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## How Have Students and Teachers Adapted to Online Instruction During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic?

Gladis Jeanneth Galvez-Mulloy  
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How Have Students and Teachers Adapted to Online Instruction During the COVID-19 Global  
Pandemic?

Gladis Jeanneth Galvez-Mulloy

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### How Have Students and Teachers Adapted to Online Instruction During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic?

Gladis Jeanneth Galvez-Mulloy  
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Master of Arts

In order to minimize the effects of COVID-19 on teaching and learning, educational institutions around the world moved quickly to transfer education from traditional classrooms to an online learning environment. The main objective of this study was to determine the effects of COVID-19 on students and instructors of several world languages at Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah), highlighting the viability or possible limitations of online learning in university teaching and learning during COVID-19. Thus, this study investigated the effects this transition had on students' learning as well as instructors' teaching practices. Using the thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2013) to analyze which factors influenced the instructors' and students' adaptations to a new online teaching and learning environment during this period of transition from the traditional classroom to online learning, ensured a comprehensive study of the qualitative data. Using survey data, I was able to make conclusions derived directly from the data collected. Results of this study indicated that most learners and instructors felt that the following factors are necessary for online learning to be successful and beneficial: A well designed, rigorous curriculum; technological and emotional support before and during the transition; constant feedback from instructors; opportunities for student-to-student collaboration; and opportunities for instructors and students to build relationships.

These results support previous research, which has also shown that the online environment requires more than simply transferring content from a traditional to an online setting. Instructors must be organized and know how to implement the course curriculum and use the right methods for the new environment to avoid factors that trigger stress and anxiety, thus blocking their learning. Therefore, appropriate training from the institutions as well should be ensured before transitioning to an online environment.

Keywords: asynchronous, computer literacy, coronavirus, COVID-19, e-learning, face-to-face, online environment, synchronous, traditional classroom

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my committee members: Dr. Child, Dr. Martinsen, and Dr. Thompson for their endless support and encouragement throughout this process. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without their support and hard work. I appreciate the long hours they spent reading my study and all the feedback they provided me. I would also like to thank my husband William Mulloy and my daughter Savannah for taking the time to read my thesis as many times as needed, and for their valuable suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank my daughter Kimber for spending countless hours cheering me on and staying up with me until late hours of the night so that I could finish writing, and my mother Alicia for her encouragement to get it done. I could not have done this without all of these individuals' support and encouragement.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **Second Language Acquisition**

Research by Chen & Wang (2008) shows that distance learning education has been around even before technology made its first appearance, allowing students to get the education they want without placing a foot in the classroom. Once technology developed sufficiently, it has made this distance learning more accessible to any type of course, especially second language courses. There are multiple applications and websites presently offering the world to become globally connected by learning another language without having to attend a mortar classroom.

In the article Oral computer-mediated interaction between L2 learners: It's about time, (Yanguas, 2010) the author claims that by offering multiple courses and differentiated instruction through games; interactive listening, reading and writing tasks; web-based chat rooms, etc., students have been able to learn a language through an online format.

### **Technology and Language Teaching**

Larsen-Freeman (2009) and Yanguas (2010) add that these technological advances have made online classes a viable option to fulfill educational requirements, as well as learning for enjoyment while achieving mastery in those specific courses. They add that the field of second language teaching has been trying to take full advantage of this new medium for years; however, they admit that there are still gaps and barriers to achieving fluency and pronunciation through digital mediums. At the same time, they also state that it is possible to negotiate meaning and practice oral communication during computer-mediated communication, the same as in a face-to-face traditional classroom. This, they say, is an ongoing area of research that is still trying to determine whether these technological chatting applications give ample opportunities to replicate real-world oral skills.

## **Online Classrooms and SLA**

Al-Jarf (2003) conducted a two-year study with Arabic speaking students learning English and found that a hybrid program, where web-based instruction was provided, proved to be an important factor in enhancing the writing quality of unskilled, EFL students with the experimental group showing great improvements in writing ability and oral competence. Moreover, students indicated that the use of technology has had a positive effect on their attitudes toward the writing process, their self-esteem, motivation, and sense of achievement while encouraging more writing and collaboration outside the classroom with almost instant feedback from peers.

In the same manner, a study by Money Penny and Aldrich (2016) sampled 90 undergraduate students in an online and face-to-face instruction using the same instrument at the end of the two semesters of Introductory Spanish. These scores were compared to the ACTFL established benchmarks and suggested that online Spanish course options could be an effective mode for students to meet oral proficiency benchmarks when programs require asynchronous and synchronous oral production, especially when collaborating with each other. However, over 50% of students were not meeting the benchmark, thus requiring additional research in this area to better understand why some students were meeting the benchmark, while others were not. If Al-Jarf and Money Penny are correct though, can online classes truly allow for a community of learners as successful as the traditional classroom?

## **Rates of Online Learning and the Global Pandemic in 2020**

Even prior to the pandemic due to the coronavirus, online learning had firmly taken root in educational systems in the U.S. According to the article 50 Online Education Statistics:

2020/2021 Data on Higher Learning & Corporate Training (2020), many educational institutions had implemented online learning in their curricula even before the Coronavirus pandemic.

Their report revealed that the percentage of students taking one or more online undergraduate classes increased from 15.6% in 2004 to 43.1% in 2016. Their findings also showed that in the fall of 2018, there were 6,932,074 students enrolled in distance education courses provided by degree-granting post-secondary institutions in the U.S. (NCES, 2018).

As the reality of the pandemic took hold, universities around the country were forced to make difficult decisions as they sought to continue to provide high quality instruction and simultaneously protect the health and safety of their university communities. Within the basic framework of social distancing at in-person gatherings, postponing or canceling elective curricula, and limiting face-to-face participation, institutions worked swiftly to incorporate innovative solutions to maintain rigorous curricula without delaying students' education. However, the literature below will illustrate how the physical, mental, emotional, and environmental factors contributed to the stress and lack of productivity in many institutions throughout the world.

Brigham Young University, the university that will be the focus of this study, was no exception. With some online classes already in place, BYU had been increasing its online offerings. However, the university only had a limited number of classes that were offered online when COVID-19 hit.

Even so, on the 12 of March 2020, all instructors and students received a COVID-19 update consistent with the CES guidelines that were issued the night before. The update communicated that regular classes on March 13, 16, and 17 were canceled and all courses at BYU would resume the 18th of March through remote instruction. Except for those courses that

could not “reasonably” meet remotely such as lab or performance-based classes. BYU also encouraged students to consider leaving campus and returning home to finish the Winter semester through remote coursework. However, due to individual circumstances that did not allow it, services and on campus housing continued to be available for those who needed it.

## **Purpose**

The goal of this study as mentioned before is to analyze the impact instructors and students in foreign language classes at Brigham Young University experienced in response to the global pandemic. Specifically, how this transition affected teaching and learning from the instructors’ and students’ perspectives. It is hoped that the results of this study will inform stakeholders and provide them with the necessary tools to improve online curriculum, choose reliable platforms, and train faculty and students on how to succeed in online learning environments.

This study primarily focuses on the impact COVID-19 had on teachers and students in the French & Italian and Spanish & Portuguese Departments at Brigham Young University. Moreover, it hopes to bring more general awareness to the challenges faced during a sudden transition to online learning, and influence institutions to better install venues for training and support in case of another global pandemic. This information should allow institutions to ensure a smooth and efficient transition to online learning, thus avoiding a “gap” in student learning during the transitional period and the unnecessary added mental and physical stress. Additionally, providing better curriculum, support, and training creates an underlying benefit to universities and institutions by allowing a more robust learning solution for students year-round and outside of a global pandemic.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### Online Learning

According to the research done by Al-Jarf (2003); Chen & Wang (2008); Colpaert (2006); Don (2005); Istifci (2017) and Yanguas (2010), the increasing demand from students for online learning has motivated more institutions to modify their course programs to make online courses more accessible. This research has also shown that some students have more success and give positive reviews of classes on synchronous and asynchronous online platforms.

Additionally, many studies explain that education is becoming more expensive, and a higher number of students attend college while also working; pushing institutions to constantly investigate the best ways to implement a successful online platform to give students more flexibility and access to the classes they would not take otherwise because of money, time, and space constraints (Al-Jarf , 2003; Blake Wilson, Cetto & Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Chen & Wang, 2008 and Colpaert, 2006).

Even after many years of research, some researchers are not completely convinced when it comes to the efficacy of online learning. Al-Jarf (2003) and Money Penny & Aldrich (2016) mentioned the fear they have that the online environment is not yet optimized to provide learning experiences that resemble the real world, especially in language classes. Additionally, the authors suggested that for online learning to be successful, it had to have certain elements in place such as an engaged curriculum design, reliable technology, connection with students and instructors, and the right platform to be able to build the right environment for learning and avoid factors that might trigger stress and anxiety.

## **Online Learning Pros and Cons**

### ***Differentiation and Scaffolding***

These are two major arguments that Colpaert (2006) makes in his study that showed that these functionalities (differentiation and scaffolding) could be developed to serve any platform if the right curriculum, the right technology, and necessary resources are available. This, according to him, would bridge the gap between technology and pedagogy, where students could create more output successfully because they have the right tools and training, no matter whether the course is online or in a traditional classroom.

### ***Flexibility in Delivery***

Flexibility has also become a must in our education in the 21st century. Chen and Wang (2008) did a pilot study to investigate the application of some of the principles of instructed language learning in an online environment teaching Chinese to English speakers, where students and teachers attended the cyber class from their own homes for ten weeks. They came to the conclusion that in order for students to succeed, teachers in online environments had to be even more cognizant of the hierarchical needs of their students, their background knowledge, and motivational filters. According to the authors, it can sustain the same type of academic curriculum as in a traditional classroom, but only with planning and scaffolding for an independent online audience. Their conclusions seem to encourage online teaching. However, Chen and Wang still feel that more research should be done to answer specific questions about gains in learning, especially oral proficiency in a language class.

