

## What Covid Has Taught Us: A Survey

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By the fall semester of 2022, nearly all of us will be back to face-to-face instruction after three to four semesters online. One question the *CALICO Journal* editors have asked in several ways during this time is what, if anything, we will have learned when we emerge from emergency remote language teaching (ERLT). In preparation for this Editorial, we surveyed a handful of our colleagues across several teaching and learning environments, and we are grateful for their participation. The result of this informal survey is not, by any means, a scientific or rigorous account of changes and implementations that have taken place. What we offer below is simply our interpretation of what came out of this survey, supplemented by our own experiences and our conversations with colleagues and students. We hope that this short piece will be our last commentary on the Covid crisis as it affects language teaching.

First, we asked whether colleagues or students had noticed any changes in how language classes are being conducted since the move back to face-to-face (F2F) instruction. That is, to what extent they have seen artifacts from the online (Covid) experience continuing in the F2F classes. We also wanted to know what changes, if any, they noticed in how instructors perceive the use of technology in their language courses. Students and instructors seem to be more comfortable with technology in general. Indeed, it seems that we are facing a positive shift in attitude about the rigor of online and hybrid language teaching. The use of mobile devices is no longer necessarily seen as a distraction in the classroom. In fact, allowing the use of mobile devices

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in the classroom seems to have become more palatable to many instructors. Students clearly prefer tasks and materials that they can complete on their mobile devices.

Although the gradual move from print-based textbooks to online L2 materials is not entirely new, there has been a noticeable shift in the openness to using online resources as core course materials over textbooks. Instructors are also likely to be more open to taking risks with technology, and there is a noticeable interest in and nuanced use of the capabilities of existing tools. The experience with the online mode of delivery has led to an increased willingness to teach in multiple modalities (F2F, hybrid, online), which results in a more fluid shift from F2F to online modes as the situation dictates. Such flexibility is beneficial for maintaining the continuity of learning and teaching for both students and faculty. We will face situations where a F2F class will be required to shift to online because of students' or instructors' exposure to Covid, or because K-12 school closings prevent the instructor from teaching in person. Likewise, instructors may be more likely to hold at least a part of their classes online in an asynchronous mode, rather than canceling classes while at a conference. Whether there is institutional support for such flexibility is a question that we cannot answer here.

We also asked what new tools have been integrated or what tools already integrated now have a more predominant place in the L2 class after the shift to online (and subsequent return to F2F) instruction. According to our respondents, the most obvious development is that there is more widespread use of learning management systems (LMSs). This use was born out of necessity, of course, but colleagues also report a perceived uptick in the integration of open educational resources, Google Docs, lockdown browsers, messaging systems such as Slack, and video tools such as Panopto and H5P. Instructors now upload more materials and handouts to the LMS, reducing the amount of paper used, which will hopefully help the environment.

We also wanted to learn the extent to which more L2 hybrid classes are offered now as compared with pre-Covid days. And if so, to what extent student learning outcomes have changed (or should have changed) in the hybrid/online courses. Based on the responses, whether there are now more L2 hybrid classes is hard to say. It seems that this is clearly an institution by institution decision, with wide variation in approaches. Many institutions have been offering hybrid courses for a long time, and some of them may have increased the percentage of the online component. It may be a bit soon to determine any long-term impact of the ERLT experience on hybrid offerings, but some faculty report a greater openness by the administration to offering courses in a hybrid format. Generally speaking, however, most faculty report enthusiasm for moving back

to F2F teaching. However, there is a perceived marked increase in the use of, say, Zoom for meetings of all sorts, as well as student–teacher conferences.

We were also interested in learning the extent to which assessment practices, if any, from the online/hybrid environment are being adopted in the F2F environment. This experience has led to a reflective moment in many departments. The shift to online magnified some of the inadequacies not only in teaching, but also in assessment practices, as instructors first tried to simply transpose their F2F practices into an online format. For example, one colleague reports that they are now redesigning all of their tests for first-year learners with a move to project-based assessment and away from traditional chapter tests. This idea was reinforced by another colleague, who reported that shifting to the online environment encouraged them to move away from the one-hour exam (often rooted in short answers) to take-home exams that allow students to connect and integrate ideas. However, generally speaking, there seems to be a marked shift toward LMS-based assessments (and away from in-class assessments), which suggests a re-thinking of the issue of “cheating.”

Regarding whether the respondents have noticed a shift in student attitudes and/or expectations concerning the “post-pandemic” language classroom, there seems to be a heightened expectation that their instructors have some level of proficiency with technology. Also, students now seem more open to working directly online and with digital materials, and even expect digital copies of learning materials. One colleague reports that their students actually had difficulty managing their paper copies of handouts once they returned to F2F instruction. This may be especially true for those first-year higher education students who are coming out of two years of fully online high school. Many students continue to prefer online classes, especially those who work full time or have families. In contrast, many other students crave the connection to others. One colleague reported that even when they had to conduct the class via Zoom, many students still opted to meet together in the classroom.

There is also evidence of a spillover effect: how one instructor organizes their class frequently influences student expectations about how other classes should be organized. This may result in or support the homogenization of course organization that is often pushed by instructional designers. Of course, the advantage of such homogeneity is that it provides a standardized product that is familiar to students and which they can easily navigate. However, there is a downside in terms of personal preference, teaching and learning styles, and creativity on the part of the instructor.

