for all languages starts at the 100-level and progresses to the 400-level. For example, in Spanish, some learners may begin in Spanish 131/132 the first year as a requirement. Upon successful completion, they may choose to enroll in Spanish 221/222 the second year and then 321/322 their third year. In their final year at USAFA, as all cadets must graduate in four years, they may enroll in Spanish 365/410 and even take additional classes at the 400-level. USAFA does not offer a major in a language; however, they may select the Foreign Area Studies major, add a language to the course of study, and take at least five courses at the 200-level or higher of the same language. The same five-course requirement is part of all language minors. Introductory class sizes vary, but the DFF strives to cap these courses at approximately 24 students per section.

In the case of Spanish, which is the focus on this article, the lower division courses (levels 100-200) focus on learning the basics of the Spanish language and Hispanic culture(s). Each level of Spanish, which is true of the eight languages taught at USAFA, has a course director who develops the entire course (e.g., lesson plans, assessments, projects). The Spanish/Portuguese Division Chief designates a course director for each level, which many times are military officers who hold a terminal degree but may lack

specific postgraduate degrees in second language acquisition teaching and learning. In the case of military faculty members, they are typically heritage speakers of the target language and have at least Advanced-Low proficiency in the target language. However, some of the officers have studied a second language, lived abroad, and have an advanced level of target language proficiency. As for civilian faculty, they must demonstrate proficiency and have postgraduate degrees in the target language. The number of fulltime civilian and military instructors varies each year ( $N=7-8$ ), but usually 10-11 sections of Spanish 131/132 are taught because it has the largest enrollment at the academy due to being a core requirement to graduate; each cadet must take two semesters of the same language or must validate the credit via approved measures (e.g., a satisfactory score on the USAFA Placement Test, AP scores, previous college credit).

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Spanish 131/132 sequence was taught in-person with what could best be described as explicit instruction, which Wong and VanPatten (2003) claim does not lead to second language acquisition. Assessments mainly included objective test items (e.g., multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank) for both linguistic and cultural knowledge along with two in-class writing assignments and two brief in-person conversations with the instructor.

During March of 2020, the USAFA Dean of Faculty instructed all faculty to begin teaching remotely from home, and the DFF Department Chair requested at least two faculty learning workshops every two weeks beginning immediately following the end of the spring semester in May through the summer that centered on pedagogy and assessment in an online teaching environment. Over the course of the summer, 14 workshops were given via the Blackboard (BB) and the *Microsoft Teams* platforms. Presenters, both nationally-recognized researchers and scholars (e.g., Bill VanPatten, Anne Cummings Hlas), and USAFA faculty gave workshops on important topics such as integrated performance assessments (IPAs), integrating emerging technologies into instruction, high-leverage teaching practices, and best practices in online teaching, and features of the Learning Management Systems (e.g., Blackboard). Theoretically, instructors' sense of efficacy—the belief that they can have a positive effect on student learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001)—was strengthened by having participated in the workshops. On many occasions, faculty members met with the department's Director of Faculty Learning (the second author) to discuss the workshops in more detail and made positive comments about the workshop content. In terms of the benefits of instructors having a strong sense of efficacy in teaching languages, research shows that students in classes with highly efficacious Spanish teachers score significantly higher on the National Spanish Exams than their peers in classes with teachers who report a weaker sense of efficacy teaching Spanish (Swanson, 2014). Additionally, language teachers are more likely to find vocational satisfaction in the profession (Swanson, 2008, 2013), which in turn, increases the likelihood of them remaining in the profession (Swanson, 2012, 2013).

### ***Conceptual Framework***

While the majority of the Spanish 131/132 military and civilian instructors at USAFA had little to no experience teaching online, the two course developers—a distinguished visiting professor (DVP) (first author) who is an expert in online language pedagogy and the course director (second author)—designed and devel-



oped the course collaboratively. They employed the ADDIE model—(A)nalysis, (D)esign, (D)evelopment, (I)mplementation, and (E)valuation—which is a systematic approach to course design that is cyclical (Dick & Carey, 2014; Gustafson & Branch, 2002). Each phase of the model is evaluated prior to, during, and after delivering the course; and each time that a course is implemented, changes are made based on evaluations from students, instructors, and course developers. Therefore, each iteration of the online course is improved to better meet the needs of all stakeholders. Because the course had to be created rapidly due to the transition of the entire institution to the online environment, the analysis phase was expedited and mainly consisted of decisions that were made by administrators such as which platform to use (*BB Collaborate* or *Microsoft Teams*), whether the online courses would be synchronous or asynchronous, and how often and when classes would meet. Each of these decisions are presented in further detail below. However, the focus of this article is on the design and development phases of ADDIE, as these are the most crucial for instructors who must transition rapidly to online teaching. Moreover, the evaluation phase is not detailed in this article due to several constraints such as space, time, and the impediments at USAFA in conducting research with cadets.

In addition to using the ADDIE model, the developers grounded the course in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach and in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) and *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL, 2012). CLT is a flexible approach to teaching that places the focus of instruction on real world communication across three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational), with language notions and functions taking precedence over the instruction of grammatical forms and structures. Notions are the real-world settings in which people communicate (e.g., ordering a meal in a restaurant, visiting the doctor's office), while functions consist of the language that is needed to realize communicative tasks in real world settings (Richards, 2006). For example, if the notion is ordering a meal in a restaurant, then some functions include formal commands (e.g., bring me a glass of water) and food-related vocabulary.

Other major tenets of CLT include delivering instruction in the target language at least 90% of the time, providing opportunities for input, output, and interaction (student-student, student-teacher, and student-content), using authentic materials, providing corrective feedback, and most importantly, being tolerant of mistakes and understanding that it is impossible for Novice learners' production to be error-free (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). With the CLT approach, instructors should strive to provide opportunities for students to experiment with and try out the language (Richards, 2006).

Moreover, the course developers incorporated standards-based instruction designed to meet the language learning needs of students at the Novice level of proficiency. While many cadets enrolled in Spanish 131 were false beginners due to having taken Spanish prior to matriculating at USAFA, all cadets were given a placement test prior to the start of the semester and no cadets enrolled in the course had reached the Intermediate Low level of proficiency, even if they had prior exposure to the language. Therefore, all course tasks, activities, and assessments were geared to the Novice level of proficiency.

Civilians and military leaders at USAFA provide “an elite undergraduate educational program, a world-class training program in the profession of arms, a rigorous four-year regimen of physical education classes and competitive athletics, and a continuous grounding in character development” (p. 1). The synergy of these elements works to develop leaders of character who are motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to the nation. When the cadets graduate and are commissioned as second lieutenants; it is expected that they have acquired a “sophisticated combination of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities that they will need to succeed as airmen and citizens” (p. 1) that are described in the nine USAFA Institutional Outcomes. The work of the DFF faculty falls under Outcome 4 (the Human Condition, Cultures, and Societies), which requires graduates to be able to “interact successfully with a wide range of individuals, to include those representing cultures and societies different from their own” (USAFA, 2021b, p. 1). Such interactions are embedded in a three-phased approach to help cadets (a) know oneself; (b) know others; and (c) have constructive engagement. As part of knowing oneself, the cadets should be able to (1) describe key elements of their own identity as human beings, citizens of a republic, and officer-statesmen in the United States Air Force, (2) explain historical, cultural, societal, and political developments that have shaped their own identity, (3) distinguish between objective (universally true) and subjective (biased) elements of their own identity, and (4) defend or critique both objective and subjective elements of their own identity (USAFA, 2021b).

At USAFA, all departments work toward meeting all nine of the institutional outcomes, but the DFF focuses specifically on Outcome 4, which includes the development of cross-cultural competence in both international and domestic environments. Furthermore, the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) are tied to the DFF’s Language Roadmaps, which provide a plan for students to begin their language study as a first-year cadet at the Novice level of proficiency and to reach at least the Advanced-Low level by graduation through taking coursework that is sequenced and articulated.

## **Course Redesign for Online Communicative Instruction**

### ***Delivery Mode***

All online language courses at USAFA were required to be delivered synchronously—or in real time—during the fall of 2020. For SPAN 131, instruction took place daily, Monday through Friday, for 53 minutes. Learners also engaged in daily oral and written practice on the textbook platform *MySpanishLab* (MSL) by Pearson, which was used for homework assignments and chapter quizzes. The MSL platform also housed the course textbook, *¡Anda! Curso Elemental 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Cowell & Heining-Boynton, 2017). Seven chapters from the text were covered in SPAN 131. In addition to the eBook, students had access to other learning materials such as cultural videos, audio files, online flashcards, an online dictionary, and other learning resources. The remaining chapters of the book were covered in the following course (Spanish 132); and in the second-year courses (Spanish 221 and 222), *¡Anda! Curso Intermedio 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (LeLoup, Cowell, & Heining-Boynton, 2017) was used. The continuity in textbooks and the MSL platform helped ensure the smooth articulation of the introductory and intermediate-level course sequence.

## Learning Management System

The course developers utilized Black Board (BB) learning management system (LMS) to deliver all other content. While BB LMS is the main delivery platform at USAFA—as well as for training courses and programs in the wider Air Force—prior to the development of SPAN 131 online, instructors did not regularly employ the LMS because their instruction and assessments took place in traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms with students completing assignments on paper as well as on the MSL platform. Moreover, the version of BB LMS that was used at USAFA prior to the spring of 2020 was outdated and not user friendly.

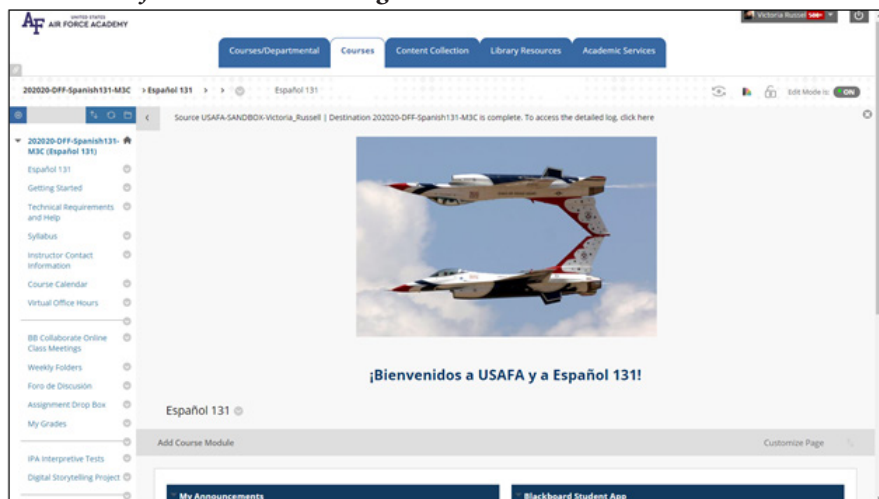
The developers used a master course shell to develop the content, assignments, assessments, discussion boards, grading rubrics, course calendars, etc.; and once the course was developed, it was duplicated and placed in each instructor's BB course shell. *BB Collaborate*, a web conferencing tool, was embedded in the course and accessed through the LMS for all online class meetings. In addition to the synchronous class meeting function, BB Collaborate also has a breakout room function where students could work in pairs or small groups to engage in interpersonal communication in the target language. Moreover, each class meeting was recorded and stored on the LMS for students to review as needed. BB Collaborate was also used for virtual office hours, extra instruction, and peer tutoring.

## Course Layout and Design

The course menu included a *Getting Started* module, a *Technical Help* module, *Weekly Folders*, Discussion Boards (*Foro de Discusión*), *Integrated Performance Assessments*, an *Assignment Drop Box*, *BB Collaborate Online Class Meetings*, *Virtual Office Hours*, a *Digital Storytelling* module, and a *My Grades* module, which included the online grade book where instructors posted grades and feedback. *Instructor Contact Information*, *Course Calendar*, and the *Syllabus* were also modules in the main navigation area. See Figure 1 for a screenshot of the main page of SPAN 131 online.

Figure 1

### Screenshot of SPAN 131's Main Page



From the main page, the first tab on the left navigation bar is the *Getting Started* module, which is a best practice for online course delivery across disciplines (Boettcher & Conrad, 2016). The *Getting Started* module is an important resource to orient learners to an online course and to set them up for success by clearly delineating the course design and expectations. This module included an ice breaker activity, information on how to set up an MSL account, a welcome letter from the course director explaining the course expectations, the grading rubric for discussion boards, netiquette guidelines, a technology and language learning survey, and a student biographical sheet (see Appendix A) that was submitted to the course drop box by the end of the first week of classes. The latter two items helped instructors learn about the unique backgrounds, personal interests, and skill levels of each student, both in terms of their readiness to learn language and to utilize course technologies. Instructors used the first virtual class meeting to walk students through the LMS, to explain the course design and layout, and to show students where to locate the required assignments, assessments, and interactions.

The *Technical Requirements and Help* module included information on the hardware that students needed, a BB LMS Quick Start Guide, tutorials on how to use BB LMS, a browser check (to check for compatibility with the LMS), the technical requirements for the BB Collaborate virtual meeting platform, support contacts for MSL, and information on where and how to seek technical help at USAFA.

Given that instructors delivered the course synchronously and students had daily instruction in Spanish, the PowerPoint presentations, videos, links, and other learning resources from the daily synchronous class meetings were available to students in the *Weekly Folders* area on the LMS. Each week, the course developers created a weekly overview file, a weekly assignment checklist, and the PowerPoints and resources that were used in class that week that included audio and video files. The weekly folder was pushed out to the course instructors by the BB administrator at USAFA. The overview file contained the weekly goals, learning objectives, reading assignments, and a detailed list of the assignments due that week. The overview file was always the first item in the *Weekly Folders* area. Instructors were able to post additional resources to personalize their courses in this area.

The developers created ten discussions on BB LMS that were due throughout the course, with students' initial posts due on Tuesdays by the end of the day and their replies to two peers due on Fridays by the end of the day. Each of the 10 discussions were infused with authentic materials and resources to create real-world contexts. The grading rubric for the discussions (see Appendix B) was available to all students from the first day of classes in the *Getting Started* module. The grading rubric delineated the breadth and depth of responses that were expected of them. These discussions were directly tied to USAFA's Learning Outcome 4 (see above) and the materials for the discussion board were curated from the Internet—specifically either from the *Center for Open Educational Resources for Language Learning* (COERLL, 2021), a national language resource center, or from *LangMedia* (Five College Center for World Languages, 2021), a repository of videos of native speakers performing everyday actions. While the present course instructed a commonly taught language (Spanish), it should be noted that both COERLL and LangMedia have numerous resources for both commonly and less commonly taught languages.

An example of a course discussion forum using a video from COERLL and two links from the Internet is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

**Screenshot of a SPAN 131 Discussion Forum**



The video from COERLL is of a native speaker from Mexico who discusses his favorite movies and actors, which is a theme that was covered in the course. The two links on successful Latino actors/actresses in the U.S. were curated from the Internet on a site that was intended for native Spanish speakers.

**Authentic Materials**

A major tenet of CLT is to infuse lessons and assessments with authentic materials (Nunan, 1991), which are beneficial for promoting the acquisition of pragmatics and intercultural competence (see below). Authentic materials are those that were created by and/or for native speakers of the language (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021); and by exposing learners to authentic materials, they can see and begin to understand how the language is used in its natural social and cultural context. Conversely, publisher-created materials often present language in a decontextualized fashion, which often seems contrived to native speakers. Given that LMS platforms where online courses are delivered provide a repository for multimedia files, it is not difficult to infuse authentic video clips, commercials, online articles, movies, and other authentic media into an online course. Moreover, when students are exposed to these media, they have a window into how people lead their daily lives in the target language culture(s).

**Pragmatics and Intercultural Competence**

In order for learners to acquire a second language, they must achieve communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972), which takes into account the social context in which language is used. According to Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), learners must master the following four competencies

to achieve communicative competence—grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse. Sociolinguistic competence includes knowledge of pragmatics, or how to use the language appropriately in social situations given specific speakers and contexts. Ishihara (2010) and Pinto (2002) asserted that most second and foreign language textbooks either fail to include pragmatics-focused content or their treatment of pragmatics is inadequate. However, instructors may seek out and incorporate a number of high-quality, open access pragmatics-focused materials that are available on the Internet. For example, having students view authentic videos of native speakers performing everyday actions—such as greeting each other on the street, shopping for food, or purchasing a train ticket—allows them to see how the language is used appropriately in social contexts. Some of the pragmatics-focused resources that were infused into the course include videos from LangMedia and COERLL as well as articles, music, and advertisements on the Internet that were created for native Spanish speakers. Each of these materials and resources are described in greater detail below.

### ***Curated Materials***

The materials that were included in the course were carefully selected to ensure that learners could understand the content given their Novice proficiency level in Spanish. In most cases, glosses were added to facilitate comprehension and to scaffold learners' comprehension of the target language. Moreover, the course developers carefully vetted the materials to ensure that they were appropriate for post-secondary language learners. In other words, the developers examined the content closely to ensure that it was free from political biases and inappropriate language or images, and that the language would be comprehensible for Novice learners when glosses of unfamiliar words were provided.

Some examples of curated materials that were infused into the course include music videos, online articles, and online advertisements, such as the advertisement for *Mercado de San Miguel* (2018) in Madrid, which is presented below in Figure 3. This was an interactive online advertisement where students could explore the various food and beverage stalls in this world-famous market. Students were asked to visit *Mercado de San Miguel* online to select the food and beverages that they wanted to try. They also needed to state why the particular food or beverage appealed to them and how it was similar to or different from the food and beverages that are available in the U.S. Moreover, students compared and contrasted food shopping in Spain and in the U.S. after exploring this resource. This website, which was created for native Spanish-speakers, is extremely visually appealing and its interactive nature gave students a window into the Spanish language and culture in Madrid, which could help them develop intercultural as well as pragmatic competence.

Figure 3

## Screenshot of a Curated Authentic Material Used on the Course Discussion Board



In addition, short articles in Spanish were curated from the Internet and infused into lesson activities, discussion boards, and IPAs, which are described in greater detail below. Learners were provided with sufficient background and cultural information during class as well as glosses to help them understand the content of each article. In other words, instructors went over key background and cultural information prior to having students read or view the curated content. This practice facilitated learners' use of top-down processing—as most Novice learners tend to instead of relying exclusively on bottom-up processing; however, native speakers of a language always use top-down processing first followed by bottom-up processing to check that their predictions about the text were accurate (Johnson, 2018).

At times, students also worked in pairs or in small groups in break out rooms on BB Collaborate to read and perform activities using curated authentic articles. For example, in small groups, learners read an online article about the top Latino singers and actors in the U.S., and then they selected their favorite performer and wrote a paragraph describing that artist. After completing this activity in break out rooms and taking notes on a *Google Jamboard* (2021), they were brought together as a class and a spokesperson from each group was asked to read their description. As the spokesperson read, their classmates attempted to guess who the artist was by typing names into the chat area. The first student to guess correctly won a point.

Moreover, music videos in Spanish from Latinx artists, both from the U.S. and from the Spanish-speaking countries that were covered in the course, were infused into the daily synchronous lessons. At the beginning of each class period, instructors played a music video while taking roll by checking the participant list in BB Collaborate. As students viewed the music video, they also read background and cultural information on each of the Hispanic artists, which instructors posted in the chat at the beginning of each class. This daily activity was intended to set the tone for each class period, relaxed the students, and infused rich cultural content into each lesson.

## Spanish Proficiency Exercises

Developed by Orlando Kelm of the University of Texas for COERLL, Spanish Proficiency Exercises (Kelm, 2021) are a collection of video clips of native speakers from across the Spanish-speaking world executing various language tasks (e.g., talking about their favorite childhood memory, describing their last visit to the doctor, discussing their musical preferences). The videos were not scripted; therefore, they contain the false starts, hesitations, back channels, and repetitions that occur in natural speech—features often lacking in publisher-created videos. Moreover, language learners can see speakers' facial expressions, gestures, gesticulation, and other paralinguistic cues that facilitate comprehension. Since the speakers come from across Latin America and Spain, learners are exposed to dialectal and region differences in accents and vocabulary usage and each speaker uses a natural rate of speech, with some speakers talking more quickly and others more slowly, depending upon their own unique idiolect. The first video on each topic is a simplified version, where the native speaker was asked to speak more slowly, in simpler terms, and without any slang. For all other videos on the topic, the native speakers used natural speech. An example of a video from COERLL's Spanish Proficiency Exercises is presented below in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

### Screenshot of COERLL Video Used for an Interpretive Listening Task

The screenshot displays the COERLL Spanish Proficiency Exercises interface. On the left is a navigation sidebar with categories like 'Assignment Drop Box', 'My Grades', 'IPA Interpretive Tests', 'Digital Storytelling Project', 'Copies of Textbook Pages', 'Other Resources', and 'Chapter Quizzes'. Below this is a 'Course Management' section with a 'Control Panel' and various tools. The main content area is titled 'Completion' and shows 'Your answers are saved automatically.' Below this is a 'Question Completion Status' section. The main task area is titled 'QUESTION 1' and shows a video player with a woman speaking. Below the video, the text reads: 'Watch this video of Cristina describing her house in Spain and then answer the five multiple choice items that follow.' Below this, there are translations: 'os = to you all; fachada = facade; tejado = roof; nos sirve = serves us; cálidos = warm; amplia = large, ample; zona del servicio = service area.' At the bottom, there is a text box for notes and buttons for 'Save All Answers' and 'Save and Submit'.

The videos are broken down by proficiency level, with videos available at the Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior levels. Information on key grammar, vocabulary, and phrases is also available for each video file. If students want to listen to rather than view the clip, they can select the MP3 audio file that is also available on the website. The site index provides an overview of topics, which is beneficial for instructors who wish to employ this resource in their lessons and/or assessments (COERLL, 2021b).

**LangMedia.** Created by the Five College Center for World Languages (2021), LangMedia contains a plethora of authentic videos, study guides, audio samples, and



other materials for the teaching and learning of world languages. Their open access resources convey the everyday life of native speakers of both commonly and less commonly taught languages. Their videos, which were not scripted, are organized by both country and region. Moreover, transcripts for all videos are available in both the target language and in English. Therefore, colloquial expressions and dialectical differences can be understood by both students and instructors alike. Since Spanish is spoken in so many countries around the world, it is impossible for Spanish language instructors to have knowledge of all the various dialects and colloquial expressions that exist. Therefore, instructors can increase their professional knowledge by using this resource. LangMedia videos were infused into the course discussion boards, lesson activities, and IPA assessments. These videos not only helped students learn Spanish pragmatics, but they also helped them learn authentic gestures, gesticulation, and back channels—which are the vocal sounds indicating that one interlocutor is actively listening to another (e.g., uh-huh). Back channels, facial expression, gesture, and other nonverbal communication will vary by language; therefore, video resources are an effective way to teach these social aspects of language. Figure 5 below depicts a LangMedia video on greetings and introductions in Spain from a course discussion board.

**Figure 5**  
**Screenshot of Course Discussion Featuring a LangMedia Video**

Foro de Discusión (FD) 3

Tema: Ustedes v. Vosotros 13 13 0 0

Much like "tú" and "usted," there are plural versions of these words. With whom would you use "ustedes"? With whom would you use "vosotros"? Where in the Spanish speaking world is the "vosotros" form used? What are some possible English translations of the words "vosotros" and "ustedes"?

Watch the following video of greetings/introductions in Spanish.

0:16 / 0:33

The transcription of this video in both English and Spanish is available here: [sp\\_greetings\\_transcript.docx](#)

Throughout the course, you will be exposed to authentic videos of native speakers performing everyday actions. Therefore, it will be beneficial for you to review the transcript.

Please review *La Nota Cultural. Cómo se saluda la gente*, on p. 7 of your text prior to answering the following questions: Do you find it unusual how many times the speakers kiss? How do you feel about kissing a person that you meet for the first time? Do the people in the video use the *besito* described on p. 7?

Note: The U.S., Spain, and Mexico were covered extensively in the introductory course, while later weeks and subsequent courses featured other Spanish-speaking countries in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean to give students a wide perspective on the Spanish-speaking world.

**Digital Storytelling Project.** The DVP created the *Digital Storytelling* module and brought in resources and examples from her prior courses at her home institution. Students completed this project individually during class, which took place over one week of the semester. Ten different Spanish-speaking countries were covered in the course and students selected one country for the focus of their digital story. The

instructors ensured that all ten countries were represented by each class. Students were required to give information on the history, culture, and geography of the country. In addition, they were asked to incorporate elements of daily life, which they researched on the Internet from sources such as LangMedia and the *Realia Project*.

The first day was used to go over the project requirements (see Appendix C) and the technology tools that could be used to create the project. Students were given a choice of using either *PhotoStory 3*, *PowerPoint*, or their *iPhone* to create their digital story as a video file. Tutorials, resources, and other support materials for each of these tools were available in the *Digital Storytelling* module on BB LMS. In addition to the resources that were provided by the first author, a student in the course director's intermediate-level Spanish course volunteered to make *how to* videos for the iPhone, which students found helpful.

Students were then given two class days to work on their project while the instructor was available to provide assistance and technical support. On the fourth day of the project, students posted their digital stories to a course discussion board and they evaluated three of their classmates' projects using a Peer Evaluation Sheet (see Appendix D). On day five, the final day of the project, the instructor selected videos of several different countries to show to the class. In addition to being enjoyable, this activity helped students review cultural information for the final exam.

### **Assessments**

The course contained a number of assessments, including chapter quizzes, a comprehensive midterm and final exam, two essays, and two IPAs. Each of these is described in detail below.

**Chapter Quizzes.** The quizzes were created by the course director and pushed out to all eight instructors via the MSL platform. Each quiz contained one or two listening sections, cultural items (focusing on the specific Spanish-speaking countries that were presented in the chapter), vocabulary items, and items that focused on grammar. All items that focused on grammar or vocabulary were presented in context; in other words, students had to decide which vocabulary item or verb form fit within a passage of connected discourse. There were five chapter quizzes that were delivered at regular intervals throughout the course.

**Essays.** Students completed two in-class essays, one prior to midterm and one after midterm. The instructor provided the grading rubric in advance, which was based on the ACTFL Performance Descriptors (ACTFL, 2015), a prompt, which contained an authentic material or resource (e.g., a link that described concerts held in Spain in 2019), and the parameters for the essay, including the word count minimum, line spacing, and the deadline (i.e., students had to complete and submit their essays by the end of class and once they were released to begin, they had approximately 30 minutes to write their essays). Students were allowed to use their books, notes, and a Spanish dictionary, but they were strictly prohibited from using an online translator. While the essays were not proctored, students were asked to adhere to the honor code, which prohibited them from cheating or from obtaining outside assistance.

**Midterm and Final Exams.** Content for these two exams focused directly on the material from the textbook, *¡Anda! Curso Elemental* (Coswell & Heining-Boyn-

ton, 2017). Both assessments consisted of several listening and reading sections with objective test items (e.g., true/false), using images as prompts for multiple choice items (e.g., people doing chores in a high-rise apartment) and contextualized fill-in-the-blank items that integrated different grammatical aspects (e.g., conversations, short scenes) in real life scenarios. Cloze items examined students' ability to use Spanish in culturally appropriate scenarios that were aligned with the textbook content.

**Integrated Performance Assessments (IPA).** Students completed two online IPAs in Spanish 131, one at midterm and one at the end of the course—the IPA is a performance-based assessment that is tied to the ACTFL World Readiness Standards (Adair-Hauck et al., 2006). Because most students had not been exposed to IPA assessments in high school, one class period was devoted to explaining the content and purpose of the IPA, while an additional three days were needed to complete each phase of the IPA. Each of the two IPAs focused on content that was covered and practiced during the synchronous lessons. The topic of the first IPA was *house and home* and the topic of the second IPA was *music and movies*.

Each IPA contained three phases as follows: (1) an interpretive listening and reading test, (2) an interpersonal speaking conversation that was recorded, and (3) a presentational speaking conversation that was recorded. Each of the phases were weighted equally. Since the students were all novice students of Spanish, interpersonal and presentational speaking were emphasized over presentational writing, as suggested by the research on IPAs (Davin et al., 2011; Kissau & Adams, 2016), which found that most introductory language courses place too much emphasis on presentational writing and not enough focus on interpretive listening and interpersonal speaking. Furthermore, the IPA materials used authentic resources such as videos from COERLL and LangMedia as well as authentic articles and advertisements that were curated from the Internet. For example, for the first IPA, students visited an online website to search for an apartment to rent in Cádiz, Spain. After viewing the website and looking at various apartments, students engaged in a spontaneous conversation where they talked about which apartment they would like to rent and why, discussing their specific needs (e.g., parking, an elevator, furnished). This enabled learners to use the course vocabulary and grammar in an authentic way while connecting language instruction with assessments (Adair-Hauck et al., 2006).

### ***Delivery of Instruction***

The online synchronous course delivery was new to both the students and the instructors, which was not without its problems and pitfalls.

**Flipped.** As part of the daily course calendar, students and instructors alike were aware of the daily assignments and events for each of the 80 days of class in the semester. Students were expected to become familiar with course material (e.g., new vocabulary, grammatical elements, and cultural notes) prior to coming to class. Instead of introducing new vocabulary as it appeared in a chapter, for example, the course director developed lesson plans that asked instructors to begin using new vocabulary immediately in contextualized scenarios. By doing so, precious instructional time was saved for more interactive, communicative tasks such as using breakout groups for activities (e.g., peer interviews about class schedules, writing responses to prompts).

**Interaction.** All online classes, regardless of discipline, need to incorporate three types of interaction: learner-instructor, learner-learner, and learner-content (Garrison, 2006). The present course incorporated learner-instructor and learner-learner interaction through daily synchronous class meetings. Break out rooms in *BB Collaborate* facilitated rich, learner-learner interaction synchronously. Students also engaged in asynchronous learner-learner interaction on the course discussion board and they had asynchronous learner-instructor interaction through e-mail communication and Teams messaging. Moreover, students interacted with their content during synchronous class sessions and while working on homework and other course tasks on the MSL textbook platform and on the BB LMS platform where course materials, resources, and assessments were delivered. Instructor-Instructor interaction also took place, as the course director held frequent meetings throughout the semester to gauge progress in the class, discuss new ideas, and provide training on new technologies such as BB LMS, digital storytelling tools, Google Docs, and IPAs among other topics.

### ***Daily Lessons and Lesson Plans***

Each week, the course director developed and posted communicative lessons for instructors on BB as well as on Microsoft Teams, which most faculty members used for instruction once the pandemic forced the pivot to online teaching and learning. Each lesson plan contained the day's standards being addressed, learning objectives, activities, a Spanish song to be played before class begins, and detailed instructions about each activity. Lessons began each day with the instructors sharing the song for day on BB a few minutes before class began. As students entered the digital classroom, the instructor took roll and selected a student to present the class to the instructor, which is a military protocol. After taking roll, the instructor informed students of the daily learning objectives. Then, at least three to four different communicative activities took place throughout each 53-minute class. At times, the course director infused different technologies in class (e.g., Google Docs). It was common to have activities where students were placed into BB's breakout groups in pairs or groups to talk and complete activities. Instructors were encouraged to visit the breakout groups for each activity to guide students or even participate in the activity.