### ***Oral Proficiency***

In his article “An investigation of the fundamental characteristics in quality online Spanish Instruction”, Don (2005) argues that since oral proficiency is the main goal when

learning a foreign language, many preservice teachers reject an online approach and are somewhat skeptical on how it might truly help students acquire that skill. They worry about the impact on the students' oral fluency, and pronunciation outcomes because they argue that this platform lacks opportunities to practice real world scenarios.

In the same manner, many researchers share the opposing views of using online approaches to teach the skills mentioned above (Blake, Wilson, Cetto & Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Don, 2005); Friedman, 2015; Moore & Kearsly, 2005; and Nguyen & Zhang, 2011). They believe that face-to-face teaching and learning in a traditional classroom cannot be replicated, and online teaching will not give students the same experiences. They argue that online instruction is limited to teaching vocabulary and grammar, i.e. structure, not fluency, and is a good tool to use as an asynchronous platform resource only. Granted, says Allen & Seaman (2008) that most of the studies done in oral proficiency have been in blended or hybrid courses and not 100 percent online, or at least what is required for an online class to be considered a fully online course, which is at least 80 percent taught online. There are, however, some studies that have tested oral proficiency but still come up with questions on how to develop it further for better implementation and outcomes (Herrera Díaz & González Miy, 2017; Karabulut, LeVelle, Li & Suvorov, 2012; Money Penny & Aldrich, 2016; and Yanguas, 2010).

### ***Self-Motivation***

In addition to the medium itself, students may also struggle more with self-motivation in online courses. For example, in a recent study, Istifci (2017) examined the perspective of 167 EFL students about their experience using online platforms during their education at Anadolu University, as well as their preferences regarding face-to-face (traditional classroom), online and blended learning in SLA. He found that 60% of students liked the blended course format;

however, their preferences changed when asked about attendance and participation, the blended course went down and face-to-face (traditional classroom instruction) went up. They felt that they could learn better with more teacher interaction because in an online or blended classroom, students had to take control of their assignments and practice on their own and they did not have the necessary motivation to do it, unless they had a synchronous class where they met together often with the teacher or created study groups, thus motivating them to practice their oral language.

By the same token, Tinto (1993) suggests students figure out where to find this self-motivation, as it is a key requirement to be successful in this new platform. “Their positive attitude will aid them to overcome the many challenges online learning brings. Their motivation will make those insurmountable challenges seem microscopic because it is their decision to take on this virtual load, or in this case, it is a necessary evil to complete the necessary course load for graduation” (p. 3).

### ***Feedback and Communication***

Students in a study done by Nguyen & Zhang (2011) also argued that lack of instant feedback and communication in an online platform had a negative impact on their learning. because usually it meant more work because they did not get instant feedback on what they were doing right or wrong to correct it. Whereas in a traditional classroom, instructors are giving feedback constantly, thus making it easier to correct errors and less time consuming. Therefore, the time and work they had to dedicate to complete assignments triggered their stress and they were less motivated to complete the work. Interestingly enough, they did less work online than in a traditional classroom but more time studying “in order to cope with a perceived heavier class workload” (p. 35). They also mentioned how much they missed the interactions with their



instructors and peers as well as students are concerned about the lack of face-to-face communication, especially missing instant response/feedback and its negative effects on their learning.

### **The Effects of the Pandemic on Learning**

Whether people are in general agreement with the efficacy of online learning or not, COVID-19 has presented many challenges for instructors and students. With the closure of schools, the conversation is no longer whether the online platform is an optimized environment, because for some at least it was the only educational environment during the pandemic.

Aristovnik et al. (2020) explain how this crisis of COVID-19 is placing stakeholders in a position where they need to make quick decisions; it seems that online learning is the perfect setting for a safe learning environment without losing instructional time. Even so, they explain what happens when students and instructors are required to jump aboard an online platform without any warning, training, or adequate resources. Simply jumping aboard or forcing passengers onto a ship does not necessarily mean that it will be a positive experience for everyone. In such a crisis, they add, “many questions arise and training is needed”.

Furthermore, they explain, “when studying isolated at home, students may face a lack of self-motivation/self-discipline or inappropriate learning environments” (p. 9). For example, in this COVID-19 pandemic, everyone was quickly moved to the online platform without warning and many times without any training because of lack of time and resources.

This is exactly what happened, explains Almaiah et al. (2020), back in March of 2020 when most schools shut down and education was transitioned to online learning. “As students and teachers dropped everything, they were doing in the traditional classroom to transition to the new environment, they still lacked the necessary training and the provision and usage of online

materials and online learning became the main challenge” (p. 9), the authors declared. There was no time to choose the best platform, only the most available, and the instructors did not have the necessary time and training to adequately teach their students how to fully navigate the new platform.

### **Minimizing the Negative Effects of the Pandemic**

Therefore, in order to minimize the negative effects of COVID-19 on learning, institutions around the world moved quickly to transfer education from traditional classrooms to an online learning environment (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Nevertheless, online learning, according to the research presented, is not simply dumping content online; instructors must be organized and know how to implement the course curriculum and use the right methods for the new environment to avoid adding to students’ stress and anxiety. Hence, appropriate training as well as the right equipment from institutions, and self-efficacy from instructors and students should be ensured (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

Additionally, Toquero (2020) agreed that there are many elements of online teaching and learning that pose challenges for instructors and students when adapting to a necessary change without warning -- such as the curriculum, which platform to use, activities to foster proficiency, and consistent feedback. She also agreed that most in-service-teachers have no issues putting in intensive work to design the content for the new platform but navigating the new platform requires training time, and the majority of instructors don’t have any training on such matters. Aristovnik et al. (2020) also claim that the effectiveness of online learning depends on the curriculum design, instructor engagement, amount of teacher-to-student feedback, and collaboration from student-to-student. In addition, they agree and explain that although most millennials and generation alpha students are experts on some types of technology, that expertise

sometimes does not extend to educational learning platforms or the diverse ways to benefit from these platforms such as finding “teacher’s feedback or allocating files”. Being successful in an online course has many facets to it; researchers agree that it is very complex and very layered and it takes time (Al-Jarf, 2003; Aristovnik et al. 2020, Blake, Wilson, Cetto & Pardo-Ballester, 2008; Chen & Wang, 2008; Colpaert, 2006; Toquero, 2020).

When this pandemic of COVID-19 hit, instructors had to design content, build synchronous/asynchronous teaching methods, adapt new technology, assess the efficacy of new teaching strategies, build connections with students, and determine the attitudes of the students, all at the same time. Similarly, students had to adapt to new environments, new styles of teaching, new self-motivation/self-discipline requirements, and the stress that comes from change (Aristovnik et al. 2020). This becomes very difficult because, as the authors explain, you cannot target everything all at once -- it takes time to design and make this transition.

In like manner, Chick et al. (2020) suggested that students needed time to adapt when creating a successful virtual learning experience, especially when switching from traditional classroom learning to a computer-based platform. “People resist change all the time and adolescents are no different, which keeps them from adapting to a new online environment. Since they resist this new change, the time it takes to learn to decode the course is increased” (p. 10). They indicate that these traditionally minded students will need to take time to adapt to the new way of doing the work and learning the concepts.

Furthermore, Bao (2020) found that the lack of knowledge when using different programs to access and complete assignments causes frustration, lack of productivity and lack of self-motivation. This adaptability is, according to the authors, a must for online courses as students will have to figure out these programs to be able to manage, organize, and turn in

assignments on time. Having the necessary training enables students to adapt and participate in online classes without hindrance to their learning or the anxiety that comes with a new change in the curriculum.

### **Five Steps to Effective Online Learning**

According to Bao (2020) there are five principles of high-impact teaching practices to effectively deliver large-scale online education:

- a. The principle of appropriate relevance. The quantity, difficulty, and length of teaching content should match with the academic readiness and online learning behavior characteristics of students.
- b. The principle of effective delivery. Due to students' characteristics of low concentration in online learning, it is essential to adjust the teaching speed in order to ensure the effective delivery of teaching information.
- c. The principle of sufficient support. Faculty and teaching assistants need to provide students with timely feedback, including online video tutoring and email guidance after class.
- d. The principle of high-quality participation. It is necessary to adopt some measures to improve the degree and depth of students' class participation.
- e. The principle of contingency plan preparation. In view of the extraordinarily large scale of online education, it is necessary to make contingency plans in advance for addressing possible problems such as the inability to connect because of bandwidth issues of the online education platform which triggers students' anxiety and stress (p. 113).

Additionally, since this transition was implemented so rapidly during the outbreak of COVID-19, Bao (2020) suggests that students should get the help they need by getting timely

and sufficient feedback from instructors to relieve the anxiety that shuts down self-motivation and ensures that their online learning can be “effectively and actively engaged” (p. 115). This, according to the author, becomes an issue, especially when instructors are stretched so thin during a crisis.

With that said, what happens when students are forced to learn this way because there is no other way they can get an education? Bao (2020), Aristovnik et al. (2020), and Mohammed et al. (2020) suggest that making sure students and instructors are trained on the successful delivery and usage of content is imperative to instill this self-motivation/discipline because not all students possess this ideal skill required for online learning. As a matter of fact, Bao adds, “most students who find that they lack that motivation the first two weeks, find it hard to continue in the course and just drop out”.

Aristovnik et al. (2020) agree with Bao and adds that instructors who are not familiar with online platforms could also become a hindrance to students' education because of the overload of study material and assignments” (p. 8).