Offering online instruction gets high points in terms of access. However, instructors noted here and elsewhere that the concurrent classroom model, where instructors are required to teach both in-person students and online students simultaneously, simply does not work, and the results are poor. It is

virtually impossible for instructors to attend to both sets of students simultaneously and to the same degree. The concurrent classroom also slows down the delivery of content. Alternating between F2F and online class meetings seems to be a preferred model. There is an increased awareness of the significant amount of work that students can do on their own outside of the classroom. This is not a new idea, but this mass realization is a step in the right direction toward harnessing technology in the most efficient way possible.

There is no question that there is an increased comfort level and flexibility with teaching languages online. This increased comfort with and awareness of the possibilities afforded by online language teaching dovetails nicely with the idea that our students want and need the flexibility to take their courses at least partially online. There is widespread gratitude and acknowledgment of the valuable role that language learning support services played in terms of training during the initial triage phase of the Covid crisis, and there is also the expectation that they will likely continue to operate at an accelerated level in the near future. Whereas we have all seen that teaching online is possible to some extent, whether instructors are using digital technologies in principled ways that capitalize on their affordances and make sense in terms of instructed second language acquisition is another story. The task now seems to be to help instructors move to the next step of thoughtful and deliberate use of specific technologies that will help their students achieve specific language learning goals.

Turning our attention to this issue, we would first like to discuss the article “Traveling by Headset: Immersive VR for Language Learning” by Dorothy Chun, Honeiah Karimi, and David Joshua Sañosa. Based on the 2021 CALICO Conference plenary, the article attends to the key concepts related to the use of immersive virtual reality (IVR), as well as to existing learning theories and models of using IVR for learning. It also reviews research studies on the use of IVR in second language learning. The authors address the need for a model that takes into account second language theories and provides a modified version of the cognitive-affective model of immersive learning (CAMIL), including such constructs as authenticity, interaction, and social factors, among others (Makranksy & Petersen, 2021). The readers of this issue will also benefit from the authors’ discussion of several existing applications, such as Wander and ImmerseMe, which have great potential for language learning, but which have not yet been sufficiently researched.

In “The Linguistic Environments of Digital Games: A Discriminant Analysis of Language Use in Game Mechanics,” Daniel H. Dixon investigates language variation in two games, *Fallout 4* and *Skyrim*, from the perspective of three game mechanics (dialogue trees, quest objectives, and quest stages), using the register analysis framework (Biber & Conrad, 2019). Three discriminant

analyses (Norris, 2015) were conducted using linguistic files extracted from the games. First, coding focused on the text segments for both game and mechanics, the second only for mechanics, and the third only for game. The findings of this quantitative study show that statistical models accurately distinguish texts' game mechanic register categories, but fail to distinguish the linguistic environments of the game at the whole-game level, which highlights the need for future research targeting specific game design features or mechanics rather than only game genres or titles.

Our third article, "Meaningful Integration in Professional Communities: Examining User Behaviors in Catalyst," by Stephanie W. P. Knight, Julie M. Sykes, Linda Forrest, Carla H. Consolini, and Johanna Jimenez, investigates in-service teacher behavior patterns in Catalyst, an online professional development social portfolio. The researchers analyzed teachers' behaviors regarding Group Membership, Goals, Evidence, Connections, Reflections, and Comments. The findings of the study show three behavior profiles: (a) Testers who chose not to join any group and were the least active; (b) Dabblers who used goals and evidence more than the most active users; and (c) Embracers who showed the highest level of activity, made more connections with others, and reflected more than Testers and Dabblers. The authors highlight the role of group participation as essential for the consistent use of the platform and self-directed learning.

In the fourth article of this issue, "The Feasibility of Using *Bande à Part* to Aid French Language Learners," Ross Sundberg and Walcir Cardoso investigate French language learners' perceptions of *Bande à Part*, a music application for French language learning, through the lens of the modified technology acceptance model (TAM; Davis, 1989). The qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a survey that targeted perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment of the app. The findings show that most participants want to continue using the app. They perceived it as useful, not difficult, and fun. Several users indicated issues with accessing the app on their mobile devices. Among the suggested features to add were more songs and highlighting more grammar features. The authors conclude that more studies with larger sample sizes are necessary to determine if the perceived usefulness construct predicts users' intentions to use the app, and if other determinants such as years of experience learning French, age, and motivation can be associated with the language learners' interest in using the app.

In "The Impact of Virtual Reality on L2 French Learners' Language Anxiety and Oral Comprehensibility: An Exploratory Study," Tricia Thrasher investigates the impact of the high-immersion social virtual reality (VR) application vTime XR™ on French language learners' anxiety and oral comprehensibility during spontaneous peer-to-peer oral production. The analysis of the

participants' self-reported data from the foreign language anxiety questionnaire and salivary cortisol levels (a physiological indicator of anxiety, collected through saliva samples during two tasks in VR and two tasks in the traditional classroom) showed consistently lower levels of anxiety (which decreased over time) in both contexts when completing interpersonal consensus building tasks. The cortisol levels were lower and the participants' oral production was more comprehensible when they were using VR compared to the traditional classroom. Finally, the participants' self-assessment of anxiety levels aligned/moderately correlated with the cortisol data. The author highlights the need for further research with larger sample sizes and additional anxiety indicators such as heart rate.

These articles are followed by two book reviews and one learning technology review. Maribel Montero Perez reviews *Language Learning Through Captioned Videos: Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition* by Mark Feng Teng; and Arthur Wendorf reviews *Digital Games and Language Learning: Theory, Development and Implementation* edited by Mark Peterson, Kasumi Yamazaki, and Michael Thomas. Finally, An Nguyen Sakach reviews *Blue Canoe*, a mobile application for English pronunciation training.

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