**Lesson Activities.** Learning activities varied each day and were based on the theme of the textbook chapter. Moreover, they focused squarely on the students using the target language for specific purposes. For example, to assimilate new vocabulary, students played the game *Pyramid*, a hybrid version of the 1970s game show where one student had to describe words or phrases to another learner who tried to guess what was being described. Other activities included interviewing and reporting on a learner's interests, (dis)likes, and preferences. In order to practice writing, instructors prompted students to write responses using the BB Whiteboard, Chat function, and/or Google Docs. At present, the course director is examining other technologies (*Google's Jamboard*) for interactive, collaborative learning.

## **Assessment Platforms and Delivery**

Several delivery modes were employed to deliver course assessments, which are outlined below. While most of the assessments were delivered online via the textbook's online accompanying MSL website or BB LMS, the in-person, pencil-and-paper midterm and final exams were requested from USAFA leadership, approved, and planned to take place in large auditoriums per approved COVID-19 spacing guidelines with the instructors serving as proctors.

**Objective Tests.** The course director created chapter quizzes using the MSL test maker. Students were given 35 minutes to complete and submit the quizzes online. Once submitted, the MSL system auto grades a student's quiz and displays a score out of 100 points almost immediately after submission. While the quizzes were directly aligned with the textbook's curriculum, one downside of the system is the time it takes to learn how to use it.

The system is not intuitive, and one major drawback is that students can see the quiz once they have completed it. Thus, once a morning class took the quiz, instructors feared that students might share details about the quiz (or even the quiz itself) to others who had yet to take it. Pearson, the textbook publisher, is aware of the issue and is working on the newly redesigned platform to give instructors a mechanism to choose if learners can see the assessment once it has been taken or to restrict it from students' view. Another drawback is when learners are absent the day the quiz is given. In that case, more time was needed to copy the assessment, place it in the course on MSL, and then set time restrictions so that the quiz could be taken at a later time. If, for example, three students needed to take the quiz at different times/days, a new copy of the quiz had to be made, placed in the appropriate course, and with new restrictions added for when the assessment could be accessed. A final drawback is that Pearson gives instructors two similar types of test activities within each chapter. Thus, there are only two tests for each chapter. With the learners being able to see the test after taking it, it is plausible that learners could share the information; therefore, when a third test is needed, all of the pre-made test activities have already been exhausted. While instructors have the option to create their own test activities, more time is consumed in such endeavors.

For the two in-person assessments, the course director created three versions of the same assessment. The exams consisted of objective test items examining students' ability to listen, read, and write in Spanish. The course director opted to implement an objective testing procedure for several reasons: (1) the date/time for the midterm and final exams were very close to the academy's deadlines for final grade submissions, (2) in addition to academic duties, the military instructors have other duties that consume their days once their teaching obligations are finished, and (3) scantron forms could be graded relatively quickly and students' scores could be input into the USAFA grading software much more swiftly than individually grading each of the 200+ students' exams.

The final exam, which was scheduled for an in-person delivery, had to be quickly shifted to the online environment due to spikes in the number of COVID cases on campus among cadets. Therefore, the course director enlisted the help of the USAFA BB administrator and together they built an online version of the final exam rapidly.

**Proficiency-Based Assessments.** The course developers created two IPAs that were administered via BB LMS over a three-day period. The DVP built the interpretive tests using authentic materials from COERLL and LangMedia and both course developers collaborated to create the speaking prompts and grading rubrics, which were based on the ACTFL Performance Descriptors (ACTFL, 2015).

On the first day of the IPA assessment, students logged on to BB and took the interpretive assessments (listening and reading). They had 20 minutes to view, read, and listen to the authentic videos and reading materials for the interpretive portion of the assessment and answer ten multiple-choice and true/false items. On the second day of the assessment, instructors showed the students a prompt that accompanied an authentic resource (e.g., a website, online article, advertisement), and they had 20 minutes to record a two-minute interpersonal conversation and upload the video to the assignment drop box on BB. Students were discouraged from writing a script, as the course developers wanted to elicit uninterrupted, spontaneous speech in the target language. However, there were a few technical issues using BB Collaborate to create the recordings. Even though the DVP created detailed instructions for both students and instructors (PowerPoints with screenshots) and instructors went over the directions for creating, locating, and downloading a recording using BB Collaborate, some students found the process to be difficult to follow. Moreover, instructors felt that creating so many different BB Collaborate sessions was cumbersome and time consuming. Therefore, for the subsequent IPAs—including for the presentational task videos—learners used Teams to create their recordings. Students were required to submit their interpersonal and presentational MP4 files to the assignment drop box by the end of class and instructors were available throughout the class period for technical support.

### **Implications and Future Directions**

The design, development, and delivery of the online introductory Spanish course that was described in this article have implications for both online language course design and educator preparation programs.

### **Implications for Online Language Courses**

It should be noted that purposeful, planned online instruction is different than emergency remote teaching. While the two course developers worked collaboratively to design and develop the course, it was still a difficult undertaking because there was virtually no lead time between the design/development phase and course delivery. Therefore, all content and assessments were created as the course was being taught. This is not recommended; but in times of emergency, instructors often have no choice but to design, develop, and deliver the course simultaneously. One possible solution is to work in pairs or in teams, as the developers of this course have done. Instructors who must shift quickly to online teaching should reach out to their colleagues who teach the same language and level so that design and development tasks could be divided.

Effective, communicative online language courses are informed by the principles of sound instructional design and incorporate the tenets of CLT. However, many language instructors lack professional development in the pedagogy and appropriate technologies to teach online effectively (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Therefore, professional development opportunities in online language pedagogy are urgently needed in advance of the next natural disaster or pandemic that disrupts traditional, face-to-face language instruction. Organizations such as ACTFL, COERLL, the Computer-Assisted Language Instruction Consortium, the National Foreign Language Resource Center, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, and the International Association of Language Learning Technologies, among other language resource centers and professional associations, provide useful professional development for online language teaching at the K-16 level. All language teachers should investigate such opportunities now to be better prepared for future online language teaching in disruptive times.

### **Implications for Educator Preparation Programs**

Research shows that online teaching presents a unique set of challenges compared to traditional face-to-face instruction (Dawson & Dana, 2014; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). A review of the literature regarding educator preparation programs training educators to teach in remote contexts shows that just a few years ago, only four states and the District of Columbia required teachers to participate in training or professional development related to online instruction (Watson et al., 2014). Archambault et al. (2016) reported survey findings where 88.2% of teacher education programs nationally lacked having an online field experience as part of their teacher preparation program. More recently, results from a national survey of more than 1,200 K-12 teachers, mainly elementary public-school teachers, administered in mid-March 2020 affirmed that most teachers were not prepared to teach online and that slightly less than half (42.8%) reported that they alone are responsible for deciding what remote/online tools to use (Newton, 2020). Given such a lack of preparation, the authors call for education preparation programs to include in methods courses and field experiences opportunities to teach world languages online.

### **Conclusion**

This article showcased a communicative, introductory online language course that was developed in response to the global pandemic and the need for social distancing during the fall of 2020 at USAFA. The course adhered to the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL, 2012) and it incorporated research-based pedagogical interventions such as online IPAs, authentic, open-access materials, and daily synchronous instruction that provided practice in three modes of communication. Given that this course was taught across 11 sections by eight instructors and enrolled more than 200 students, it was shown to be scalable and could be replicated by other institutions who may need to shift quickly to remote teaching due to emergencies such as natural disasters or pandemics.

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## Appendix A

### Cadet Biography Sheet

Answer in English if you prefer.

1. ¿Cómo te llamas?
2. ¿Cuándo es tu cumpleaños?
3. ¿De dónde eres?
4. Brevemente describe a tu familia.
5. ¿Por qué estás aquí (en USAFA)?
6. ¿Qué experiencia has tenido con el español?
7. ¿Cuál es tu expectativa (*expectation*) para esta clase?
8. ¿Cuáles son tus pasatiempos favoritos?
9. ¿Qué deportes practicas o te gustan?
10. ¿Cuáles clubes te interesan aquí en la Academia?

## Appendix B

### Rubric for Discussion Board Postings

Discussion boards will be graded on a 10-point scale according to the following rubric:  
Student's Post

(7 points) Fully Acceptable: Demonstrates complete understanding of a concept and its application; links concepts to other course material. A fully acceptable written post should answer all of the question prompts thoroughly and accurately.

(4 points) Partly Acceptable: Demonstrates only partial comprehension of a concept and its application. A partially acceptable written post answers most of the question prompts thoroughly, but may have some errors in grammar, syntax, and/or orthography.

(1 point) Not Acceptable: Does not demonstrate comprehension of a concept. The content and/or ideas presented in the written post are erroneous and/or do not address the question prompts.

Student's Reply

(3 points) Replies thoughtfully to a peer

(1.5 points) Replies superficially to a peer

(0 points) Does not reply to a peer

## Appendix C

### Digital Storytelling Project

You will create a digital story on one of the following Spanish-speaking countries that was covered this semester. Your instructor will assign one of these countries to you:

- México
- España
- Honduras
- Guatemala
- El Salvador
- Nicaragua
- Costa Rica
- Panamá

Include the following information:

- geographical location of the country;
- population of the country;
- country's flag;
- any languages that are spoken in addition to Spanish;
- capital city, its location, and any other major cities and their locations;
- major monuments, landmarks, and/or museums that are located in the country;
- famous citizens (e.g., authors, artists, scientists);
- favorite sports and/or pastimes;
- typical dishes with description;
- typical family size and any information on daily life that you can locate;
- two or three similarities / difference between your assigned country and the U.S.

Technical Requirements

- minimum 3 minutes to a maximum of 5 minutes in length;
- a minimum of 10 photos;
- narrated in Spanish, use the present, past, and future tenses along with object pronouns;
- include a title (using text) on the first slide;
- if possible, include appropriate background music from the target language country Note: Your voice must be audible and much louder than any background music;
- You may use *Photo Story 3*, *iMovie*, or you can simply narrate a *PowerPoint* presentation to create your story, but your final submission must be an .mp4 file;
- Check your final video to make sure it is audible and functional. 10 points will be deducted for such issues.

## Appendix D

### Peer Evaluation Sheet

Name of Cadet Completing the Evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Cadet Whose Project is Being Evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The Digital Story is between 3 and 5 minutes in length:      Yes      No
2. The video is narrated entirely in Spanish:      Yes      No
3. What country was the focus of the video?
4. Name three things that you learned about the history, culture, or geography of the country from watching this video.
5. Name two things that you learned about the daily life of people from this country.
6. What could have been improved in this video?
7. What was done well in this video?

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## The Start Here Module: Creating a First Day Impression in an Online Language Class

Sabrina Wengier

Middle Georgia State University

### *Abstract*

*Students gain a lasting impression of a course and of the instructor on the first day of class (Lang, 2019). In asynchronous online or hybrid classes, the equivalent of the first day of class is the Start Here module. This orientation module should contain essential information about class expectations and technology requirements and provide help and accessibility resources. However, it is also the first opportunity for the instructor to establish a community of inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000) through a strong teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. The Start Here module in an online language class is also fertile ground to build anticipation about the language and cultures taught, and to provide a space to discuss potential language anxiety and common misconceptions about language learning.*

**Keywords:** *asynchronous classes, first day of class, community of inquiry, community building online, language-learning anxiety, language-learning expectations, online course orientation, Start Here module*

### **Background**

In 2017, I taught my first asynchronous online language course to address my institution's need to reach students on all five of our campuses (I am the only French instructor at Middle Georgia State University). I completed the training offered by our Center for Teaching Excellence but still felt unsure about the class. My concerns were threefold: (1) I was uncertain how I would interact with students and establish connections with them; (2) I was worried about losing the immediacy of the language practice; and (3) I was concerned whether students would receive enough exposure to the language. I attended professional development workshops, read literature about general online teaching and teaching languages online, and eventually found ways to establish my teaching presence and connect with my online students.

I believe that establishing strong foundations for the class in terms of teaching, social, and cognitive presence (Garrison et al., 2000), building a community of learning, and motivating students to learn the language and cultures begin with the Start Here module. For me, the Start Here module is the online equivalent of the first day of a face-to-face class. It should provide students with the orientation information they need to be successful in the class, but it should also be an opportunity for students to establish connections with their instructor and their peers (Asgarpoor, 2019;

Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). The Start Here module is also fertile ground to start building anticipation about the course content (Darby & Lang, 2019) and the language-learning journey (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Boettcher and Conrad (2021) contend that presence, community, and clear expectations should be the three pillars of the beginning weeks of an online class. In this article, I will provide suggestions on key elements of the Start Here module that are supported by best practices for online learning and online language learning in asynchronous and hybrid language classes that can be adapted to other delivery modes.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Planned Online Language Education***

In spring 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced instructors into teaching online, what happened was “crisis-prompted online language teaching” (Gacs et al., 2020, p. 380). Instructors had to find ways to adapt quickly, whether or not they had prior experience teaching in the online environment. In fall 2020, several U.S. institutions, mine included, partially returned to in-person instruction and chose among a variety of online delivery modes: synchronous (through videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom), asynchronous (in which students and instructor do not meet at the same time), hybrid (a mix of in-person and asynchronous online), or HyFlex (where students can attend in person, remotely, or by watching a recording of the class session on their own time).

Prior to 2020, online classes were already gaining in popularity due to their convenience and flexibility (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Darby & Lang, 2019). With the pandemic-induced switch to emergency remote learning, some students who work full time, have personal responsibilities to family members, have long commutes, or disabilities (among other reasons), found that the flexibility and convenience of online classes worked better for their personal situation and expressed a desire to continue learning online (Anderson, 2021; Morris & Anthes, 2021). Because online education seems here to stay, shifting to *planned online language education* (Gacs et al., 2020; Goertler, 2019), meaning classes informed by best practices and research, should be a priority to ensure students receive a quality education. Planned online language education has been shown to be as effective as in-person learning, but it requires thoughtful and intentional preparation (Gacs et al, 2020; Goertler, 2019; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021).

### ***Universal Design for Learning and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion***

Accessibility is a key principle for teaching and learning online or in person—students of all backgrounds and abilities should be able to access the materials presented and engage in the class and with the course content (Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Quality Matters, 2020; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). The first step in ensuring accessibility is to apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. UDL, as defined by CAST (2018), is a set of practices that provides multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression to students. In the online environment, it means ensuring that audio and video material are accessible to people with visual and/or hearing impairments (e.g., captioning, providing transcripts, ensuring that

written text is compatible with screen readers, using *sans serif* fonts). In addition, CAST (2018) suggests allowing for multiple ways of communication and assessment. In an online language class, for instance, instructors can show flexibility by allowing students to hand in audio assignments instead of video. Sathy and Hogan (2019) highlighted how such inclusive practices benefit all students and advocated for a highly structured class environment where expectations are clearly set and expressed in a variety of ways (oral and text, for example). For more details about UDL, the CAST website offers a comprehensive set of resources.

Another essential aspect of teaching and learning is diversity, equity, and inclusion. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) underscored the importance of representation for all learners and for the languages and cultures taught. They recommend that “target cultures and ethnicities—each with its own products, practices, and perspectives” be “introduced to the learners in sensitive, non-judgmental ways that neither ignore nor underplay L1 biases that the learners will have to navigate to increase their intercultural competencies” (p. 61). In the online environment, diversity, equity, and inclusion practices may include using visuals that represent diverse populations and practices and discussing and using inclusive pronouns and language in the target language. UDL and diversity, equity, and inclusion practices will be grounding principles for all suggestions presented in this article.

### **Course Design**

For Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021), the goal of an online language course should be to “increase learner proficiency in language and intercultural communication and to include the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of digital literacy and autonomous learning” (p. 9). To this end, an online language course, beginning with the Start Here module, should be grounded in best practices for course design with backward design and the Analysis-Design-Development-Integration-Evaluation (ADDIE) Model (Kurt, 2018) and best practices for language education, guided by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) *Guiding Principles to Language Learning* (n.d.) and World Readiness Standards (NSCB, 2015).

The ADDIE model offers a useful framework for starting the design of an online course. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) provide a comprehensive implementation plan of this model for online language courses; I will only summarize each step here. *Analysis*, the first stage of the model, is a phase of reflection in which the designers identify the reasons for starting an online course or program, identify the learners (demographics, level), the stakeholders in the project, the learning goals, the available support provided for faculty and students, and an appropriate online delivery mode (e.g. asynchronous, synchronous, hybrid, HyFlex), that works best for the students to achieve the goals. Gacs et al. (2020) also underline the importance of this planning stage for online language classes.

The second phase of the model is *design*, which defines the structure through which the instruction will be carried: which Learning Management System (LMS) to be used, if any, technology tools that will help achieve the desired results, and any other useful resources. At a fundamental level, the design phase is the planning stage where the goals for the class are set, using the backward design framework. Backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) is an instructional design framework by which instructors start with the end in mind. With backward design, instructors first

reflect on the learning goals—what they want students to be able to do at the end of the course; then on assessment—determine acceptable evidence that students have achieved those goals; and finally, instructors create learning activities that will help students achieve the learning goals. Backward design is a learner-centered approach that encourages instructors to be more intentional about the learning goals they set for students and the ways in which they assess students. In a language class, the learning goals are grounded in (1) the ACTFL *World Readiness Standards for Language Learning* (NSCB, 2015), which establish the link between communication and culture and identify the competences needed to be part of a global community; (2) the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), which identify what a learner can do at each level of proficiency; and (3) the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (ACTFL, 2017), which help set communication learning targets.

The third and fourth phases of the ADDIE framework are *development* and *integration*. The development phase focuses on production (Kurt, 2018) and on creating the learning materials and environment that will foster student engagement and a sense of autonomy (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021) while integration is where teaching occurs. As Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) underline, a central question of an online language class should be “How will these materials deploy in the target language grounded in its authentic culture(s) in an online environment?” (p. 75). The development and integration phases create a structure that provides paced and scaffolded material so that students can progress toward their proficiency goals. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) propose adapting communicative language teaching (CLT) to the online environment by using authentic materials, focusing on meaning over form, focusing on what students can do at the targeted proficiency level, and creating a meaningful cultural context for language instruction as just a few of the ten guidelines.

The last phase of the ADDIE model is *evaluation*. Kurt (2018) explains that the evaluation phase really starts at the development stage to ensure that the material put together helps reach the learning goals and to allow stakeholders to make adjustments as necessary. Evaluation takes place again at the end of the course to gain a big-picture consideration of what worked and what needed improvement.

An essential aspect of course design is to ensure that the materials are accessible and easy to find. In a face-to-face class, students know how to behave: Come to class and share the same physical space as the other students and the professor (Darby & Lang, 2019). In the online environment, this structure exists virtually instead of physically. Consequently, an online course must be easy to navigate with a clear and consistent design that facilitates students’ access to their professor, their peers, and the course materials and assignments (Asgarpoor, 2019; Darby & Lang, 2019; Gacs et al., 2020; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Riggs & Linder, 2016; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Many institutions use an LMS to house students’ courses; however, use of the LMS might not be intuitive for students, so offering an orientation to the class organization in the form of a Start Here module is essential (Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). While it may not always be possible, Kumar and Skyrocki (2016) recommend offering a synchronous session for the orientation module.

Finally, “a good online language course should include all communication modes (interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal) and skills (listening, reading,



speaking, and writing)” (Gacs et al., 2020, p. 386). Integrating these various modes and skills in the class material means that students will interact with their instructor and their peers in a variety of ways. Even though the asynchronous online environment removes the immediacy of the physical space and the verbal cues, intonation, and gestures that are important in communication and teaching (Swan, 2002), the online environment can adapt by fostering communication and interaction in different ways.

### ***Community of Inquiry and the Concept of Presence***

Online classes are structured around three types of interaction: student-content, student-instructor, and student-student (Nilson & Goodson, 2018). Despite the seemingly interactive nature of the online environment, students may feel lonely and disconnected in online classes because they are not directly in the presence of their peers and of their instructor, and such feelings of disconnectedness can lead to higher attrition in online classes (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Nilson & Goodson, 2018). The Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework (Garrison et al., 2000) puts the concept of community at the center of the online learning environment and presents best practices to counteract such feelings of disconnectedness in students.

The CoI Framework posits that learning occurs at the intersection of three forms of presence: teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence. Teaching presence is defined as both the design of the educational experience, i.e., the course materials the instructor creates and curates; and the facilitator role the instructor takes. Cognitive presence is the construction of meaning that occurs in the class while social presence is the “ability of participants in the Community of Inquiry to project their personal characteristics into the community, thereby presenting themselves to the other participants as ‘real people’” (Garrison et al., 2000; p. 89). Social presence is the socio-emotional aspect of the class where the feeling of connection is fostered and sustained. For Boettcher and Conrad (2021), presence is the most important best practice in an online class and “establishing connections through social presence is a prerequisite to students shifting their attention to content and knowledge” (p. 84).

I will offer several suggestions as to how to begin to establish social presence in the Start Here module in this article, but the literature highlights two key elements. The first is an introductory discussion board where the students and the instructor offer personal information in an effort to reveal themselves as *real people* (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Darby & Lang, 2019). The second element is for instructors to be visible and accessible. For example, frequently posting announcements (on a weekly basis, for instance), providing timely feedback/replies to inquiries, and being engaged in class discussions show students that the instructor is present and teaching the class (Asgarpoor, 2019; Crews et al., 2015; Darby & Lang, 2019; Gacs et al., 2020; Meskill & Anthony, 2015; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Riggs & Linder, 2016; Swan, 2002). Gacs et al. (2020) sum up instructor presence online as being visible, present, and authentic (p. 388).

### ***Language-Learning Mindset, Anxiety, and Misconceptions***

A *fixed language-learning mindset* is the belief that one’s ability to learn a language is fixed and predetermined while a *growth language-learning mindset* is the belief that with effort and strategy, one can learn a language (Lou & Noels, 2019, p.

2). *Language Educator* authors Spino and Wu (2021) and Gearhart (2021) stated that fostering a growth mindset for language learners transfers ownership of the learning back to the students.

In addition to a possible fixed language-mindset, anxiety can run high in language classes (Russell, 2020). Russell (2020) called attention to the idea that students who enroll in language classes online do so for a variety of reasons, including language-learning anxiety. Students may believe they will engage in fewer interactions in the target language with their peers in the online environment (Russell, 2020). However, online language classes often include oral activities conducted through audio and video tools (Russell, 2020). Students may then experience two kinds of anxiety: one related to language learning and one related to the use of technology tools with which they are not familiar (Russell, 2020). Offering a robust Start Here module with key technical information and help navigating the class can be a good start to alleviating students' perceived levels of language anxiety (Gacs et al., 2020; Goertler, 2019; Russell, 2020).

Anxiety may also stem from misconceptions students may have about the language-learning process. For instance, some students believe that they should not speak in the target language unless they can express themselves without making mistakes (Horwitz, 1988); others believe that it only takes two years to learn a language (Zalba, 2021). For Zalba (2021), addressing those preconceived ideas is important in terms of academic success, expectations, commitment to the class, and overall satisfaction. The combination of a fixed-mindset, anxiety, and false beliefs about how languages are acquired can have a powerful negative impact on the way students approach their language learning in the class. Russell (2020) recommended asking learners to engage in a discussion about their fears, either through a written discussion board or an oral voice board (p. 345). Zalba (2021) suggested playing a myth buster game and openly discussing language-learning misconceptions with the class while Gearhart (2021) related how, on the first day of class, he talks to his students about his own challenges in learning the language.

### ***The Start Here Module***

The Start Here module is the opportunity for the instructor to start laying the groundwork for a successful semester. Essential orientation elements that must be present in the Start Here module (and that I will expand upon in the article), are (Asgarpoor, 2019; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Riggs & Linder, 2016; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021):

- An explanation of how to navigate the course
- Syllabus, course requirements, learning outcomes, and institutional policies
- Technology requirements and expectations
- If applicable, information about proctoring expectations and third-party providers for proctoring
- An instructor introduction
- A space for students to introduce themselves
- A low-stakes syllabus quiz whose successful completion is the prerequisite to gaining access to the content of the course

The Start Here module should thus house key orientation information for students regarding course expectations and requirements, but it should also provide opportunities for the instructor to start establishing teaching, social, and cognitive presence.

### **Suggested Sections for the Start Here Module**

Keeping in mind the principles outlined in the literature review—UDL, diversity, equity, and inclusion, the community of inquiry framework, and course design considerations for online language learning—I now offer some suggestions of sections that I have used in the Start Module of my asynchronous online French classes to successfully start the semester and to set my students on a path to proficiency. Many of these suggestions can be adapted to other online delivery modes, such as hybrid, HyFlex, and synchronous.

#### ***An “About Your Professor” Page***

The “About Your Professor” page is the instructor’s chance to showcase their personality and their enthusiasm for the language and cultures they teach. Below are common options from which instructors can choose for the “About your Professor” page:

- A self-introduction video in which the instructor outlines their credentials and expresses why they are excited to teach the class is the best option. Because the asynchronous online environment does not immediately provide verbal and non-verbal cues, instructors need to be intentional in the way they create social presence (Swan, 2002). An introductory video can help establish visibility, presence, and authenticity in the class (Gacs et al, 2020). The video format allows for a more personal connection with the instructor (Asgarpoor, 2019; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018). The video does not need to be highly produced; on the contrary, Darby and Lang (2019) recommend more natural and authentic videos.

In the self-introduction video, the instructor can share some personal and professional information: How did they learn the language? Are they a native speaker? What got them interested in the language and cultures they teach in the first place? Instructors can discuss their traveling experiences and aspects of the language and cultures about which they are the most passionate. In addition, the video can address how the class and its content will contribute to the student’s personal and academic successes.

- A narrated presentation in which students hear the instructor discuss the same information as recommended for the self-introduction video is another option. Students will miss the benefits of seeing the instructor, but hearing their instructor discuss their travels and other personal experiences can also make an impact.
- At minimum, a written paragraph about the instructor including the same information as outlined for the self-introduction video can suffice especially if it is accompanied by some personal pictures.

Lang (2019) states that “highly effective college instructors recollect what first fascinated them about their discipline, pay attention to what fascinates students today, and make a connection with those issues at the opening of the semester” (para. 7). An enthusiastic self-introduction (in any format) in which students see their in-

structor discussing their own love of the language and its cultures, their own language-learning process, and why this class matters can help the instructor establish their teaching persona as someone who is open, accessible, and authentic and it can spark students' curiosity.

### **A “Benefits of Learning Another Language” Section**

In the current higher education climate with the threat of language programs disappearing or being considerably reduced (Hamilton & Berdan, 2019; Johnson, 2019; Looney & Lusin, 2019), explaining to students the benefits of learning another language is an advocacy and retention tool and it can also be a good way to activate their interest in the class. Boettcher and Conrad (2021) argue that a best practice for online classes is to help students customize and personalize their learning (Best Practice 9) as it can make the learning more meaningful. Questions that instructors can ask are: *What will learning a new language bring to their careers? How will it enhance their personal lives?* My institution's focus is on job outcomes and the School of Arts and Letters, to which my language program belongs, prides itself on providing students with credentials and learning skills that prepare them for their future jobs. Therefore, in this section of the Start Here module, I share *The Language Educator's* short article, *U.S. Businesses Need More Multilingual Employees* (2019) which details the critical demand for employees who speak a language other than English. ACTFL's Lead with Languages (2017) website also provides concise and attractive material promoting reasons to learn a language that is easy to share with students and can make an impact. Other information that could be valuable to include are foreign companies that have business ties to the institution's region; if the instructor's program offers service-learning or internship opportunities, highlighting them in this section would be beneficial as well. Whatever connection the instructor can establish between the class and its real-world applications helps showcase to students that the language they choose to learn can enhance their personal life and help build their future career.

### **A “What to Expect in your Language-Learning Journey this Semester?” Section**

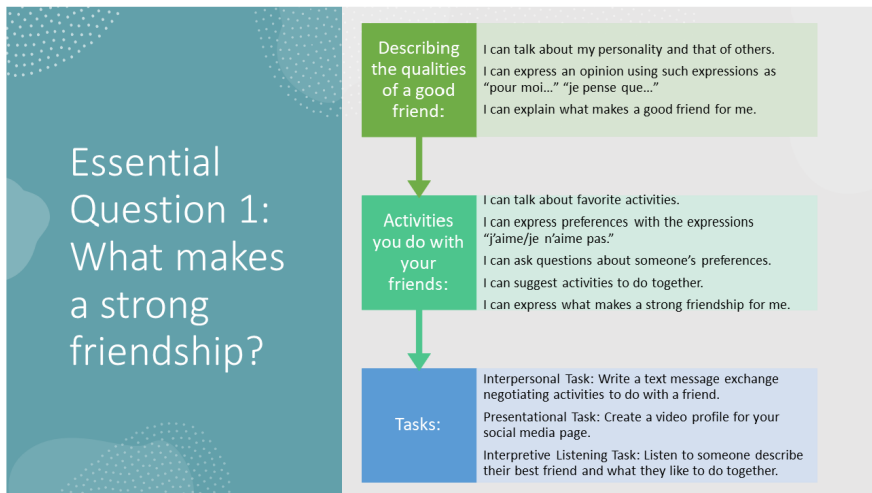
My students often wish to know what they will be able to say in the target language at the end of the semester. Student learning outcomes may sound dry to students, and they might not always understand what they mean (Darby & Lang, 2019). Therefore, it is useful to include concrete examples of what can be achieved. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) recommend that the Start Here module “contain models of successful online language learning for the proficiency level of the target audience. ... Short profiles of successful students and clips of them engaging in best practices, for example, can be extremely instrumental” (pp. 45-46). If the instructor does not have such audio or video examples, they could show samples of written work produced by previous students who took the class (shared with permission). Russell & Murphy-Judy (2021) further note that “integrating learning standards and proficiency targets in introductory materials helps direct the learners and their learning” (p. 46), and they suggest introducing the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2017). Discussing ACTFL's Proficiency Guidelines (2012) can help set the right expectations for the class and can help students better understand the language acquisition process as well.

To further establish clear expectations for students, an essential feature of course design for Boettcher and Conrad (2021), it may also be useful to include an overview of assessments and their grading rubrics. For instance, in my class, I assign discussion boards, video and audio journals, short written assignments, and listening comprehension exercises. Each type of homework has a consistent rubric I use throughout the semester. In the overview of assessments, I explain how this type of exercise contributes to the students' progress in proficiency and I attach the rubric so that students know how they will be assessed [Appendix 1 Discussion Board Rubric Example].

### An Outcomes Map

One way to engage students with the course learning outcomes is to introduce an overview of the course content at the very beginning of the class that can be in the form of an outcomes map (Nilson & Goodson, 2018). An outcomes map offers a visual representation of the course content while also making explicit the organization of the class and how each skill builds upon another. For advanced language classes such as literature, culture, business, and others, the outcomes map will illustrate the various concepts students will learn and the way they build on each other. For elementary and intermediate language classes, an outcomes map works particularly well at the unit level for classes that focus on essential questions and/or the NCSFL-ACTFL Can-Do statements (2017). The outcomes map will let students see that even at the elementary level, they will discuss interesting topics. An outcomes map also links the course content to the assessments and shows how they align so that for each unit, students know what they will be asked to produce. For instance, in a French 1 class with a unit focused on the essential question “What makes a strong friendship?” an outcomes map might look like the following:

**Figure 1**  
**Outcomes Map Example from a French 1 Course**



The outcomes map provides an informative and appealing visual for students who get an at-a-glance view of how content and assessment are linked.