## **Summary**

To sum up, COVID-19 has forced the educational system to develop alternative educational delivery methods for instruction online. Neither students nor instructors were asked whether this was an option, but in order to minimize the effects of COVID-19, institutions around the world moved quickly to transfer education from traditional classrooms to an online learning environment. Online learning, according to research, is not simply dumping content online; instructors must be organized and know how to implement the course curriculum and use the right methods and strategies for the new environment to avoid students' stress and anxiety.

Therefore, Aristovnik et al. (2020) advised that appropriate training as well as the right equipment, curriculum, and scaffolding should be ensured.

### **Study Model and Process**

The present study will build on previously mentioned research regarding online learning by examining topics related to the resources and the motivation needed to adapt to this new educational reality. How does one train for the challenges that come with it, and train themselves for future challenges that could come their way? How do teachers and students adapt and overcome all of these challenges? These are significant issues that teachers and students are facing during COVID-19. Therefore, it is imperative to inform all stakeholders about these issues during this transition and the impact this change is having on learning so that new implementations and remediations can ensure success for both instructors and students (Toquero 2020). Within the basic framework of social distancing at in-person gatherings, postponing or canceling elective curricula, and limiting face-to-face participation, the work that educational institutions quickly incorporated to maintain rigorous education was innovative and proactive and may have reduced delays in students' education. However, as seen in the research, the lack of multiple elements added to the stress and lack of productivity in many cases. Instructors and students were told all classes were transitioning to an online platform. Nobody was asked whether they had the right resources and according to Aristovnik et al. (2020), many instructors and students were not trained on the diverse platforms being used. As mentioned in the research, instructors had no option either; they were in the middle of a crisis creating lesson plans for an unknown platform when schools shut down so that students did not have lag time in their education.

The research of this study observes the following model and processes to produce the findings: The responses from the surveys will be analyzed using a thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2013):

1. Familiarize oneself with the data.
2. Assign preliminary codes to the data in order to describe the content.
3. Search for patterns or themes in the codes across the different interviews.
4. Review themes.
5. Define and name themes.
6. Produce a report.

Using this structured analysis method will ensure a comprehensive study of the qualitative data. The focus will be on the research questions, which will help to tabulate and filter results to analyze the numbers and draw conclusions. For example, cross-tabulating and filtering the answers by teacher/student and themes, reading the comments repeatedly and looking for patterns in themes, as well as looking for similarities and differences among subgroups such as teachers and students as well as differences in course levels.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Reasons for the Present Study**

Even though time did not permit training for online teaching and learning, instructors and students at Brigham Young University were required to find a way to cope with the unknown if they wished to continue teaching and learning during the pandemic. In this crisis, many concerns arose regarding how an institution could support instructors and students transitioning to a new world of teaching and learning. It is the hope of the author to find enough information from both groups (instructors and students) to give insight on how these two groups adapted to a necessary change in their teaching/learning practices.

Additionally, it is hoped that this will give some insights on what is needed for quality online instruction and how those who have less experience with this type of environment can benefit as it becomes more common in a global diverse mobile world.

### **Context of the Present Study**

This study involved an investigation of some of the factors that led to the implementation of an online curriculum during the pandemic in 2020 and an analysis of the effects of those factors in online classrooms. This study aims to inform institutions and stakeholders how instructors and students were impacted by the transition to online teaching and learning during COVID-19 at Brigham Young University. This study also aims to identify how to improve online teaching generally based on lessons learned during the global pandemic.

In brief, the main objective of this study is to determine the effects of COVID-19 on students and instructors of several world languages at Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah), highlighting the viability or possible limitations of online learning in university teaching and



learning during COVID-19. Thus, this study will investigate the effects this transition had on students' learning as well as instructors' teaching practices.

### **Research Questions**

- How did students and instructors adapt to a necessary change to online language instruction?
- Was instructor-to-student feedback affected during the transition to an online learning environment? If so, how?
- How has the transition to online teaching affected students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities in their language of study?
- How satisfied are students and instructors with the institution's support during the transition to online learning?
  - How satisfied are students with instructors' support during the transition to online learning?

### **Participants**

The respondents in the target population were recruited by convenience sampling facilitated by students' personal contact information in the database of the target institution. The online survey was emailed to each participant's personal email and sent back directly to the database of the survey software.

I chose a sample of students and instructors in first and second level language courses as well as third-year conversation language courses at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah during the time of transition to remote learning in 2020. There were 17 French students, 5 Italian, 20 Portuguese, 53 Spanish students and 2 Spanish TAs; with 11 instructors of Italian (1) Portuguese (2), and Spanish (8) languages, who participated in the study. Participants were a mix

of French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish students who are at least 18 years of age. Teachers were a mix of graduate student instructors as well as adjuncts in the Spanish/Portuguese and French/Italian departments.

In order to ensure anonymity, the names of the language instructors were replaced using capital letters and numbers; e.g., FI-1 means French Instructor No. 1; II means Italian Instructor No. 1; SI-1 means Spanish Instructor No. 1; and PI-1 means Portuguese Instructor No. 1. Likewise, the names of students were replaced in the same manner; e.g., FS-1 means French Student No. 1, IS-1 means Italian Student No. 1, etc.

### **Procedures**

Each participant received an email with a link to the survey. The email explained the basic study briefly. Students then clicked on the link and completed the survey. If participants declined the survey, recorded interviews were an option to allow for more participants; however, interviews were not necessary as students who were willing to participate chose the survey. Surveys for students and instructors were similar but not identical (see Appendix 1 and 2). These Google surveys were sent through emails; however, email addresses were not collected unless students were willing to disclose them. If students provided their emails, as mentioned previously, a code with letters and numbers was used in lieu of the students' name in the analysis and reporting in order to maintain anonymity. A choice was given to each instructor and student to participate in the study voluntarily without a reward. Participants were informed and given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Data Analysis**

This study uses a qualitative framework, which has some quantitative data that has been analyzed using descriptive statistics.

More specifically, this study employs the thematic method of case study survey to gather all the necessary information for a qualitative analysis. By using the thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2013) to analyze which factors influenced the instructors' and students' adaptations to a new online teaching and learning environment during this period of transition from the traditional classroom to online surveys, I was able to make conclusions derived directly from the data collected. This qualitative study includes the following research procedures: Two groups (instructors and students), which is the main boundary; the time and place (school year 2020, Brigham Young University); and the context of the actual study, which is how students and teachers adapted to the necessary change to online instruction during COVID-19.

Categorical aggregation was included, and a cross-case thematic analysis was conducted in order to obtain information and insights on the attitudinal views of learning from both instructors and students during the transition period according to Braun and Clarke (2013).

### **Reliability and Validity of Instruments**

The reliability and validity of the instruments used have been increased by a Google form which is a familiar format for surveys for these participants. To further enhance the validity, it was created and piloted with two instructors and two students, then modified according to their feedback. Moreover, the surveys included questions that related to their specific course of study and were in a conversational style, and the hypothesis or the specific aim of the study was not mentioned.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Teachers' Background with Technology**

According to the instructors' survey, after the university transitioned to online instruction, instructors used Zoom or CANVAS as their educational platform and received some training on the basics of how to use these platforms. Zoom was used to give lectures online synchronously, record sessions, and create breakout rooms for group participation and conferences with students. CANVAS was used as a venue for readings, assignments, projects, and grading. According to the surveys, none of the instructors had ever used Zoom as a teaching tool but had used CANVAS before for instruction and learning. Brigham Young University had a well-developed technological infrastructure, thus making the Internet connection reliable when on campus. However, when off campus, instructors and students had some connectivity issues.

### **Research Questions and Findings**

#### ***Question 1:***

How did students and teachers adapt to a necessary change to online language instruction?

In this study, results showed that a variety of factors affected the teaching and learning process including lack of prior experience with the necessary technology tools, lack of self-motivation, and frequent outside stressors. Results from the surveys showed that students as well as instructors had little to no experience using Zoom; and though 37.1% had taken an online or hybrid class before, only 13.4% felt comfortable navigating the online platform and course. Finally, 59.8% agreed that some of the challenges in completing the course successfully was the lack of reliable internet access, self-motivation/confidence, anxiety and stress.

**Self-Motivation and Confidence.** According to the instructors, there was a great lack of motivation and confidence experienced by some students that kept them from participating because they were afraid and embarrassed to say anything that might not be said correctly:

*No one stayed after class for extra help and no one was motivated to come to office hours once we switched (PI-1).*

*My students stopped trying to ask questions in Portuguese and relied on English. Many students couldn't figure out how to type using the special characters like accent marks so I had to stop taking off points for them. I spoke more English to help navigate students through the newer program because they couldn't understand my directions about Zoom in Portuguese (PI-2).*

Students also felt the difficulty of this shift because of the communication gap among students and teachers. Socializing was no longer as easy as it had been face-to-face. Now students had to go out of their way and build the courage to participate and connect with peers and instructors as indicated in the following statements:

*I'm a very social person, so I missed getting to see people in person, and I felt discouraged because I didn't think I was really progressing on my own (SS-1).*

*It became more difficult to form relationships with teachers/classmates and to connect with classmates to form study groups or ask questions if needed (SS-2).*

*It was also hard to participate in the discussion-based classes because I don't feel comfortable speaking up in class unless I know who's there. It was also difficult to have a conversation on Zoom because you can't just pipe up; you have to wait in line for the teacher to get to you (FS-7).*

*I struggled to focus online, and take good notes. In person I was able to sit in the front to help with this but there wasn't really a way to do this over zoom (PS-18).*

In the same vein, when asked “What technical challenges did you face in completing your instruction remotely? (Select all that apply),” students commented:

*Internet connectivity (SI-1).*

*Internet connectivity, Problems with remote instruction platforms: Zoom, Canvas, etc., (SI-2).*

*Internet connectivity, problems with remote instruction platforms (PI-1).*

*I am very lucky to have stable ethernet connection at home, and a good computer that I like to work at. The hardest part would be if a student was willing to participate but we could not hear them due to their bad internet (SI-5).*

