

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Surviving or thriving? Experiences and job satisfaction of language instructors in the USA during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic meant fast changes for language educators. Understanding how teachers experienced online language teaching during the recent pandemic is crucial for the language teaching profession in order to better prepare instructors for future scenarios in which a move to online instruction may be necessary again. Language instructors' experiences can help inform administrators and program directors about potential gaps in teacher training or support needed for effective language instruction. This study investigates the experiences and challenges that increased or decreased language teachers' feelings of satisfaction with teaching online. As an exploratory study, both quantitative and qualitative methods are included in order to capture a broad picture of teacher job satisfaction. The results indicate common challenges faced by teachers during online instruction, and the qualitative analyses of correlations between pre-identified factors impacting job satisfaction allowed us to measure the strength between these factors and job satisfactions; pre-defined factors included familiarity and ease of technology, relevance of training, and expectations of how long online/distance education would last. We conclude this study with a discussion of how these findings can be used to better prepare for future shifts to online teaching, including strategic use of training, programmatic changes in teaching load, and the role of technology in facilitating the delivery of content and interaction between instructors and students.

Keywords pandemic, job satisfaction, teacher experiences, teaching challenges, online language teaching, USA

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic meant fast changes for language educators. Many instructors had to switch from in-person classes one week to teaching online asynchronously the next, with little time to prepare. It was impossible initially to even begin to understand what all of these changes meant for instructors, for students, and for language courses. Two years into the pandemic, it is important to reflect on the experiences that educators had, including their varying degrees of real and perceived satisfaction, and the mitigating factors that lead to these outcomes.

Few events in recent history have had such an impact on the way we think about and design our classes as the Covid-19 pandemic, and the switch to online synchronous teaching was only made possible within this past decade. The internet capacity to host millions of video-teleconferences required extensive infrastructure, technological advances, and easier

access to requisite technology than was available in the past.

However, not all students and teachers were able to access these new forms of teaching and learning in the same way (Gerber & Leong, 2021). Existing inequalities including but not limited to access to broadband infrastructure and high-speed access led to unequal opportunities and experiences with online education (Boys, 2022). Students and teachers who worked from remote locations or did not have the financial means to pay for high-speed internet access may have been adversely affected compared with peers who were able to utilize high speed internet to participate in synchronous, video-based online instruction. Variable access to technology, such as laptops or phones, and even software, also resulted in disparate experiences learning and teaching online and increased inequity among learning opportunities (Alhumaid et al., 2020; Ezra et al., 2021; Shin & Hickey, 2021), especially in developing countries (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). While these issues could cause

problems for all students and instructors regardless of content matter, such as learning how to deliver content in an online, synchronous format or how to access to course materials, language instruction in an online setting brings with it its own unique challenges.

Wearing a mask may inhibit comprehension for students in all classes because of muffled voices and the lack of supporting visual input (Nobrega et al., 2020), but the effect is exponential in a class where the students do not know the language. In the synchronous, online classroom, language teachers are stripped of gestures, mimicry, modeling and deictics which support student comprehension and can provide necessary scaffolding during challenging L2 tasks (Ulm et al., 2014). Furthermore, situational, interactive teaching techniques like role-plays were no longer possible and much of student-to-student interaction had to be replaced by breakout rooms that the teacher could only monitor one-at-a-time.

In spite of all of these challenges, there are lessons to be learned from language instructors' experiences and their reactions to and adaptations during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study seeks to identify teachers' experiences with online language teaching and understand which factors related to the sudden shift to online teaching during the pandemic led to language instructors' feelings of satisfaction during this unusual time.

This study focuses on the experiences and perceptions of language instructors in the USA. Due to a shortage of studies on language learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, the literature review takes a broader view and reports on studies outside of this context. However, the survey that was the basis for the present study was distributed to language instructors in the US only.