### ***Introductory Discussion Board***

Interacting with other students and the instructor helps establish the social presence Boettcher and Conrad (2021) identify as necessary to any learning happening. It is an essential aspect of community building in the online learning environment (Quality Matters, 2020; Swan, 2002). To me, the introductory discussion board is a central piece of the Start Here module as it is the first opportunity for students to interact with me and their classmates. The introductory discussion board can also be a valuable place to initiate conversations about the language-learning process and to address potential anxiety and nervousness about the class. The discussion board can be written, audio, or video and instructors can leave the choice of format to students.

For an elementary level course, the introductory discussion board should be in English but from the novice mid-level, it could be in the target language. In intermediate level courses, the instructor can decide to include some basic questions in the target language with encouragement to respond in the target language—questions such as “What kind of music do you like?”—while questions that require more complex answers can be kept in English. The introductory discussion board should not overwhelm or discourage students; rather, it should feel like a safe place to connect with others.

### ***The Chinese Portrait and Proust’s Questionnaire***

In traditional ice breaker questions, students may be asked to share their major and why they chose it, to discuss their tastes in music and film, or talk about their hobbies. To dig deeper, encourage more meaningful interactions with their peers, and bring in a cultural aspect to the class, instructors can use cultural alternatives such as the Chinese Portrait and Proust’s Questionnaire. The Chinese portrait originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Alleau, 1964) and is a game of associations and comparisons through which one paints a portrait of oneself. Essentially, it is a series of “If I were X” questions that can be a playful way to learn about students. It is also simple enough that it could be done in the target language starting at the novice mid level. Here are some examples of what could be asked:

- If I were an animal / a city / an object / a dish / a piece of clothing / a song / etc., I would be a... because...

Instructors can also ask students to create their own “If I were” statement to ask their classmates so they are more actively engaged in the activity.

Proust’s Questionnaire, incidentally not created by Marcel Proust, the 19<sup>th</sup> century iconic French writer, but made famous by his answers, can also be a unique way of asking engaging get to know each other questions. Some questions are light while others are more serious and choosing some of both can bring a good balance to the exercise. Here are a few of the questions I have used in the past:

- What is your idea of perfect happiness?
- Which talent would you most like to have?
- If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?
- Where would you most like to live?
- What do you most value in your friends?

In my experience, answers to this questionnaire are often insightful, and the students appreciate the cultural aspect of it. The questionnaire can be used in the target language in advanced-level classes, but I strongly advise keeping it in English at the novice levels. (The full questionnaire is available in English in *Vanity Fair* (2011) and in French on the *Apprendre, réviser, mémoriser* website (2020) and can be adapted to various languages.)

Finally, I always ask students to formulate a question to ask their classmates as I believe doing so allows them to be more active and engaged in the exercise. In my experience, many students ask such basic questions as “What is your favorite food?” or “Are you a cat person or a dog person?” but some students have asked more insightful questions such as:

- Do you prefer taking online classes or in-person classes? Which setting do you feel you learn better in?
- Why did you choose to learn French?
- Is anyone nervous about speaking in French?

The last question received a lot of replies and comments from other students in the class who confirmed they were nervous about speaking French as well. It provided me with the perfect opportunity to address anxiety in the language classroom and provide some reassurance (see more suggestions in the section *Follow up to the Introductory Discussion Board: Announcement Recap*).

#### *Discussing Mindset and Language Learning Myths in the Introductory Discussion Board*

As outlined in the literature review and the example above, students can be anxious about the experience of learning a language and may have misconceptions about language learning. The aforementioned *What to Expect in Your Language-Learning Journey this Semester* section can help set expectations while the introductory discussion board can provide a platform for students to voice potential concerns. Therefore, the discussion board can ask students to “share a crazy idea about language learning” (Zalba, 2021, slide 16). Zalba (2021) suggests providing examples of such myths of language learning; for instance, “Acquiring a second language is a special ‘gift’ that only some have,” “A maximum of 2 years is sufficient to learn a language,” or “Adults are physiologically unable to speak a second language without an accent” (slide 11). Instructors can also ask students to share what they are most anxious about in the class (Russell, 2020), and what they are most excited about in learning the language and discovering its cultures as a way to not focus only on the negative. The instructor can then address student answers in a general announcement (see more about this in the section *Follow up to the Introductory Discussion Board: Announcement Recap*).

#### *Follow-up to the Introductory Discussion Board: Provide Your Own Answers*

Darby and Lang (2019) remind instructors that establishing presence in an online class requires effort and that it includes “sharing more of who we are as people” (p. 90). Therefore, the first post students see in the introductory discussion board is my own with my personal answers to the questions I asked. To me, writing my own answers accomplishes three things. First, I was able to see which questions made me uncomfortable, and I edited those out of my list. In the prompt, I provide the option for students to skip one question out of the list (and I do not call them out if they skip

more than one). Second, it provides a model for students. Third, and most important to me, it helps me establish my social presence by revealing aspects of my life and my personality. I believe that by providing my answers, I show students that I am engaged with the class, I am willing to let myself be known, and I want to connect with them. Lang (2019) and Russell and Judy-Murphy (2021) refer to such techniques as humanizing; Garrison et al. (2000) refer to it as “becoming real people” (p.2).

#### *Follow-up to the Introductory Discussion Board: Answer Every Student*

In the same way that providing personal answers to the introductory discussion board questions demonstrates engagement on the instructor’s part, I believe that replying to each student with a personal comment or follow-up question is a way to establish connections. Students tend not to enjoy ice breaker activities on the first day of class (Eskine & Hammer, 2017; Robinson, 2019), but Boettcher and Conrad (2021) insist on the value of the introductory discussion board in terms of establishing social interaction and community-building (Course Beginning Tip 8) and identify discussion boards as the place where “students and faculty become a learning community” (Best Practice 7, p. 51). This practice can be time-consuming in large classes, but it is a worthwhile investment to begin building a CoI and to establish instructor presence.

### **Inclusive Learning**

Another essential aspect of building a CoI and one that may help with retention as well (Gannon, 2018) is striving to ensure that all students feel comfortable in the class by creating a welcoming and respectful environment (CIRTL Includes, 2017). As a complement to UDL principles being used for all materials, a simple way to let students know that the instructor cares is to ask for their pronouns (Brown et al., 2020). The following is a model that has been circulating on the Pandemic Pedagogy and the Higher Ed Learning Collective Facebook pages as an effective way to ask for students’ preferred name and pronouns. I suggest setting it up as a no-stakes quiz or assignment whose answers are only visible to the instructor.

Name you want me to call in you in class and how to pronounce it: \_\_\_\_\_

Pronouns (ex: he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/their): \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| • May I use these pronouns in front of the class?                                      | Yes | No |
| • May I use these pronouns when I contact home?  | Yes | No |
| • May I use these pronouns in front of the other teachers?                             | Yes | No |
| • Would you like to follow up with me (in a private conversation) about your pronouns? | Yes | No |

### **A Language Diagnostic and Goal Setting Assignment**

Because it is important for students to quickly become familiar with the assignment tools that will be necessary for them to be successful in the class (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Nilson & Goodson, 2018), my institution requires a blank document be submitted in the Start Here module as evidence that students understand the submission process. I have taken this opportunity to turn this requirement into a more



active and productive task: a language diagnostic and goal setting document. This assignment is worth no points and students are allowed unlimited submissions, but its completion is mandatory. I adapted the language diagnostic from a document used by the language program at the University of Miami where I was a graduate teaching assistant. The document has several sections, and the objectives are to establish a baseline for students' individual proficiency levels as well as to help them set goals for their language learning and success in the class.

### Section 1: Background Information and Goal Setting.

1. Have you ever taken French before, and if so, when was the last class you took?
2. Do you speak other languages? If yes, which ones?
3. How does this class relate to your career goals?
4. What are some aspects of francophone cultures that you find interesting? (Francophone means from the French-speaking world.)
5. What is your main goal in this class? (It could be because you have family who speaks French and you would like to communicate with them in the language, etc. It's ok to say that this class is a requirement and you just want to pass, but also try to find something that you would like to achieve other than pass.)
6. Identify a potential challenge that could interfere with you achieving this goal. (Example: I work full time.)
7. Identify a way that you will overcome this challenge. Be specific. (Example: I will create a schedule and set aside an hour a day to work on my French, etc.).

**Section 2: Language Diagnostic.** This second part is all in French. If you don't know how to say it in French, just write "Je ne sais pas" (I don't know). This is NOT a test, and it will not impact your grade in any way. Do not use Google Translate or other tools or ask for help from others to complete this part. This is just to gauge everyone's level.

8. Describe yourself in French. What do you enjoy doing? What activities do you not like to do?
9. Tell me in French what you did this past weekend.
10. In French. If you could change three things in your community, what would they be?

Questions 3-5 provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their relationship with the class—in what way could it help them in their personal lives and their careers? It reinforces what the instructor explained in the "Benefits of Learning of Another Language" section and creates self-reflection regarding the students' relationship with the language. These goal-setting questions also participate in developing students' cognitive presence by crafting personal and customized goals for the class (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Course Beginning Tip 8). Meanwhile, questions 6-7 are adapted from Darby and Lang's (2019) idea of a *Goals Contract*. Darby and Lang (2019) state that "helping our students take ownership of their learning is

a strategic way to help them persist and complete online classes” (p. 140). Asking students to devise personal goals and specific ways to reach those goals can thus increase accountability and perseverance. If a student starts falling behind in the course work, the instructor could refer them to the strategy they had proposed or help them to consider whether other strategies are needed.

The language diagnostic itself (questions 8-10) can serve as a placement tool if the instructor’s institution (like mine) does not have a mandatory language placement exam. The language diagnostic, in my experience, provides the language instructors at my institution important insight into students’ written proficiency, and they can contact students early on about possible placement issues. Another advantage of the language diagnostic is that I can use it as a *look how far you’ve come* reference at the end of the semester when I ask students to revisit the questions and assess whether they are now able to answer in French (if it is a French 1 class, they should be able to answer question 8, for instance) and whether they achieved the goals they set for themselves. In my experience, students are usually able to respond to the questions, and they often comment they are excited to see their progress.

Just as I reply to every student’s post in the introductory discussion board, I recommend leaving some feedback for this assignment as well. It could be commenting on the cultural aspects the student mentioned were of interest to them and whether they will indeed be addressed in class. It could also be commenting on the student’s stated goals and potential challenges in achieving those goals. Interacting with students often is part of being present and it is a key component of good online teaching and establishing an instructor’s social presence in the class (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). For Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021), “fostering teaching presence is a powerful way to promote learning” (p. 96) and Darby and Lang (2019) add that “your interactions in class can be minor. The important thing is to be present, and to make sure your students know it, on a very regular basis” (p. 87). Leaving feedback on assignments is another opportunity to connect with students and help them in their learning.

## **Lesson 1**

On the first day of my elementary French 1 face-to-face class, I spend the first 30 minutes of class fully in French introducing myself (pre-pandemic, I would shake everyone’s hand) and having students introduce themselves using “Je m’appelle” (my name is). It is a great way for students to learn their classmates’ names and to practice basic introductions and greetings. Lang (2019) insists on the importance of engaging students in learning and in the types of activities they will often do in the class on the first day of the face-to-face semester. While I have not found a way to replicate the immediacy of my introduction exercise in the asynchronous online setting, I nevertheless believe it is important to start teaching students language and content in the Start Here module. Short input-based activities based on authentic material grounded in ACTFL’s core practices for world language learning (Glisan & Donato, 2017) can be a good introduction to the class material. At the elementary level, the instructor can provide an authentic video presentation of greetings (from LangMedia or YouTube’s Easy Languages Channel for instance) or a highly comprehensible short authentic text along with self-check comprehension questions. For an introduction to literature

class, the instructor can use a short poem or text with a visual representation and self-check comprehension questions. The instructor can also share an authentic cultural video or image related to the first topic in the class with reflection questions or self-check comprehension questions. In any case, the lesson should reflect what students will learn in the class and should pique their interest. As a follow-up, I usually assign a self-reflection activity (not graded or low stakes and that the instructor does not necessarily grade) in which students write about what they have read or watched. Finally, the instructor can add a retrieval question in the introductory discussion board about this initial content. For instance, in my French 1 class, I tell students: “Start your post with a greeting you learned in today’s presentation.” The first lesson should create anticipation and excitement for the course content while being low or no stakes.

### “How to Be Successful in Your Language Class” Page

Boettcher and Conrad (2021) advise instructors in the online environment to think of their role as that of facilitator or coach, helping students become more independent and take a more active role in their learning (Course Beginning Tip 6). However, Nilson and Goodson (2018) remind instructors that students may not always know best strategies to study and be successful in a class and that sharing strategies for success encourages self-efficacy in students. For all online courses, my institution provides a required page that lists useful advice for students on how to be successful in their online class. Strategies include logging in frequently, reaching out to the professor and asking questions, spending time becoming familiar with the LMS and the course site, and being aware of deadlines by making a calendar. I created an additional page that offers advice specifically about language learning. Here are some of the bullet points I include:

- Carefully read the course material, watch the videos, listen to all the recordings on each page, and complete the activities. This material will help you develop proficiency in the language.
- Pause the videos and recordings to repeat and/or answer the questions.
- Take notes and start a language diary in which you use relevant vocabulary.
- Reach out to other students via the “Student Lounge” (found in the “Discussions” tool). The Student Lounge is your space to communicate, form a study group and practice the language together, or just ask questions. Online learning does not have to be a solo adventure! Note that I do not monitor that space; it is yours. [In synchronous and hybrid classes, instructors can ask students who are comfortable doing so to exchange their contact information with others in the class.]
- Reach out to me with questions, comments, anything!
- Tutors are here to help. [Include tutoring hours and a way to book an appointment. I suggest redundancy and posting this information on other pages on the site as well.]
- Netflix and other streaming services have a plethora of great shows and films from various countries. Watching those will immerse you in the cultures of the language you are learning; watching them in the original language (with or without English subtitles) will help you get used to listening to the language and develop your listening comprehension skills.

If the instructor has a list of useful sites and other resources to help students in their learning, the instructor can house them on this page as well or create an additional resource section.

### A “Syllabus Highlights” Page

Course expectations and policies should be included in the syllabus, which should be provided in full in the Start Here module (Asgarpoor, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018). I tell students I expect them to read the entire syllabus, but the *Syllabus Highlights* page emphasizes important course policies. The format can be a question-and-answer page for easy reference or a video. My *Syllabus Highlights* page includes information such as how to reach me and when to expect a reply, what course material is needed and how to access it, when assignments are due, what the late work policy is, how the tests will be administered (with information about test proctoring), grade distribution and overview of assignments, an overview of technology requirements (with a link to the technology requirements section), an explanation of the academic integrity policy, and extra credit opportunities.

#### *Technology Requirements and Computer Skills Section*

While the *Syllabus Highlights* page mentioned a brief list of technological tools needed, a more comprehensive page providing details for such tools as well as essential computer skills needed to complete the class successfully is crucial in online classes (Asgarpoor, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). It is even more necessary in language classes as “students must be prepared to work on all four skills across the three modes of communication (interpretive reading or listening, interpersonal speaking or writing, and presentational speaking and/or writing) by means of tools for audio-visual recording and online collaboration and communication” (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021, p. 46). The technology requirements and computer skills section can include the following elements:

- Whether the work can be completed through a mobile device or whether some material can only be accessed through a computer can be an important consideration for some students.
- Any technology tool used in the class besides the LMS. For instance, if the instructor requires the use of a conversation platform such as TalkAbroad, a short tutorial should be linked, and the information on cost and registration should be included.
- Access and registration information about plagiarism prevention tools if they are used in the class.
- Access and registration information for a proctoring service if it is used in the class. If a webcam is used, this should be explicitly stated. If alternates modes of proctoring can be arranged, the instructor should explain how to set up the process.
- Netiquette, defined as *the protocols for civil communication online* (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021), advice such as, do not use all caps, do not use offensive language, use emojis to convey tone in written conversations. If the class is synchronous, the instructor can explain the expectations regarding cameras on or off.
- How to access technical support for all software and platforms used in the class.

## “How to Know What is Due When?” Page

Being able to easily find course material and assignments is a must in online classes. A “How to Know What is Due When?” video can explain this information and serve as a walkthrough of the class (Asgarpoor, 2019; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). For Asgarpoor (2019), a *tour de class* video adds a personal touch and is a sign of the instructor’s engagement with the class (p. 3). In the video that I created for my classes (using Screencast-O-Matic, a screen recorder, and video editor software), I begin the tour with the course landing page of my LMS and demonstrate through screensharing how to access the daily folders, navigate the course material, find the assignments, and determine their due dates. In the video, I also explain that the order in which the material is organized and listed on the daily checklist is intentional and that students should follow it to benefit fully from the class.

## Entry Quiz

The entry quiz should be the last item in the Start Here module and its successful completion should be a prerequisite to students accessing the rest of the course content (Asgarpoor, 2019). The entry quiz questions can refer to important policies and aspects of the course stated in the course syllabus and/or mentioned throughout the material in the Start Here module. Through this quiz, students demonstrate basic knowledge of the requirements of the class. Some questions I have used in my classes include:

- What is the title of the textbook?
- When are assignments due?
- What is the course policy concerning late work?
- What are the technology requirements for the class?
- What is the proctoring policy for the class?

Answers to all the questions in my entry quiz can be found in my *Syllabus Highlights* page. The quiz should be auto graded with multiple-choice questions so that students receive their result immediately upon completion. In addition, I recommend that students must score 100% on the quiz as it demonstrates awareness of the important policies in the class. Most LMSs allow for multiple attempts for quizzes, and the entry quiz should be allowed unlimited attempts. Finally, I recommend checking that all students have completed the quiz and obtained the required score and to contact those who did not, ideally the day after it is due.

## Follow-Up to the Start Here Module: General Announcement Recap

The last piece of the Start Here module, for me, after I have read and commented on my students’ introductory discussion board answers and course goal assignments, is to offer a summary in the form of an announcement to the class. Announcements in general are a great tool for teaching presence (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021). The general announcement is another way to foster my community of inquiry by reinforcing teaching presence, social presence, and cognitive presence as I touch upon and expand on students’ answers and questions. I suggest recording an informal video, but a written announcement could be effective as well. In the general

announcement, I reiterate my excitement about the class. I comment on how well the students interacted in the introductory discussion board or give suggestions on how to engage more meaningfully with one another (teaching presence). I also address the language-learning myths and concerns students expressed, point students back to the resources shared, such as the *Proficiency Guidelines* (ACTFL, 2012), and reinforce the idea that language learning is not a one-size fits all endeavor (cognitive presence). Finally, I start fostering a sense of community and class identity by highlighting some of the common answers students gave to the introductory discussion board questions (social presence). When I read my students' introductory posts, I take note of interesting answers, and I try to identify common traits. I am often struck by the number of similar answers in each class—classes with an overwhelming number of students who state they are introverted or wish they could sing—and I mention those in my general announcement. I also like to create a word cloud with the most common traits I have gleaned from the students' answers, and I share it in addition to my video, as an initial snapshot of our class.

## Conclusion

On the first day of face-to-face classes, students expect to receive information about the course requirement, policies, and major assignments, and advice on how to succeed in the class (Eskine & Hammer, 2017; Lang, 2019; Robinson, 2019). They also enjoy when instructors discuss their background and teaching style and when they seem approachable, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about the class (Eskine & Hammer, 2017; Robinson, 2019). The first day of class can influence student motivation and success (Eskine & Hammer, 2017) and creates a “lasting impression not just of you as a teacher but of your course, too” (Lang, 2019, para. 3). I argue that the Start Here module is the equivalent of the first day of a face-to-face in the asynchronous online environment and that it can, too, be the place to create a lasting impression for students.

Although there is no research specifically about the impact of the Start Here module in online classes, most pedagogical resources related to online course design indicate the importance of having a module to orient learners to the online environment (Asgarpoor, 2019; Darby & Lang, 2019; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). The Start Here module, and the entire course, should be grounded in the principles of universal design for learning, inclusive teaching, good course design, and strong language learning principles—ACTFL's *Proficiency Guidelines* (2012), *Core Principles* (2017), and *NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements* (2017). As the orientation to the class, the Start Here module should set clear expectations for the class (Boettcher & Conrad, 2021; Nilson & Goodson, 2018; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). It should contain the syllabus and a *Syllabus Highlights* page with key support information and resources and a breakdown of main course policies and expectations, along with technology and computer skills requirements.

I also argue that the Start Here module should go beyond focusing on orientation material. Research on online learning indicates that students often feel disconnected in the online learning environment because contact with their classmates and instructor is not immediate and in a shared physical space (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Swan, 2002). Garrison et al. (2000) proposed the Com-

munity of Inquiry framework whose central idea is presence (social, teaching, and cognitive) that can be used as a tool to counter such feelings of disconnectedness and foster a community of learning for students. Boettcher and Conrad (2021) promote being present as the first best practice of online teaching. Through carefully crafted course material and use of presence tools (such as announcements and feedback), the Start Here module can begin to foster presence as the central tenant of the learning experience. Instructors can make themselves known through a personal introduction (in the form of a video, for instance), through participation in an introductory discussion board where they share more of themselves and interact with students, and by offering feedback on assignments.

In turn, students can feel engaged in the class by participating and interacting with others in the introductory discussion board (which could be video, audio, or written) and by being asked to reflect on their goals for the class and how learning the language can help them enhance their personal life and their career goals. Students' interest in the class will be piqued by providing a visual representation of the course content in the form of an outcomes map and through a level-appropriate first lesson grounded in authentic cultural material. The Start Here module also presents an excellent opportunity to help students set realistic language learning goals and to help them understand the language learning process. Introducing them to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012), providing them with examples of what they will be able to achieve at the end of the class, and discussing language learning misconceptions and anxiety can help alleviate nervousness about the class (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021).

As Darby and Lang (2019) put it, "When we facilitate the development of a dynamic community of learners in an online class, we significantly increase the potential for individual student learning and success. When we don't attend to this essential ingredient, we see high attrition rates, low engagement, and minimal participation" (p. 72). By creating an accessible, inclusive, encouraging environment through carefully crafted and engaging course materials and strong social presence, the Start Here module can set students on the path to be successful in an online language class.

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## Appendix A

### Discussion Board Rubric

My contribution is relevant to the task.	/ 4 pts
The vocabulary is adequate and the message is communicated.	/4 pts
I engage with my classmates' replies.	/4 pts

## Teaching Languages Virtually During a Global Pandemic: Perspectives from Post-Secondary Language Educators

Dieter A. Waldvogel  
Samford University

Tiffany Robayna  
Samford University

### *Abstract*

*This survey study explores how second language (L2) educators at institutions of higher education quickly transitioned from face-to-face (F2F) teaching to an online, technology-based environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what their perspectives are on the use of virtual technology after the pandemic. A total of 574 language educators at colleges and universities in the U.S. submitted responses to the survey. Results show that two-year college instructors and women favor the use of virtual technology in L2 education significantly more than instructors at four-year colleges and universities and men overall. In general, the majority of L2 educators surveyed embrace the increase of virtual technology in L2 education.*

**Keywords:** *online teaching, virtual technology in L2 education, language education online, L2 education during COVID.*

### **Background**

Few events in recent history have had such a dramatic impact on second language (L2) teaching methodologies as the global COVID-19 pandemic had in 2020 and 2021. Instructors in higher education institutions had to find alternative methods to continue teaching during this period, and most of them found themselves having to abruptly transition their face-to-face (F2F) courses to emergency remote teaching (ERT) with little notice, support or training. There are many new questions and concerns about the use of technologies for teaching languages remotely, along with new opportunities to take advantage of the lessons learned following the unprecedented COVID-19 global pandemic. One question is whether post-secondary L2 educators have a greater appreciation for online technologies for teaching and learning, or if, as a result of the abrupt transition to ERT, L2 educators have developed a negative attitude towards the increased reliance on technology. Another important question is whether or not colleges and universities will continue to provide students with opportunities for distance L2 learning following the pandemic or will

they mostly revert back to pre-pandemic approaches to language instruction. In one of the largest survey studies of its kind since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a major L2 textbook publisher with an online platform and more than 27,000 language educators, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), and L2 faculty at a mid-sized private university in the Southeast recently collaborated on this study to investigate the aforementioned questions.

## **Literature Review**

The use of technology and blended learning have been gaining popularity as an effective way of teaching and learning (Holcomb et al., 2004; Kane & Rouse, 1999; Seaman et al., 2018; Zhang, 2020). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, schools and universities around the world were forced to rapidly redesign traditional F2F courses to be delivered completely online with very little time to do so (Cutri et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2020). As the transition was so sudden, many educators had not received training in online language pedagogy.

There were many issues with the transition that caused undue stress on educators. In early 2020, the pandemic forced a large percentage of the U.S. workforce to rapidly transition from office work to working from home. Not everyone, however, had the same access to high-speed internet necessary for downloading materials, videoconferencing, installing apps, working with shared documents and streaming videos (Cutri et al., 2020; Miller, 2021). For many educators, learning to use the technology was a challenge. Many universities, for example, started using video conferencing tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Classroom, Webex, etc. to continue teaching their courses live. With these platforms, issues of privacy quickly became another concern and many students, for different reasons, refused to turn on their cameras or had technical problems with their video and/or audio (Cutri et al., 2020; Miller, 2021; Sangeeta & Tandon, 2020). All these issues have caused additional stress for both students and educators on top of what could already be considered a substantial workload increase.

Furthermore, maintaining student engagement has also been challenging. Many teachers lack the preparation needed for designing interactive and engaging lessons online (McMurtrie, 2020). Due to the sudden shift to remote learning, many teachers did not have the time or the knowledge to develop engaging online lessons. One consequence of the abrupt move to remote teaching has been a transition from student-centered lesson plans to teacher-centered lectures via videoconference platforms (Ahmadi & Ilmiani, 2020; Moorhouse, 2020). Per Egbert (2020) "It may be easier for teachers to focus on providing access to content rather than to worry about how well the content is designed and delivered" (p. 314). Cole et al. (2017) talked about how many online teachers try to replicate what they do in a F2F classroom, but that in order to accomplish the same tasks, one must implement a variety of communication channels. These tools can include audio, video, and multimedia to create a media rich online classroom environment. Again, due to the limited amount of time to transition online, many instructors tried to copy what they were already doing in the F2F class, but they were largely unable to build in the extra media richness into their online classrooms. Also, depending on the type of media required in the various classrooms, there is a cost associated with some digital tools and not

everyone can afford the subscriptions for different websites, permissions of usage, etc. (Ahmadi & Ilmiani, 2020).

Another factor that contributed to the stress of the situation was the lack of emotional connectedness in online classrooms. The extra time most educators had to engage with students or answer their questions just before or right after class was suddenly gone. As Zhang (2020) noted, “connecting two individuals emotionally adds to the experience of being human. The uniqueness of feeling cared for and noticed cannot be replaced by computer emojis” (p.44). The loss of the social connection between educators and learners is difficult and contributes to both teachers’ and learners’ struggles with isolation and loneliness (Bolliger & Inan, 2012). Teaching remotely takes away the opportunity to discuss, in passing with other colleagues, successes and failures in the classroom as well as how we are all coping with the global pandemic in general (Lederman, 2020).

Garrison, et al., 2001, developed a Community of Inquiry (CoI) model that holds three elements as essential to online learning: social, cognitive, and teacher presence. In unpacking each of these elements, the social aspect refers to the community that the students are able to establish with their peers in online classes. For example, Bolliger and Inan (2012) observed that “students may feel part of a community but may still experience high levels of isolation because they have limited opportunities to participate in those learning communities” (p.45). It is crucial that online instructors provide ways for students to collaborate with other students in the class and create a sense of community for the students. If students feel like part of the group and/or community, then their contribution becomes essential and meaningful.

In the CoI model, the second important element for learning in an online setting is the cognitive aspect, which is the “higher-order knowledge acquisition and application, and it is most associated with the literature and research related to critical thinking” (Garrison et al., 2001, p.11). Courses should be designed in a way that allows students to work through the content, reflect on the knowledge gained, discuss within a community, and seek resolutions. This approach is all part of the process of gaining cognitive knowledge in the CoI model. Structuring an online class where students gain critical thinking skills and knowledge is challenging especially if the educator does not have much experience with it.

Finally, teacher presence is the last aspect in the CoI model. Having teachers monitor the discussions and help guide students is crucial for online classes. According to Anderson et al., (2001, p. 9), “A widely documented problem in computer conferencing is the difficulty of focusing and refining discussions so that conversation progresses beyond information sharing to knowledge construction and especially application and integration.” Instructors have a role in not only facilitating the conversations but also designing the activities to impart knowledge, create a sense of community for students, and help them apply that knowledge in practical ways. Building these three aspects into an online class helps students gain more out of the class. The problem with teaching online during the onset of the pandemic was that educators did not have sufficient time to think about these elements nor be trained on how to implement them into online classes effectively.

Even though there have been many factors that increased educators’ level of stress, the shift to teaching completely online has had some benefits too. Maintaining

an open mind and a flexible attitude allowed for positive reactions and a willingness to develop digital competence (Zhang, 2020). Creating engaging tasks for students helps prevent boredom while learning online, and these tasks allow instructors to model positive attitudes (Egbert, 2020). Many educators were willing to revise their teaching for online delivery and they had a sense of hope that their efforts would result in good online teaching (Cutri et al., 2020). In Zhang (2020), one teacher shared that:

teaching became more convenient in an interactive environment, where teacher-student collaboration is highly favored. Integrating different digital tools into language teaching helps teachers to establish an environment that helps cultivate a meaningful experience. (p. 42)

Creating meaningful online learning experiences is a way to keep learners engaged, and in doing so helps both educators and learners develop a more positive attitude. Moreover, remote teaching has allowed students to help educators through the knowledge or lack thereof with executing these technological functions. According to Cutri et al. (2020), many instructors have had to ask for students' assistance when navigating certain functions on new platforms, which, in turn, gave students a sense of empowerment. Sharing power in the classroom due to a lack of expertise in solving technological issues allowed educators to gain a sense of empathy for their students as learners.

Finally, Jin et al. (2021) explored the impact of ERT on 662 U.S. college-level L2 educators' intention to use virtual technologies after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers analyzed three factors—perceived values of online language teaching, self-confidence in online language teaching, and the perceived stress of ERT. Jin et al. (2021) found that these three factors correlate significantly with L2 educators' intention to use virtual technologies in the future. The researchers concluded that, in general, the participants in their study had a positive view on adopting technologies for remote language instruction, although many preferred hybrid teaching if given the choice.

As evidenced by previous research studies, the use of technology for remote teaching and learning can have both positive and negative outcomes. These outcomes can be influenced in large part by instructors' training and experience in the use of these technologies, and how successfully they are able to integrate technology into their curriculum. The abrupt transition to ERT in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the slow transition back to more traditional F2F L2 teaching and learning in the fall of 2021 have exposed many issues that must be addressed by academia to gain a better understanding of the role of technologies for remote L2 instruction. In order to address the gaps in our present body of knowledge in this area, this study focused on the three research questions below.