In addition, there were many cases where instructors were sick and depressed due to the virus, suffering great emotional trauma physically and emotionally. Instructors felt that they had given the best they could under the circumstances and that they were also victims of emotional trauma, which caused anxiety and stress that sometimes made teaching and giving feedback difficult and almost impossible:

*At least in that first semester when the switch happened, I feel we were all a bit detached from school and just trying to survive and cope. I feel I adequately supported my students but I imagine I was less supportive considering all of the stress, anxiety, and depression going on for everyone at the time. I found myself more often doing the bare minimum, once or twice even rolling out of bed just as class was about to start (SI-3).*

*I was definitely more willing to give students the benefit of the doubt because we were all going through a very difficult time adjusting to a new life (SI-6).*

*I was more supportive due the emotional stress that students felt due to the pandemic (PI-1).*

*I tried to be just as supportive, but most of my students didn't want help due to emotional stress (II-1).*

Equally concerned were students who also believed stress from the pandemic had a huge impact on their motivation to keep learning as well as technological issues. An SS commented how bad the situation was because they were not only dealing with the stress of school and connectivity issues, they were also dealing with the stress from other life issues. When asked the same question as the instructors about which challenges they had faced during this transition, they said:

*My life changed a lot right as the covid-19 transition was occurring. We found out that my grandma had cancer, and we were spending every weekend in St. George being with and caring for her and my grandpa as well. A loss of physical activities and a physical routine (such as intramural sports) hindered my learning as well, as weird as that sounds (SS-3).*

*Steady internet access and access to university resources (PS-2).*

*Depression and anxiety with a lack of social contact (SS-36).*

*WiFi & some professors didn't know how to optimize online learning (SS-37).*

*Poor audio quality on live feeds sometimes (IS-4).*

*Very little response from the teachers. I didn't get the personal aspect of language learning where they can tell you/help you with your accent and pronunciation (FS-1).*

Hence, mental and physical health concerns as well as technological issues were themes found in both groups. As one of the quotes reads, one instructor said that it was hard to “even get

out of bed” to teach a class because of lack of motivation and all the stress felt due to the situation. As noted above, students were also having similar concerns with health issues whether it was their own health or the health of relatives as one SS mentioned in the survey.

***Distraction and Lack of Participation.*** Another theme found among the answers for research question 1 was distraction and lack of participation. As research shows, engagement and participation are vital to any type of learning, but especially in online learning because there are many ways to get distracted and not give participation the priority needed for language acquisition. Instructors mentioned that students were more willing to disregard the eating and cell phone rules during online instruction compared to the traditional classroom. Thus, the lack of participation was not only due to the awkwardness of the platform but the fact that students were distracted and often missed instructions.

*Another downside to the transition was the necessity of teaching students online classroom etiquette; staying focused during class, not eating, not logging in while at the beach or while driving in the car for example (SI-2).*

*Engagement was much lower, you're less likely to get real-time feedback from students that would help you adapt your teaching, more time wasted, less physicality and games/competition, harder to establish a classroom culture/environment (SI-4).*

*They did not come to class in person once an online option was presented (even though in-person attendance was required) and they did not participate in the lessons.*

*As a result, I had to conduct activities with 1-3 students in the classroom, which made everyone feel awkward and the students less likely to take risks and feel comfortable making mistakes (II-1).*

*Half the time when I would put students in groups, they wouldn't know what was going*



*on because they had a much harder time paying attention and listening to directions. But never asked questions (PI-2).*

Students also felt that the environment was not conducive to learning. They had a hard time focusing during online instruction and felt the need to be doing something else just to stay focused. As they mention in the comments below:

*It can be difficult to focus during online classes that don't feel interactive. Some of my classes were lecture-based, and I found that I needed to be doing something else (like solitaire or another mind-numbing game) just to help me focus on listening to the lecture (PS-8).*

*I was rather depressed (about) everything being shut down and I was distracted by wrangling things with my landlord trying to get out of my housing contract (SS-19).*

*It was hard to focus in my new environment (FS-3)*

*It was a lot more difficult to concentrate on classes. I've never been one to sleep through classes or not pay attention, but this past semester I was nearly always having trouble listening to the lecture (FS-7).*

*What was hard was that our instructor burnt out and stopped trying just because it was difficult and boring to teach online, plus he was drained from his online classes and quarantine stuff (FS-8).*

**Question 2:**

Was instructor-to-student feedback affected during the transition to an online learning environment? If so, how?

**Lack of Personal Connection.** According to the research, relationship building is an essential factor for teacher-student feedback and student-student collaboration (Aristovnik et al. 2020). In this study, instructors and students mentioned the impact they felt because of the lack of this personal connection from each other. Some instructors thought they were building connections with at least the students who were attending classes, yet others felt that the personal connection was lacking or felt different than within the traditional classroom.

*I wish I had known how to keep those AWOL students involved. It is still a bit of a mystery to me how much an instructor can change the course of someone who has decided to stop coming to class (SI-7).*

*I prefer the traditional classroom because I can interact with my students face to face and there are less distractions for them (SI-3).*

*If I had to choose though I would say that I prefer the traditional classroom because it is far more personable and it is easier to form a relationship with students (SI-2).*

Students' answers showed that most of them were grateful for the leniency and kindness instructors provided during this time; however, they felt disconnected from their instructors and peers:

*It became more difficult to form relationships with teachers/classmates and to connect with classmates to form study groups or ask questions if needed (SS-2).*

*There is not as much one on one interaction with the teacher so there is little to no feedback outside of oral exams. I am just as motivated to learn as before, that's on me (SS-16).*

*Lack of personal connection with teachers, professors, and students. That connection is crucial to developing language skills and communication (FS-10).*

Although some instructors mentioned that they felt connected with the students who attended their classes, some instructors showed frustration with the disconnectivity and lack of relationship building. Whether that was due to the absence of attendance or the platform, it was a factor when trying to give feedback to students because it was hard to keep in touch with them.

**Feedback.** The feedback that students expected from instructors and peers was a main concern for instructors and students because neither group felt that there was enough during this transition period due to time constraints and lack of knowledge of the educational platform used to teach and learn. Instructors mentioned how difficult it was to give feedback on this new unknown platform. Six out of eleven instructors thought that feedback was given less in the online setting; three of the eleven instructors thought there was no change, and only two thought that there was more feedback given in this new platform in comparison to the traditional classroom:

*It was more difficult for me to give students feedback via zoom because I didn't want to take class time or embarrass students that were already having a hard time speaking up and participating in class (SI-5).*

*I think that I was able to give much less feedback on all of the modes of communication because of the online environment that winter semester and the lack of resources/knowledge of online tools that I had. I was still able to do a lot of speaking activities during class, but I would move from breakout room to breakout room and found it very hard to give individualized feedback as I had before in our in-person classes. I*

*also had the students display their writing skills in a variety of ways, but was only able to give very general feedback about common errors I noticed (SI-7).*

*There were fewer opportunities for students to practice speaking and I couldn't give them as much feedback over online platforms (II-1).*

*I think that I was able to give much less feedback on all of the modes of communication because of the online environment that winter semester and the lack of resources/knowledge of online tools that I had. I was still able to do a lot of speaking activities during class, but I would move from breakout room to breakout room and found it very hard to give individualized feedback as I had before in our in-person classes. I also had the students display their writing skills in a variety of ways, but was only able to give very general feedback about common errors I noticed (SI-8).*

Students also felt the negative impact of having no feedback from their instructors:

*The personal connection between students and instructors during in-person activities hindered my ability to hear the correct pronunciations and styles of communication. In an in-person class, transitions to different learning activities were quick, and the feedback received from teachers was much more comprehensive. Being in a class with other students wanting to learn (especially if the language is not as commonly spoken in the area) gave me greater motivation and practice with others (FS-10).*

*Teacher feedback and willingness to help stayed the same (SS-33).*

*It was a lot harder to receive feedback, because you can't really go up to the teacher right after class, you can stay after in zoom, but I feel like it's a lot harder to get feedback online than in person (PS-17).*

*Feedback was limited depending on the instructor. My later SPAN 206 course still managed to be an improvement but before that, instructors struggled with feedback opportunities lost to technology management or lecture (SS-24).*

*Because participation was a grade I participated more. Other than that, I lost focus enough to engage and I felt like teacher feedback was sometimes limited (SS-51).*

On the other hand, some students felt that even though it was not the same as in the traditional classroom, teachers were still able to give valuable feedback in online environments.

*Being able to go into breakout rooms and receive feedback personally rather than in a larger group was really helpful (FS-5).*

*Break out rooms encouraged conversation (SS-37).*

*I think it's almost easier to give written feedback online sometimes because the teacher can be more specific and give comments for any assignment they want (SS-45).*

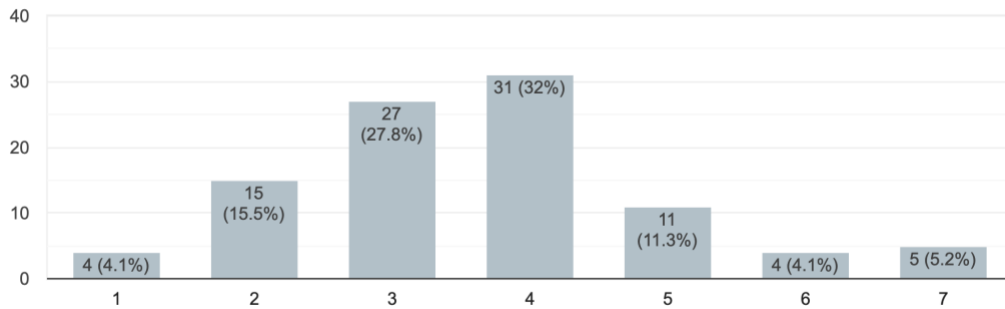
The quantitative data, summarized in Figure 1, seemed to indicate a similar sentiment, with a large group of students (32%) indicating no change in amount of feedback and slightly less than half (46%) indicating less or substantially less feedback. At the same time, some students (20%) claimed that they received more or substantially more feedback during online instruction.