2. Literature Review

There is a difference between planned online language teaching and the remote online instruction that became the norm during the Covid-19 pandemic in US higher education contexts. Online as well as blended language courses have been shown to be as effective as classroom instruction (Cubillos, 2007; Means et al., 2009; Peterson, 2021) and in some cases even led to stronger language outcomes in certain skill areas (Chenoweth & Murday, 2003; Chenoweth et al., 2006; Enkin & Mejías-Bikandi, 2017; Mundir et al., 2022). In traditional online language courses both instructors and students choose this delivery format. Instructors are typically well-prepared to teach online and have the necessary technology and institutional support for their instruction. They have time to design materials and choose software to support their language courses. In contrast, the remote instruction that happened during much of the pandemic was not chosen by the majority of instructors; consequently, many challenges arose and remote pandemic instruction cannot be easily compared to planned online language

teaching (Gacs et al., 2020).

While extensive research has analyzed online and blended language learning before the Covid-19 pandemic, little is known about how higher education language teachers experienced the sudden switch to online instruction at the beginning of the pandemic, how they perceived language teaching remotely, and what factors may have impacted their job satisfaction or dissatisfaction while teaching online. To explore higher education language teachers' teaching experiences during the pandemic, we began from the perspective that teaching satisfaction is a "multidimensional and dynamic construct, ...affected by factors such as individual characteristics of the profession, features of the working conditions and specific job related aspects," (Griva et al., 2012, p. 543). Overall, "job satisfaction refers to the level of fulfillment gained from work" (García Torres, 2019, p. 114).

There are a number of ways to approach teaching job satisfaction, such as determined through personal attributes including educational level (Ganzach, 2003) and cultural background (Kwantes, 2010), or as impacted by external factors such as working conditions and institutional support (Ateş & Ünal, 2021). All in all, there is a lack of agreement on a theoretical construct of job satisfaction (Pepe et al., 2017), but several factors have repeatedly been identified as impacting teaching satisfaction including institutional support (Kassagby et al., 2001), levels of teacher autonomy and self-efficacy (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), and personal characteristics such as gender, age, education, and prior experience (García Torres, 2019; Guarino et al., 2006).

Factors specific to the COVID-19 pandemic that may have impacted teachers' satisfaction during remote teaching included not only concerns over teaching in what was for many an unfamiliar technological environment as well as an increased workload (MacIntyre et al., 2020), but also anxiety over their own and family's health, sharing working space with other family members, and negotiating work with other family and childcare duties (Appel & Robbins, 2021).

According to a study on European Language Centers, many instructors did not receive special training when they shifted to online teaching, and whether or not hardware or software was provided also differed between institutions (Zamborová et al., 2021). In fact, over 30% of the European respondents neither received a release in workload nor any hardware or software to accommodate the switch to online courses. Nonetheless, the majority of the 725 teachers who were surveyed by Zamborová et al. (2021) felt that language outcomes in their courses during the first pandemic semester were met with slight modifications to their assessments. However, they did note challenges in meeting speaking skill goals, a concern which was shared by 52 ESL instructors in Thailand (Todd, 2020). Zamborová et al. (2021) recommend that training workshops should be implemented for instructors to better equip them with the strategies and pedagogical

approaches needed for effective online language teaching. Other studies underlined the necessity of professional training for instructors as well in order to better prepare them for teaching languages online. One study found that K-12 instructors were especially keen on workshops focusing on the accommodation of different learner styles, finding resources, and integrating language-based technology in online courses (Lin & Zheng, 2015).

The availability of necessary technology to facilitate remote teaching as well as institutional support in general was also related to more job satisfaction with online instruction in a study surveying 1844 teachers in Mexico across school levels (Reynoso et al., 2021). For some instructors, the shift to online remote language teaching was seen as a positive opportunity to try new approaches to teaching and new technology tools (Mueller & Oguro, 2021), and others felt that online teaching had increased their work efficacy (Kwee, 2022).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers who felt confidently about their online teaching skills also perceived it to be more effective than those who were more skeptical about their abilities, and teachers' own technological knowledge and skills also improved their perceptions of online teaching (Gao & Zhang, 2020). Also, instructors with little background in technology-enhanced and online language teaching reported higher anxiety about the move to remote online instruction which impacted their view of the new teaching context negatively (Gao & Zhang, 2020). There seems to be consensus that technological skills are a requirement for effective online language teaching (Compton, 2009; Paepe et al., 2018).