## **Research Questions**

This survey study examined how instructors at post-secondary institutions quickly transitioned from F2F L2 teaching and learning to an online technology-based environment, and what their perspectives are on the increased reliance on technology during the pandemic and in the future. The following research questions guided all aspects of this study:

1. How do L2 educators in higher education feel about the usefulness and effectiveness of technologies for remote/online language instruction following their teaching experiences in 2020 and 2021?
2. Are there any significant differences of opinions between different groups such as men versus women; educators at two-year versus four-year institutions; newer versus more experienced educators, or between educators in different languages?
3. Do L2 educators in higher education believe there will be more reliance on technology after the global pandemic ends and institutions return to more traditional F2F delivery of instruction?

## Methodology

The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), a major U.S. language textbook publisher, and L2 faculty at a mid-sized private university in the Southeast collaborated to develop a 20-question online survey (Appendix 1) designed to address the three research questions. The survey used multiple-choice items (9), Likert-scale items (3), and open-ended questions (1). Survey questions 6 and 13 served to gather information requested by the publisher to better forecast the post-pandemic needs of post-secondary L2 educators in terms of virtual teaching and learning. University Spanish faculty led the design of the survey using SurveyMonkey, and once approved by the AATSP and the publisher, it was sent out via email in March of 2021. Independent-sample *t*-tests and single factor ANOVAs were used to analyze the quantitative data, while the open-ended responses to question 20 were downloaded and analyzed looking for common themes.

*Participants.* A link to the online survey was sent via email to all current and past post-secondary members of the AATSP and to the over 20,000 French, German, Italian, Spanish, and “other” L2 educators throughout the U.S. who use the publisher’s L2 textbooks. In total, 574 L2 educators responded to the survey. The raw data from all 574 respondents was compiled in an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Of the 574 survey responses, 115 (20%) were males, 433 (75.4%) were females, and 26 (4.6%) chose “Other” or “Prefer not to say.” Furthermore, 107 (18.6%) teach at 2-year colleges, while 476 (83%) teach at 4-year colleges and universities. Nine (1.5%) teach at both. In addition, 116 (20.21%) of the respondents teach French, 22 (3.8%) teach German, 42 (7.3%) teach Italian, 417 (72.6%) teach Spanish, and 25 (4.3%) teach other languages. All the responses were fairly well distributed among the L2 proficiency level taught; beginner-level (418), intermediate-level (393), and advanced-level instructors (301), with many respondents teaching more than one level. Finally, of the 574 respondents, the majority (414 or 72.13%) were experienced educators with more than 15 years of teaching experience, 92 (16%) had 10-15 years of experience, 51 (8.9%) had 5-10 years, and 19 (3.3%) had five or fewer years of teaching experience.

## Results

Questions 10 and 11 of the survey asked participants what percentage of their language courses were completed via virtual technology prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 1 shows the differences between the two sets of responses.

### Figures 1 and 2

#### Percentage of Coursework Completed Online Prior to and During the Pandemic

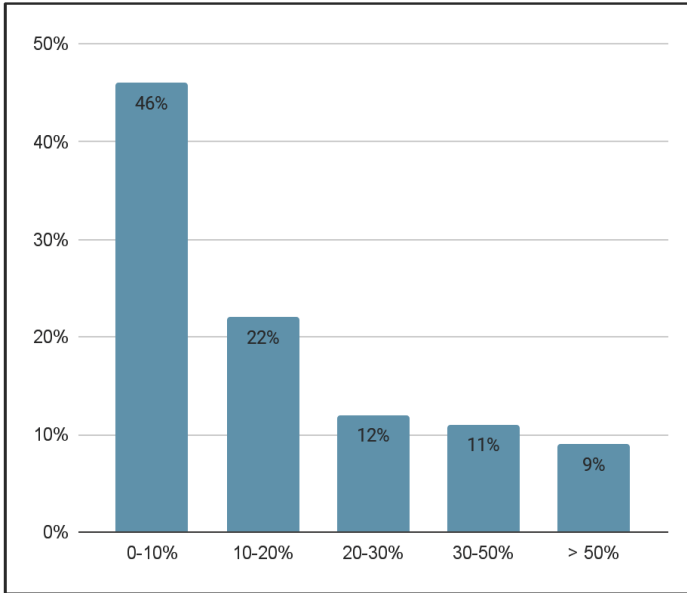


Figure 1: Prior to COVID-19

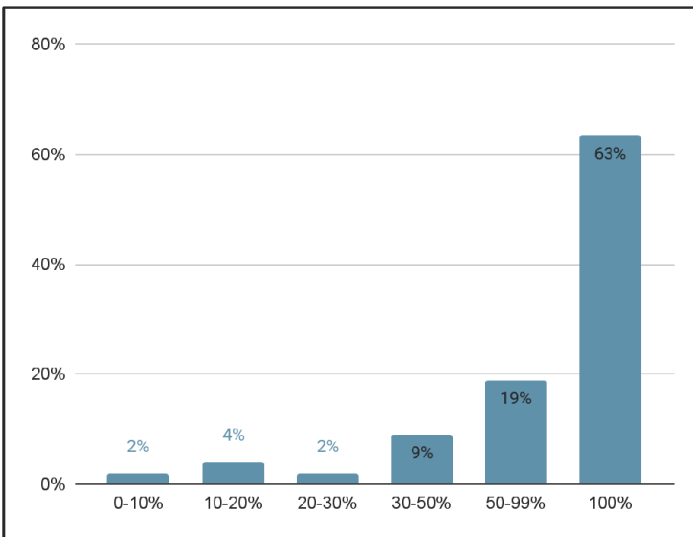


Figure 2: During COVID-19

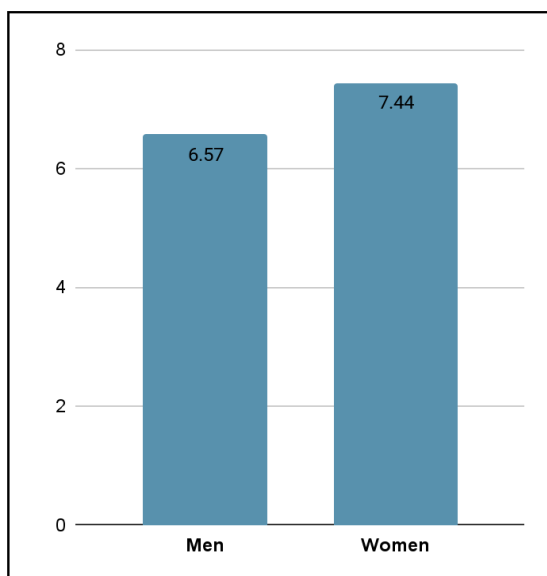
The results from Questions 10 and 11 clearly show a major shift towards an online technology-based teaching environment from the fall of 2019 to the spring 2020 semesters when COVID-19 spread rapidly throughout the world.



Survey question 14 asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 to 10, with ten being the most positive experience, how their experience using virtual technologies during the pandemic changed their perceptions on the use of technology in language instruction. The mean for all participants was 7.2 out of 10 (SD 2.43). However, some significant differences in ratings ( $p < 0.001$ ) were found between men and women respondents (Figure 3), and between 2-year and 4-year college and university respondents ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Figure 4). Surprisingly, there were no statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.67$ ) in the responses to this question between newer L2 educators (0-5 years) and other more experienced educators (5-10, 10-15 and >15 years), or between L2 educators who teach different languages ( $p < 0.7$ ).

**Figure 3**

**Satisfaction (scale 1-10) in using online technology during COVID - men vs. women**

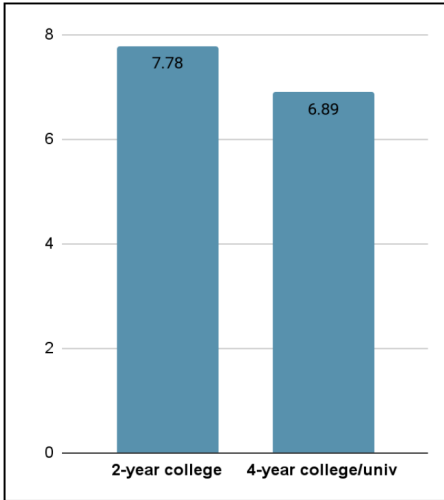


For men, their mean level of satisfaction with using online technology during the pandemic was 6.57 out of 10 (SD 2.63), while women's mean level of satisfaction was 7.44 out of 10 (SD 2.3). According to the single factor ANOVA conducted, there was a significant statistical difference between the two groups ( $p < 0.001$ ) with women having a more positive experience with the use of virtual technology for L2 instruction during the pandemic than men.

When expressing their level of satisfaction with using online technology during the pandemic, two-year college L2 instructors had a mean of 7.78 out of 10 (SD 2.42), while their 4-year college/university colleagues had a mean of 6.89 out of 10 (SD 2.44) (Figure 4). A single factor ANOVA highlights a significant statistical difference between the two groups ( $p < .001$ ). Two-year college educators report a significantly more positive experience with the use of virtual technology for L2 instruction during the pandemic than their 4-year college/university colleagues.

**Figure 4**

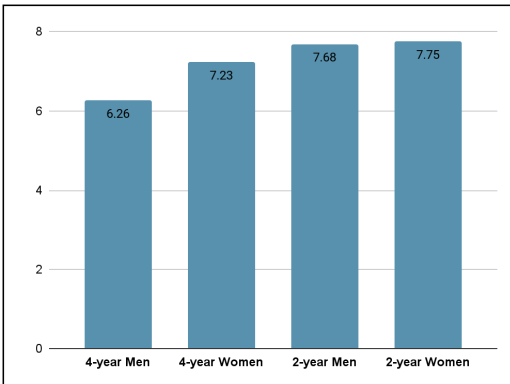
**Satisfaction (scale 1-10) in Using Online Technology During the Pandemic: 2-year vs. 4-year Institutions**



Question 15 of the survey asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 to 10, with ten being *highly useful*, how much they believe that the use of virtual technologies in L2 courses are useful for language learning. The mean rating for all respondents was 7.0 out of 10 (SD 2.45). Again, one-way ANOVA analyses found significant differences in ratings between 2-year and 4-year college/university respondents ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Figure 5), and between men and women ( $p < 0.0001$ ) (Figure 6). Surprisingly, as with the previous question, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses to this survey item between newer L2 educators (0-5 years) and more experienced (> 5 years) instructors ( $p < 0.05$ ), or between L2 educators who teach different languages ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Figure 5**

**Usefulness (scale 1-10) of Virtual Technology for L2 Instruction**

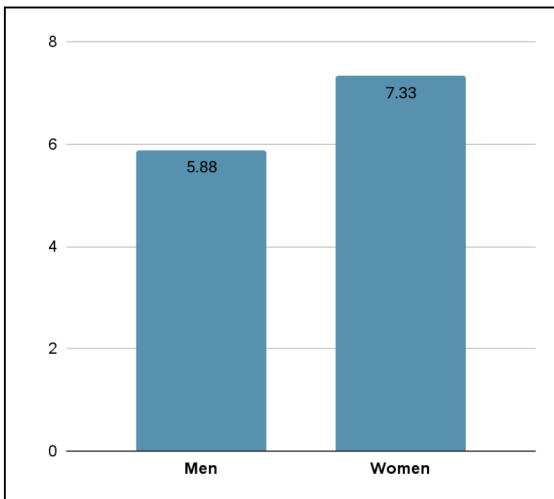


There were, however, significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the responses between instructors at two-year ( $M = 7.71$ ) and at four-year colleges/universities ( $M = 6.74$ ) (Figure 5). Overall, the ratings were favorably high. However, instructors at 2-year colleges gave a more positive rating to the usefulness of virtual technology in L2 instruction than their counterparts at 4-year colleges/universities ( $p < .001$ ).

The largest statistical difference ( $p < .0001$ ) found in the answers to this survey item was between men and women. When asked to rank on a 1-10 scale the usefulness of virtual technology in L2 instruction, the men's mean was 5.88 (SD 2.68) while the women's mean was 7.33 out of 10 (SD 2.3).

**Figure 6**

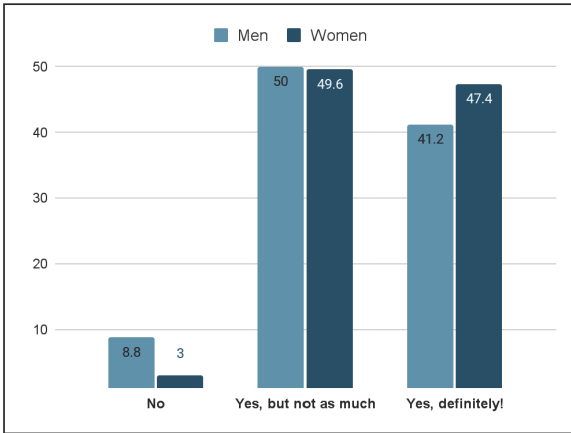
*Usefulness (scale 1-10) of Virtual Technology for L2 Education: Men vs. Women*



To help answer research question three (Do L2 educators in higher education believe there will be more reliance on technology after the global pandemic ends and institutions return to more traditional F2F delivery of instruction?), survey item 16 asked participants whether or not they would continue to use virtual technology in their L2 courses once the pandemic ends and their institutions resume F2F delivery of instruction. Again, as with the previous two questions, there were no statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.67$ ) between the answers provided by newer (0-5 years) instructors and more experienced ones (5-10, 10-15 and >15 years). Unlike the previous two questions, however, men and women gave answers that were not statistically different (Figure 7). However, 47.5% of women stated that they would *definitely* continue using more virtual technology in their courses compared to 41% of men who stated the same, and 8.8% of men stated they would not continue using virtual technology in their courses compared to only 3% of women, continuing with the trend from survey items 14 and 15.

**Figure 7**

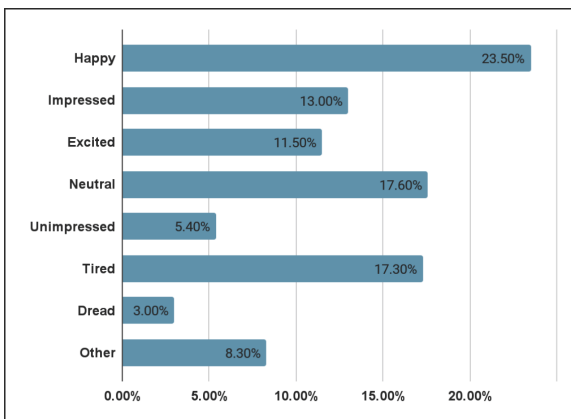
*Continue Using Virtual Technology after the Pandemic: Percentages of Men vs. Women*



Survey Question 17 asked participants to choose one word that best describes their views toward the use of virtual technologies for L2 teaching and learning once the pandemic is over. Survey respondents were given seven different words to choose from, i.e., happy, tired, impressed, unimpressed, excited, dread, neutral, and other. The word that was picked the most (23.5 percent of participants) was *Happy*. The word that was picked the least was also the most negative word, *Dread*. In total, 48% of respondents chose one of the positive words, i.e. happy, impressed, or excited, while 26.4% chose one of the negative words, i.e. unimpressed, tired, and dread. Also, 17.56% of survey respondents chose *Neutral*, and 8.3% provided their own words and phrases, most of which were also positive. Figure 8 below displays a distribution of the words chosen.

**Figure 8**

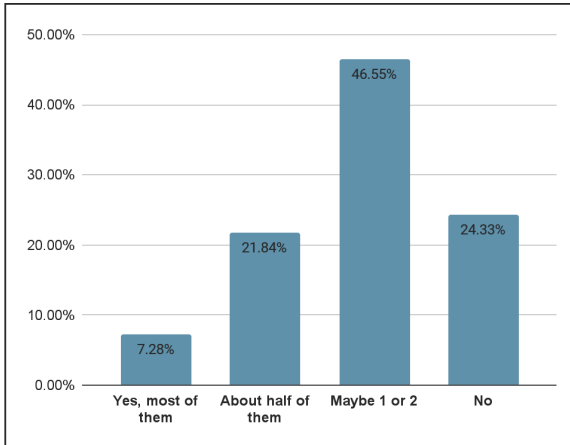
*Words Chosen to Best Describe Educators’ Feelings Toward the Continued Use of Virtual Technology after the Pandemic*



Also, to help answer Research Question 3, Question 18 asked participants whether or not their institutions would continue offering remote learning options for their L2 students. In total, roughly 75% of respondents believed their institutions would continue to offer remote learning options for L2 students (Figure 9). Therefore, most participants anticipated continuing using some form of virtual technologies once the pandemic ends.

**Figure 9**

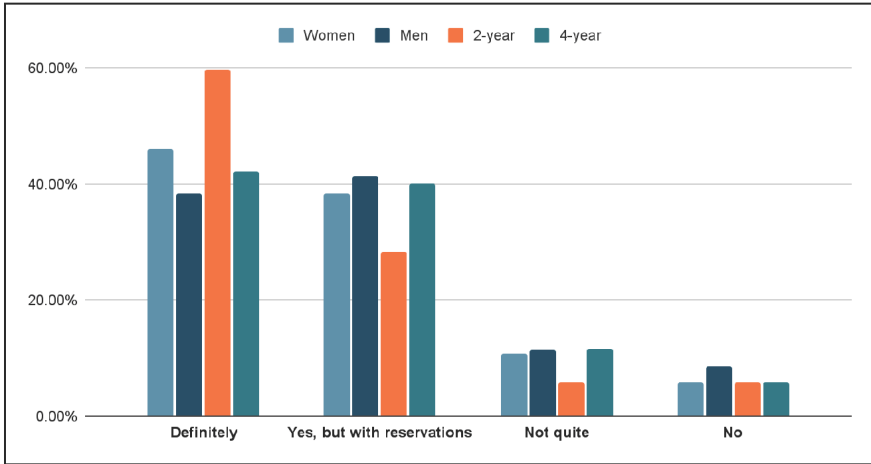
***How Many L2 Courses Will Be Offered Remotely Post-Pandemic***



Finally, the research team turned to Question 19 in their pursuit to fully answer Research Question 3. This item asked participants whether or not they felt ready to embrace more virtual technology in their language classrooms once the pandemic ends. Almost 85% of all respondents said *definitely* or *yes*, while only 17% said *no* or *not quite*. In these answers, there were no statistically significant differences in the responses between men and women; between two-year and four-year institutions, or between French, German and Spanish instructors. However, following the patterns from the prior survey items, women were slightly more inclined to embrace more virtual technology (84.76% responded *Definitely* or *Yes*) than men (79.8% responded *Definitely* or *Yes*), and two-year college instructors again were also slightly more inclined to embrace more virtual technology (88.23% responded *Definitely* or *Yes*) than their four-year college/university peers (82% responded *Definitely* or *Yes*) (Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*Readiness to Embrace More Virtual Technology in the Classroom Post-Pandemic.*



**Discussion**

Much of the feedback provided by the participants in the open comment section of the survey support the feedback received in similar studies (see Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020; MacIntyre, Gregersen and Mercer, 2020; Moser, Wei, and Brenner, 2021; Trust and Whalen, 2020) in that educators who had little to no experience using online educational platforms or teleconferencing technologies found themselves having to quickly learn and transition to these technologies almost overnight while trying to keep their students engaged in their learning as much as possible. Educators who had already adopted some of these technologies in their classrooms, and those who had experience with online learning, were able to handle the transition better than educators who did not. Many L2 educators who depended less on the use of online technology and more on interactive, F2F communicative classroom activities found traditional communicative methodologies to be challenging to do in an online classroom environment without the proper training and experience.

Survey Questions 10, 11 and 12 were aimed to determine roughly what percentage of post-secondary L2 courses shifted from a F2F instruction in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, to a virtual environment during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The findings were fairly predictable, as many school closures were reported not just in the U.S. but throughout the world. Social distancing mandates made it difficult for L2 instructors to continue using the same teaching methodologies they were using pre-pandemic. In addition, many students living with pre-existing health problems or who simply feared exposure to the virus had to remain at home for most of the 2020-2021 academic year, which forced academic institutions to offer, or entirely switch to, remote learning options for students. Hodges et al. (2020) remarked that the campus support teams are usually available to help a small group of faculty with online classes, but due to the quick time frame of everyone going remote, these

support teams could not effectively support all of the faculty in the transition to ERT. Therefore, instructors had to be creative to figure out this transition for their respective classes which can be a factor that causes stress. With a short time frame to transition to remote teaching and a lack of instructional support, many faculty undoubtedly felt overwhelmed in these circumstances as evidenced by the findings of this study.

According to the results from this survey, only 8.6% of respondents were offering more than 50% of their coursework via virtual technology prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. Prior to the pandemic, most study participants (91%) relied on virtual technology for less than 50% of their coursework, and 43.3% stated that zero to ten percent of their coursework had to be completed online (Figure 1). However, during the pandemic in the spring of 2020, almost two thirds (63.36%) of respondents switched 100% of their coursework to an ERT environment. Only 2.1% of participants continued teaching mostly F2F during the 2020-2021 academic year, and roughly 34.5% switched to a hybrid teaching environment where part of the lessons were online and parts were still offered in a classroom (Figure 2). Xu and Jaggars (2013) reported that typical students taking online courses have lower motivation to finish the course than those students in a F2F course. Thus, it is very likely that higher ed L2 students' motivation was negatively affected during the 2020 and 2021 academic years when two thirds of educators switched to 100% remote teaching.

Items 14, 15 and 16 sought to understand how L2 educators in higher education feel about the usefulness and effectiveness of virtual technologies in language education, and whether their previous opinions changed following their teaching experiences in 2020 and 2021 (Research Question 1). Finally, on survey item 16 (if you had to increase your reliance on virtual technology during COVID, once the pandemic is over and your institution resumes traditional F2F teaching, will you continue to use online technologies in your language), 96% of participants responded with *Yes, definitely* or *Yes, but not as much*. Only 24% selected *No*. Thus, from the results of this survey we can infer that the majority of L2 instructors that participated in this survey had a positive experience with the use of virtual technologies in their language courses during the pandemic and are open to continuing the use of some of these technologies in the foreseeable future.

The findings also indicate that both men and women, and instructors at two-year versus four-year institutions differ significantly in their perceptions towards usefulness of technology and ease of use in L2 education, with women having a more positive view of virtual technology than men, and instructors at two-year colleges also having a more positive view of virtual technology than instructors at four-year colleges and universities.

According to Lai and Kuo (2007), gender difference is an important theme in the field of linguistics because it influences the design of curriculum, teaching methodologies, instructional strategies, and students' learning processes. In other fields, the literature on gender differences on the use of technology in the classroom find men tend to favor the use of technology in education more than women (e.g. Fauville et al., 2021; Jamieson-Proctor et al., 2006; Marbán & Mulenga, 2019; Teo et al., 2015; Wiseman et al., 2018; Zhou & Xu, 2007). However, most of the participants in these studies taught in the hard sciences and computing fields, which are disciplines that

traditionally employ more men than women. In the context of L2 teaching, there is a predominance of women, including instructors with varying nationalities and cultural backgrounds, and thus, gender differences in the perceived role of virtual technology and its usefulness in language education may differ from those in the hard sciences and engineering. Guillén-Gámez et al. (2019) for example, found that among L2 teachers in their study, gender “does influence the level of pedagogical digital competence” (p. 1). In their study, Guillén-Gámez et al. found that males had a higher level of confidence in and usage of technology compared to females. They also suggest, however, that this gender gap is becoming less evident with the increased prevalence and importance of digital technologies in society and in higher education.

The participants in this study, however, show that women L2 instructors in higher education have a more positive opinion on the use of virtual technologies in education than men, suggesting perhaps that L2 educators differ from educators in other academic fields in their perceptions on the role of virtual technologies in education. However, according to figures provided by the AATSP, over 68% of language educators in the U.S. are women, compared to only 27% of instructors in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (2020 U.S. Census). More empirical research could determine the role gender plays in the perceived satisfaction with the use of virtual technology in education between different academic fields.

Significant differences emerged in the perceived levels of satisfaction with, and the usefulness of, virtual technology in L2 instruction between two-year college and four-year college/university instructors. Previous research has not fully explored the differences in opinions about the use of virtual technology in education between these two groups. However, since two-year colleges offer more online courses than four-year colleges and universities (Shea, 2007), it is likely that instructors at community or junior colleges simply have more experience teaching online courses, and thus, may have more experience and a more favorable view of virtual technology in education. Xu and Jaggars (2013) have also stated that “most community colleges have already expanded substantial resources to support online learning” (p.55). The key seems to be that some colleges have a support team dedicated to serving its faculty in creating high quality online classes that maintain student engagement. As four-year institutions offer more online courses at reduced prices to remain competitive (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020), it is becoming evident that instructors at these academic institutions must find ways to gain the necessary training and experience in the use of virtual technologies in education to remain relevant in the future. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, one-third of all U.S. college students had some type of online course experience before the pandemic as cited in Gallagher and Palmer (2020). The results from this survey (Figure 9) suggest that this number will likely increase in the coming years following the pandemic.

As far as the differences in opinions between L2 instructors with fewer years of experience (0-5 years) and those with more teaching experience (5-10, 10-15 and >15 years), this study found no significant differences. It is well established that educators’ receptiveness to, and ability to use, virtual technology in the classroom is strongly correlated with their experience and training in the use of technology in education (Cox, 2013). Many older educators did not receive training in the use of modern technology for educational purposes in their academic training, even



though many received this training as part of their in-service professional development. As Cox (2013) states:

[m]ore tenured teachers are different from their younger colleagues in that they did not receive the same quantity of preservice technology integration instruction as part of their teacher education as their younger counterparts. (p. 209)

Despite the common perception that younger educators are savvier with technology in the classroom than more veteran instructors, the present study shows that among post-secondary L2 instructors, there are minimal, non-significant differences in the perceptions of the use of virtual technology in L2 instruction between less experienced instructors and more veteran ones. In addition, no significant differences were found between French, German, and Spanish L2 instructors.

Finally, according to the results of this survey (Figures 7-10), the majority of post-secondary L2 instructors believe that there will be an increased reliance on virtual technologies and remote language teaching and learning in the future. Almost 85% of respondents stated that they will continue using virtual technologies post-pandemic, while only 17% stated they are not quite ready. These results support recent conclusions by Jin et al. (2021) that “U.S.-based college-level world language educators were generally positive about adopting online language teaching in post-pandemic times” (p. 412).

### **Future Research**

Findings from the present study support the argument that women L2 educators at colleges and universities in the U.S. favor the use of virtual technology for remote teaching more than men. However, do L2 educators differ from educators in other academic fields in their perceptions on the role of virtual technologies in education? Do instructors in the STEM fields differ from those in the humanities in their experience with, and use of technology in the classroom? Are there differences between genders within and between these fields? Future research should continue to evaluate the differences in the use of virtual technology in the L2 classroom between the genders and between the different fields of education.

Future research should also focus on the amount of online technology instructors maintain in the classrooms in the post-COVID era. Since many instructors have to find a balance between online teaching and F2F time in the classroom, researching how much instructors are incorporating online technology into their teaching in the post-COVID era and comparing it to how it was in the pre-COVID era would show if there has been a significant shift in methodologies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This would help evaluate the impact the pandemic has had in L2 education and whether or not COVID-19 transformed the way instructors teach second or foreign languages.

### **Conclusion**

It would be an unfair comparison to judge the remote learning instruction that took place during the pandemic to traditional F2F instructional delivery. The speed with which institutions moved their courses from F2F to an online, remote learning

environment was “unprecedented and staggering” (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 2). Campus technology support personnel at academic institutions were not able to offer the same level of support to entire faculties in such a narrow window of time, and faculty members found themselves having to improvise quick solutions in less-than-ideal circumstances during the pandemic (Hodges et al., 2020). This situation caused stress to many educators. The present study, however, showed that this may not be the case for most L2 instructors, or at least not to the extent many may suspect. Overall, according to the results of this survey, the vast majority of post-secondary L2 instructors have a positive view of virtual technology and are ready to embrace more of it in L2 instruction.

Levy et al. (2015) stated that “Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) design is about constructing CALL environments purposefully such that learning does not occur by accident, but through an understanding of the key factors or variables that impact upon it” (p. 3-4). Due to the nature of how fast educators had to transition their classes to online platforms, it is apparent that purposeful design was not always an aspect of this transition. According to Cutri et al. (2020), teachers were tempted to revert back to some predominately teacher-centered pedagogy due to the strain of the pandemic. However, the necessity of the rapid shift away from F2F instruction to remote instruction provided the field with an opportunity to improve current L2 teaching practices. Not only do most post-secondary L2 instructors want to continue using virtual technologies but they have a positive outlook on doing so. As MacIntyre et al. (2020) noted, developing courses that work well in the online environment, however, takes time as well as a special skillset to know how to teach them well. Zhang (2020) mentioned that an exploratory spirit to experiment with pedagogical possibilities in the use of virtual technologies is important in helping to create digital competence. Since the pandemic presented a crisis, expectations for both educators and learners were relaxed to help alleviate the abrupt shift to teaching and learning online and all of the challenges that this unexpected transition presented. As Maggioncalda (2020) stated,

As universities develop their own digital competencies, what has started as a short-term response to a crisis will likely become an enduring digital transformation of higher education (para. 5).

Going forward, institutions should offer digital support and time for instructors to upgrade their skills with digital competencies. Furthermore, institutions of higher education should offer more opportunities for professional development in instructional design and online language pedagogy so that instructors will be better prepared for the next ERT situation.

Institutional support and instructors’ motivation play a role in promoting or inhibiting the development of instructors’ digital competencies (Zhang, 2020). This is crucial since 75% of the participants in this study anticipate the continued use of virtual technology in their classrooms post-pandemic (Figure 9). Some studies at the community college level have shown that instructors feel alone in creating online courses and lack training and continued support (Cox, 2006; Pagliari et al., 2009). This could be cause for some of the disparity that was found between two-year and four-year post-secondary institutions.

As evidenced by the responses to this survey study, 84% of the participants feel ready to embrace the use of more virtual technology in their courses. It is important that educators be provided with time to explore their own virtual technologies that foster meaningful experiences and engagement. As Anderson et. al (2001) stated, “in the process of designing and using these tools, teachers are forced to be learners themselves and like all who experience learning, the learners themselves are changed” (p. 15). It is possible that the pandemic has opened up educators, both novice and veteran, to the advantageous and positive aspect of digital tools. However, how best and how much to incorporate these tools into the classroom is another debate where most educators are striving to find the balance.

According to Zhang (2020), “teachers’ voices about digital language teaching are hardly heard” (p. 37). This study is unique in that it provided L2 educators with an opportunity to indicate their experiences with teaching L2 languages virtually during a pandemic and where they want to go from here. This study revealed that there were some disparities between men and women’s perceptions and attitudes as well as between the types of post-secondary institutions, two-year or four-year. However, this study shows that among all the chaos of the quick transition to ERT, most of the survey respondents have embraced the experience with a positive attitude.