Figure 1

*Students' Perceptions of Quantity of Feedback During Online Instruction*

Do you feel that you received more or less feedback from your instructor after the switch to online instruction? (1=Substantially less feedback; 7=Substantially more feedback)

97 responses



**Organizational skills.** This was another theme that emerged from both groups because a significant part of online learning is being able to organize time and resources proactively to be a successful learner. Some of the instructors mentioned that since they were already organized and had developed a curriculum on Canvas, it was easier for them to modify and transfer it to the online platform during the transition. However, those instructors, who were not as organized or experienced, had to start over to implement what they thought was the best online curriculum for their students and it was, according to their answers to the survey, exhausting and time consuming without the results they expected. According to their answers to the survey, 72.7% of teachers had never taught online before COVID-19 and only 36.4% felt somewhat comfortable teaching online. These numbers show that only a few instructors were familiar with the new platform but tried to adapt quickly to it.

When asked about how the reorganization and preparation time to transfer the content online impacted their ability to give feedback during this transition period, they said:

*I think that the biggest change was that I had to spend more time having "mini lectures" for students to understand more difficult and challenging grammar concepts. After we changed to online instruction, I needed these activities to be more straightforward and to the point to not waste a lot of time. Time that could be used during breakout rooms or other zoom activities (SI-2)).*

*I just wish that I had access to all of the tools and resources that I have now. Things that work and things that don't. I just wish I could have made things easier for my students using the knowledge I have now, because looking back, that first course I taught online was very disorganized. I am grateful that my students put up with me while I learned to transition to an online platform with them (SI-8).*

*While participation can be pretty good on zoom, I don't think it can be quite as high or free or uninterrupted as in-person. There's also inevitably (in my opinion) more time wasted and more room for technical issues (SI-4).*

*I had to type out a lot of text I used in pictures and I had to choose different classroom activities. I wish I hadn't allowed online learning as an option for my class (II-1).*

*I think my experience was pretty neutral or average. I don't think it was terrible but I also feel like it wasn't the best. I just had to adapt fast and learn how to teach the same content in a different format. I wish we would have had more time to prepare our courses because everything seemed to happen so fast that it was a hard transition.*

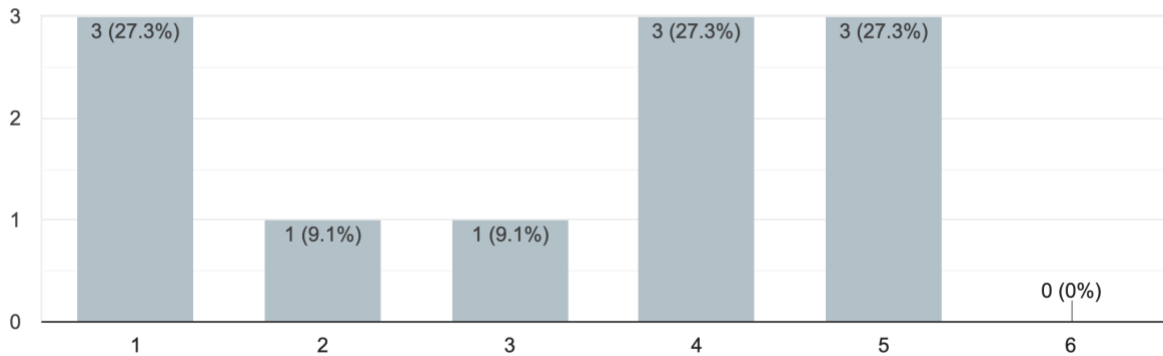
*Now being everything online, one cannot go and visit more than one breakout room at the same time. So, that's why I feel that providing feedback has been negatively affected (SS-6).*

Figure 2 shows how the time that instructors used to prepare for classes did have an impact on the type and quantity of feedback they gave their students during this transition period. 54.6% agreed that the time they used to prepare impacted the type and quantity of feedback they provided their students and 36.4% did not think it had an impact, while 9.1% were neutral.

Figure 2

*Instructors' Perspectives on Preparation Time and Teacher-Student Feedback*

Did a change in the amount of preparation time impact the ability to give feedback during this transition period? 1=No impact at all; 6=Huge impact  
11 responses

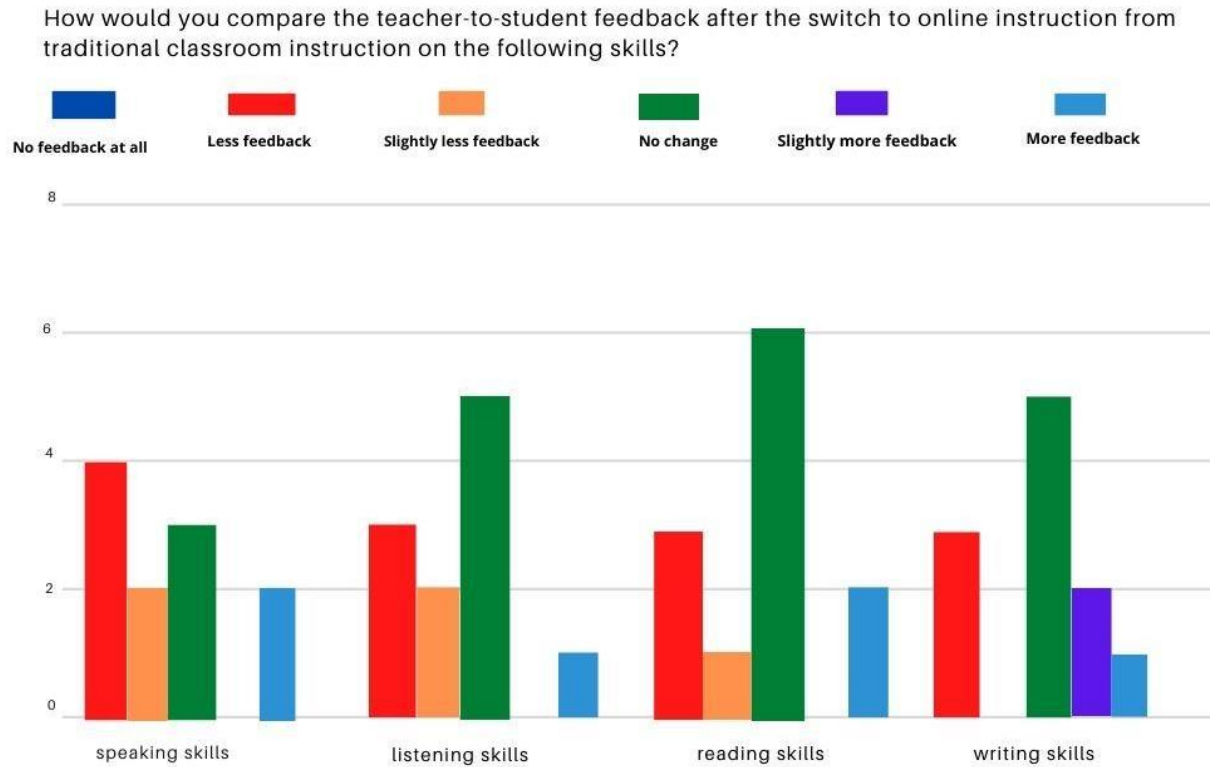


However, when instructors were asked how this change affected the feedback on the specific skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, they answered that the only skills that were negatively impacted were the speaking skills as shown below on figure 3.



Figure 3

*Instructors' Perceptions of Teacher-Student Feedback During Online Instruction*



As the table above shows, the perception of instructors was that there was no change when it came to giving feedback to students on language skills, except for the speaking skills.

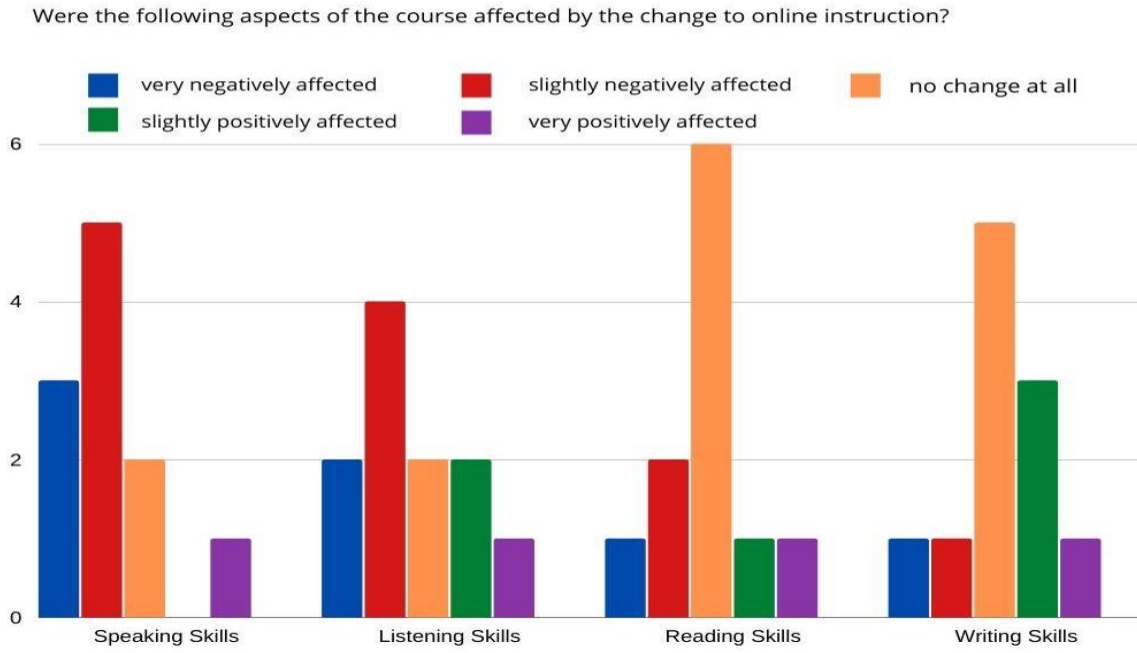
**Question 3:**

How has the transition to online teaching affected students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities?

