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INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF MIGRATING TO ONLINE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract
This article considers the similarities and differences between two constructivist studies examining the experiences of emergency remote teaching and learning English. One project explored instructors' descriptions of facilitating the transition from in-person to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second investigation analyzed the experiences of multilingual students as they made the transition from in-person to online. The first study elicited data through a Qualtrics open-ended questionnaire, while the research on students' experiences examined student writing samples from their coursework. After the researchers coded both data sets through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), they collaborated to ensure interrater reliability (Belur et al., 2021). Results indicated that the nature of their concerns differed based on their role as the course consumer versus the course creator. Instructors struggled more with transforming their in-person content to an online context, while the students struggled with accessing and participating in the online learning experience. Accordingly, the authors recommend that both instructors and students receive instruction on how to engage in online learning. Additionally, instructors should build redundancy into their online courses so that students have multiple means of accessing and responding to instructional content.

Keywords: COVID, online language instruction, student experience, teacher experience

Introduction
During the spring semester of 2020, most university instructors and their students faced a rapid transition from in-person to online instruction. This expediency caused an instructional crisis since much of the previous research on online English instruction focused on preparing instructors and students for a planned online migration (Baralt & Morcillo-Gomez, 2017; Bernardo & Duarte, 2020; Pawan et al., 2016). Before the pandemic, only about one-third of instruction in higher education occurred online, compared to 84 percent of the instruction online after the migration (Marcus, 2022). Therefore, the speed of the transition

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exacerbated the adjustment to online instruction. Accordingly, the resulting experience created a priority-driven phenomenon where teachers designed and implemented instruction in a way that met the immediate needs of their students as they grappled with accessing content through a new medium of an online learning management system (Gacs et al., 2020). Research on online language teaching and learning conducted before the pandemic focused on teacher preparation for a planned online migration (Codreanu, 2020; Pawan et al., 2016) or student readiness for online instruction (Hubbard, 2013) but did not address the issues involved in emergency remote teaching and learning.

Emergency remote teaching and learning (ERTL) (Milman, 2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic differed significantly from a gradual preplanned transition (Gacs et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2022). First, in an ERTL situation, Hodges et al. (2020) stated that the overall purpose is to create a makeshift framework to provide instruction that is readily and rapidly accessible as opposed to a planned migration, which usually relies on six to nine months of planning. Another significant difference is that the abruptness of the migration may mean a lack of resources to create a successful learning experience (Morita-Mullaney et al., 2024). The compulsory nature of the COVID-19 online migration meant that individuals who were cynical about the merits of online instruction had to embrace this new mode of learning despite their reservations (Bentahar & Alalou, 2022; Jin et al., 2022). The mismatch between ERTL and planned preparation for online instruction served as the impetus for this comparison of studies because much of the previous research has not examined the differences in experiences between the two groups, instead choosing to focus on one particular group, either instructors (Bentahar & Alahou, 2022; Leider & Tigert, 2022; Morita-Mullaney et al., 2024) or students (Janah & Cahyono, 2022; Kaya, 2021). The few articles that have compared the experiences of teachers and students have focused on comparing instructors and students from the same area (Al-Shlowly et al., 2022; Harsch et al., 2021), which may not yield results that would be generalizable to other contexts. The results of such an inquiry will benefit both instructors and students and help them better prepare for a rapid migration to online instruction in the future. Additionally, insight from this comparison could inform practice for integrating technology more fully into English language instruction.

Literature Review

Teacher preparation for online language instruction

While teachers often draw from their experiences as learners to shape their teaching practice (Pawan et al., 2021), 70 percent of educators had no online learning experience before 2020 (Hechinger & Lorin, 2020). This knowledge gap is significant because previous studies have indicated that in-person pedagogical practices do not transfer directly to online learning (Baralt & Morcillo-Gomez, 2017; Kebritchi et al., 2017). Given this gap in professional knowledge, Koehler and Mishra (2009) argue that instructors must address the multifaceted challenge of integrating technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge to provide meaningful online instruction. The following paragraphs will describe how these three concepts were examined in previous research on training instructors for a rapid migration to online instruction.