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## Appendix A

### AATSP & Vista Higher Learning Survey

The use of virtual technology during and after COVID-19

#### Demographic questions:

1. Select whether you teach primarily at a 2-year or a 4-year college or university.
  - a. 2-year college
  - b. 4-year university
2. Your gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other
  - d. Prefer not to say
3. Select the language(s) you teach.
  - a. Spanish
  - b. French
  - c. German
  - d. Italian
  - e. Other (specify)
4. Select the level(s) you primarily teach.
  - a. Beginner
  - b. Intermediate
  - c. Advanced
5. How long have you been teaching?
  - a. 0-5 years
  - b. 5-10 years
  - c. 10-15 years
  - d. Over 15 years
6. Which publisher's virtual platform are you using in your course?
  - a. vhlcentral
  - b. WileyPLUS
  - c. Pearson MyLab
  - d. CENTAGE MindTap
  - e. None
  - f. Other (specify)

7. Select the professional language association in which you are a member.
  - a. American Association of Teachers of German
  - b. American Association of Teachers of French
  - c. American Association of Teachers of Italian
  - d. American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese
  - e. None of the above

### **Teaching during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic**

8. During the spring and fall of 2020, which of the following instruction modalities did you primarily use for your language instruction?
  - a. Remote teaching
  - b. In-person teaching
  - c. Blended or hybrid teaching
  - d. Online synchronous
  - e. Online Asynchronous
  - f. Other (specify)
9. Which of the following teaching modalities are you primarily using this spring of 2021?
  - a. Remote teaching
  - b. In-person teaching
  - c. Blended or hybrid teaching
  - d. Online synchronous
  - e. Online Asynchronous
  - f. Other (specify)
10. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what percentage of your language courses was completed via virtual technology?
  - a. 0-10 %
  - b. 10-20 %
  - c. 20-30 %
  - d. 30-50 %
  - e. More than 50%
11. During the COVID-19 pandemic, what percentage of your language courses was completed via virtual technology?
  - a. 0-10 %
  - b. 10-20 %
  - c. 20-30 %
  - d. 30-50 %
  - e. 50-99 %
  - f. 100 %

12. Today, what percentage of your language courses is being completed via virtual technology?
- 0-10 %
  - 10-20 %
  - 20-30 %
  - 30-50 %
  - 50-99 %
  - 100 %

13. How satisfied are you with your publisher's virtual platform?

N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very unsatisfied			Unsatisfied			Satisfied		Very satisfied		

14. On a scale from 1 to 10, how has your experience using virtual technologies during the pandemic changed your perceptions on the use of technology in language education?

N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very unsatisfied			Unsatisfied			Satisfied		Very satisfied		

15. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you believe that the use of virtual technologies in foreign/second language courses are useful for language learning?

N/A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very unsatisfied			Unsatisfied			Satisfied		Very satisfied		

16. If you had to increase your reliance on virtual technology during COVID, once the pandemic is over and your institution resumes normal teaching, will you continue to use online technologies in your language courses?

- Yes, definitely!
- Yes, but not as much
- No

17. Choose one word that best describes your views toward the use of virtual technologies for language teaching and learning after the pandemic.

- Happy
- Tired
- Impressed
- Unimpressed
- Excited
- Dread
- Neutral



- h. Other (please specify)
18. As far as you know, will your institution continue teaching remote language courses after the pandemic ends?
- a. Yes, most of them
  - b. About half of them
  - c. Maybe one or two
  - d. No
19. Do you feel ready to embrace more virtual technology in your language classroom once the pandemic is over?
- a. Definitely
  - b. Yes, but with reservations
  - c. Not quite
  - d. No
20. Please share any other comments you may have below:

# Language Teachers' Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Emergency Remote Teaching

**Jarom Hickenlooper**

*Brigham Young University*

**Teresa R. Bell**

*Brigham Young University*

## **Abstract**

*This study investigates university-level German instructors' perceived advantages and disadvantages of synchronous emergency remote teaching during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic at five universities across the United States. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered by means of an electronic questionnaire from 16 instructors of beginning German regarding their experiences with live remote instruction in 2020. Survey questions centered on the five goal areas of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and online instructional practices. Findings indicate that the language instructors from the sample perceived emergency remote instruction—switching to teaching live online—to be overall more detrimental than advantageous to their students' language learning over the course of the quarantine and subsequent two pandemic semesters. However, the emergency switch to online instruction also afforded these instructors the opportunity to recognize some advantages to online instruction. The emergency nature of the switch to remote teaching revealed principles of resilience and the need for online language pedagogy in professional development. This study has implications for language teachers, administrators, language program directors, and state and district supervisors.*

**Keywords:** *emergency remote teaching, language instruction, virtual language instruction, COVID-19 pandemic, World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, higher education, German, teacher resiliency*

## **Background**

Due to the immediate emergency move from in person to online teaching and learning at the onset of COVID-19 in the United States in March 2020, language teaching and learning have been significantly impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Egbert, 2020; Gacs et al., 2020; Lomicka, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020; Russell, 2020; Troyan et al., 2021). As the pandemic and quarantine necessitated, language instruction has been delivered remotely for at least a portion of the initial academic year at most schools, including the five higher education institutions included in this study. More than 4,200 post-secondary institutions un-

derwent major changes in teaching and learning (The Entangled Group, 2020), and many university-level language programs have taught exclusively remotely through live teleconference meetings (Guillén et al., 2020; Krohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). Before the pandemic, 31.6% of U.S. undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one remote delivery class, about half of which were taking exclusively remote courses (Seaman et al., 2018). However, those distance education enrollments were primarily concentrated at a relatively small number of institutions. In the spring semester of 2020, more than 1,300 colleges and universities cancelled in-person classes or shifted to online-instruction only (Smalley, 2021). Most higher education institutions (89%) employed emergency remote teaching (Johnson et al., 2021). Prior to 2020, many faculty members in higher education had a negative opinion about online teaching (Johnson et al., 2021). Yet, online instruction in the last couple decades has proven effective, with students taking online courses performing better on average than students taking those courses through face-to-face (FTF) instruction (Angiello, 2010). Before the pandemic, most online language instructors were at post-secondary institutions, with 63% of online language learning establishments at four-year public institutions (Murphy-Judy & Johnshoy, 2017). Most online language enrollments were in Spanish, followed by French, German, and Chinese.

Prior to the worldwide pandemic, ample research has explored online language instruction (Blake et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2016; Peterson, 2021; Rubio et al., 2018; Russell, 2020; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Multiple studies observe that language students learn just as well, if not better in online settings as in FTF settings (Aldrich & Money Penny, 2019; Blake et al., 2008; Peterson, 2021; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). Many online learners experience less language anxiety than their peers in FTF classrooms (Pichette, 2009; Russell, 2018). Lee (2016) found that students appreciate synchronous and asynchronous language instruction and perceive it as effective for their language learning. Additionally, Lee concluded that the social presence of synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated communication increased student engagement and motivation and promoted learner autonomy. Rubio et al., (2018) also reported that learners were more engaged with content in remote delivery than FTF. These factors result in positive outcomes as well. Students enrolled in exclusively online Spanish language classes are able to meet national oral proficiency benchmarks and can be held to the same standards of oral proficiency as students in FTF classrooms (Aldrich & Money Penny, 2019). Analyzing oral proficiency with measures of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, and fluency, Money Penny & Aldrich (2016) found no significant difference between proficiency of online and FTF Spanish students, with some data suggesting online students outperformed FTF students in their oral proficiency skills.

Considering emergency remote teaching (ERT) however, Hodges et al. (2020) noted that there is a difference between a forced emergency transfer to online and voluntarily electing to take an already prepared online course. So, while research has shown that FTF language instruction and intentional online delivery have similar outcomes, it is probable that there is a difference in the language learning and instruction experience in regular online courses and the “displacement” to ERT experienced by college and university programs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ross & DiSalvo, 2020, p. 374). This presents a gap in research, as most literature on online

language instruction examines cases where instructors and students elected online courses, rather than being forced to do so (Blake et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2016; Peterson, 2021; Rubio et al., 2018; Russell, 2020).

The sudden emergency transfer to online instruction also factors in a difference in teacher preparation. Many instructors who had to shift to remote teaching had little to no previous experience or training in online teaching. Bay View Analytics found that the number of faculty who taught their first online course between April and December 2020 exceeded the number who did within the decade prior (Johnson et al., 2021). Almost all higher education institutions (97%) had to call on faculty with no prior online teaching experience and a majority of faculty (56%) had to use teaching methods they had never before used. Some language instructors observed that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ability to address and assess communication and on students' ability to use the target language in class (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ramirez et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2021). Students have also experienced increased stress and anxiety, introducing negative affect in language learning contexts (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). Feelings of disconnectedness and social isolation during the pandemic should also be taken into consideration. Social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence are essential aspects of a successful educational community of inquiry (Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported several research findings on the experiences of higher education professors shifting to online teaching during the global pandemic. Troop (2021) reports that in a survey of readers of *The Chronicle's Daily Briefing* and *Academe Today* newsletters, participants reported that of all aspects of the life that the pandemic had changed; primarily they were most "sick of" online meetings, virtual events, screen fatigue, and any transition to virtual conferencing or platforms. Ellis (2021) discussed the extreme strain the pandemic has placed on workers and instructors in higher education, pushing some to even leave the profession. One interview with a professor of classical mythology at the University of Texas highlights specific struggles professors face in online instruction, such as limited engagement with students, the difficulty of facilitating meaningful interaction, and extensive work developing and finding online curriculum and resources (McMurtrie, 2021). This is somewhat contrary to findings from Bay View Analytics, which reported that despite pre-pandemic negative opinions of online teaching and initial uncertainty in spring of 2020, by the fall semester 2020 over 80% of faculty felt prepared to teach online (Johnson et al., 2021). By the end of the year, 51% of faculty reported they had more optimistic opinions about online instruction than before the pandemic. Similarly, 57% of the 1,708 faculty and administrators representing 1,204 different institutions reported they were more optimistic about using digital materials. Only 15% reported their opinions about online teaching had become more pessimistic. While not specifically focused on language instruction, these findings offer valuable data from instructor perspectives during the displacement to online teaching that can inform the present study.

Specific to the field of language learning, several recent studies provided insight and recommendations for online language instruction (Gacs et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021; Russell, 2020; Swanson, 2021; Troyan et al., 2021). Specific recommendations for transitioning to online instruction include (1) directing language instructors to

establish clear communication lines, (2) developing an online learning community, (3) delivering quick and automated feedback to students, (4) developing time management strategies, and (5) being judicious with use of synchronous video conferencing to prevent fatigue (Gacs et al., 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020). However, many of these publications lack qualitative data collected from teachers who made the abrupt switch to ERT during the pandemic. Moser et al. (2021) investigated concrete shifts in practices and perceptions of teachers' instruction during the pandemic, but they did not focus on specific goals for language teaching and learning, and only 21% of their participants taught in post-secondary education. In a large-scale study (n=497) of K-20 language teachers, Swanson (2021) found that language teachers' sense of efficacy was adversely affected during the pandemic, and more than one in five of the language teacher participants considered leaving the language teaching profession due to the pandemic. Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) offered insightful data on the stress generated by the crisis and how different stress responses affect the difficulty and prioritization of language learning, and Morris (2021) found five themes related to teachers' challenges and successes in language teaching during the pandemic—engagement, community, comprehension, balance, and mental health—but none of the themes revealed advantages or disadvantages of remote teaching regarding the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015).

These studies mentioned above offer little data on what specific advantages and disadvantages were presented by ERT. Additionally, none of the studies conducted during the pandemic focused specifically on all five goal areas in ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015)—Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. However, three recent studies focused on two of the five goal areas—Communication and Cultures: (1) Troyan et al. (2021) focused on the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) along with two other core practices for enacting language instruction—backward design and target language use (Glisan & Donato, 2017, 2021); (2) Baumgardt and Ikeda (2021) focused the Cultures goal area and explored ways language teachers can successfully teach culture asynchronously designing interpretive and presentation cultural tasks for students that emphasized products, practices, and perspectives; (3) Swanson (2021) also explored the Cultures goal by investigating teachers' confidence levels in teaching relationships between cultural products and practices and perspectives of the target culture. He found that teachers were about 30% less confident in teaching culture when teaching remotely during the emergency transition.

### Research Questions

The present study investigates the perceived advantages and disadvantages of synchronous emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from 16 German language instructors from five universities evaluating their experiences with synchronous ERT in 2020. The universities are located in California, Utah, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Vermont. The questions of the distributed questionnaire were based on the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015).

The research presented in this article highlights the perceived advantages and disadvantages of online language instruction and can inform future post-secondary synchronous ERT by answering these questions:

1. Do higher-education instructors of beginning German perceive synchronous ERT to be more or less advantageous than FTF instruction before the pandemic?
2. What perceived advantages of synchronous ERT did higher-education instructors of beginning German find, note, and describe?
3. What perceived disadvantages of synchronous ERT did higher-education instructors of beginning German find, note, and describe?
4. What can be learned about effective language instruction and resiliency from the transition to live-remote instruction during the world-wide pandemic, and how can that knowledge be used to improve language instruction?

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Sixteen higher-education German instructors participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 21-57 years old and, at the time of the study, all but one had been teaching two semesters or longer. Higher-education instructors from five universities across the United States participated. Instructors from one medium public research university in the Northeast, one large private research university in the Northeast, one large public research university in the Midwest, one large private research university in the West, and one large public research university in the West were invited to participate because they teach using the *Augenblicke* curriculum. *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts* is an in-class workbook that uses authentic materials, current trends in second-language acquisition theory and research, the *World-Readiness Standards*, and best practices in classroom language instruction to guide students through introductory and intermediate German.

Participants' teaching positions included TAs, adjunct professors, and tenured or tenure-track professors. Participants taught first semester through upper-level German courses. Canvas and Zoom were used for instructional delivery in all courses. Instructors met with their students three times each week for synchronous instruction. None of the participants had received training in instructional design or online language pedagogy.

### ***Data collection***

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed in February and March of 2021 to instructors of beginning German from five universities in various regions of the United States. Responses were only collected from instructors who have taught through synchronous ERT using *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts*.

Questionnaire items were based on the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015) and included ten Likert-scale items and four open ended items. Instructors were asked to evaluate on a five-point Likert-scale how their instruction has been affected by ERT regarding each of the five standards.

Participants were then asked via a free-response question to elaborate on their rating. For example, on the questionnaire one item read as follows: "How has teaching live remote instruction affected opportunities for interacting with the target culture (products, practices, perspectives) in class? (If possible, please share one way this has been enhanced or impaired in the box below.)" Additionally, participants were asked through questionnaire items and free response questions how live remote instruction has affected their ability to use curriculum resources and keep students engaged and motivated. Concluding questions asked participants to describe both an advantage and a disadvantage of live remote instruction.

Results from the Likert-scale responses to each of the five goal areas of the *World-Readiness Standards* (Table 1) and overall teacher effectiveness (Table 2) are presented by questionnaire item. Using grounded theory, free response answers were analyzed and coded for common themes related to aspects of ERT (Tables 3-12).

By assigning a point value to Likert-scale responses (Significantly Impaired = -2; Moderately Impaired = -1; Neither Enhanced nor Impaired = 0; Moderately Enhanced = 1; Significantly Enhanced = 2) and adding these assigned values together, individual participant responses are also evaluated. Through this system, data revealed that only two participants gave more positive responses than negative (one participant with a cumulative score of 1, one participant with a cumulative score of 10), two participants gave more neutral responses overall (with scores of 0), four participants gave moderately more negative responses (scores between -1 and -3), and eight participants gave significantly more negative responses (scores between -4 and -8) ( $M = -2.86$ ).

## Findings

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Overall, the majority of the 16 teacher participants reported that ERT neither enhanced nor impaired their language teaching in the *World-Readiness Standards'* goal areas of Connections (87.5%) and Comparisons (68.75%) (see Table 1). This result is reassuring considering the statistics that most higher education instructors had a negative view of online teaching prior to ERT (Johnson, 2020). The goal areas that were reported to be most impaired by ERT, with attention to the three modes of Communication, were: (1) Communities and Interpersonal Communication, followed by (2) Interpretive Communication and Cultures, and lastly (3) Presentational Communication.

**Table 1*****Instructor Perceptions of Opportunities to Meet the Standards with ERT***

n=16	Significantly enhanced	Moderately enhanced	No change	Moderately impaired	Significantly impaired
Communication: Interpersonal	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	3 (18.75%)	7 (43.75%)	2 (12.5%)
Communication: Interpretive	0 (0%)	3 (18.75%)	8 (50%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0%)
Communication: Presentational	1 (6.25%)	4 (25%)	5 (31.25%)	4 (25%)	2 (12.5%)
Cultures	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	6 (37.5%)	5 (31.25%)	1 (6.25%)
Connections	0 (0%)	1 (6.25%)	14 (87.5%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Comparisons	0 (0%)	2 (12.5%)	11 (68.75%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)
Communities	0 (0%)	3 (18.75%)	5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (6.25%)

The most affected goal area was Interpersonal Communication—56.25% reported that ERT impaired interpersonal communication, 18.75% reported no effect, and 25% reported that ERT moderately enhanced interpersonal communication in class. These statistics are not surprising. In in-person language classes, much of the time is spent speaking in dyads. On Zoom, teachers had to learn how to put students into breakout rooms and how to make use of the chat function for interpersonal communication. Four teachers commented that they had difficulty facilitating interpersonal communication in ERT, eleven considered ERT a disadvantage for having fewer or less effective opportunities for collaboration or group work, but six found engaging students by changing the mode of delivery often to be advantageous for encouraging interpersonal communication among their students.

For the goal area of Communities, 50% of participants agreed that ERT at least somewhat impaired opportunities for students to engage in the target language community. This is not consistent, however, with nearly 20% of the teachers' perceptions regarding the advantages and ease of communicating with native speakers virtually during the quarantine, which makes sense because of the rich opportunities available to virtually connect with target language speakers.

In the Cultures goal area, 25% of participants agreed that ERT moderately enhanced opportunities for interacting with the target culture, yet 37.5% agreed that ERT impaired opportunities, and 37.5% reported no effect. This result is consistent with Swanson's 2021 study that found that teachers were 30% less confident in teaching culture remotely during ERT. Three teachers commented that teaching about cultural products during ERT was difficult, one commented that there were fewer opportunities to discuss culture, yet one commented that teaching about cultural products and practices was better during the quarantine semester.

For Interpretive Communication, 50% reported no effect, 31.25% reported that moderate impairment, and 18.75% reported moderate enhancement. Four teachers commented that teaching listening was more difficult during ERT. Using the *Augen-*



*blicke* curriculum, listening and reading are integrated into class activities and homework, so it makes sense that most teachers reported no effect or moderate enhancement.

Presentational Communication was the least impaired standard where 31.25% of respondents reported that ERT enhanced presentational communication, 25% reported no effect, yet 37.25 reported impaired ability to meet this standard. To explain no effect and enhanced presentational communication, one teacher commented that they were able to find ways to accommodate presentations through Zoom and pre-recorded videos, two perceived that students felt more comfortable presenting virtually, two perceived that students were able to be more creative with online presentations and another two perceived saving time on student presentations.

Teacher's Perceptions of their overall teaching effectiveness during ERT revealed some concerns. The ability to keeping students engaged during ERT was reported to be impaired by 77% or participants. Keeping students motivated was reported to be impaired by 62.5% of participants, whereas using department resources seemed to be slightly enhanced (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

***Instructor Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness with ERT***

n=16	Significantly enhanced	Moderately enhanced	No change	Moderately impaired	Significantly impaired
Using department resources	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)
Keeping students engaged	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (18.75%)
Keeping students motivated	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	4 (25%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (6.25%)

***Thematic Analysis***

Using grounded theory, the researchers discovered common themes from the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. Themes emerged through the reading and grouping all of the survey responses. First, data were coded initially for general categories in language teaching. Second, categories were identified more specifically in relation to the topic of the study: live remote vs. traditional beginning language classes. Ten categories were created from the initial coding: (1) assessment, (2) attendance, (3) learning about the target culture, (4) feedback and teacher-student relationship, (5) material presentation, (6) preparation and planning, (7) presentation quality, (8) student engagement and participation, (9) technological difficulties or limitations, and (10) time management. In the second round of coding the responses, sub-categories for major categories were identified (see Tables 3-12) for results of all ten themes). Each coded response was further classified as either a perceived advantage or perceived disadvantage of live-remote instruction.

**Assessment****Table 3*****Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction Pertaining to Communication***

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Attendance	Student being able to attend from anywhere	-	4
	Teachers being more available to hold class	-	1
	Difficult to motivate students to come	2	-
Total		2	5

**Advantages.** Only one response regarding assessment was coded as a perceived advantage. The participant discussed faster and easier access to students' writing using digital whiteboards and collaborative presentations. It is pertinent to note that two other responses mentioned it is easier to have the students write in the chat than on the whiteboard but did not explicitly mention assessment. All instructors used chat, whiteboard, and Canvas.

**Disadvantages.** Four comments were coded as perceived disadvantages in assessment. These consist of two sub-categories: being unable to listen to as many groups and difficulty checking assignments and understanding. The primary challenge mentioned is the inability to listen into multiple groups simultaneously in breakout rooms. The online format in general also presented challenges. One instructor experienced "Impaired ability to discern if students really understand the material or are even paying attention."

**Attendance****Table 4*****Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Attendance***

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Attendance	Student being able to attend from anywhere	-	4
	Teachers being more available to hold class	-	1
	Difficult to motivate students to come	2	-
Total		2	5

**Advantages.** Five instances of perceived advantages pertaining to attendance were identified. Respondents commented on students, and even instructors, being able to attend class from anywhere. This included students away on vacation or stu-

dents and instructors too sick to attend campus, but well enough to join through live-remote delivery. An example is found in the following quote: "I was still able to hold class even when I was sick and could not find a sub (even conducting one class where I only communicated with students through chat and PowerPoint slides because I could not talk!)."

**Disadvantages.** Two comments of perceived disadvantages relating to attendance were identified. Both referenced difficulties motivating student to attend class. One participant commented, "Some students were very motivated and had good relationships with other classmates, but some students would not come to class for weeks on end. That sometimes also happens in person, but it seemed more extreme or more common online." Another instructor remarked that watching recorded classes after an absence can never replace the real-time interaction essential to a language learning classroom.

**Cultural Engagement**

**Table 5**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Cultural Engagement**

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Cultural Engagement	Easily share cultural products and practices	-	2
	Native speakers & guest speakers more accessible	-	4
	Not able to hold club activities	2	-
	Less opportunities to discuss culture	1	-
	Difficulty sharing cultural products	3	-
	Total	6	6

**Advantages.** Analysis revealed six cases of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction for cultural engagement in the comments. Four of these cases discussed native and guest speakers in class. "Because we aren't able to visit with German speakers in the community, we have begun connecting with them via Skype or Zoom or email." In two other instances, instructors explained live-remote delivery allowed them to easily share cultural products and practices by displaying them digitally.

**Disadvantages.** There were also six instances of disadvantages of live-remote instruction for cultural engagement. Two mentioned the inability to hold club activities, due to the pandemic. "We used to do so many hands-on activities for culture, Oktoberfest, Christmas activities, food in general, and that is all but gone." This was more a consequence of the pandemic in general than live-remote instruction itself, but another instance also indicated that there are fewer opportunities to discuss culture on the online setting because students were asking less questions. In contrast to

the previously mentioned cases on the ease of sharing cultural products online, three comments expressed difficulty sharing cultural products outside of a FTF context.

### *Feedback and Student-Teacher Relationships*

**Table 6**

***Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Teacher-Student Feedback & Relationship***

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Teacher-Student Feedback & Relationship	Difficulty having interpersonal communication	4	-
	Difficulty learning listening or learning pronunciation	4	-
	Difficulty connecting and building relationships	4	-
	Difficulty delivering feedback	3	-
	Less flexibility during instruction	1	-
	Total	16	0

**Disadvantages.** Participants only shared perceived disadvantages regarding feedback and relationships between students and the instructor. Sub-category coding uncovered sixteen total occurrences of perceived disadvantages. Four specifically mentioned difficulty connecting and building a relationship with students. One instructor wrote, “The students do feel further away and additionally mediated, which has made it moderately more difficult to connect.” Four indicated challenges with interpersonal communication between instructors and students. Another four commented on students’ difficulty hearing and learning pronunciation from the instructor. Impaired feedback delivery was also a notable sub-category, with three mentions of students’ difficulty receiving or understanding feedback. One comment indicated how one instructor perceived their classroom interaction with students were impaired through less flexibility to “go off quick tangents” due to the structured nature of online presentation with PowerPoint presentations.

Along these lines, it is up to instructors to build teaching, social, and cognitive presence in their online courses. When there is presence, students can be actively engaged in a community of language practice through student-student, student-teacher, and student-content interaction (Russell, 2020). Presence also helps hinder students’ perceptions of social isolation and disconnectedness. But without knowledge of online pedagogy, the teacher participants in this study did not know how to build those three types of presence in their courses.

**Preparation and Curriculum Resources**

**Table 7**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Preparation & Curriculum Resources**

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Preparation & Curriculum Resources	Collaborating with other teachers for curriculum	-	1
	Emphasis on technology encouraging using more resources	-	1
	Forcing instructors to be more thorough in preparation	-	2
	Having frustrations with course management system	1	-
	Total	1	4

**Advantages.** Four comments were coded as perceived advantages for preparation and resources. The pandemic and sudden shift to live-remote delivery worked positive effects on instructors planning. Two comments demonstrate how instructors were forced to be more thorough in their preparation. “I had to adapt some of my activities to breakout rooms, but sometimes that meant making my instructions simpler and clearer.” “It made me more organized and plan my lessons very carefully with back-up plans for technology glitches.” Emphasis on technology and collaboration also encouraged discovering and using more resources. One instructor wrote, “I feel like teaching virtually has allowed all of us teaching the same course to work more closely together to use the curriculum better. We’ve found many helpful resources to use.”

**Disadvantages.** Only one response demonstrated a perceived disadvantage of live-remote instruction regarding preparation and curriculum resources. In this case the instructor expressed frustrations with the course management system (Canvas).

**Presentation of Material****Table 8*****Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Presentation of Material***

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Presentation of Material	Easily share cultural products and practices	-	1
	Easily display materials	-	3
	Difficulty with film streaming	3	-
	Displaying and saving annotations	-	2
	Students able to better see and hear materials.	-	1
	Difficulty or limitations w/ whiteboard, project PPTs, etc.	2	-
Total		5	7

**Advantages.** Seven occurrences of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction regarding presentation of material were identified. One mentioned how it relatively easy it can be “to share quick [cultural] bits,” and another claimed that students could sometimes hear and see audiovisual material better with their laptops. Three instructors pointed out the ease of displaying other materials and documents, and two described the advantage of displaying and saving live annotations.

**Disadvantages.** Five coded cases described perceived disadvantages in presentation of material with live-remote instruction. Two expressed difficulty or limitations with displaying materials, especially switching back and forth from one Power-Point to whiteboard to displaying the student workbook.

**Student Engagement and Participation**

**Table 9**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Student Engagement & Participation**

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Student Engagement & Participation	Difficulty monitoring students	8	-
	Students forced to be engaged working on their own, tasks	-	2
	Less distracted by side-talking	-	2
	Engaging students by changing modes of delivery, break out rooms, chats	-	6
	Engaging students with shared media in small classes	-	1
	Students more distracted at home (videogames, roommates)	7	-
	Watching all students in small classes	-	1
	Students participating less in class	8	-
	Students rely too heavily on resources	1	-
	Having fewer/less effective opportunities for collaboration & group work	11	-
	Experiencing "Zoom fatigue"	3	-
	Not observing "Zoom fatigue"	-	1
	Total		38

**Advantages.** A total of thirteen instances of perceived advantages of live-remote delivery in student engagement and participation were identified. The sub-category including the most comments (six) was engaging students by using various modes of delivery, including break-out rooms and the chat function. One instructor explained, "I'm much more likely to change things up more frequently when teaching virtually. In our department, we try to change the mode of delivery teaching

using Zoom every few minutes to keep students engaged. We've learned to engage students by requiring them to participate more frequently in the chat or in breakout rooms with clearer assignments."

Similarly, two other comments highlighted the idea that student engagement was improved as students were compelled to be engaged as they were busy with tasks and had to work more on their own. "I think the fact that it is online, and it is harder for students to ask each other for help in the middle of activities sometimes forces them to figure it out themselves." Keeping students busy also helped keep them on task. "I'm sure students were sometimes off-task when online, but they almost always had to be doing something with their computer or talking to others, which I think made it more difficult to do non-class tasks." Additionally, two comments from participants pointed out that the live-remote delivery format eliminated distractions of "side-talking" with other peers.

Two different sub-categories included the aspect of small classes in their coded comments. One instructor wrote, "we seem to be able to keep everyone engaged in the lesson easier than in FTF classes. When my classes are small enough, it's really quite easy to see what everyone is doing all the time! I kind of really like this." Another observed that students are more likely to pay attention to shared media than in FTF classes.

**Disadvantages.** There were 38 total occurrences of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction in regarding student engagement and participation. Seven comments indicated that students are more distracted at home, for example by video games or roommates. On a related note, eight samples expressed difficulty monitoring students. "It is nigh-on impossible to make sure students are engaged all the time. Whereas in a class students would never be able to check their phones, in a virtual classroom, even with their screens on, you never know if they have multiple tabs or windows open." Instructors had difficulty determining if students were paying attention or really understanding the material.

Eight occurrences explained students participate less in class in live-remote delivery. "Some students are less likely to share thoughts online vs in class." Instructors also perceived live-remote delivery to be disadvantageous for communication between students. Eleven occurrences discussed having fewer or less effective opportunities for collaboration and group work. "Because students cannot interact with each other directly and immediately as in in-person settings, interpersonal communication was largely impaired. Even with breakout rooms on Zoom, one group cannot directly interact with another group." This additionally affected the community building in the classroom. "Again, better this semester, but I've done more community building work, and we still feel further from one another. Usually, I find community building incredibly easy in language classes!!" And while one instructor pointed out that greater isolation encouraged greater individual engagement, another comment claimed that with "less negotiation, students seem to have less trust in their own ability to internalize a word, more reliance on online translation services and dictionaries."

Three instances were identified noting "Zoom fatigue" as a challenge in live-remote delivery. However, one participant indicated they did not notice any "Zoom fatigue."



**Student Presentations**

**Table 10**

***Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Student Presentations***

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Student Presentations	Students feeling more comfortable presenting	-	2
	Having more agency to be creative with online presentations	-	2
	Presenters unable to connect with audience	1	-
Total		1	4

**Advantages.** Four total cases of perceived advantages of live-remote delivery regarding student presentations were identified. Two indicated that students feel more comfortable presenting in the online format. Another two discussed how live-remote delivery provides more agency for students to be creative with online presentations.

**Disadvantages.** Only one case of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction was identified. The comment indicated that in the online format, student presenters, like instructors, have difficulty connecting with the audience.

**Technological Difficulties and Limitations**

**Table 11**

***Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Technological Difficulties and Limitations***

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Technological Difficulties and Limitations	Internet stability issues	3	-
	Struggling with technology	1	-
Total		4	0

**Advantages.** Four total instances of technological difficulties and limitations as perceived disadvantages were identified. Three comments discussed internet stability issues as an impairment. One comment expressed an instructor's frustration from struggling with using the technology.

## Time Management

Table 12

### *Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Time Management*

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Time Management	Saving time w/ break our rooms	-	2
	Saving time on presentations	-	2
	Saving time on transitions	-	1
	Saving time with the chat	-	1
	Losing time on transitions and break out rooms	5	-
	Total	5	6

**Advantages.** Six total cases of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction were identified. Most comments of perceived advantages involved saving class time. Two comments attributed saved time to break-out rooms, two to presentations, one to transitions. One instructor described their class student presentations as follows. “Students present projects by recording themselves and uploading the video to Canvas. Students watch other students’ videos and comment on them. This way, we don’t need to take two or three full class periods to allow each student to present!” An additional comment expressed preference to using the chat over a physical whiteboard in FTF.