Once such reason for the difference in face-to-face (F2F) and remote teaching is the extent to which teachers and students can see and interact with one another. A study by Zou et al. (2021) investigated how instructors and students perceived the online delivery of English as a foreign language (EFL) courses in China during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the responses of 181 university EFL teachers, the study found that there was a significant relationship between the instructors' perception of the effectiveness of online teaching and their ability to see and be seen by students during online EFL courses ($p = .02$). Instructors perceived teaching effectiveness to be higher if everyone either saw each other or did not see each other. Another significant relationship was identified between instructors' educational background. A higher degree correlated to a stronger perception of effective online teaching ($p = .004$).

There is also a connection between all participants' general attitudes toward teaching and learning remotely online and the benefits that are experienced. Santos et al. (2021) outline that teachers in the Philippines who regarded online language teaching more positively also perceived stronger benefits of this instruction type. The relationship between satisfaction with online teaching and perceived benefits of the courses extends to other programs and non-language classes as well (Lei & So,

2021).

While some instructors noted that online teaching was less time consuming (Appel & Robbins, 2021; Kwee, 2022), and minimized materials having to be produced for in-class instruction (Santos et al., 2021), most teachers noted that online remote teaching was more time-intensive and increased their workload (Burgin et al., 2022; Kozhabayeva & Boivin, 2021; Lin & Zheng, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Zamborová et al., 2021). There were different opinions on whether shifting to remote online instruction presented an increase in workload for language instructors. Other challenges perceived by online language teaching include lack of technology access for all students (Gillis & Krull, 2020; Santos et al., 2021), combining synchronous and asynchronous tools effectively (Wong & Moorhouse, 2021); engaging all learners and fostering collaboration between students (Paepe et al., 2018; Wong & Moorhouse, 2021), maintaining good group dynamics (Zamborová et al., 2021), engaging students (Leech et al., 2022), managing lower student motivation (Aguilar-Cruz et al., 2021); and lack of support from the administration (Burgin et al., 2022). As mentioned earlier, problems of equal technology and internet access for all students are especially pronounced in countries with poor technological infrastructure (Alhumaid et al., 2020). Perceived effectiveness of online language courses may also depend on class size; smaller classes have many advantages in the online format related to the quality of student-instructor interactions and the ability to create a productive learning environment (Russell & Curtis, 2013).

To date, there is a lack of research that focuses on language teacher experiences and perceptions of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic in the USA. Previous research deals with European educational contexts (Milena & Nataša, 2021; Zamborová et al., 2021), Asian countries (Alhumaid et al., 2020; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Kozhabayeva & Boivin, 2021; Lei & So, 2021; Santos et al., 2021; Todd, 2021; Todd, 2020; Zou et al., 2021), South and Central America (Aguilar-Cruz et al., 2021; Burgin et al., 2022; Reynoso et al., 2021), and a mix of countries excluding the USA (Kwee, 2022). Only a handful of studies so far have analyzed language teachers in the US and their reactions to the pandemic in the contexts of: US teachers' intentions to teach online after the pandemic (Jin et al., 2021), evaluating quality online language instruction (Gacs et al., 2020), and identifying coping mechanisms for stressors during the pandemic (MacIntyre et al., 2020). While studies on other content areas or general education studies focused on the US context do exist (Bryson & Andres, 2020; Leech et al., 2022; Raes et al., 2020; Trust & Whalen, 2020), there is a scarcity of research into US language teachers' particular experiences.

Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap in research by specifically investigating language teacher experiences in the USA and their reactions to remote online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic. The

study aims to investigate satisfaction with and general experiences of remote online language instruction, and seeks to identify factors impacting instructors' job satisfaction in an effort to better inform future decisions about (online) language teaching and teacher training, especially during times of crisis and unexpected teaching conditions.

The current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What was language teachers' overall satisfaction with teaching online during the pandemic in the USA?
2. What factors, including perceived benefits and challenges of online teaching, contributed to teachers' overall satisfaction in the USA?
3. What, if any, training did they receive prior to and during online teaching and how did this training affect satisfaction in the USA?