ERTL research has shown that the instructor's technological knowledge is crucial to online pedagogy since technology serves as the lifeblood for continuing education in the face of crisis (Crompton et al., 2021). Although technology plays a central role in ERTL, Can and Silman-Karanfil's (2022) mixed study analyzed both qualitative interview data from EFL instructors as well as quantitative data from an online survey, finding that many English language instructors were unfamiliar with the skills needed to create and maintain an online learning environment. Specifically, the study revealed that the educators struggled to transform their in-person teaching repertoire into an online format. In contrast, Bollen and his colleagues (2022) conducted a qualitative study of 10 EFL instructors, which analyzed interviews and reflective essays written after the migration to find that the instructors found the actual experience of migration to be less of a burden than they had originally anticipated. Beyond the overall attitudes towards the migration to online instruction, Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) examined written teacher reflections about transferring to remote learning to find that instructors adopted a triage approach by selectively choosing technological applications to meet the immediate learning demands rather than pursuing an in-depth understanding of the multiple ways to use technology with online learning.

Research about pedagogical knowledge in ERTL focused on adapting course plans, assignments, and evaluations to meet the constraints of a rapid online migration (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Xie et al., 2021). As part of a mixed methods study on instructors' views of curriculum design during the pandemic, Bernardo and Duarte (2020) found that instructors reported that online instruction requires educators to merge content, situational awareness, and learning applications to seamlessly weave technology throughout the entire curriculum design. Yang and Xu (2023), who conducted an online survey of online readiness and open-ended questions that evaluated the readiness of online instruction for EFL teachers in China, found that curriculum design emerged as an essential instructional skill. Within the challenge of curriculum design, Bollen et al. (2022) found that half of the instructors interviewed struggled to convert their in-person strategies to an online context. Additionally, Bentahar and Alalou (2023) conducted online surveys and follow-up interviews to find that instructors had to manage the balance of synchronous vs. asynchronous activities during their curriculum design. The importance of course design for effective online instruction was reiterated by Xie et al. (2021) where the researchers conducted open-ended interviews with eight online English instructors and found that finding and sharing resources for online teaching with other instructors was challenging as they struggled to find material that would direct them on how to create online instruction for their students.

Lastly, previous ERTL research has shown that structuring student interaction is one pivotal part of the online learning process so that the students are not socially isolated or overly stressed about the online experience (Cai et al., 2022). In a mixed-method study that examined the difficulties that teachers and students encountered through online migration in 2020, Harsch and her colleagues (2021) found that limited student interaction often hinders online language instruction. Past conceptual articles have stressed that educators must plan and facilitate the students' learning opportunities for language input and output (Gacs et al., 2020; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022), whether the interactions occur through online discussions or live communication through Zoom. However, Bernardo and Duarte's (2020) study,

which used an online questionnaire, found that instructors felt it is difficult to assess students' content achievement without interaction. Similarly, in a qualitative study, Cai et al. (2022) demonstrated that when instructors increased direct communication with ML students, it made the learning experience more meaningful. As part of a mixed method study of a qualitative survey and a Likert scale of the various skills of the components revealed that the online activities that EFL teachers implemented to promote student interaction focused on Zoom breakout rooms, discussions, whiteboards, and virtual polling (Can & Silman-Karanfil, 2022). These strategies provided diverse ways of facilitating online student participation.

Research on students' online learning in ERLT

Previous studies examined the challenges that students have experienced in online language learning. Al-Shlowiy and his colleagues (2021) conducted a quantitative study where learners ranked their top ten greatest challenges in migrating to online learning. The results showed that the absence of live interaction and the fear of losing points in an online setting are the primary concerns about online learning. In another study, Kaya (2021) asked students to complete quantitative rating scales to analyze their motivation and preferences before finding that motivation has a profound influence on the students' level of readiness to take online language courses. Previous studies have determined that students need formal training to successfully engage in online language learning (Hubbard, 2013) to increase student motivation.