**Disadvantages.** Five cases of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction were identified. All described losing class time to transitions and break-out rooms.

## Discussion

This study investigated advantages and disadvantages language instructors in post-secondary perceived in their experience with live-remote instruction during the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. Participants completed a questionnaire answering to what degree the pandemic affected the integration of each of the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* (NSCB, 2015) in their language classes. Quantitative data showed that on the whole, instructors perceived more impairments than disadvantages; however, given the limited number of participants, this finding should be interpreted with caution. Qualitative data from written responses by participants revealed detailed aspects of live-remote delivery, which were perceived as harmful or helpful.

Studies have found teacher perceptions of impairment in the areas of student engagement, interaction, and focus during the pandemic (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Troyan et al., 2021). Instructors also perceived student struggles, namely, decreased personal connection, desire to attend class, and diminished ability to understand feedback. As mentioned in literature review, this may be more a result of lack of presence than from ERT itself (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

Some data confirm the conclusion from Troyan et al. (2021) that instructors' ability to assess student learning was negatively impacted during the pandemic. However, another comment extracted from qualitative data aligns closer with the conclusion from Castillo et al. (2016), that educators can monitor students' progress easier online: "Using digital whiteboards and collaborative PowerPoint presentations, I have had faster and easier access to students' writing." And while some existing literature and responses in this study provide evidence of less student engagement and participation, there is also evidence that students are more engaged with content in remote instruction (Rubio et al., 2018). In the context of smaller classes, one participant observed that "the students are more likely to pay attention to media shared as part of a lecture. In live classes they often will get on their phone, but here they pay better attention." Thus, research literature and evidence on student engagement in live-remote language instruction during the pandemic is mixed, indicating that more research on student engagement in online learning contexts is needed.

Russell (2020) noted that student anxiety may be a primary factor in the absence of student engagement, and she offers suggestions instructors can employ to help reduce student anxiety. Instructors can encourage students to express their fears, engage students in relaxation techniques, post frequent messages of motivation, create student support groups on conversational discussion boards, and establish online tutoring and virtual office hours (Russell, 2020). Two instructors in the present study observed that students were even more comfortable when presenting online versus FTE, and some instructors adapted the format of student presentations to pre-recorded videos that they post for classmates to view. Given the perceived comfort of students posting and watching classmates' videos online by two teachers in this study, it is important to keep in mind that Russell (2020) explained that student anxiety can be just as high when making posted videos as when giving live presentations.

Another relevant factor of ERT is Zoom fatigue. There is evidence that Zoom fatigue during live-remote instruction can impair student engagement. Instructors need to be judicious with their use of synchronous videoconferencing to prevent fatigue (Krohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020) and encourage engagement. By switching types of activities every few minutes and talking with students about their levels of different types of fatigue (emotional, motivational, visual, social, and general) (Fauville et al, 2021), teachers can help students identify and navigate potential types of fatigue. Regarding Zoom fatigue, one instructor in this study commented:

As a teacher, it's important to lead by example and admitting that Zoom fatigue is real and being open about attempts to combat it are a way of leading by example. I think breakout rooms helped a lot, and when I taught during Spring term, I made sure that, roughly 50-60 minutes into class, students would take a break, walk around, and be active so as to reduce Zoom fatigue.

Guillén et al. (2020) offer ideas for real interactive communication and reduction of Zoom fatigue, such as relying less on computers and more on cellphones for tutorial, content, creation, and communication. Despite Zoom fatigue, interacting synchro-

nously does help increase student motivation and thus is preferable to on-demand delivery (Gunes, 2019).

Written comments from participants also clearly demonstrated an impairment in the relationship and connection between the instructor and student. This is concerning, especially considering the importance of the role of the teacher in language learning classes (Rubio et al., 2018). Instructors employing effective strategies such as teacher modeling, scaffolding, and implicit and explicit corrective feedback are essential for boosting learner autonomy in a meaningful and effective way in online instruction (Lee, 2016). Lomicka (2020) suggests that language instructors can generate better connectivity by being present, being authentic, and interacting with their language learners. Additionally, in the live-remote instruction format, it is important for the instructor to be visible, establish clear communication lines, organize an online learning community, take advantage of quick and automated feedback, and teach students successful online learning strategies (Gacs et al., 2020).

Though live-remote instruction presents challenges, instructors can be successful as they adapt to the situation, modify their role, and develop time-management strategies (Castillo et al., 2016; Gacs et al., 2020). Educators need to gain the necessary technological skills, and institutions need to provide that technology training (Castillo et al., 2016; Chambless et al., 2021; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020; Ramirez et al., 2021). Most of all, to be successful, instructors must shift their thinking and not just try to replicate FTF design in a virtual format (Carr, 2014; Ramirez et al., 2021; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). With the sudden emergency shift to online instruction in March of 2020, teachers were not prepared for the online teaching environment, and many had no knowledge of or professional development in instructional design and online language pedagogy (Chambless et al., 2021; Ramirez et al., 2021). Gacs et al. (2020) and Russell (2020) point out that there was not sufficient time, training, or resources to prepare instructors and students to have a successful, low anxiety learning experiences. This lack of training likely impacted their experiences and effectiveness in the online environment.

The distinguishing feature of this study is that all the data gathered are perceptions of the instructors themselves, prompted by questions structured by the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning*. These instructors were forced to teach online and were teaching students who had not anticipated taking the course online. Thus, not having opted to teach online in this case, the participants in this study may offer unique perspectives and may be more candid about the challenges of online instruction. Most of all, this study provides insight into perceptions of online instruction. Prior to the pandemic, few teachers had positive perspectives of online language instruction (Moser et al., 2021). Educators tend to have “deep-seated doubts” about the efficacy of online instruction (Blake et al., 2008, p. 114). There is a stigma of online learning being inferior (Hodges et al., 2020) and it is possible that personal bias could influence teachers to use live-remote delivery as a “scapegoat” to explain lower student motivation or not meeting objectives (Moser et al., 2021).

The importance of perception is evident in the study by Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practitioners:

This study also suggests that what some participants perceived as stressors triggering a crisis, others viewed as beneficial. This observation seems applicable for the pandemic in general as well as for some specific issues that became concerns due to the pandemic. While many students and teachers were scared, frustrated, and challenged by the pandemic and all its repercussions, others felt less stress as they enjoyed a more relaxed and less-structured approach to study, work, and family life. (p. 152)

Beyond interpretation of stressors, appraisal of experiences with live-remote instruction could influence perception of outcomes. It is important to note that although most teacher participants perceived live-remote instruction during the pandemic to be more disadvantageous than beneficial for language instruction, assessments from before the pandemic and during the pandemic at one of the included universities indicate no difference in student proficiency levels at the end of first-semester German and second-semester German courses before, during, and after remote learning during the pandemic. If the perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction shared by instructors in this study are valid, then either instructors were somehow able to overcome challenges, or these instructors were able to learn some practices with live-remote instruction that were equally or more beneficial and able to compensate for perceived challenges. The adaptability and resiliency of the instructors in such a crisis make a difference.

Comments in qualitative analysis indicate potential resilient and non-resilient mind-sets from instructors. For example, comments coded as perceived advantages for preparation and curriculum resources demonstrate how the crisis at first challenged instructors, but then encouraged them to find new resources and be more thorough in their planning. In this way, instructors resiliently used a challenge as an opportunity to improve the quality of their instruction. The extracted sample quoted above detailing solutions for Zoom fatigue also show a resilient mind-set, where the instructor found solutions rather than only seeing challenges. One instructor exemplified a resilient mind-set with this general perspective on live-remote instruction: "I feel that achieving the same standards through live remote instruction as in-person instruction is harder, but attainable. It requires the right mindset and motivation from both the student and the teacher." Another instructor, with the same prompt, answered with simply, "Just ready for it to end!" demonstrating a more rigid and less resilient perspective. When instructors approached the challenge of live-remote with a resilient mindset, they were able to find resources that may have already been available before, but which were only discovered or utilized in response to the crisis. "In some ways virtual instruction allowed me to involve the target language community more (having native speakers join the class for an activity for example) but it could be argued that those opportunities already existed when teaching in-person, I just didn't utilize them." This demonstrates how instructors are able to learn, grow, and adapt in the face of—or by virtue of—a crisis or necessitated adjustments. The flexibility that instructors developed will likely be instrumental in improving the quality of post-pandemic education (Johnson et al., 2021).

To emerge out of the worldwide pandemic resiliently, it is critical that we carefully examine what we have learned, and consider what advantages live-remote

instruction during the pandemic has offered, and how those can be implemented in the future to improve language instruction. By focusing on the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, this study offers unique insight on culture and presentational communication. Instructor comments in this study highlight the importance of cultural engagement at club events and reveal the potential for sharing cultural products through incorporating online resources and inviting native guest speakers through videoconferencing. However, one advantage is that the *Augenblicke* German workbook, like many other instructional materials, is apparently very adaptable to online settings as explained by one participant: “The materials in *Augenblicke* are fabulous in [respect to interacting with the target culture in class], and we integrate additional projects and online work into the courses. This remains the case, and has transitioned quite well to online instruction, better I imagine than other textbooks I’ve used.” Further, live-remote or electronically posted student presentations have the potential to save invaluable class time, reduce presentation anxiety, and offer students greater autonomy to exercise their creativity.

Evidence of reduced student engagement and impaired interpersonal communication calls attention to the importance of sharing physical space for immediate and active interaction in the language learning classroom. This reflects the importance of presence in an educational community as emphasized by Garrison and Akyol (2013). However, FTF is not the only or definitively most advantageous method for language learning. For example, online resources can be used to monitor student learning. Especially in live-remote instruction formats, it is crucial that instructors find new ways to interact more frequently with students. Multiple comments hinted that smaller class sizes experience less impairment in live-remote delivery. Further research could be conducted to determine the ideal size for live-remote instruction classrooms.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research and Teaching**

The main limitations of this study include a small number of participants, the focus on only instructors of beginning German, and the focus on only instructors teaching beginning German using a certain curriculum. Even though this study was limited to German-teaching instructors and has few participants, it highlights important principles in language instruction in general and presents a framework for training language instructors to be prepared for online instruction.

Additional research exploring the extent to which instructors in post-secondary education incorporate the Connections goal by bringing other disciplines in instruction and class content would be of interest to the language teaching profession. The ambivalence of responses regarding drawing connections to other disciplines in class could indicate insufficient attention given to that standard. Perhaps instructors did not perceive any impairment or advantage to connection to other disciplines in live-remote instruction because it is seldom practiced anyways. One of only two comments regarding connections on the questionnaire address this possibility: “I have never been good with [drawing connections to other disciplines] in general unless you could use authentic texts.” This comment corroborates research on the Connections goal area. Miller (2019) also observed that students do not incorporate connections into their language goals, which again points to the possibility of language instructors placing insufficient emphasis on the standard. Though collegiate students

tend to be excited about drawing connections to other disciplines in language learning (Crane, 2016), Connections and Communities goal areas of the standards have received less attention in research and professional dialogue (Trojan, 2012; Bell, 2014). One way for language teachers to draw connections to other disciplines is to study Wagner et al.'s (2019) interdisciplinary approach to guiding language students to become intercultural citizens. The following quote from a participant illustrates that even though she lacked training in online teaching, she imagined ways online teaching could be effective for students joining class FTF or remotely:

I would love to see the idea of a blended classroom develop and be researched, i.e., a classroom where some students are physically in the classroom, whilst others are attending via Zoom. I imagine a teacher providing the instruction and catering for the physically present class, with a TA monitoring the Zoom call to ensure that questions posed by students in the Zoom classroom are not missed, and that the tech is running smoothly. Something like that would make learning more accessible for more students.

This participant understands that making language learning more accessible to students is the ultimate goal. What she did know already know is that this very model she described already exists and has been and is still being used by many K-12 schools and universities before and throughout the pandemic—it is called HyFlex, and there are already research studies that investigate the effectiveness of HyFlex in teaching languages (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021; Taylor, 2021; Tolosa-Casadont, 2021). HyFlex is a combination of hybrid (a combination of both online and FTF teaching and learning activities) and flexible (a choice for students to attend FTF or online) that allows learners to choose how they participate in classes (Beatty, 2014).

Just as flexibility will become a hallmark of post-pandemic language instruction and learning (Johnson et al., 2021), a continued focus on the training for hybrid instruction is recommended as more of higher education shifts to remote teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a stress test, particularly in the field of education, and this study highlights how perceptions can influence resiliency in the face of a crisis. Even when not facing an actual crisis, the ever developing and changing nature of technology, language learners, and novel research on best pedagogical practices will require instructors to demonstrate resilience and ability to adapt and develop their own skills and practices.

As demonstrated by responses of teacher participants in this study, there is a great need for professional development for in-service WL teachers and the incorporation of instructional design and online language teaching pedagogy into the WL teacher education curriculum (Chambless et al., 2021; Ramirez et al., Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Chambless et al. (2021) state that even though nationally recognized pre-service WL education programs require teacher candidates to “use technology and adapt and create instructional materials for use in communication” (ACTFL, 2015) and to use technology to connect students with native speakers and to integrate authentic text, the overall inference is that technology will be used to “supplement rather than supplant instruction” (p. 221). In order to prepare language teachers to succeed, the cursory focus on technology must be revised. In light of re-

cent experiences with ERT, Chambless et al. (2021) suggest six critical considerations along with practical action steps to make modifying existing teacher preparations program manageable. These considerations are: (1) beliefs about online language learning, (2) principles of effective online courses, (3) applying principles of design to online WL classes, (4) theory-to-practice connections, (5) learner affect, and (6) conditions for learning (Chambless et al., 2021).

In addition to the consideration offered by Chambless et al. (2021), Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) and Ramirez et al. (2021) have written entire books to assist language teachers in becoming effective online language teachers. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) present a comprehensive and practical approach to creating, developing, and teaching online, flipped, or blended language classes. In addition to providing a multitude of information and resources, the authors explain results and implications of sound research studies to help online language instructors “create more meaningful, effective, and enjoyable learning experiences for their students and themselves” (p. 256). In addition, Ramirez et al. (2021) address all aspects of online teaching and learning and include information on moving courses online, training teachers, developing core competencies and skills, assessing and self-evaluating, setting goals, and normalizing online teaching practices. They include several checklists for training and assessment, evaluation of online instruction training and assessment, and performance rubrics.

Finally, even though almost all the focus of providing online teacher training is for in-service WL teachers and preservice teachers candidates, professors and TAs in language, literature, and linguistics departments should also be incentivized to participate in similar professional development.

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## Appendix A.

### Questionnaire.

Responses will be collected anonymously and will have no effect on your employment or standing with your college. Expected duration: 10-15 minutes

Q1 What German course(s) do you teach? Mark all that apply.

- German 101/German I
- German 102/German II
- German 201/German III
- German 202/German IV
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 Do you currently teach a German course online? If so, which?

- No
- Yes (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3 Have you taught a German course online in the past? If so, which? When did you teach this course online?

- No
- Yes. (Please specify which course and when taught.) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 How much language teaching experience do you have?

- Less than 1 semester
- 1-2 semesters
- More than 2 complete semesters

Q7 Have you taught in-person before?

- Yes
- No

Q8 If you have taught in-person, did you teach the same course?

- Yes. (Please specify which course(s)): \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Q9 Do you use the *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts* curriculum for beginning German courses?

- Yes
- No

Q10 For which courses do you use *Augenblicke*? Mark all that apply.

- First semester
- First quarter
- Second semester
- Second quarter
- Third semester
- Third quarter
- Fourth semester
- Fourth quarter
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q11 How has ERT affected opportunities for... (If possible, please share one way each has been enhanced or impaired in the box below.)

Significantly enhanced / Moderately enhanced / No change /  
Moderately enhanced / Significantly enhanced

- Interpersonal communication in class?
- Interpretive communication in class?
- Presentational communication in class?
- Interacting with the target culture (products, practices, perspectives) in class?
- Comparing the native and target languages?
- Drawing connections to other disciplines?
- Student engagement in the target language community?
- Using the resources and curriculum provided by your department?
- Keeping students engaged? (i.e., discouraging multi-tasking during class?)
- Keeping students motivated (i.e., combatting negative affect or “Zoom fatigue”)?

Q12 List and explain helpful resources you have discovered or utilized more ***in live remote instruction*** (i.e., Kahoot, Zoom tricks, media resources etc.).

Q13 Describe at least ***one challenge of live remote instruction*** in your experience. (Please be specific.)

Q14 Describe at least ***one advantage of live remote instruction*** in your experience. (Please be specific.)

Q15 Any other thoughts, insights, or ideas relevant to live remote instruction?

# Instructors as Designers of Learning Experiences: A Case Study of a Flipped Intermediate Spanish Course

**Nadia Jaramillo Cherrez**  
*Oregon State University*

## *Abstract*

*This study investigated the experiences and perceptions of two instructors while designing, teaching, and evaluating a flipped, intermediate Spanish course. Qualitative data was gathered through pre-post semi-structured interviews, curriculum design documents, class observations, and student course evaluations. The findings revealed that beliefs about teaching and learning, tensions between pedagogy and technology choices, appropriateness of CALL and in-class tasks, and sustainability of the learning environment shaped the instructors' approach to design and teach the flipped CALL course. Discussion on how the flipped approach served to facilitate and sustain communicative, task-based instruction with opportunities to integrate tasks and technology are presented.*

**Keywords:** *CALL tasks, flipped learning, course design, communicative tasks, instructor's experiences.*

## **Background**

Language instructors have resorted to technology that, integrated with the pedagogical approach, facilitate opportunities for learners to use the language in and out of the classroom (Moranski & Kim, 2016; Vitta & Al-Hoorie, 2020). An approach that has attracted language instructor's attention relatively recent is flipped learning. Flipped learning refers to an approach that "inverts the traditional classroom model by introducing course concepts before class, allowing educators to use class time to guide each student through active, practical, innovative applications of the course principles" (Flipped Learning Global, 2021. para. 4). This model uses active learning strategies to increase learner engagement, focusing on making the challenging content more accessible to learners, and redistributing the learning processes between inside and outside the classroom. Thus, the flipped learning pedagogy seems suitable for creating more learner-centered language instruction and communicative activities (Buitrago, 2017; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020).

Research on flipped language learning has mainly examined learning outcomes and students' perceptions. Findings are mixed suggesting, on the one hand, that flipped learning can promote language acquisition and development (Kang, 2015; Leis et al., 2015; Moranski & Kim, 2016; Obari & Lambacher, 2015), while

on the other hand, flipped learning might trigger negative reactions to the delivery of online content (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Egbert et al., 2014). Now that existing research on flipped learning has investigated learning outcomes and students' perspectives, an examination of instructor experience in designing, implementing and evaluating flipped language courses is warranted. Studying these experiences, we will be able to underscore the potential of the flipped learning approach to bridge theoretical and practical underpinnings to transform foreign language instruction and truly promote a task-based communicative approach where students enhance their language performance. This qualitative case study examines the *experiences and perceptions of two instructors while designing, teaching, and evaluating a flipped, intermediate Spanish course* that implemented a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) component.

### **Pedagogical Perspectives**

Designing a flipped language learning experience involves integrating technology and language pedagogy in a complex process where technology is not neutral and can have a significant impact on language learning, use, contexts, and multiliteracies (Chun et al., 2016). Instructors who develop their courses adopt and adapt strategies to create a clear course plan (Branch & Dousay, 2015; Graves, 2000) and to increase opportunities that expose learners to contexts where they can use the language in formal and informal contexts (Collins & Muñoz, 2016).

### ***Pedagogical Tasks for Flipped Learning***

The integration of pedagogical and technological choices for designing a flipped language learning experience pertains to content, teaching strategies, assessments, technology, and learner support. Instructor's decisions derive from their own knowledge, practice, expertise, and conceptualizations about language teaching and learning (Graves, 2000; Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010). The pedagogical decisions also derive from the overarching language goals and outcomes. For instance, learning and using the language require effective strategies and conditions to engage learners in authentic and contextualized activities or tasks to address their communication needs and interests (Lee & Van Patten, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Savignon, 2007). Hence, students are expected to demonstrate their performance through tasks and activities where they show their ability to use the language they learned. In order to promote language performance, learners need to engage in real uses of the language so that they can show evidence of what they can do with it. This type of engagement involves tasks that prepare learners to use the language in functional communication and to mobilize grammatical knowledge. Performance in the language can be evidenced by "what the language learner is able to do, in what contexts and content areas, how much and what kind of language the learners is able to produce or understand, the expectations of accuracy, and what strategies the language learner uses to communicate" (ACTFL, 2015, p. 3). In this regard, language performance can be maximized through pedagogical tasks.

For designing CALL tasks for flipped learning, instructors rely on the resources they have at hand, their dispositions towards technology, and the affordances the tools provide for language learning (Chun et al., 2016). Language learners'

increased and extended exposure to the target language in the classroom, where they can interact and communicate with their instructor using the target language, can be beneficial to their linguistic development (Collins & Muñoz, 2016; Muñoz, 2012). Because the quality of the classroom time matters and plays a key role in the exposure to the language, designing flipped CALL curriculum necessitates careful analysis and plan.

Understanding course design as “a system in the sense that planning for one component will contribute to others; changes to one component will influence all the others” (Graves, 2000, p. 4), can help instructors interrelate the course components in a structured, logical, and consistent way to warrant pedagogical content knowledge (Schulman, 1987), effective technology integration (Koehler & Mishra, 2009), and principles of second language acquisition and CALL (Neumeier, 2005). Instructors usually find themselves immersed in integrating and balancing learning activities, content, and assessments. Their own personal and professional experiences may shape the way they develop and teach a course. Furthermore, their own beliefs about learning another language determines their teaching and assessment practice. Thus, this study examined the ways in which two instructors conceptualized the pedagogical approach that aligned to the ACTFL standards, integrated CALL and methodological strategies, and held roles as course designers and instructors.

### ***Flipped Language Learning***

Research-based conditions that foster learning a language can align with the flipped learning approach. For instance, flipped learning can facilitate opportunities to increase interaction and negotiation of meaning because learners can engage in authentic tasks, be creative with the language, receive more individual feedback, lower their language learning anxiety, and develop autonomy (Egbert et al., 2014). Flipped learning can also promote digital literacy and encourage the use of technology for language learning (Webb & Doman, 2020). A flipped language class is similar to many current practices where direct explanations of content material is assigned prior to class, and the time in class is usually used to promote interaction, scaffolding, and agency (Moranski, & Kim, 2016). However, for Moranski and Kim (2016), the apparent connection between the language and flipped learning mostly responds to integrating technology to deliver complex instruction rather than to reconceptualizing the role of the learning spaces.

Research on students’ perspectives and learning outcomes in a flipped model has shown mixed results with regard to the effectiveness of this approach for language development. On the one hand, researchers have found learners improved performance and communicative skills (Ishikawa et al., 2015; Obari & Lambacher, 2015), developed better linguistic and lexical understanding (Kang, 2015; Leis et al., 2015; Moranski & Kim, 2016), applied content concepts effectively in class (Egbert et al., 2015; Ishikawa et al., 2015), increased their motivation (Chen Hsieh et al., 2016; Evseeva, & Solozhenko, 2015), had flexible access to content materials online (Hernández-Nanclares & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2016; Ishikawa et al., 2015), and developed technological skills (Egbert et al., 2014). On the other hand, researchers have also found that students might not feel comfortable with the delivery of grammar



content online (Chen Hsieh et al., 2016; Egbert et al., 2014; Hernández-Nanclares & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2016). For example, in Egbert et al.'s (2014) study, students showed a clear preference for direct and explicit instruction by their instructor inside the classroom.

Flipped learning has been implemented to facilitate students' use of the language in active communicative tasks in the classroom scaffolded by the instructor. Communicative tasks are theorized to place learners in realistic situations as close to real-world contexts as possible (Savignon, 2007). Thus, language tasks in the classroom involve the use of the language for communicative purposes with learners focusing on conveying meaning rather than on producing linguistic items. It is important to note that in these pedagogical tasks, grammar is not neglected. To the contrary, "meaning and form are interrelated and grammar exists to enable the language user to express different communicative meanings" (Nunan, 2004, p.4). Therefore, the ability to communicate with others develops more from engaging in communication itself than from the mere learning and practicing of linguistic forms (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Nunan, 2004).

In designing a flipped course, instructors need to determine the extent and depth of content, create assessments and learning activities, select the modes of delivery, and evaluate the learning outcomes (Branch & Dousay, 2015; Carr-Chellman, 2010). Research on instructors' approaches to transform their courses utilizing flipped learning as the underlying platform to build CALL and leverage class time remains scarce. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how two language instructors in a higher education context integrated pedagogical and technological choices through the flipped learning model. Understanding the instructional choices can help in designing and implementing programs that prepare students from the start of their language courses to transfer what they learn in the classroom to real world situations, and to be able use a language well and in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish real-world tasks (Eddy, 2014). Instructor voices in the process of course design will help us identify their systems of beliefs, process, challenges, outcomes, and concerns related to the affordances and limitations of flipped CALL.

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. How do instructors experience designing, teaching, and evaluating the flipped intermediate Spanish course?
2. How do instructors perceive the success of language teaching and learning in the flipped intermediate Spanish course?

## **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2014) to examine the experiences and perspectives of designing, teaching and evaluating a flipped Spanish course. The case study helps to better capture the circumstances in which the participants (instructors) designed and implemented the flipped approach and reveal the potential of this approach within the curricular structure of the course. The embedded units of analysis included two participants, (1) the language coordinator and lead instructor and (2) the course instructor of the second iteration of the course. Through this case study, the researcher assumed a relativist perspective to delve into the epistemological, pedagogical, and technological perspectives of each participant and the ways in which they applied these perspectives and interpreted their own experiences throughout the flipped CALL course.

### ***Research Context***

This study is situated within the Lower-Division Spanish Language Program at a large land-grant university in the Mid-West of the U.S. and is part of a design-based research project for flipping Spanish language courses. This research study was conducted with a flipped CALL intermediate Spanish course which corresponds to second-year of college Spanish. The intermediate Spanish course had been offered in a hybrid format in previous years where learners met in class two times per week and participated in a synchronous session two times per week. The instructors in the program believed that this format was ineffective for students to meaningfully interact and communicate in spoken Spanish. Therefore, the course was redesigned to optimize class time and leverage communicative and interactive tasks that promote and increased language performance.

### ***Research Participants***

This study used a purposeful sampling to select the participants. Two instructors from a group of six instructors teaching the intermediate Spanish courses were invited to participate in the study. Raul and Deborah (pseudonyms) were scheduled to teach the first of two second-year courses in the academic year 2016-2017. Considering the need to implement a more effective pedagogical approach in the Spanish program, Raul led the course redevelopment project for this first course which offered one section in each academic semester. Raul, a native English speaker, as the coordinator of the Lower Division Spanish Program redeveloped the course in the Summer of 2016 and taught the course in the Fall of that year, whereas Deborah, a native Spanish speaker, taught the second iteration of the flipped course in the Spring of 2017. Table 1 describes the participants' academic background, teaching experience and philosophy, and their views on technology.

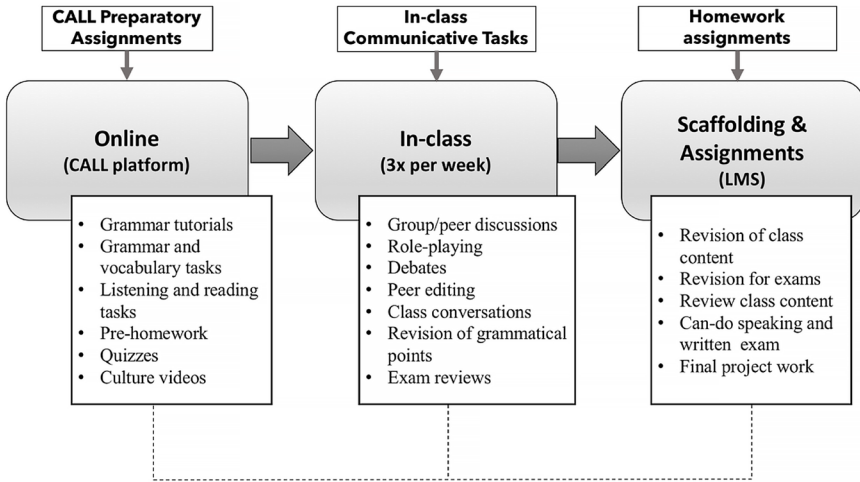
Table 1

**Participant Background**

Instructors	Academic Profile
Raul (course coordinator & instructor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Academic background:</b> Doctorate in Spanish Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition</li> <li>- <b>Teaching experience:</b> 8 yrs. Introductory Spanish (I &amp; II), Intermediate Spanish (I &amp; II), Business Spanish, Spanish Phonetics &amp; Phonology</li> <li>- <b>Teaching vision:</b> communicative focus, task-based approach, proficiency-based instruction</li> <li>- <b>Technology vision:</b> optimization and individualization of learning</li> <li>- <b>First language:</b> English</li> <li>- <b>Spanish language experience:</b> living/teaching/travelling in Spain, Chile, Argentina &amp; Costa Rica</li> </ul>
Deborah (instructor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Academic background:</b> Master in Spanish Linguistics and Education. ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview Tester Expertise</li> <li>- <b>Teaching experience:</b> 20+ yrs. Introductory Spanish (I &amp; II), Intermediate Spanish (I &amp; II), 300-level bridge courses</li> <li>- <b>Teaching vision:</b> communicative focus, authentic and real-life tasks, learners' confidence, personalized scaffolding</li> <li>- <b>Technology vision:</b> optimization of instruction &amp; development of authentic-like materials</li> <li>- <b>First language:</b> Spanish</li> <li>- <b>Spanish language experience:</b> living/teaching/travelling in Spain &amp; Argentina</li> </ul>

**Course Redesign**

The intermediate Spanish course was redesigned utilizing the flipped learning approach as the foundational platform upon which the principled communicative approach was integrated. All the direct and explicit instruction on grammatical, lexical and cultural explanations was delivered through online preparatory CALL tasks that students had to complete prior to class. The CALL tasks were created to prepare students with basic understanding of the Spanish language at the intermediate level and would require a time investment for the equivalent of one contact hour (50 minutes). The classroom space and time was for meaning-focus activities, communicative tasks, and peer work in order to reinforce the knowledge students gained in the online CALL tasks. The in-class communicative activities were oriented towards what learners can do with the language in contrast to what learners know about it, guided by the NCCSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements. The seating time for the in-class communicative activities was three times per week for 50 minutes each. Additionally, homework assignments were added to reinforce knowledge and practice of Spanish (Fig 1). Raul redesigned and taught the first iteration of the flipped course, while Deborah taught the second iteration. Course improvements were also made at the second iteration of the course.