Even though instructors perceived that the only skills affected by the transition were the speaking skills as data shows on figure 4 below, students felt differently (see figure 5).

Figure 4

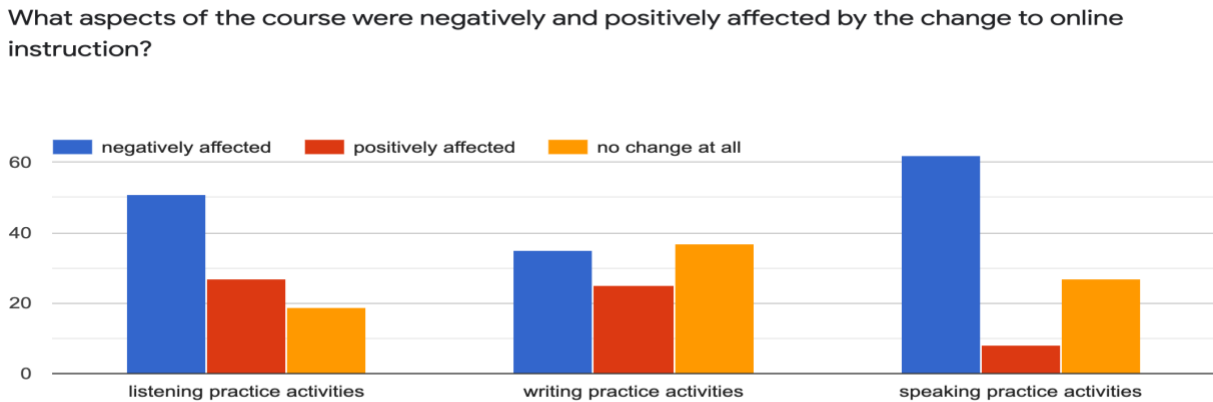
*Instructors' Perceptions of Skills Affected by the Change to Online Instruction*



According to students as seen on figure 5, speaking and listening skills were negatively affected; they also mentioned the negative impact on the other skills (listening, reading, and writing). Furthermore, they felt that speaking skills, as mentioned previously, were the most impacted because there was no motivation to participate or even attend classes sometimes.

Figure 5

*Students' perspectives on the course aspects that were affected by the change to online learning*



Interestingly enough, when instructors were asked again about the effects on students' skills by the change to online instruction, they added that besides speaking skills, listening skills might have also been affected by this change as shown on figure 5.

As data has shown, instructors and students agreed that there can be some type of progress in all of the proficiency skills; nonetheless, they also agreed that it was nothing like what they could have had in a traditional classroom.

**Question 4:**

How satisfied are students and teachers with the institution's support during the transition to online learning?

***Institutional Support for Training in Technology.*** According to research, this is a vital part of an online education and lack of it is detrimental to any learning experience. During the transition to online learning because of COVID-19 there was no time for training, but according to most of the instructors, BYU provided the basics of training on Zoom in one day; then instructors had to help students learn to navigate this new system.

One of the instructors' biggest concerns was internet connectivity at 63.6%, and trying to navigate Zoom at 54.5% since it was a new medium of learning for everyone. It was almost the same for students at 59.8% for connectivity issues and 41.2% learning the new system.

Instructors and students who had the motivation and time made it a point to look for extra resources online, which helped those who were motivated to do so but the rest were somewhat lost and depended on their instructors to help them with it. Resources such as FlipGrid, Skype, finding a quiet place at home or apartment, etc., helped increase learning, participation and feedback according to both groups.

**Experience With Technology for Online Classes.** This was another theme that surfaced in this study. Brigham Young University provided a one-day instructor training on Zoom during a Friday; then they were expected to teach the following Monday. In addition, they were expected to help their students learn how to navigate the new platform. Some instructors were at a loss and just transferred their content from a traditional classroom to the new online platform, while other instructors who had prior experience with technology and online took some time to scaffold for the new environment.

Instructors and students who had experience with technology and online classes were more successful than those who did not have any experience as they expressed:

*My previous experience with online classes, as well as my position as a TA, helped me during the transition to online learning because I was familiar with the methods and procedures as well as helping implement them from the instructor side (PS-).*

*The hard part about being inexperienced is that a well-designed online class makes your life super easy, but when we switched an in-person Span ... class to remote, I had to quickly reconfigure the class to fit an online teaching format (SI-7).*

*I just had to adapt fast and learn how to teach the same content in a different format. I wish we would have had more time to prepare our courses because everything seemed to happen so fast that it was a hard transition (SI-2).*

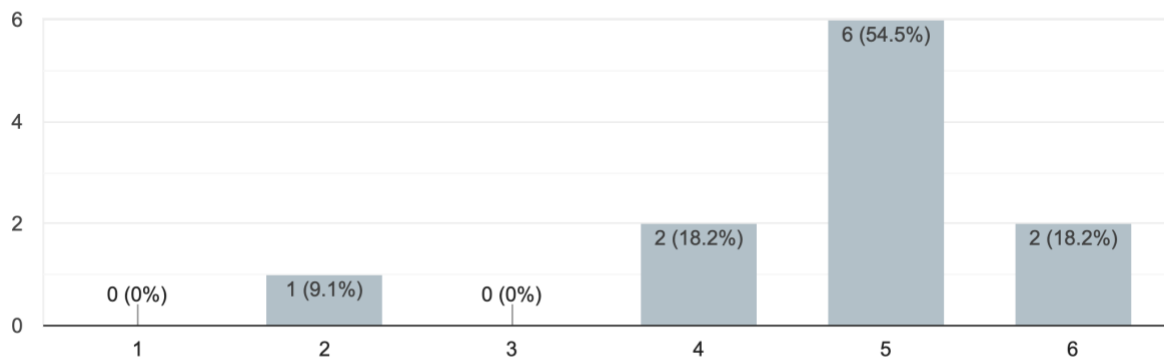
Even with just one day of training, the satisfaction of these 11 instructors with Brigham Young University's support was a high 72.7%. Figure 6 shows the satisfaction statistics from instructors.

Figure 6

*Instructors' Satisfaction with their Educational Institution's Overall Support During the Transition*

How satisfied are you with your educational institution's support during the transition to online learning? 1=Very dissatisfied; 6=Very satisfied

11 responses

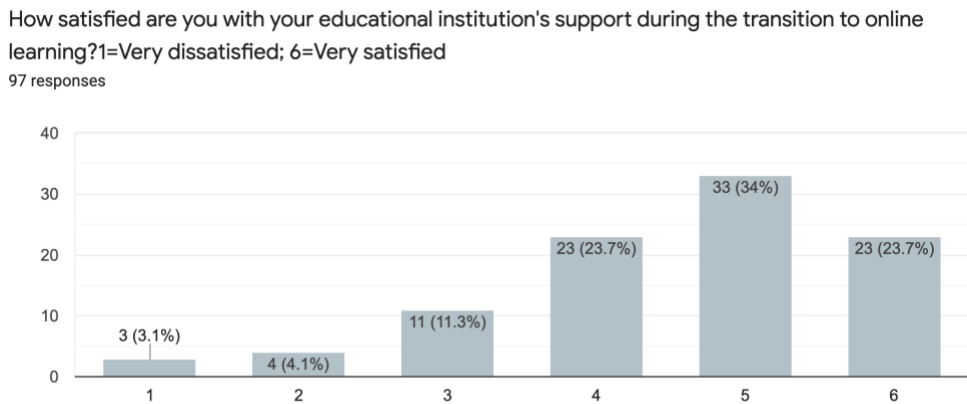


Most students did share the instructors' opinion on this issue. Some felt that they received adequate support from the institution, while others expressed their dissatisfaction. As a matter of fact, one student even went to lengths to try and get his tuition refunded for not getting the type of education he was promised by suing the institution. In the article published by "The Daily Universe", Chase Hiatt accuses BYU of giving students a poor online education, "The online

*learning options being offered to BYU's students are subpar in practically every aspect,"* which was also included in the lawsuit. Later he dropped the lawsuit and apologized saying that he understood that BYU was doing everything they could: *"The whole thing isn't BYU's fault and they're doing their best, so what more can I ask for?"* Said Hiatt in a later article. As we can see on the chart below, most students agreed that their institution had provided some type of support during this transition period but it was still not enough considering the enormity of the crisis.

Figure 7

*Students' Perceptions on the Overall Support Received from their Educational Institution*



As shown on figure 7, most students said they were satisfied with the support they received from their institution but complained about the connectivity issues. Their comments alluded more to the instructors' support than the institution. They expressed how their instructors were empathetic and supportive during this transition as their answers show below:

*She was very lenient when it came to issues with the technology and the changes that came from that (FS-17).*

*They at least tried to make or change activities to make it online friendly. I'm not saying it worked but they tried (FS-11).*

Other comments were more specific to what the instructors did to support them.