Similarly, Kolesova and her colleagues (2021) surveyed online language learners through Google Forms. This study revealed that students desired more online materials so that they could explore more content independently. Such an emphasis on learner autonomy was an important part of learner readiness because ML students received limited technological training for online learning (Jin et al., 2022; Kaya, 2021) because pre-COVID-19 immigration regulations precluded international students from participating in online instruction (Han et al., 2022). The degree of accessibility played a significant role in student engagement since less than half of the online ML students logged on to their online learning management systems at the pandemic's peak (Sugarman & Lazarin, 2020). Bich and Lian (2021) administered online qualitative surveys and follow-up focus groups to find that MLs who were studying in different geographical locations experienced connectivity issues due to infrastructure or equity matters. As a result of the novelty and sudden shift to online instruction, Li (2022) found that many MLs wanted more time to adjust to the new learning demands. As these studies show, online learning presented challenges for the students as they grappled with the new procedures and expectations for ERTL.

Once the students could access the online platform, ML students encountered challenges engaging in the learning community (Bich & Lian, 2021; Sailsman, 2020). Chen et al.'s (2022) study found that students needed online contact for social and emotional support. This sense of isolation intensified in online instruction because people who had chosen the in-person format appreciated the structure of directed learning and were unprepared for the autonomous learning commonly seen in online instruction (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Brophy et al., 2021). Furthermore, several studies have documented students' lack of interaction within online learning, arguing that visual interaction and paralinguistic cues enhance

roleplay and real-time discussions (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Bich & Lian, 2021; Sailsman, 2020). Bernardo and Duarte (2020) surveyed students who reported that online interactions were not substantive enough to increase either content learning or language development. In another study, Can and Silman-Karanfil (2022) found that instructional talking time increased to explain the technology, exacerbating the dearth of rich interaction between the instructor and the student. The shift also meant that students were missing the opportunity to talk with their peers (Harrison et al., 2018). However, providing multiple modalities can support online communication either through affirming classmates' responses or providing visual support through their nonverbal feedback (Cai et al., 2022). Overall, previous research has shown that students felt that the interactions that occurred in online learning paled in comparison to the deeply embedded cues transmitted through in-person instruction (Han et al., 2022).

Method

The overarching research questions for this study were as follows: What were the similarities between English language instructors and ML students' experiences with the rapid transition from in-person to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the differences between English language instructors and ML students' experiences with the rapid transition from in-person to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The first study focused on English language instructors' experiences of rapid migration to online instruction. Recruitment efforts via email yielded fifty participants from higher education institutions that hosted academic English language programs. Data collection from the first study occurred through an open-ended Qualtrics survey to elicit English language instructors' reflections about their experiences during the transition as they shepherded their English language classes to online instruction. Another question delved into what pedagogical skills transferred from in-person to online instruction. The next inquiry asked instructors to describe the challenges they encountered during the rapid transition. Additionally, participants discussed the strategies implemented to facilitate language practice for their students.

The subsequent research project examined ML students' experiences as they migrated to online English instruction. The participants in this study attended the same academic English program at a large land grant university in the southeastern United States. All respondents voluntarily participated in the study. This study received institutional approval for examining found data (Ang et al., 2013), which indicates that the specific demographics of the student sample cannot be known. Data for this study comprised students' written essay responses over three different semesters, which yielded 46 documents for analysis. The prompts asked participants to reflect on the positive and negative experiences during the pandemic ERTL and the impact of online instruction on their overall learning.