**Figure 1****Course Redesign****Researcher Positionality**

I identify myself as the author and researcher in this study. My role in this study was two-fold. First, I held the role of instructional designer, assisting the lead instructor in the redevelopment process of the course by providing instructional design and technology consultations during the planning and implementation stages. In this role, I guided the instructor in creating the blueprint of the flipped course, align the course outcomes to assessment and activities, and identify the CALL activities to be selected in the textbook platform and the ones to be created in the learning management system (LMS). I also assisted the second instructor in making adjustments for the second iteration of the course. Despite my own background and experience designing and teaching blended and online language courses, my responsibilities were oriented towards ongoing instructional design support and not content related. I regarded both instructors as the subject matter experts and myself as the learning design expert. I viewed this course redevelopment process as a partnership to achieve a common goal –provide students with a meaningful and communicative learning experience. Second, my professional interest in instructional design research and language teaching led me to conduct this research study with permission from the Institutional Review Board (#15429 & #16-582) and both instructors. Throughout the design and development stages (e.g., flipped learning course blueprint, creation of activities and assessments), I kept my role as course designer connected to of researcher, yet separate by focusing on specific tasks related to each role. The design and development meetings focused on instructional design work, whereas the interviews focused on gathering data to examine instructors' experiences.

### **Data Collection and Procedure**

The data collected for this study included (1) pre- and post-course semi-structured interviews with instructors, (2) curriculum design documentation, (3) class observations, and (4) course evaluations. The main data sources were the interviews, design documents and class observations.

First, pre- and post-course semi-structured interview protocols (Appendices A and B) were created to collect rich and deeper insights from participants' experiences and reflections and explore their attitudes, actions, and feelings while designing, teaching, and evaluating the flipped CALL Spanish course. The semi-structured interviews were based on previous research on CALL evaluation (Chapelle, 2001; Jamieson & Chapelle, 2010), and blended learning (Gleason, 2013). These interviews had ten open-ended questions pertaining to the design phase (pedagogical-technological decision for the delivery of online and face-to-face content), teaching phase (instructional strategies for in-class communicative tasks), and the evaluation phase (perceived effectiveness and future improvements) (see Appendix A). The nature of the open-ended questions was intended to guide the researcher during the interview and respond to emerging topics from the participants' responses. Additionally, the post-course interview included a few questions drawn from the curriculum design documentation and class observations field notes (see Appendix B).

One-hour interviews for pre-course and post-course were conducted with each instructor. The pre-course interview with Raul took place during the planning semester (Summer of 2016), and the post-course interview was conducted after finals week in the Fall 2016. The pre-course interview with Deborah took place during finals week of the Fall 2016 before the second iteration of the course (offered in Spring 2017). Her post-course interview took place after finals week in Spring 2017.

The curriculum design documentation for the first iteration of the course included the initial course overview guidelines, an alignment matrix for course components, and the course syllabus and schedule. In my role as the instructional designer of the course, I annotated and summarized the specific details regarding the instructors' plans and decisions on the pedagogical and technological aspects of the course as discussed during our design and development meetings. This curriculum design documentation constituted the work-in-progress materials that were discussed and updated with Raul at the meetings throughout the design and implementation of the course. For the second iteration of the course, Raul suggested updates to several activities, including adding more specific expectations for homework assignments, revising the in-class communicative tasks, and varying the cultural topics. Deborah followed the suggestions and added clarifications to the syllabus about the nature of the flipped model, additional/supplemental grammar and vocabulary tasks, and in-class scaffolding of the online assignments.

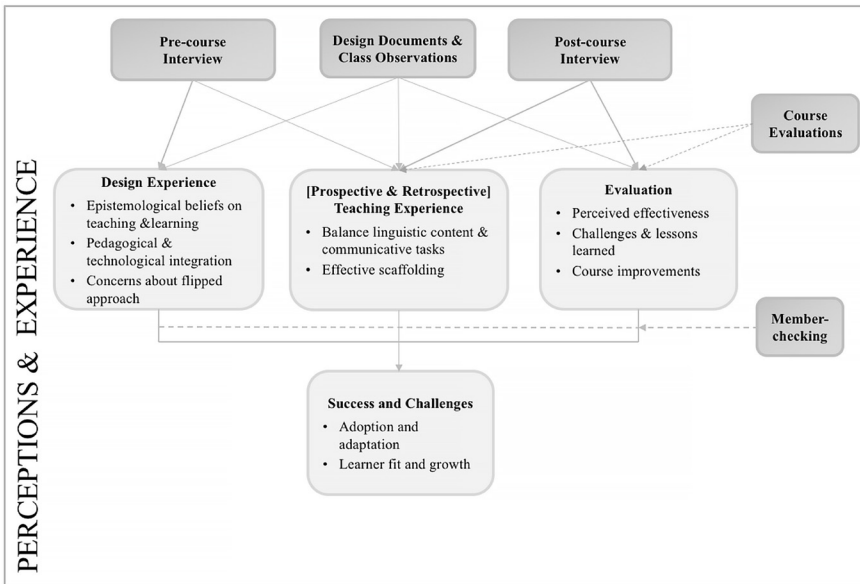
Lastly, two class observations conducted in each iteration of the course and student course evaluations at the end of both course iterations were collected to examine positive aspects and further improvements of the flipped CALL course. The observation protocol included (1) context information about the class (e.g., course/section number, no. of students, time/day of observation), (2) in-class dynamics (e.g., activities, interactions, instructors' behavior/attitudes, instructional scaffolding, and (3) researcher's notes to capture my reflection after the observations.

**Data Analysis**

Both pre- and post-course interviews with each instructor were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The application NVivo 11.03 was used to conduct the analysis. A recurrent and iterative process of content analysis was conducted guided by the interview protocol questions in order to systematically examine ideas and patterns related to the questions in the data (Creswell, 2012; Elo & Kyn g s, 2008). These ideas were coded into categories, and later the categories were clustered into the following preliminary themes: (1) design experience, (2) reflection of the teaching experience, (3) evaluation, and (4) success and challenges. To ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher used member-checking and triangulation of data sources (Fig. 2). Further, the researcher kept her neutrality position in regards to the instructors’ perspectives by reframing from adding personal views or questioning the participants’ insights to assure a successful interview process (Merriam, 2009).

**Figure 2**

**Triangulation of Data Sources**



**Findings**

Overall, the findings suggest that the instructors considered the course redevelopment a successful implementation of the flipped CALL based on the design, teaching, and evaluation of the course. Table 2 presents a summary of the categories and themes.

**Table 2*****Summary of Categories and Themes from the Interviews***

Categories	Themes
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning,</li> <li>• pedagogical and technological integration,</li> <li>• concerns</li> </ul>
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• balancing linguistic content and communicative tasks,</li> <li>• effective scaffolding</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceived effectiveness,</li> <li>• challenges and lessons learned,</li> <li>• course improvements</li> </ul>
Success and Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adoption and adaptation,</li> <li>• learner fit and growth</li> </ul>

***Design Experience***

Instructors' perceptions and experiences related to (1) epistemological beliefs about teaching and learning, (2) pedagogical and technological integration, and (3) concerns. First, instructors' epistemological beliefs deeply rooted in communicative approaches to language learning, where they facilitated learning opportunities and constant scaffolding. These beliefs were also connected to their own experiences learning another language. Raul a native speaker of English learned Spanish and travelled to several Spanish-speaking countries. In contrast, Deborah, a native speaker of Spanish, learned English as a foreign language in her homecountry, and later as a second language in the U.S. Raul indicated that “[s]econd language acquisition research has demonstrated that [communicative and] interactive activities are the engine of language development insofar as they encourage students to notice the gap between their production and a more appropriate rendition” (Raul, pre). Similarly, Deborah considered communication as the key for language development. She placed greater emphasis on effective and just-in-time feedback. She indicated that “[students] will do [activities] with a partner, and I always check their answers... I don't want them to be talking to each other without anybody checking if they are doing it properly” (Deborah, pre). For both Raul and Deborah, a communicative approach guided how they created learning activities.

For Raul pedagogical and technological integration was at the forefront of the design process, while for Deborah, this integration was less of a concern. Raul's view of the role of technology drove him to select the flipped learning model to “restructure the curriculum to take advantage of the two modes of instruction: online, individualized, and input-base preparatory work that provides immediate feedback; and face-to-face, interactive, proficiency-oriented activities whose goal is comprehensible communication” (Raul, pre). For Raul, re-conceptualizing the learning spaces provided a venue for CALL instruction that “is individualized and adaptive with systematic and more robust feedback” (Raul, post). However, for Deborah, pedagogical strategies were a priority. Her major focus revolved around the activities that

students would do in the classroom as she mentioned that “[creating] and using a lot of activities from the book, interactive ones, and then I kind of modify some of them that I think are ‘boring’ and so I just modify [them]” (Deborah, pre).

Although Raul and Deborah reported several concerns during their course re-designs, Raul, being the language coordinator in addition to his role as lead instructor, had concerns about administrative constraints related to “[organizing] the course in a way that’s intuitive and makes sense and is transparent for everyone involved, because we have a lot of different components and resources” (Raul, post). Deborah, in contrast, indicated her concern about creating a welcoming learning environment that also challenged students in the use of Spanish. She shared that her biggest challenge was to create an environment that was “inviting even for the shy students, and it’s not easy... So we just [need to make] sure that you don’t put them on the spot, but motivate them to participate” (Deborah, post).

### ***Teaching Experience***

The themes that were identified in the data related to (1) balancing linguistic content and communicative tasks, and (2) effective scaffolding. First, in implementing the flipped learning model, Raul sought to reach a balance between the linguistic content (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) and communicative tasks (e.g., content topics, cultural aspects) as he mentioned that learners would have “scaffolded preparation before class, to use class time for truly communicative task-driven activities. I don’t want instructors, myself included, spending time in class going over basic vocabulary words in a sort of drill and kill, call and repeat format. I don’t want grammar taught that way” (Raul, pre). Raul targeted different language skills through the CALL content where every lesson began with vocabulary and grammar followed by the sequence of the book content. Whereas in class, Raul focused on extensive use of Spanish for conversations and activation of prior knowledge. The first activity in his class was always a conversation activity ‘a conversar’ [time to talk] that integrated the vocab and grammar of the chapter. Raul highlighted that “that’s our task, the grammar is supporting that” (Raul, post).

Raul’s focus was on communication rather than on attaining accuracy of grammatical structures. He exemplified this by explaining that some real-life situations do not require specific grammatical structures and therefore “[c]ommunicatively, does it accomplish the same thing? Yes. That’s acceptable for me. If I’m only going to accept the subjunctive, the target grammar structure, then I’m teaching a grammatical syllabus. There’s nothing communicative about that. There’s nothing task-based” (post).

Deborah, in contrast, promoted critical thinking about real issues and had students use the vocabulary from the chapter first, then adapt it to their own contexts and realities. She used several activities from the textbook “because it’s more in the box” (post). Then, she would aim at having students “[think] just outside the box in the second language” (post) by making connections between activities and their own situations during “next class when they feel more comfortable, we talk for five or ten minutes as an icebreaker. It’s more related to the class before” (post). Deborah also explained that fully communicative tasks would not always work well because students struggled with understanding and using advanced structures in meaning-oriented activities (e.g., subjunctive). Sometimes she selected “mechanical and bor-



ing” activities from the textbook for learners to practice more the use of specific grammar. She said that “I just try to make them feel like they can carry a conversation. It’s not just in a box. It’s a process. Sometimes things don’t work out the way I expect” (post). Observations from field notes confirmed that both instructors regularly implemented task-oriented activities to push students to use Spanish to communicate in the classroom (e.g., discussing topics on democracy, foreign cultures).

Raul and Deborah believed that providing effective scaffolding through just-in-time support during the in-classroom tasks was crucial for learners’ deeper understanding of the uses and nuances of Spanish in communicative activities. Raul “want[ed] [students] to acquire a more sophisticated way of saying it, I recommend that you do x, y, and z versus you need to do ... That’s different. I always model[ed] that” (post). Raul modeled real uses of Spanish by adapting a real and authentic activity to his own students’ needs. He mentioned that his class activities were always “scaffolded. I’m modeling, they’re getting input, they’re doing controlled output, more spontaneous output, guided uses of the language” (post). Similarly, Deborah’s teaching approach promoted the use of Spanish in a safe and non-threatening environment with peer and instructor scaffolding. She, being a language learner herself, pointed out how she was conscientious “of not making [students] feel like they can’t do it just because they are mispronouncing or because they are not getting it right” (post). She also mentioned that learners engaged in mutual scaffolding and feedback, and she also provided individualized feedback by communicating and pointing areas of improvement on a one-on-one basis whenever possible.

### ***Evaluation Phase***

The themes related to the evaluation phase include (1) perceived effectiveness, (2) challenges and lessons learned, and (3) course improvements. First, Raul’s and Deborah’s different experiences shaped their perception of the effectiveness of the flipped approach. Overall, for Raul, the flipped course was successful because the course objectives to engage students in communicative, proficiency-oriented, and interactive language tasks were met and the structure of the course facilitated learning in a more reasonable way. Raul pointed out that the change was about “re-conceptualizing expectations around the course, both for instructors and for [students] and for the department as a whole, to say, this is intermediate level, intermediate mid at the highest, what are the expectations, what is reasonable?” (post). Raul believed that learners were much more prepared to participate in the communicative tasks during class because he noticed “[students] weren’t floundering ever. In group work they were ready, they had things to say, they seemed much more prepared to me. It was a much more pleasant experience for me as well” (post). For Raul, it was better to create more communicative activities based on students’ needs and on the expected outcomes.

Likewise, Deborah believed that the flipped format was effective in preparing students out-of-class and achieving communicative outcomes. She indicated that “[students] prepared at home and when they came to class, they could make more connections, they could discuss more topics with their classmates. I think they activated [a different system]” (post). Furthermore, she argued that support and scaffolding throughout the activities helped students achieve their learning goals. For her, the success of the flipped learning involved academic as well as emotional

support to students. With increased opportunities to use Spanish for communicative purposes “students potentially developed their fluency in Spanish, otherwise we wouldn’t be able to do that” (post). Flipped learning through the online CALL preparatory assignments gave students “the tools and the resources to come to class prepared, and it allowed me more class time to do communicative activities” (post).

Second, both instructors faced challenges at the micro and macro level and had lessons learned throughout the flipped course. Raul, as the language coordinator, faced challenges in reconceptualizing the design of a single course and the way the entire curriculum could be affected. In the single course, Raul focused on facilitating tasks for students to engage in communicative tasks during class. However, at times he attempted to do “the very nitty-gritty grammar exercises in the textbook, it was a disaster... it didn’t fit with the course... Students just didn’t know what to do with it because all of a sudden there’s no communication, just a grammar exercise” (pre). Another challenge for Raul was the use of the LMS for developing a logical structure of the course. Despite his 7-year experience with the LMS, Raul believed that “it [was] not all intuitive, which means that I have to do everything myself” (pre). Raul commented that he did not enjoy using the LMS because “I find that I spend countless hours just sitting there, clicking, answering emails from instructors about things that should be intuitive but aren’t” (pre). Raul used the LMS as a gateway to access the online CALL platform Connect/LearnSmart which as was more intuitive and easier to use.

Besides this, Raul faced a challenge while envisioning the redesign of the course as part of an integrated series of courses within the entire curriculum. According to Raul, the department had requirements for one or two semesters of language instruction with more serious students coming to study. These students wanted to achieve a real communicative competence in Spanish, starting at a lower 200-level course. Raul pointed out that his challenge involved re-thinking the curriculum structure because “you can’t just re-design a course. In a way, you have to mentally re-design every course in the curriculum or think okay, two years from now, how is this going to affect [other courses]?” (pre).

Deborah faced challenges related mostly to her single course. In the classroom, she promoted substantial interaction and communication, “challenging [students], ‘Okay, we know you mastered this skill in Connect. Let’s just do something else. Let’s just challenge you. Now, it’s your turn to create’” (pre). However, Deborah wished the activities were “all real life... You have to nail that grammar concept or that vocab before they can apply it” (post). Deborah also realized that to create an inviting learning environment where students felt confident and less anxious to speak in Spanish, she needed to “educate [herself] and [develop] more activities, how to use different activities to engage students” (pre). She also realized that “keeping up with social media, or activities [students] engaged in, or just bring more things that are relevant to their lives in the classroom” (pre) would be necessary to achieve a more engaging and lively class environment. For Deborah, teaching the flipped course was hard because “[she was] trying to make the class relevant and also teach the grammar and the vocab...so it’s not that easy” (post).

For Deborah, technology in the flipped model required time and skills for instructors and learners if the model were to be integrated throughout the program.

Deborah wondered about the difficulty of integrating technology in the flipped model because of the perceived need for “[making] this technology available if they are going to be required to use it in the classroom? How do you manage that? How much time do you want students to be learning how to use the technology? You have to be realistic” (post). She believed that coordination with the entire program would facilitate a better integration of the technology within the flipped model. She illustrated her perspective in the following comment, “unless we all coordinate within the program.... you teach the students to use the technology in [lower levels] and then the same technology is going to be used in each semester with a different project” (post). This seemed to be a good time investment as it was expected that students would be using the same CALL technology semester after semester.

Third, Raul and Deborah considered changing several of the CALL activities to provide students with additional practice of linguistic knowledge as well as more grammar and vocabulary focused tasks. In particular, Raul planned to improve the writing component “to make that truly communicative, not just dress it up in communicative clothing” (post). He also planned to re-structure how to handle speaking tasks in a more efficient way.

Deborah realized that seating time was a crucial aspect in the flipped course to extend the opportunities students had for speaking in Spanish and developing their fluency. She proposed to “add another day instead of three, four days a week. I would add a little bit more exercises to come prepared” (post). Deborah thought of increasing the types of activities in class to foster more speaking practice by “maybe having once a week, some kind of [activity], giving them a prompt for them to speak for two minutes more often” (post).

By the second iteration of the flipped Intermediate Spanish course, Raul had already decided to integrate the approach into the curriculum by moving the entire program to the flipped model. However, in Raul’s words, this was a “work-in-progress with much more to improve to help students meet the learning outcomes” (post).

### ***Success and Challenges***

Themes included (1) adoption and adaptation, and (2) learner fit and growth. First, Raul and Deborah considered the need to shift to a more communicative approach if they wanted students to fulfill the goals of learning and using Spanish for functional and communicative purposes. Raul argued that the adoption of the flipped approach allowed him to “optimize class time for communicative interactive practice driven by the can-do model, and our own internal departmental standards for where we want our students to be and maintain, nonetheless, an accuracy component” (post).

Implementing the flipped model called for a quest on more effective resources for online and in-class work. For Raul, the analysis of the course evaluation in previous semesters indicated that the “[hybrid] model was not working well and the textbooks lacked communicative activities and connection of topics” (pre). Additionally, “some online collaborative tools that [we used] ... the university stopped supporting, that were expensive and we couldn’t require students to buy that” (pre). The CALL platforms previously used had “limited functionality... for example, just error detection, so all or nothing grading...to expect [students] to get accents right all the time is absurd” (pre). These challenges required a radical change to envision learning outcomes more realistically and integrate the technology as a means for more

individualized learning. He argued that technology was adaptive and had reached a point where adaptive dynamic systems could help in implementing performance indicators and benchmarks in a tailored experience.

In turn, Deborah argued that language learning does not seek perfection, but considering that it is a learning process, she emphatically commented that “if you are looking for perfection in everything that [students] say, the flipped classroom approach is the wrong approach” (post). For Deborah, a vision of language learning within the flipped approach had to come with “a change of mentality. What are you looking for? The flipped, I think it’s perfect for the communicative focus” (post).

Second, for Raul and Deborah, the flipped model involved beyond mere re-conceptualization of the learning spaces and re-definition of what takes place inside the classroom. It further involved learner fit and growth. Raul highlighted the difficulty of getting students “to shift to that mentality because a lot of language training is about native performance on some level” (pre). Because students are so much focused on getting perfect structural accuracy, they might not see value in “[evaluating] them on the comprehensibility of their message, on their ability to communicate something meaningful in the language on a given topic” (post). For Raul, flipped learning related to performance-driven model of assessment and curricular design, where communication was the backbone of the curriculum without leaving grammatical accuracy aside. He did not want to leave the impression that accuracy did not matter, but he wanted to give students “license to make mistakes and say, at this level you should really be able to produce sentences, isolated sentences” (pre). In this sense, Raul was aiming to have learners acquire not only the language, but also to become autonomous in their learning and “start those skills early on in a very safe, controlled environment” (post). For Raul, it was important that by implementing the flipped model students “assess themselves, the ability to set goals for themselves, the ability to manage their time, to synthesize information, and thinking critically, that’s that cross-cultural component always, the X culture is very different from our own, etc.” (pre).

Contrastively, Deborah pointed out that the flipped model might not suit every student because the demands and responsibilities for autonomous learning are greater and “not everybody is ready to study the grammar on their own. It takes a very dedicated student” (post). According to Deborah, some students were used to having all the concepts explained to them, “being lectured, instead of studying on their own” (pre). Some students struggled with the new model, while others exercised the freedom to study on their own and then apply the new concepts. She perceived that “[students] are so used to having their teacher explain from zero. Do they get use to the flipped? Yes, they do, but it’s a shock for some of them at the beginning” (post). Deborah argued that the flipped model promoted “that freedom, that independence... and it takes a very responsible student... who is more organized because they need to dedicate that time that they are not in class to study at home. I think it takes some specific kind of learner” (post).

## **Discussion**

This case study examined instructors’ experiences and perspectives in the process of designing, teaching, and evaluating the Spanish flipped course. Overall, both instructors demonstrated a positive, yet challenging experience throughout the pro-

cess, underscoring critical aspects that contributed to and hindered the success of the flipped model. For instance, a clear and focused rationale for adopting the flipped model needs to consider the scope and sequence of the course within the curriculum as well as the necessary support to students. Raul and Deborah had taken a shift in their mindsets by seeking alternative approaches to leverage CALL and promote a more constructivist learning environment that allowed learners to engage in practical experiences (Lee & Dashew, 2011) and communicative and engaging tasks hypothesized to be key for language development (Chapelle, 2009; Nunan, 2004).

This case study provides insights into the change of mindsets that instructors need to have to move from a techno-centric view of technology to a more pedagogical and theoretical view of the conditions needed for language learning and development and the ways that technology affects language use (Chun et al., 2016). The belief system that Raul and Deborah had about language teaching and learning influenced their pedagogical practice leading them to seek alternative approaches to combine form and meaning in CALL and in-class tasks. Both instructors believed that delivering CALL tasks online was more effective to build learners' declarative knowledge of Spanish through input-rich activities where they could notice linguistic features of the language and be able to map the connections between form and meaning (Chapelle, 2009). Additionally, the flexibility of access to CALL tasks at one's own time and pace, facilitated revision of content as needed and reinforced knowledge and practice.

The instructors' experiences contributed to an ongoing change of mindsets where they acknowledged the need for themselves and for students to step out of their comfort zones and think more creatively about the ways that old and new technologies can shape the language learning processes (Chun et al., 2016). This relates to existing research that suggests that the flipped learning model can foster digital literacy (Webb & Doman, 2020). This case study illustrates that theoretical principles on language pedagogy can be applied based on whether these meet teachers' mindsets and beliefs (Mowlaie & Rahimi, 2010), and the need to mindfully select activities for the online as well as for the face-to-face learning spaces, which in turn, shapes the dynamics of the course (Bonakdarian et. al., 2009).

Raul and Deborah both struggled when adapting and creating activities that, on the one hand, promoted active peer and group communication and interaction, and on the other hand, targeted specific grammar structures. Despite using task-based activities that challenged students further in their linguistic knowledge and language development, not everything in the flipped course was as effective as expected. Other studies had reported, learners' concerns about having to study grammar on their own and lacking instructor direct and explicit instruction (Chen Hsieh et al., 2016; Egbert et al., 2014; Hernández-Nanclares & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2016). Other studies on flipped language learning environments have also found that not all students can benefit from these environments due to the self-regulation behaviors needed (Chuang et al., 2018). Thus, instructors should include supportive strategies for students to cope with the demands of the learning approach including self-regulation (e.g., goal setting, self-monitoring), time management, and problem-solving.

The findings of this case study also suggest that the effectiveness of the flipped model depends on a clear understanding of the learning outcomes, conditions for ef-

fective second-language acquisition, and reconceptualization of the learning spaces. In this regard, the implementation of the flipped model for language learning has implications for the design of CALL tasks and materials (Chapelle 2009, 2017; Kern, 2006; Levy et al., 2015), the role of the instructor in assisting learners in their language learning performance and interaction (Hubbard, 2011), the needs, characteristics and interest of learners (Oxford & Oxford, 2009), and the development of digital literacy (Webb & Doman, 2020).

The findings show that for Raul and Deborah, the clear end goal involved performance-based communicative use of the language. The flipped course was overall sustained through communicative tasks that maximized learners' exposure to meaningful input that, along with the linguistic resources they had at hand, was used to accomplish learners' communicative and functional goals. In other words, learners built up their explicit knowledge of the language through the learning process and implicit knowledge they gained while communicating meaningfully, as opposed to learning the language with the present-practice-produce instruction (Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden, 2016). Thus, this case study suggests that the flipped learning approach can facilitate task-based instruction with opportunities to integrate tasks and technology.

## **Conclusion**

Through examining instructors' experiences and perceptions of the flipped course, this case study illustrates the complexity of integrating pedagogical approaches, communicative tasks, and technological resources. With careful design, instructors can design a flipped language course that can transform the classroom into a highly dynamic and communicative space where learners interact among themselves and with the instructor using the target language (Collins et al., 2012; Hung, 2015; Shyr & Chen, 2018). While pedagogical principles may remain stable, technology evolves drastically requiring instructors to constantly evaluate the affordances of the new technologies to fit their pedagogical practices.

Although researchers argue that implementing flipped learning pertains to what happens in the classroom in terms of active learning strategies (Betihavas et al., 2016), this case study suggests that the online CALL and the face-to-face learning spaces as well as the activities that allow students move seamlessly between these spaces can impact the success of the learning experience. The "choice and combination of technologies [depended] on [the] overall goals and pedagogical approach" (Chun et al., 2016, p. 74). While improvements to the flipped CALL model still develop, this case study contributes to understand instructors' perspectives and epistemological beliefs while adopting more student-centered learning.

This case study brings some limitations and offers directions for further research. First, the participants' predispositions to the pedagogical model might influence their expectations and perceptions. Second, two instructors from the Spanish language program participated in the study, limiting a broader understanding of the experience across instructors and courses in the entire program. Further research should examine how instructors' make instructional choices that determine which types of CALL and in-class tasks are implemented. Research should also investigate the systems of support and skills for instructors to effectively develop a flipped learning model.

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## Appendix A

### Pre-Course Interview

1. Could you share what prompted you to consider the flipped approach to redevelop your Spanish courses?
2. Could you describe your philosophy for language teaching and how it guides your choice of teaching strategies?
3. How does your teaching philosophy connect to the underlying framework of the flipped format for which some content goes online and communicative activities happen in the classroom?
4. How do you envision designing the flipped courses?
5. What components of the course and content would you develop for the online space and which ones for the classroom?
6. What kind of activities would you leverage in the classroom?
7. What kind of preparation do you believe students will need to engage in highly-communicative activities in the classroom?
8. How would you initiate the redesign of the course with the flipped format?
9. How would you get students feedback on what works for them and what needs improvement in the flipped format?
10. Do you have any concerns about going into this design?

## **Appendix B**

### Post-Course Interview

1. Could you share your overall teaching experience in this flipped format?
2. How do you see the value of having the students come prepared with the grammatical points, the vocabulary, and even reading some aspects about their culture? How does that add to what you do in the classroom?
3. When you think about all these activities that you do with the students in the class, how close are those activities to real life activities like what native speakers of Spanish would be doing?
4. How do you perceive your students' reactions to what they do in connect? Do they like? Do they feel overwhelmed?
5. What are the accomplishments that you have seen in the course and what have been the challenges that you have seen in the course in this flipped format?
6. Do you think that this format somehow has some impact on how a student proceeds with their own learning strategies?
7. From my observations, I noticed that in a couple of classes you had to basically explain the grammar points. Why was that? Do you feel that it was necessary? What happened?
8. How do you connect culture topics to the class because my understanding is that these topics are hard to understand.
9. If you are going to do this course again, if you are going to teach this course again in the flipped format, what would you do differently? Or what would you add or take out of the course?
10. What is your personal reflection on the whole experience teaching in this flipped format?

## It Took a Village: A Demonstrated Need of Institutional Support for Successful Online Teaching

**Gwendoline Aaron**

*Southern Methodist University*

**Aria Zan Cabot**

*Southern Methodist University*

**Daniele Forlino**

*Southern Methodist University*

**Susana Solera Adoboe**

*Southern Methodist University*

### **Abstract**

*While many language instructors were encouraged throughout the pandemic to rethink their teaching methods, instructional modalities, and course design in order to successfully pivot from in-person to remote learning environments, it quickly became clear that the burden of pandemic teaching could not be sustained by individual faculty members. Instead, successful instances of emergency remote instruction were often aided by pre-existing online curricula and extensive institutional support in the form of additional funding, training, and shared expertise. This chapter outlines the type of resources and support available to support the teaching and learning of languages during the shift to emergency remote instruction and beyond.*

**Keywords:** *online course design; pandemic pedagogy; professional development*

### **Background**

The COVID-19 pandemic created an unprecedented disruption in education, requiring a rapid shift in the role of distance learning from a supplementary role at many institutions to a necessity for nearly all instructors and learners. For many institutions, the shift to emergency remote teaching not only presented a learning curve—adjustments on behalf of faculty, administrators, and students—but also the need to address the longstanding reluctance of many faculty members to embrace educational technology and even basic functionalities of their Learning Management System (LMS), such as electronic gradebooks and discussion boards. As traditional face-to-face teaching became unviable almost overnight, faculty and administrators had to quickly establish uniform guidelines for synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid and HyFlex modes of instruction delivery. As a result, many instructors were rushed through the process of converting face-to-face courses to an online format, with lim-

ited expertise and assistance other than crash courses or short videos demonstrating the basic tools offered by their institution's LMS.

Our physical return to the classroom has surely revealed, and rightfully so, a blend of old and new practices gleaned from the past year. A March 2021 survey of faculty and administrators by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* outlined some of the "pandemic" teaching practices that a majority of faculty and administrators hope will stick around. Supiano and McMurtrie (2021) reported findings from this survey, highlighting the continued need for (1) the increased use of virtual office hours; (2) professional training around effective course design and teaching practices in online environments; (3) the increased use of virtual academic supports for students (e.g. tutoring, advising); (4) teaching and learning communities where instructors can share best practices; and (5) increased use of virtual co-curricular activities (e.g. research, service, internships).

During the 2020-21 academic year, many language instructors without previous experience or training in online teaching faced unique challenges as they transitioned away from emergency remote instruction toward a more robust, sustainable, and effective method of online teaching. On the other hand, language departments that had already developed tech-enhanced, online, or hybrid curricula prior to the COVID-19 pandemic were better positioned to rapidly adapt their courses (Supiano & McMurtrie, 2021). With respect to many other disciplines, foreign language course design had already been at the fore of instructional technology, and many language instructors were already accustomed to using rich media content, authentic material, and technology to access resources in the target language. The history of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), with roots in the 1960s, has had clear and consistent implications on the development of educational technology for language teaching (Davies et al., 2012), and most foreign language curricula have been technologically enhanced for a long time (Bax, 2011), given that developing proficiency in the target language requires students to practice skills such as speaking, listening, and viewing. The integration of audio-visual tools, *realia*, and (when possible) real-world interactions has also meant that many instructors were accustomed to using technology outside of class time to introduce linguistic and cultural content, which also offered greater opportunities for flipped learning, in which students prepare and practice the material before meeting in the classroom, an integral part of language course design ahead of many other disciplines.