*She listened to what we had to say and changed her teaching style (IS-5).*

Another IS attested to the fact that his instructor would have interviews with each one of them to make sure they were learning. That being said, there were some students that felt isolated and lost hope for learning the target language because their instructor

*One of my Portuguese instructors cut down on their assignments/readings to lighten the mental/academic load, especially with cutting down the final paper and not having a final exam. Most of my other instructors didn't (PS-20).*

According to the chart below, students felt great support from their teachers; nevertheless, after asking how they were supported, it is clear that instructors were understanding of the circumstances and even though they were lenient and kind, there was a struggle to have a rigorous course as a PS wrote:

*She's a nice teacher, but nothing she did was 'specifically helpful' to online learning.*

*She's the same teacher she'd be in person. Good instructors cannot make up for a bad format (PS-10).*

*One was understanding, another one felt that we were getting off easy so they doubled down on assignments and tried to force uncomfortable zoom class participation (SS-48).*

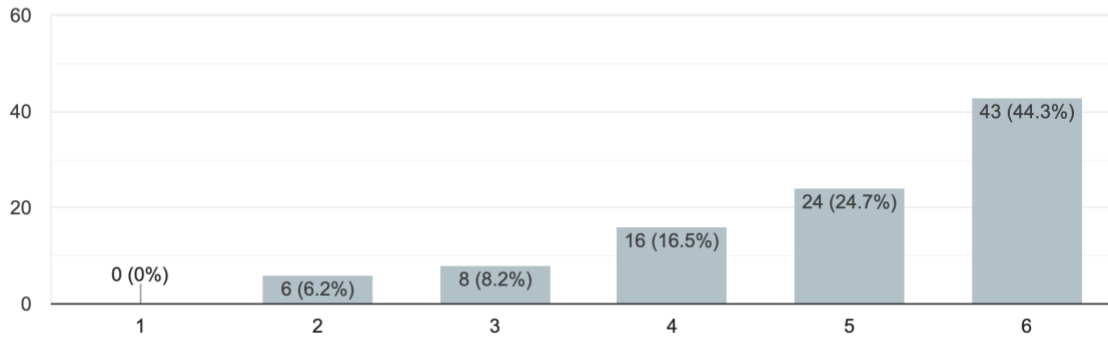
Figure 8 shows the perceptions of students on the support they felt they received from their instructors during and after the transition.

Figure 8

*Students' Perceptions on the Type of Support they Received from their Instructor After the Switch to Online Learning*

How satisfied are you with your instructor's support after the switch to online learning?

97 responses



From the instructors' perspective, they did everything they were able to do to support their students' learning during such a difficult time. They recalled:

*I think I became more supportive and more aware of their needs (PI-1).*

*I was more supportive (PI-2).*

*More supportive. The switch to online was like a wake-up call, and with other things shutting down, I had time on my hands to really create fun and helpful online assignments for students (SI-6).*

*I don't think my level of support changed, but I was definitely more willing to give students the benefit of the doubt because we were all going through a very difficult time adjusting to a new life. More due to the emotional stress that students felt due to the pandemic (SI-7).*



Figures 9 and 10 below show the feelings from instructors and students about their overall teaching and learning online experience during COVID-19. Figure 9 shows the results from instructors and their perspectives when comparing online instruction to the traditional face-to-face instruction. As the numbers show, instructors had a slightly better experience than students; with 81.9% instructors felt that they had a satisfactory experience.

On the other hand, students felt the opposite; with 74.2% dissatisfaction, students felt that they had a much worse experience online than in a traditional classroom.

Figure 9

*Instructors' Perspectives on their online instruction experience compared to face-to-face instruction*

How would you rate your overall online instruction experience compared to your in-person instruction? 1=Extremely unsatisfactory; 5=Extremely satisfactory  
11 responses

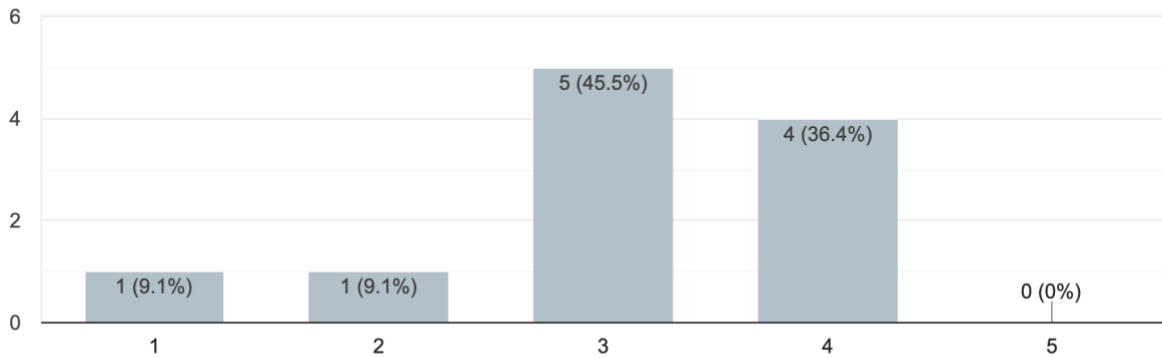
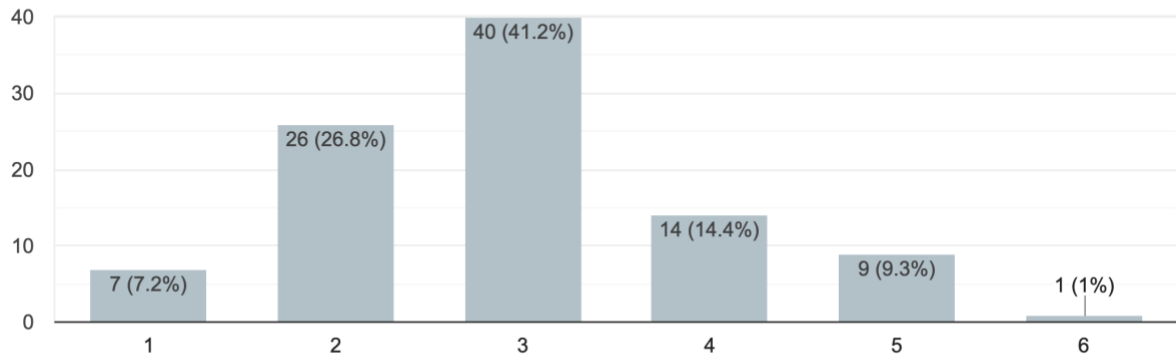


Figure 10

*Students' Perspectives on their online instruction experience compared to face-to-face instruction*

How would you rate the overall quality of online learning experience compared to in-person instruction? 1=Much worse; 6=Much better

97 responses



## Chapter 5: Discussion

In this study, instructors and students were asked about their attitudes towards the online teaching and learning methods, resources, and satisfaction with the instructors' and institution's support during the transition and throughout their online learning experience during COVID-19. As seen in the results from both instructors' and students' surveys, many aspects of their lives were affected, which in turn affected their academic experience. Since the main purpose was to find out how they adapted to a necessary change to online learning during COVID-19, it felt necessary to include indirect themes to show, more accurately and holistically, the effects this transition had on both instructors and students.

The results of this study support Toquero's (2020) warning that there are many elements of online teaching and learning that pose challenges for both instructors and students. She also claims that while most in-service-teachers have no issues putting in intensive work and time to design the content for the new platform, navigating the new platform requires training time, and the majority of teachers have not had any training on such matters.

Likewise, Aristovnik (2020) mentioned that the effectiveness of online learning depends on the curriculum design, teacher's engagement, how much feedback there is from teacher-to-student and also collaboration from student-to-student. When the transition happened in March 2020 at Brigham Young University, most instructors and students were concerned about learning how to navigate the new system and feedback came as a second thought. Even when instructors tried to give feedback, some students did not seem engaged and therefore instructors felt discouraged:

*I felt disconnected from the students, and less motivated (PI-2). At least in that first semester when the switch happened, I feel we were all a bit detached*

*from school and just trying to survive and cope (SI-2).*

An SI shared that there was no student-teacher or student-student collaboration because some of them did not take their classes seriously and were distracted by other things around them such as phones and other browsers. Other instructors also mentioned the disengagement, where students, in a display of learned helplessness, stared at their phone screens. As a result of this, many students and instructors felt that learning and motivation had been hindered by lack of reliable connectivity with the new technology and the effectiveness of relationship building through Zoom:

*While I ended up really not minding zoom teaching and feeling it could be about as effective as in-person, I found myself still missing the organic, real-time, face-to-face interaction with students in a classroom. While participation can be pretty good on zoom, I don't think it can be quite as high or free or uninterrupted as in-person.*

The results in this study are very similar to the findings of Bao (2020). The results in this study show that most students with a high motivation and self-confidence or those who had experience with online classes were less affected by the COVID pandemic than those who had low self-esteem, health issues, or technical difficulties. This can be seen in the results under the theme of teachers' and students' experience with online classes.

Furthermore, students' and instructors' comments suggest that those who had higher self-confidence or motivation and/or experience with online learning had a more positive attitude towards their adaptation to online learning during this transition period than those who struggled with the same attributes or skills. The same findings were corroborated by the instructors' survey; the instructors with high motivation, confidence and experience, etc. were able to engage the same type of students while motivating themselves, and the rest of the students. In short, this

study demonstrated what Aristovnik et al. (2020) and Bao (2020) discussed in their studies about how the lack of self-motivation, discipline, stress, and anxiety can be triggered by the lack of training in a different educational format.

Therefore, having adaptable and willing instructors is a plus, but as other research has indicated (Aristovnik et al., 2020), “teaching online is not just putting learning materials online”, instructors still have to modify and organize their lesson plans according to the new mode of delivery. As seen in the data presented in this study, some instructors were able to adapt quickly and with only one day of training on online teaching, while others struggled throughout the semester.

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic caused havoc in everyone’s lives, but educational institutions were especially affected. Instructors and students from Brigham Young University were no different. This unprecedented period created doubts, anxiety, stress, and health issues as classes were moved from face-to-face to online. According to these findings, there is an urgent need for technical professional training and a detailed study to truly understand the impact on instructors’ and students’ lives during this transition and moving forward. During this transition, several different mediums were used for online instruction, however, Zoom and Canvas were the most dominant platforms.