Data analysis

The researchers analyzed the data from both studies using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). Next, they read the data samples individually to understand the totality of the data before identifying the salient elements for the research questions. They then determined the preliminary themes

that captured the overall experience of each participant group (Braun & Clarke, 2022). After agreeing on the initial themes (Pigden & Jegede, 2020), they discussed subthemes within each data set to document important aspects of the overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). At that point, the researchers collected all the data points related to the identified themes to ensure the underlying data adequately supported the themes. After solidifying and renaming the themes before deciding the order, the researchers concluded the themes in each study (Braun & Clarke, 2022). They then compared the findings from each study to ascertain the differences and similarities across the perspectives of the two participant groups. The researchers articulated the key themes across the two data sets before choosing data samples documenting the overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022), as evidenced in the examples in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

While both instructors and students experienced the same rapid transition to online instruction, their roles in the learning process had a profound effect on their perspectives. The educators' roles as content creators and class facilitators focused on the technical skills needed to produce and support the learning opportunity. In contrast, students described their experiences of online interaction, language mastery, and course completion. The following sections will explore the experiences of each population.

Similarities between English language instructors and ML students' experiences with the rapid transition from in-person to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic

Similarities between the two populations' reactions to technology seemed to focus on their response as they both sought to perform their distinct roles in online instruction (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Each constituent group noted various aspects of utilizing technology to facilitate content and language instruction. Technological issues included creating online language learning experiences (Gacs et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2021), obtaining access to online content (Han et al., 2022; Li, 2022), facilitating course interaction (Harsch et al., 2021), and participating in instructional activities (Baralt & Morcillo Gomez, 2017), as the following paragraphs describe.

Within the role of course designer, the instructors found that they had to plan more proactively to provide a more reassuring structure for their students (Gacs et al., 2020). For instance, one instructor remarked, "My syllabus had to become much more detailed for the length of the entire semester, whereas in face-to-face teaching, I felt I had more flexibility in planning classes day to day and week to week." Therefore, the instructors' response to the technology mandated more prescribed planning to anticipate the needs of their students to participate in online instruction (Hickenlooper & Bell, 2022). Another struggle for the instructors was transforming their in-person lessons into a format that was amenable to the virtual setting. One educator remarked, "I have to break down tasks into minute activities that can be active. I have to craft breakout rooms that can progress more independently." Therefore, course design had to scaffold the students' individualized learning to create opportunities for interaction (Martin et al., 2019). Such a perspective requires the teacher to envision the activity through the eyes of the student to maximize the

learning potential of a lesson regardless of the external variables. At the heart of the challenges with technology was the sheer amount of time needed to reconfigure in-person instruction for a virtual setting (Kebritchi et al., 2017), as indicated in the following quote: [I] "invested a lot of time early in re-building courses for rich online offerings." Many other instructors in the study expressed similar sentiments as they described the various efforts that they undertook to transition from in-person to online instruction.

Technology usage challenged the instructors to select and implement applications to accomplish routine linguistic tasks in their in-person instruction. For example, one instructor lamented the "frustration trying to arrange a suitable venue (zoom? Voov?) to discuss student's errors and provide feedback." As this quote demonstrates, instructors did not utilize the technology to fulfil their online instructional needs (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Many educators mentioned that their priority was to find expedient means of operationalizing their class instruction in the new online environment; this led to selective attention to technological applications rather than an in-depth understanding of the learning management system (Gacs et al., 2020). Another educator acknowledged that technology affected the instructional process, saying, "with a web camera, however, some aspects of three-dimensionality and freedom of movement were lost. The struggles with technology caused some distraction and lost class time." Other instructors affirmed this comment as they found that technology usage had trade-offs that interfered with instruction (Hickenlooper & Bell, 2022).