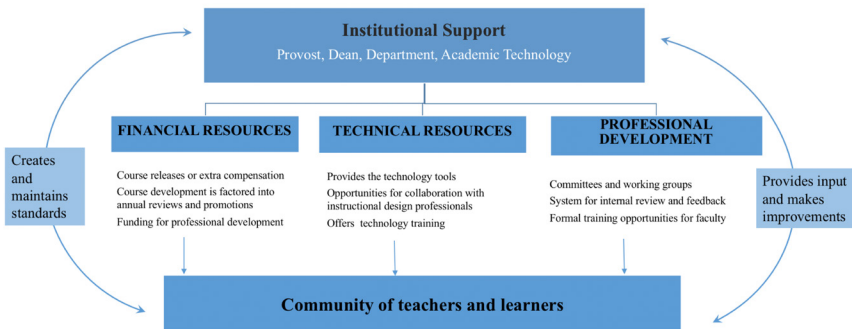
This article is co-authored by four foreign language faculty from Southern Methodist University (SMU), a private, four-year university with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 7,000 students, in Dallas, Texas. Our World Languages Department successfully navigated pandemic pedagogy, in large part due to its development (starting in 2016) of a series of online language courses that had been designed with the support of the Provost, Dean, Department Chair, Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and Academic Technology Services (ATS). This paper focuses on key areas that allowed their department to successfully apply shared principles of online course design and delivery across their curriculum. A comparison of departmental shared principles of online course design before, during, and after the pandemic reveals key areas identified and described as (1) institutional and technical support for online course design, (2) professional development, and (3) university-sponsored initiatives to build faculty community and collaboration.

Given the growing demand for short-term, online course offerings, the Department of World Languages and Literatures at SMU began developing five-week, fully online courses in 2016. Faculty were given a course release to follow a nine-month course development timeline under the supervision and guidance of the Center for Teaching Excellence and Academic Technology Services, following a two-part online course designed to prepare instructors to teach in hybrid or fully online formats. The course was required not only for course designers, but for any faculty members interested in teaching an online course for the department. By Fall 2019, 50% of the department’s full-time faculty had completed the Online Teaching Faculty Training (OTFT) and thus, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, found themselves well-equipped with a myriad of tools to rapidly shift to online instruction.

The successful online teaching during the pandemic at SMU cannot be attributed to individual instructors alone, but rather to the institutional network of support. Specifically, the relative success of the department, measured qualitatively in the positive feedback received by student evaluations, and quantitatively by the maintenance of sustainable enrollment numbers in almost all language areas, can be articulated through key elements that created supported quality: Institutional Support, Technical Support, Professional Development, and Collaboration and Community.

- Institutional Support defined as an intentional effort from the administration to provide funding and guidelines to facilitate the development of online learning (distance learning).
- Technical Support as assisting faculty by providing technology (from LMS to funding for devices such monitors, videos, cameras, etc.), and professionals to help with instructional design and technical elements of teaching.
- Professional Development as providing training and expertise to create and maintain the quality of online courses (distance learning).
- Collaboration and Community as guidelines, communication, and procedures that enable the community of teaching as a community of learner as well, gives faculty a clear sense of agency and control, and creates a functional line of communication between the administration and the faculty focusing on quality of the courses.

**Figure 1**  
*Institutional Support to Create a Community of Teachers and Learners*



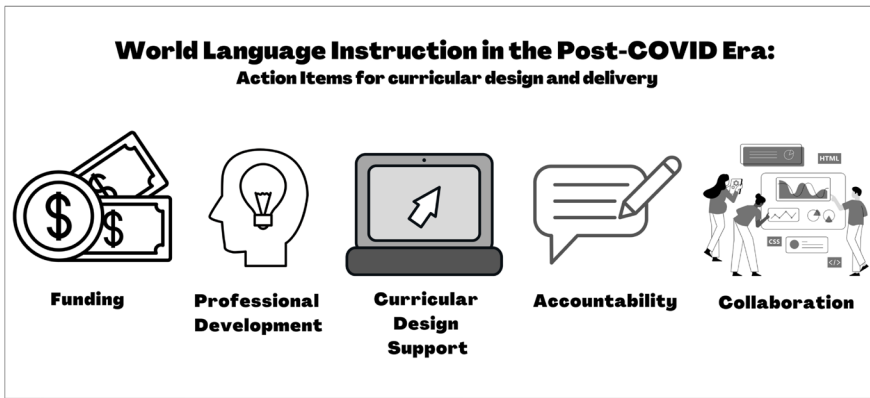
By focusing on these aspects, the purpose of the paper is to reflect on best practices that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and to offer practical applications for the future.

This framework not only allowed faculty in the department to be pandemic ready, but also guarantees a solid structure for quality courses that can grow while maintaining high standards of the institution and providing new approaches and more clearly defined student learning outcomes. The experiences of this department led to the development of several specific practical applications and the following action items for the future that may be of use to language departments and educational technology units on various campuses:

1. **Funding:** Provide a system that gives time to and compensates faculty for professional development, course development, coordination, and improvement; compensate faculty for online curriculum design via course-load reductions, monetary compensation, and incentives for online course design projects (e.g., counting these activities toward promotion); provide compensation for online course coordinators for maintaining and improving shared courses.
2. **Professional Development:** Create and support opportunities for professional development (conferences, training, working groups, certifications, workshops).
3. **Curricular Design Support:** Provide LMS templates and training and opportunities for collaboration with instructional designers throughout the course design process to create a uniform, consistent brand aligned with institutional learning outcomes; ensure that faculty have a basic knowledge of the tools offered by their LMS and how they can be integrated in their courses, in order to create a uniform experience for students.
4. **Accountability:** Create procedures and systems of communication where roles and expectations are clearly defined, faculty have agency and control over the content of the course, but also are reviewed and supervised to maintain standards; when a course is offered in a variety of modalities, ensure that all students are able to achieve the same objectives regardless of the modality.
5. **Collaboration:** Create groups and procedures for faculty and technology departments to collaborate and interact; create groups for faculty to share resources, encourage collaboration; when multiple sections of a course are offered, share online material with colleagues (if available, copy shared course from Canvas Commons); provide channels for soliciting feedback via surveys, meetings, or presentations, about shared material and procedures and give an opportunity for faculty to offer suggestions.

Figure 2

### World Language Instruction in the Post-Covid Era: Action Items for Curricular Design and Delivery



### The Landscape and the Framework: The Need for Institutional Support in Online Learning

What lessons have we learned, and where do we go from here? How has this experience affected attitudes toward online learning, and how will it change the role of online learning after the crisis has passed? These are some of the questions about online teaching practices proposed by the most recent edition of the annual *Changing Landscape of Online Education* (CHLOE) report, *CHLOE 6: Online Learning Leaders Adapt for a Post-Pandemic World, The Changing Landscape of Online Education* (Garrett et. al, 2021). To understand the rapidly evolving landscape of post-pandemic iterations of in-person, hybrid, and fully online courses and the kind of technical support that is most needed and beneficial for faculty, it is necessary to consider pre-pandemic resources and the degree of training that language faculty had already received prior to the shift to remote teaching. According to the CHLOE 6 Report, although most institutions “responded quickly and well to the increased and immediate need for faculty development in online learning” (Garrett et. al, 2021, p. 41) most were underprepared. Prior to Spring 2020, many institutions offered only “optional faculty development for online teaching (54%), online course design (59%), LMS/technology training (64%), and quality assurance for online learning (55%)” (Garrett et. al, 2021, p. 41). Moreover, private four-year institutions emerged as “the least prepared for the quick shift to online learning, as 11% offered no options for online teaching, 12% did not offer training in online design, and 27% did not offer training in online quality assurance prior to Spring 2020” (pp. 41-42). Accordingly, nearly half of the world language instructors started the experience of emergency remote instruction already at a disadvantage, given their lack of familiarity with online learning modalities. Finally, resources that emerged to aid faculty in the shift, while excellent (such as the interactive tool for “Transitioning from Remote Instruction to Online Teaching and Learning,” published in Spring 2020 by *FLTMAG*, IALLT’s free practice-oriented online magazine dedicated to language technology), were often directed at individual



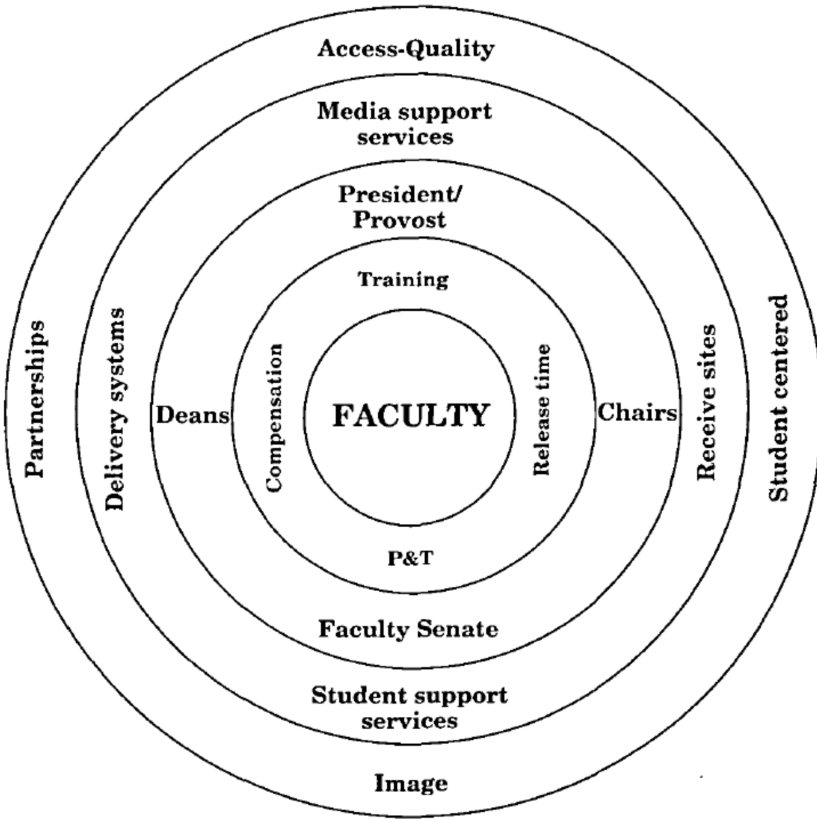
instructors who were called upon to educate themselves and redesign their courses independently from their colleagues and without institutional support.

Why were faculty so often left to their own devices? On one hand, as the 2021 CHLOE 6 report indicated, very few colleges and universities sought external assistance from third parties, instead preferring in-house technology and faculty development. On the other hand, a physical and methodological chasm often separated faculty from their own in-house resources. In a recent article published by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on “disappointing digital teaching tools,” Jenae Cohn (2021), director of academic technology at California State University at Sacramento, identified a series of common causes for the disconnect between faculty, staff, and administrators with regard to educational technology, including poor channels of communication, lack of faculty representation on online teaching committees, and instructors who “go rogue” instead of adopting institutionally supported ed-tech tools. For Cohn, a large part of the problem is simply that “faculty and the staff operate in separate spheres on most campuses” and on any given campus educational technology staff might be siloed in IT departments, campus teaching centers, academic affairs offices or even as “part of a distinct online-learning division” (Cohn, 2021, par. 6). Cohn proposes a straightforward, two-pronged solution for better integrating research, teaching, and administration: 1) Joint faculty-administrative appointments that would allow instructors to be directly involved in decisions regarding educational technology; and 2) The direct involvement of educational-technology professionals in online teaching and research.

The notion that institutional policies (or a lack thereof) pose barriers to the active participation of faculty in post-secondary distance learning is certainly not new. In their 1995 study, Olcott and Wright outlined various obstacles preventing faculty from more actively participating in distance learning initiatives, including: Faculty attitudes related to educational technology and its effect on their control over the curriculum and their role in the classroom; structures related to compensation, training, and incentives for faculty; lack of departmental support, institutional incentives, appropriate compensation, and time; and technical difficulties (Olcott & Wright, 1995). In order to overcome these barriers, Olcott and Wright proposed the following framework:

Figure 3

*Institutional Faculty Support Framework (Olcott & Wright, 1995)*



While faculty are at the center of Olcott and Wright’s (1995) framework, it is clear that instructors cannot participate in the process of effectively designing or delivering an online curriculum without full institutional support in the form of collaboration, compensation, training, and course releases.

**A Case for Institutional Support in Developing Online Curricula**

The somewhat unique case of SMU’s World Languages and Literatures department (one of the largest departments in the college, with just under sixty full-time faculty members and major and/or minor programs in American Sign Language, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Ancient Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish), offers a potential model for other departments insofar as its pandemic practices were already aligned with Cohn’s (2021) vision for the future and Olcott and Wright’s framework. For nearly a decade, the department has fully sponsored a delegation of instructors to attend the annual ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Convention. These delegates, in exchange for receiving departmental support for their attendance, are asked to organize and participate

in an end-of-semester roundtable in which they share best practices, new tools, and key takeaways from the convention with other members of the department. Over the past five years, not only has the number of departmental delegates grown, but there has been a marked shift from convention attendees to convention presenters (at the 2019 ACTFL convention, all but one of the delegates was a presenter) and an increase in the number of official ACTFL roles occupied by the departmental delegates, many of whom now serve as officers for special interest groups, raters, and reviewers, as a direct result of having received funding for their convention attendance. The ripple effect of this kind of institutional support is evident, as the annual roundtable is attended by nearly the entire department, and the department views its investment in ACTFL participation as extremely worthwhile in terms of professional development, visibility and image, faculty climate and moral.

At the institutional level, starting in 2016, all SMU faculty became eligible to apply for a six-week Online Teaching Faculty Training (OTFT) course developed by the Center for Teaching Excellence to prepare instructors to teach hybrid or fully online courses. The course allowed faculty to experience being online students in an environment that modeled research-based best practices for online instruction. As those who had not undergone such a training prior to the pandemic learned firsthand only in Spring 2020, transitioning from in-person to distance learning is not a “plug-and-play” process. Rather, learning to design, develop, and deliver content online in order to meet specific, targeted learning objectives takes time. Faculty training is useful for breaking down the false dichotomy between “face-to-face” and “online” environments by introducing instructors to diverse categories of online course formats and delivery method.

**Table 1**  
***Course Classifications (Allen, Seaman, & Straut, 2016, p. 7)***

<b>Proportion of Content Delivered Online</b>	<b>Type of Course</b>	<b>Typical Description</b>
0%	Traditional	Course where no online technology used—content is delivered in writing or orally.
1 to 29%	Web Facilitated	Course that uses web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. May use a learning management system (LMS) or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments.
30 to 79%	Blended/Hybrid	Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has a reduced number of face-to-face meetings.
80+%	Online	A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings.

As presented to faculty during the Online Teaching Faculty Training, the essential difference in design is not in learning outcomes, assessments, or learning paths, but in the development of communicative activities. The course facilitator, an Instructional Designer from the Center for Teaching Excellence, emphasized throughout the course that while not all interactions that occur in a face-to-face classroom can be translated into an online environment, it is possible to adapt and transform many activities to produce similar outcomes. In essence, in a face-to-face language classroom, the time dedicated to spoken, verbal interaction is usually more substantial, but it is possible to develop oral skills and promote interactions in an online environment as well.

Faculty enrolled in the Online Teaching Faculty Training gained both theoretical and practical knowledge before starting to develop their courses, and spent time reflecting collectively on how to maximize the online environment for teaching and learning their respective languages and to create effective communicative activities in an online environment. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of the World Languages department had already completed this training, and more than one-third had already had the opportunity to teach a fully online course for the department. The department had begun to implement an in-house online curriculum starting in 2016, creating an online sequence through which students could complete the university's proficiency-based Second Language Requirement in four of its language areas (Spanish, French, German, Italian or Latin, with additional online courses developed in Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish for Healthcare). Each course was developed by a faculty member over the course of nine-twelve months with the training, support, and evaluation of the World Languages & Literatures Online Advisory Committee, the Director of the World Languages Teaching and Technology Center, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and Academic Technology Services. In order to be certified to teach online and propose a course for development, faculty members had to obtain approval from their Area Chair via a formal Recommendation to Teach Online, co-signed by the Department Chair and Director of ATS, and complete a two-part training series (housed on Canvas, comprised of both asynchronous and synchronous components, and developed by administrators and Instructional Designers from the CTE and ATS). Faculty completed the entire training series prior to beginning their development project, during which they followed college-specific guidelines for online course development and department-specific course components (which included baseline requirements for synchronous meetings and virtual office hours).

During the one-year design process, faculty designers collaborated on the development of what Russell and Murphy-Judy (2021) have described as meaningful and open-ended activities spanning all three modes of communication, using their LMS to house a combination of synchronous texting, chatting or teleconferencing activities and asynchronous activities using discussion boards and tools such as VoiceThread (Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). During the development phase, a lot of innovative work went into creating activities through which students could engage academically with the material and with each other in the target language (including discussion board activities, asynchronous and synchronous video chats, auto-graded self-tests, scaffolded TalkAbroad assignments, interactive Playposit lectures).

Making the learning path more visible to the students, building performance-based assessments and rubrics into Canvas, and recording instructional videos required considerable time and effort in the development and implementation phases of the program. Once completed, all courses underwent an internal review by an Instructional Designer, the Director of ATS and the Director of the Teaching and Technology Center, followed by a period of revision and resubmission, and finally the submission of an Online Course Readiness Form completed by the designer.

### **Preparedness and Readiness through Institutional and Technical Support**

Prior to the pandemic, the Online Teaching Faculty Training began with a self-paced, technical *Introduction to Canvas* developed by Academic Technology Services. All new course developers were assigned an instructional designer and were provided with a course template in their LMS that allowed for a uniform, streamlined process for creating electronic syllabi and modules in their online courses that clearly outlined institutionally adopted ed-tech tools (and their respective accessibility and privacy policies) that would be used for content delivery (LMS, synchronous meeting tools, tools for content creation and storage). At the departmental level, the World Languages Online Advisory Committee and Teaching and Technology Center provided an intermediary system of support and accountability, offering a series of course design workshops and creating an archive of shared materials in Canvas Commons and in shared folders online.

Online course design and management is considered a constant work-in-progress that requires input from instructors and course designers alike. Since 2017, after each iteration of their online courses, online faculty designers and instructors provide feedback via a department-wide Qualtrics survey regarding their experience with online, blended, and hybrid instruction. Survey questions include, but are not limited to, questions about faculty satisfaction with the quantity and quality of the training and pedagogical and technological support they received before and during the term, the amount of time they dedicated to course design and implementation compared to face-to-face courses, the resources they utilized for design, teaching, and assessment, and the accuracy of time-on-task estimations and other components of the online course template.

Moreover, to ensure that all World Language students enrolled in courses designed to satisfy the Second Language Requirement are able to achieve the same objectives regardless of modality (online, face-to-face, or through six-week intensive courses taught abroad), the Teaching and Technology Center oversaw a department-funded comparative study of OPI results taken from a sample of French and Italian classes over the course of multiple terms in all three modalities. Preliminary results of the study, which were presented at a session of the 2019 ACTFL Convention sponsored by the Distance Learning Special Interest Group, indicated that students who completed their Second Language Requirement in fully online courses achieved only slightly lower speaking proficiency (and slightly higher writing proficiency) compared with students in face-to-face environments. With the aim of closing this gap, further adjustments were made to the online course curriculum to integrate more opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous speaking practice (Cabot, 2019). This was important given that the department not only has a proficiency-

based second language requirement, but all languages taught (with the exception of Latin and Ancient Greek) share the same student learning outcomes, and it is essential that the core components of the online curriculum be aligned with their equivalent face-to-face courses. All courses, regardless of their format, utilize Canvas for the assessment of the Second Language Requirement and other Common Curriculum outcomes using a set of rubrics designed by faculty-led committees under the guidance of the Provost's Office. Informal survey results from online faculty in the department over the course of four years (2018-2021) showed that in any given term, 75%-89% of our instructors felt that the level of proficiency obtained by students in our online courses was either comparable to that of students in face-to-face environments, or lower in some areas but higher in others.

Finally, to make sure that the online curriculum is treated as a dynamic, evolving program rather than a static, "one and done" set of online courses, an Online Course Coordination program and compensation model was developed and approved by the department and college to ensure that online course designers are fairly compensated for the ongoing work required to maintain, improve, and coordinate multiple sections of the courses they designed. Whereas course instructors receive the same salary regardless of modality (online or face-to-face), online courses are managed by a designated faculty member who is compensated for handling certain routine course maintenance tasks (such as updating assessments, rubrics, due dates, reading activities, etc., in the LMS for each term) and is eligible for additional course enhancement stipends for larger projects (such as the adoption of a new textbook or online platform). This model of compensation was developed to be analogous to our face-to-face multi-section courses, which are supervised by course coordinators who receive extra compensation or course-load reductions for their additional responsibilities.

This is the backdrop against which faculty from this institution faced the pandemic with a relative sense of preparedness for the shift to emergency remote instruction. Across the university, under the COVID-19 operational model, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) led the implementation of a HyFlex model of instruction for courses that were not fully remote, and instead required in-person instructors who could provide instruction to a combination of remote and in-person students. Alongside the OIT, the Center for Teaching Excellence offered workshops and training sessions related to instructional design and educational technology.

### **Creating and Supporting a Village through Professional Development**

In addition to the training and financial support needed to design their online courses, faculty within their department benefitted from a range of professional development opportunities. The Center for Teaching Excellence offered workshops, such as *Flipping Your Classroom with Just-in-Time Teaching*, and a series of *Partner-Up Grants* that provided monetary compensation to small teams of full-time faculty members from various academic units and disciplines who collaborated in faculty-led learning pods focused on priority areas and served as a nexus for faculty to enhance their own pedagogical knowledge while sharing with colleagues. As stated on the CTE website, the grants were created "to support faculty helping one another with pedagogy; disseminate ideas more broadly across the academic year; and make

more visible the ways that faculty navigated the 2020 year.” With assistance from the CTE, OIT, and the university library system, each pod determined its own strategy for sharing the ideas and resources it produced, such as publishing materials on the university’s *Keep Teaching* website, conducting workshops with the CTE, curating short videos, or giving presentations to colleagues. Finally, the CTE and Academic Technology Services continued their pre-pandemic practice of offering a pre-semester Teaching Effectiveness Symposium (dedicated in 2021 to remote instruction) and of offering small Just-in-Time-Teaching (JiTT) grants to faculty across campus to acquire specific technology or materials for their courses. Within World Languages, such grants were used for myriad activities during the pandemic, including virtual cooking classes and museum visits. Students completing a unit about Italian professions were able to interview an Italian *pizzaiolo* and attend a virtual pizza-making lesson and dinner with their classmates; intermediate Spanish students were able to practice their language skills using interactive websites, such as Kahoot, Thinglink, and Flipgrid; and students discussing their Spanish-language internships in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex were able to use podcast equipment to create high-quality presentations.

At the departmental level, the World Languages Pedagogy Committee (PC), comprised of volunteer faculty from all language areas, met bi-weekly throughout the pandemic to address a set of tasks provided by the department’s Executive Committee pertaining to curriculum development, student learning outcomes, and the online curriculum. The support of this committee in discussions related to distance learning – such as how to address questions of academic integrity or how to assess global engagement in virtual environments – provided faculty from different language areas with a platform to share examples, best practices, and ideas, and establish uniform guidelines related to diverse matters, such as how to assess participation in virtual courses.

### **Support and Growth through Collaboration and Community**

More than in other semesters, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout the 2020-21 academic year, cooperation among colleagues across different language areas and the creation and promotion of collaborative learning and teaching environments was a key element in the success of academic programs, the maintenance of a strong community of learners, and the capability of instructors to use institutional resources effectively and synergistically to adapt to remote, hybrid, and HyFlex models during the pandemic. Using enrollment as a metric of success during the pandemic, our preliminary data shows that student interest in world language majors and minors actually grew during the pandemic. A comparison of the number of majors and minors in 2018 versus 2021 reveals maintenance or growth in all areas except for a decrease in the number of French majors (from fifty-two in 2018 to thirty-eight in 2021, a direct result of the cancellation of study abroad programs for two consecutive summer terms), which was nonetheless counterbalanced by explosive growth in the number of French minors (from twenty-three in 2018 to fifty-one in 2021).

Because the World Languages department had already been characterized by a strong commitment to collaborative learning and teaching and building a strong

community of learners and teachers, instructors and students were well-equipped to navigate the changing face of academic life during the pandemic. Drawing on this department's model, this section will offer some possible trajectories and tips for a successful post-pandemic era for all world language instructors. At the risk of stating the obvious, it is worthwhile to reflect on the influence that a cooperative and collaborative environment has on the experience of teaching and learning, as both are inherently social processes. The absence of a shared physical space, the requirement of social distancing, and other preventative measures aimed at limiting the diffusion of COVID-19 on campus challenged these principles, but also affirmed that physical spaces are only one channel for social and linguistic interaction. It has long been suggested that Computer Mediated Communication/Collaboration can enhance and stimulate the creation of a strong community and that a community of learners and instructors should not be defined by physical constraints; however, the pandemic offered valuable opportunities to put those beliefs to the test and harness resources to turn a period of crisis into an opportunity to reinvigorate our sense of community and curricula.

In the specific case of SMU, the three communicative strands associated with the world language classroom were also those of the working environment: Cooperative learning, collaborative learning, and interaction (Oxford, 1997). Faculty applied Olsen and Kagan's (1992) definition of *cooperative learning*, according to which learning "is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, p. 8). Contextually, faculty worked towards a shared goal of *cooperative teaching*, likewise organized so that teaching becomes "dependent on the socially structured exchange of information" between instructors and in which all instructors are held accountable for their own learning/teaching and are motivated to increase the learning/teaching of others. While such "socially structured exchange" pre-dated the pandemic, the sustained effort to maintain and create venues for faculty collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic helped to reinforce that sense that "if we want teachers to teach collaboratively, they must first be exposed directly to collaborative learning contexts and experiences" (Hughes Wilhelm, 1997, p. 527).

The World Languages Teaching and Technology Center, while physically closed for the 2020-21 year, continued to offer a venue for professional development opportunities in the form of online workshops and webinars, course design, technical support, the supervision of the online curriculum, and equipment loans. In Spring 2020 and Spring 2021, the department focused its annual, faculty-led symposium, or Inter-linguistic Pedagogical Exchanges (ILPE), on *Making Language Teaching Happen During a Pandemic* and *Assessing Without Testing*, respectively. Another faculty-led initiative that continued to serve as an important professional development tool throughout the pandemic was a series of informal monthly workshops, *Taste of Teaching*, in which faculty share their firsthand experiences and discuss and reflect on specific aspects of teaching methodologies and approaches.

A final example of a pre-pandemic program that has continued to thrive under COVID-19 operations is found in the university-sponsored, faculty-led research clusters. World Languages faculty members served as conveners for four different



research clusters funded by the university's Interdisciplinary Institute on the topics of *Critical Literacies for the Digital Age*, *Global Literacy and Languages for Specific Purposes*, *Hispanics at Work: Business and Cultural Matters*, and the *Global South*. The activities of these clusters, while moved to a virtual format due to the pandemic, provided important opportunities for collaboration and professional development, such as a two-week, hybrid ACTFL OPI familiarization workshop for World Language faculty that was fully funded by the Global Literacies research cluster in May 2021. Taken together, these initiatives represented a major contribution to the overall well-being and success of the department before and during the pandemic and many of the unique ideas that arose from these events highlight how the crisis became an opportunity to re-evaluate and revise beliefs and practices about online teaching, learning, and assessment.

Due to the extensive training to teach online prior to the pandemic, the SMU World Languages faculty were able to rapidly shift to online instruction and focus their efforts on more sustainable, long-term changes to the curriculum during the 2020-21 academic year, whereas other institutions remained stuck in the *emergency remote* holding pattern (Samuels, 2020). Consequently, the Pedagogy Committee could take advantage of the fully-online instructional mode to pilot options (discussions about which had begun in 2019) for permanent blended and hybrid third-semester language courses as a means of better meeting student needs and of achieving multiliteracy and self-directed learning skills. Under the new model, in order to facilitate language acquisition and achieve institutional curriculum goals for this language level, all third-semester courses would be modified through the addition of a one-credit online lab in lieu of a credit hour that had previously been fulfilled in the classroom. During the redesign process, the Pedagogy Committee provided a rationale for the development of the hybrid course and examples of non-language-specific assignments that could be adapted for various languages and levels to foster opportunities for communication in meaningful contexts and that could be used in an online lab. Some of the assignments proposed by the Pedagogy Committee include student-curated websites, portfolio assignments, class blogs or podcast channels, digital literacy projects, and weekly partner chats. Meanwhile, the Center for Teaching Excellence offered consultation sessions with an Instructional Designer.

The pandemic provided the ideal circumstances for piloting this new model, and during the 2020-21 academic year, the department offered one third-semester French course using the new model (three credit hours taught synchronously and one credit hour delivered asynchronously via two weekly sessions). To facilitate practice in the interpretive mode, the course integrated a selection of films available in streaming (via Kanopy or Digital Campus, two streaming platforms available through institutional subscriptions), whereas the conversation platform TalkAbroad was used for synchronous interpersonal speaking activities. Presentational speaking and writing skills were developed through activities using Canvas tools. Student responses to a mid-semester survey and their feedback at the end of the semester were positive and encouraging, but the success of the pilot was a result not only of the faculty-led, re-design process, but also of the institutional support offered by various units on campus. In the mid-semester survey, students commented that they liked the course model and found it easy to navigate, and that they were progressing

(learning with quizzes and scaffolded content). In the end-of-semester course evaluation, students commented positively about their online experience, and that they benefited from the daily course structure (the independent work done two days a week, the flipped classroom model used three days a week).

### **Conclusions: Looking Back, Looking Ahead**

The availability of institutional and technical support, professional development, and opportunities for faculty collaboration were essential to the success of the World Languages department during the pandemic and will remain so moving forward. Although the experiences and expertise gained during the disruption has fundamentally changed faculty attitudes toward distance learning and hopefully made all of us better teachers, an institutional commitment to fostering greater synergy between administration, staff, and faculty will be necessary to continue to make critical improvements to online course design and delivery. Faculty training and cross-campus collaboration must be prioritized to make continued improvements not only to online and distance learning curricula, but also to prepare instructors to approach face-to-face teaching with a new lens, and to allow faculty to explore new approaches, assessment methods, and ways of making sure that teaching and learning environments utilize the technological tools at their disposal to their full capacity.

In conclusion, the presence and strategic interaction between the four elements discussed in this paper – Institutional Support, Technical Support, Professional Development, and Collaboration and Community – are all necessary to create the conditions for success in the classroom and to offer a system of support for instructors that includes funding, professional development, curricular design support, accountability, and opportunities for sustained collaboration. As we look toward the future of world language curricula in online, hybrid, and face-to-face environments, it is evident that the success of a program cannot rely solely on the readiness and preparedness of individual faculty members and departments. It will also necessitate the development of an intentional, long-term investment on the part of the institution as a whole, and one that rises above typical pitfalls caused by diverse objectives of faculty, staff and administration, who must instead create and strive for a set of common objectives.

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