First of all, the main focus of this study was the academic work and how adaptations were made by teachers and students for conducive learning by asking the question: How have students and teachers adapted to a necessary change to online language instruction? Since all traditional classrooms were canceled, students claimed that everyone switched to either Zoom or canvas and face-to-face instruction was substituted for video conferencing, videos, lectures, and assignments posted on canvas, and interviews through Zoom. Feedback was done

over forums and chats or emails. There were some instructors who modified their assessments to online interviews through Zoom and their students showed satisfaction with that choice.

Results further showed that when students were asked about how instructor-to-student feedback was affected during the transition to an online learning environment, they agreed that most of the instructors handled the new venue of teaching in a satisfactory manner; did the best they could under the circumstances; but was not enough compared to what they could have had in the traditional classroom. Even though the pedagogical process and venue was changed, the fact that most students showed some competency in computer literacy helped with difficulties of technology and the navigation of a new system. Some instructors and students still struggled with technology but overall, there was a concerted effort to make things work.

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations to this study: the total number of students in the Language departments at BYU during the transition and time of this study was over 400, yet only 97 answered the survey; not conducting personal interviews and being able to speak to more students to get the first thoughts that come to mind instead of being able to edit them on the survey. Finally, biases of recall, where students have a hard time remembering how they felt because too much time has passed; and demand characteristics, where students alter their responses to align with how they believe each participant should respond.

Best efforts were made to eliminate these limitations as explained above in chapter 3 under section “Reliability and Validity of Instruments”.

### **Implications for Practice**

Instructors and students have their own set of challenges in the academic world but there are many resources that can be utilized to help them succeed and have a valuable educational

experience. The key as the literature review above shows is to train instructors on the pedagogical process of online teaching practices, design curriculum specifically for the online learning environment, and allow time for instructors and students to adapt to the new environment. Bao's (2020) five principles of high-impact teaching practice to effectively deliver large-scale online education could be followed for a more engaging and successful online learning experience.

The findings of this study confirmed what prior research has found, for online teaching and learning to be successful, it requires, as Al-Jarf, R. S. (2003) and Money Penny, D. B., & Aldrich, R. (2016) suggest, having certain elements in place such as curriculum design, content, technology, connection with students and teachers, organization and structure of the synchronous or asynchronous course. As shown in chapter 4, none of these elements were in place for either instructors or students as noted by them in the surveys completed for this study.

Throughout this study, it was found that in order to have a successful online teaching and learning experience, the following is a must:

1. Design a curriculum for online learning. This is done by matching the quantity, difficulty, and length of teaching content with the academic readiness and student demographic.

A recommendation for this demographic is to create online curricula for all language classes and offer those to students all year-long at all levels.

2. Training is absolutely necessary for success in this area. Train teachers on how to use techniques associated with this type of platform, adjusting the teaching speed for better engagement. If classes are already in place, teachers already trained, and students used to take online courses then the transition would be smoother because it is familiar to them. If teachers are trained and curricula designed as recommended by Bao (2020), the content

will be pedagogically sound and students self-efficacy enhanced for a successful learning experience, even if students have never taken an online course. This is clearly difficult in a situation such as COVID-19 because it took everyone by surprise. However, if the first step about curriculum design is followed, instructors and students will have an easier time transitioning to this new learning environment.

3. Technological support and training for instructors and students should be in place before the course starts as well as throughout the length of it. The feedback received from this study is that instructors were barely trained and were expected to train their students on how to navigate the new platform (Zoom), which brought up issues with distraction, less time for fun activities, and less feedback.
4. Building a space for high quality participation is valuable in an online environment as this study has shown. Making sure to plan ahead of time for these types of activities with differentiation according to their students' learning styles will help empower students to participate and share within this new environment.
5. Building personal connections with students to enhance learning and self-motivation and confidence. This study shows how important those relationships are for instructors and students. Adopting these measures and strategies ahead of time to improve students' confidence online will ensure that every student will be empowered to add to the conversation. This will also help with the relationship building or connection between students and instructors that was lacking during the transition to online learning during COVID-19.
6. Maintain the rigor of the course. Another implication that surfaced during this study was the fact that even though most students were happy with the instructor's leniency and



kindness, they felt that their learning was negatively affected. Therefore, maybe instructors ought to reflect upon the expectations of the course and what kind of leniency they should give while still maintaining the rigor and high caliber of the course.

7. Emergency plans are a must for online teaching. Planning in advance to be flexible to address potential challenges such as issues with connectivity, which was one of the biggest issues during COVID-19 that triggered stress and anxiety, will help minimize them. As instructors are preparing, there should be contingency plans in case of connectivity issues or any other issues that may surface during the lesson. The more prepared instructors are, the better experience students will have.

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## APPENDIX 1. Instructor Survey

- Have you ever taught an online class before transitioning to online during COVID-19? If so, which class?
- What is your preferred teaching environment (traditional classroom, online, hybrid, other)? Why?
- What teaching techniques did you need to modify when you transitioned to online teaching?
- How comfortable were you with teaching in an online environment prior to the shift due to Covid-19? 1=Extremely uncomfortable; 6=Extremely comfortable
- How would you rate the overall quality of the online learning experience for students compared to in-person instruction? 1=Extremely low; 6 Extremely high
- How would you rate your overall online instruction experience compared to your in-person instruction? 1=Extremely unsatisfactory; 5=Extremely satisfactory
- Please explain your answer to the question above (How would you rate your overall remote instruction experience compared to your in-person instruction?)
- How much did your students participate when your classes were remote compared to when they were in person? 1=Much less; 6=Much more
- How committed were your students to learning after the switch from in-person instruction to online instruction? 1=Much less during remote instruction; 6=Much more during remote instruction
- How do you feel that your students' skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) changed in any of these areas after the switch to online learning? 1-6 got better, got worse.
- What changed in your teaching practices as a result of the COVID-19 crisis?

- How would you rate the learning in the online portion of the course compared to in-person instruction? 1=Much worse; 6=Much better
- Did a change in the amount of preparation time impact the ability to give feedback during this transition period? 1=No impact at all; 6=Huge impact
- How would you compare the teacher-to-student feedback on language skills (speaking practice, listening practice, reading practice, and writing practice) after the switch to online instruction from traditional classroom instruction? Columns no feedback at all; less feedback; slightly less feedback; no change; slightly more feedback; more feedback
- Please explain your answer above.
- Describe in detail the ways in which students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities were affected during this transition?
- How satisfied are you with your educational institution's support during the transition to online learning? 1=Very dissatisfied; 6=Very satisfied
- How true is this statement for you? I received adequate technology/computer support training from my institution to transition to online instruction? 1=Not adequate at all; 6=More than adequate
- In regards to the question above, what types of training did you receive?
- What did you need to do to transfer the class material to an online environment? Please explain.
- What technical challenges did you face in completing your instruction remotely? (Select all that apply) Internet connectivity, trouble accessing important software, trouble accessing a reliable computer, problems with remote instruction platforms (Zoom, Canvas, etc.), not tech savvy or not good with software, none of the above, other

- Do you feel that you were more or less supportive of your students after moving to remote instruction as compared to face-to-face instruction?
- What do you wish you had done to help your students be more effective in their online learning?
- After this online learning experience, how interested are you in teaching an official online course? 1=Not interested at all; 6=Very interested
- Please check yes or no if you would be willing to answer any follow up questions.

## APPENDIX 2. Student Survey

- What language class-level were you taking in March 2020?
- Had you ever taken an online and/or hybrid class besides the classes that transitioned to online during COVID-19? If so, what were they?
- How confident were you with navigating online learning systems before COVID-19?  
1=Not confident at all; 6=Extremely confident
- How comfortable were you with online learning prior to the shift due to Covid-19?  
1=Extremely uncomfortable; 6=Extremely comfortable
- What aspects of your personal situation helped your learning after the transition to online learning?
- What aspects of your personal situation hindered your learning after the transition to online learning?
- Was the instruction effective for your style of learning? (Explain your answer in "other")
- Do you feel that you received more or less feedback from your instructor after the switch to online instruction? (1=Substantially less feedback; 7=Substantially more feedback)
- How much did you participate when your classes were online compared to when they were in person? (1=much less; 4=same; 7=much more)
- How much content did you learn when your classes were online compared to when they were in person? (1=much less; 4=same; 7=much more)
- How would you rate the overall quality of online learning experience compared to in-person instruction? 1=Much worse; 6=Much better



- What aspects of the course (speaking practice activities, receiving feedback, listening practice activities, motivation to learn) were negatively and positively affected by the change to online instruction? Negatively affected; positively affected; no change at all
- Explain your answer above (What aspects of the course were negatively and positively affected by the change to online instruction?)
- Please identify the progress you made after the switch to online learning in comparison to in person learning (Speaking abilities; Listening abilities; Reading abilities; Writing abilities) No progress at all; Some progress; No change at all; Significant progress
- What technical challenges did you face in completing your classes online? (Select all that apply.) Consistent or reliable internet/connectivity; access to important software; access to a reliable computer; problems with remote instruction platforms (Zoom, Canvas, etc.); internet access; none of the above, other
- How satisfied are you with your instructor's support after the switch to online learning? 1=Very dissatisfied; 6=Very satisfied
- How satisfied are you with your educational institution's support during the transition to online learning? 1=Very dissatisfied; 6=Very satisfied
- What did your instructor do that was specifically helpful to your progress in online learning?
- What do you wish your instructor had done to help you be more effective in your online learning?
- After this online learning experience, how interested are you in taking an official online course? 1=Not interested at all; 6=Very interested
- Please check yes or no if you would be willing to answer any follow up questions.