From the students' perspective, technology also influenced different elements of the online learning experience. First, accessibility profoundly affected learning due to the infrastructure needed to facilitate online learning (Bich & Lian, 2021). A participant demonstrated this by concluding that "online education also has some disadvantages, such as high cost, which means you should have a laptop and high-speed network. Without these devices, that may lead to a decline in the quality of teaching or learning." Accordingly, the students realized that online learning created equity issues that detracted from their overall learning experience if they could not afford the high-speed internet (Jin et al., 2022). Participants noted that the connectivity issues tended to be sporadic and affected some students more than others. One student commented, "However, after we started the remote learning, I can hardly do as active as before because of the network issue." The same participant later remarked, "the technology issue also happened on me which caused I can hardly hear and understand what the teacher was saying and teaching." As the student noted, unstable bandwidth from various geographic locations presented the student with learning disruptions that interfered with their quality of learning (Bich & Lian, 2021). Despite the challenges that students faced, they drew from their initiative to resolve their challenges. The student later concluded, "Luckily, I still have the PowerPoint on Canvas so that I can finish all the assignments on time." As shown, the student appreciated the redundancy of resources incorporated into the course design to reinforce course content.

Other participants described their discomfort with online learning since they had limited levels of technological training and expertise (Al-Shlowiy et al., 2021). This lack of confidence and competence undermined their online performance (Bich & Lian, 2021). For instance, one student remarked,

> *My experience with online learning so far has been overall negative because I'm new to online learning. I'm very bad at using computers, so at first, I didn't know what to do. I can't understand the way ofonline classes explained in the emails. I took a lot of time and consulted with my classmates before I gradually understood what was going on*.

As indicated, online learning was a struggle due to the unfamiliarity with educational technology. Students required more time to adjust to this new mode of learning (Li, 2022). Other students struggled with specific parts of the learning management system. As one student remarked, "I am a low-tech person and never have an online class before, so I really got messed up with the new toolbar." This unfamiliarity with technology components impacted their performance in the class. These quotations both affirm Li's (2022) finding that students' levels of technological expertise correlate with the student's attitude towards online instruction.

Online interaction

Online interaction also presented a challenge to both groups because it manifested itself through three forms: teacher/student interaction, student/student interaction, and student/text interaction (Akin & Neal, 2007). As course designers and facilitators, instructors shouldered the responsibility of creating and monitoring interactions in their online courses (Hodges et al., 2020). On the other hand, online participation served two roles: demonstrating content mastery and engaging in social interaction during the isolation of the pandemic lockdown (Sailsman, 2020). The following paragraphs will describe each group's attitudes toward the online interaction they experienced during online instruction.

The instructors described the challenges they faced in creating and facilitating interactions for their students for language development. Many instructors mentioned the deliberate effort they exerted to create online interaction opportunities for their students (Martin et al., 2019). One educator stated, "There's more work for less reward, reward meaning interaction, linguistic development via communication, and content learning. It's feasible but not rewarding to have classes this way." Other teachers reported that using technology stifled interaction due to students' reluctance to talk and the additional steps needed for communication. For instance, one representative comment was as follows:

> *Some didn't want to stand out in the crowd by answering questions. Others were embarrassed to try or too shy to speak unless called on. On Zoom, this problem was amplified because it took time to unmute to answer. Plus, I sometimes couldn't tell who spoke up when I was looking at the grid view if they answered quickly and re-muted immediately, so I had to ask who had answered, which probably made them less willing to answer!*

Therefore, the results of the online communication did not yield the same results as the face-to-face interaction. Such a finding affirms Baralt and Morcillo Gomez's (2017) study, which concluded that students value preserving their social standing rather than completing the prescribed task. Additionally, many other instructors noted a significant drop in teacher and student interaction due to students' connectivity issues since internet access is a predominant factor affecting students'

online participation (Gacs et al., 2020). Given this variety of factors, online instruction often fails to provide meaningful interaction for students (Bernardo & Duarte, 2020).

From the students' perspective, much of the online communication they described focused on directional support that they received from their instructor. For instance, one example from the students' writing explained, "There are still many positive things that I recognized the interest of many teachers when they were constantly sending emails to reassure as well as for instructions on how to join the online class or the assignments to be completed." This quote affirms Bich and Lian's (2021) finding of the importance of instructional guidance in students' learning. Another student underscored this impact of faculty support by commenting on its absence, as evidenced in the following statement: "Thinking about you can't go to the teacher's class face to face and answer your questions. This is what I think is most challenging about online classes." Multiple students who missed the immediacy of instructional guidance expressed similar sentiments.

Students had different viewpoints about the experience of student-to-student interaction as they participated in the various instructional tasks. Some students noticed online interaction fulfilled the pedagogical objective but did not provide meaningful communication (Bailey & Lee, 2020). One such reflection noted, "When recording video to a computer instead of speaking to an audience, this is not a public speech. Although I can understand this helpless move, my public speaking ability has not been exercised and improved." Students often cite this lack of interaction as a critique of online instruction (Bernardo & Duarte, 2020; Bich & Lian, 2021). Despite the criticism of online interaction, other students voiced their support for the affordances provided through the learning management system. One student explained, "The pandemic has brought new study [method] where teachers and students can hear and see each other, and study groups can be arranged online, making lessons easier… we can have group discussions, … I, my team members, and I meet at Zoom to discuss our film assignments. It's a new experience." This example shows that some students embraced various technological applications to replicate the immediacy of face-to-face discussions (Sailsman, 2020). Overall, students were responsive to the interaction incorporated into the course design.

Differences between English language instructors and ML students' experiences with the rapid transition from in-person to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic

Several unique issues emerged from the findings of both studies due to their distinct roles in the educational process. The instructors focused on the obstacles to creating an online learning community for their students (Bernardo & Duarte, 2020; Gacs et al., 2020), while the students addressed the barriers to participation in an online platform (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Each of these challenges required participants to exercise individual agency to work their way around the challenges to perform their roles.

Instructors reported a desire for more institutional support in preparing for the rapid online transition, especially given the lack of notice many received. One instructor explained, "There was no time for planning. We had two days to figure out what to do and were inundated with 'tips.' Very little support was offered at the department level." Previous studies found that elevated organizational guidance is

critical to the success of an ERTL language program (Gacs et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020). One instructor compared experiences at two different institutions, as seen in the following quote: "At one school, the transition was seamless, well-coordinated and well administrated. At the other school, the administration was flustered; therefore, the transition was as well." Other educators indicated that the level of institutional backing had a profound effect on the ease of migration to the online platform (Canese et al., 2023). Some instructors commented that they shouldered the task of providing technological and pedagogical support to their colleagues, as explained by an educator who lamented that "the biggest struggle is supporting less technologically proficient coworkers, students, and supervisors." Such a finding corresponds with Steadman and Kraut's (2018) study, which found that language program administrators are often uncomfortable with providing technological support to online language instructors. Overall, the current study found that technical support was a key component of instructors' pedagogical development as they learned to master the new norms of online instruction.

While insufficient institutional support diverted some instructors from their teaching role, students noted electronic distractions as an obstacle to productive online learning without accountability to an instructor (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Li, 2022). One participant observed,

> *Remote teaching allows us to learn without going out, but it has many external influences, such as mobile phones, computers and so on. These reasons will divert our attention from learning, and we cannot devote ourselves to learning. So, our grades may decline, which will have an impact on our academic success.*

Students explained that online instruction gave them many distractions that diverted their attention from learning (Bailey & Lee, 2020). In addition to the digital digressions, students also mentioned that objects in their immediate physical environment tended to draw their focus away from their online learning, as shown in the following quote: "Because I am in my bedroom and there are too many stuff that attracts me more...we are losing the study atmosphere." Students who were taking online classes from their home country lived with their families and did not have much privacy to create an optimal study environment. As students assumed more autonomy to maintain a conducive environment for online learning, they encountered virtual and physical obstacles that threatened to disrupt the online learning process (Bich & Lian, 2021).

Discussion

Findings from both studies revealed that the diverse perspectives from teachers and students provided a copacetic experience, and the teachers' experience of course creation paid off as students appreciated the resources in the learning management system. Having experienced the technology challenges, the instructors understood the students' frustration in mastering the techniques needed to participate in online learning (Hubbard, 2013). As a result, the educators anticipated the students' difficulties and incorporated scaffolds into the curricular design to assist students who struggled with online participation (Baralt & Morcillo Gomez, 2017). This pre-emptive planning guided the students through the unfamiliar

procedures to socialize the students into the new online learning norms of the community of practice in ERTL (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Both studies highlighted the importance of online interaction and engagement as key to the student's success (Gacs et al., 2020). Given the novelty of the online format, instructors' deliberate creation of opportunities was essential for fostering the students' engagement in online activities. Additionally, while previous research has mentioned the difficulty that instructors face in providing online interaction for students (Gillett-Swan, 2017), this study highlighted the recalcitrance of students to interact online. Such a finding confirms earlier research that interaction in online platforms produced less spontaneous communication than in-person discussions (Harsch et al., 2021). However, over time, the students in this study recognized the benefit of the interactional supports implemented in the learning management system. They began to use the various online tools to enhance their interaction. The dual perspectives of creating and participating in online instruction raise the significance of interaction to counter the isolation prevalent in ERTL (Hickenlooper & Bell, 2022).

Students' confessions and complaints about their own and others' digital distractions during class may point to another cause of the strained interaction felt by instructors. Specifically, students mentioned the pull of outside objects or technological applications interfered with learning. To combat the influence of external distractions, the teachers in this study remarked that they harnessed the devices to garner attention through teacher-initiated online platforms and applications tied to the lessons (Cai et al., 2022). Furthermore, the students' acknowledgement of disruptions may indicate their need for autonomous learning strategies. Outside of the direct gaze of an instructor, students in this study could not rely on a teacher to set the tone and direction of the lesson in the same way as in the face-to-face classroom (Bich & Lian, 2021). For asynchronous sections especially, self-directed learning techniques like time management and focused attention are necessary for student success (Li, 2022). Another challenge for student distractedness may also stem from students' distance from their instructors, as the students in this study were participating in synchronous courses from as many as three or four different time zones through the data collection period (Liu & Shirley, 2021). Some students were ending their day while others in the same class were just beginning; such differences may have hindered interaction and engagement more than the technological issues did.

Limitations

The two studies described in this article have some limitations for replication. First, the COVID-19 pandemic was a new phenomenon for participants in both studies, and future research has the benefit of learning from previous ERTL research to plan for future instruction (Gacs et al., 2020). As a result of the pandemic, more technical support is available, so organized approaches to transitioning to online learning would replace the initial response of do-it-yourself pedagogy (Kamisli & Akinlar, 2023). For the student study, all students were studying in the same language program, so sampling students from different institutions might produce different results due to a variety of factors. While the unique nature of the onset of the pandemic would hinder replications of both studies, these findings

provide important insight into the lived experiences of students and instructors in an ERTL context.

Conclusion

This research delved into the shift to online language learning due to COVID-19, revealing the significant impact of this transition on instructors and students, influenced by their roles and experiences. Instructors encountered difficulties in adapting teaching methods to the virtual format, requiring technological skill and reconceptualization of course delivery, with the level of institutional support being a crucial factor in the ease of this transition. Students encountered different challenges associated with the online learning environment, including technological barriers and distractions in their physical surroundings. Reliable internet connectivity was critical to students' ability to engage in online coursework, highlighting underlying equity issues intensified by the digital divide. Interaction emerged as a key element in the online learning experience, with both instructors and students needing to navigate new forms of engagement and technological use. Despite challenges, both groups demonstrated resilience and adaptability, leveraging technological tools and instructional support to mitigate disruptions caused by the pandemic. The findings demonstrate the importance of tailored interventions and policies to enhance online language learning, emphasizing the need to address the distinct challenges instructors and students face to foster a more equitable and effective educational environment.

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