In order to answer the research questions, a Qualtrics survey was distributed to language instructors across the US. The survey was distributed through multiple channels including foreign language listservs and mailing lists, and foreign language association social media groups.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

The target population were all language instructors who had taught online during the Covid-19 pandemic in the USA regardless of language or level taught. Responses were voluntary and anonymous. Of the 183 participants who began the survey, 110 satisfactorily and fully completed the survey. All respondents indicated that they had made the sudden move to teaching online from traditional classroom instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of language instructors had taught at a 4-year, post-secondary institution (91). Only a small number of respondents were language instructors at high schools (12), middle schools (6), vocational or 2-year post-secondary institutions (3), elementary schools (2), and pre-schools or kindergartens (1). The average age was 47.5 years ($SD = 11.3$), with 84 language instructors identifying as females, 22 as males, 1 non-binary, and 3 who preferred not to provide gender/sex information. The average years of teaching experience was 20.4 ($SD = 11.4$). Regarding the educational level of the teachers, the majority held a PhD (66) or MA (32), while only a few language instructors had a BA or BS (6), EdD (3), or MSc (1).

3.2. Materials

The survey used for this study, built and administered through Qualtrics, was designed to allow for both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data. For this reason, the survey began with two primary questions that drove our analysis. First, on a sliding

scale from 1 to 100, participants were asked to rate the satisfaction with their experience in moving to online teaching. The second question in the survey was an open-ended question that asked them to elaborate on their overall experience with the sudden shift to teaching online. The additional questions probed specific co-variables we identified as potentially relevant to the relative satisfaction of individuals through a total of 42. These included individual (education level, degree field, first and second languages), pedagogical (prior experience teaching online, whether they were teaching their first or second language, the age/education level of their students, years of teaching experience), pandemic training-related (anticipated vs. actual days online, hours of training provided to support shift to online, whether language teaching specific training was provided) and technological (learning management system, video platform) factors.

3.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

The survey was designed and hosted on Yale's Qualtrics XM interface and distributed via an anonymous link. Participants were solicited via social media, particularly Facebook pages to which the authors belong that focus on language teaching, including the various American Association of Teachers of X (e.g., German, Spanish, French, Japanese...) national pages, the MLA Facebook page, and the World Language Teaching Lounge Facebook page. In addition, the Yale CLS (Yale instructional faculty), International Association for Language Learning Technology and CALICO listservs were also used. Participants were also solicited via virtual meet and greets at major conferences such as the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The distribution link to the study was included in all communications with potential respondents.

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations, while the qualitative data was coded using NVivo based on pre-determined codes that were agreed upon between the two authors of the paper upon having read all responses. The qualitative data analysis focused on themes that emerged in the instructors' responses in order to identify general trends and patterns. To develop the codes for the qualitative data, one researcher read all of the responses and developed codes that included both factors that were identified *a priori* for the quantitative questions, as well as ones that went beyond initial factors, in order to adequately capture the different themes that appeared in the data. Then, the same researcher applied these codes to the qualitative data. Afterward, the second researcher checked the codes against the data. Discrepancies between the two researchers' assessment of the data coding were then discussed and resolved. Overall, the two types of data collected were used to triangulate the results to provide added validity to the findings and

provide multiple opportunities for participants to express and evaluate their experience.

4. Results

4.1. Research Question 1

The first research question asked generally: what was language teachers' overall satisfaction with teaching online during the pandemic? The responses to the first quantitative question of the survey, asking participants to rank their satisfaction with online teaching during the pandemic on a sliding-scale from 0-100, where 0 was defined as "absolutely dissatisfied" and as "absolutely satisfied", provide an overview. The As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the distribution of these results was not normal. The heavy left-skew of the data is a result of a ceiling effect due to many participants indicating with a mark of 100 that they were absolutely satisfied with the teaching experience, and the majority of participants fell above 50, indicating that they were more satisfied than not with online teaching during the pandemic. The mean of the responses was 73.62 ($N = 110$, $SD = 22.47$), while the median was 82, and the mode was 90.

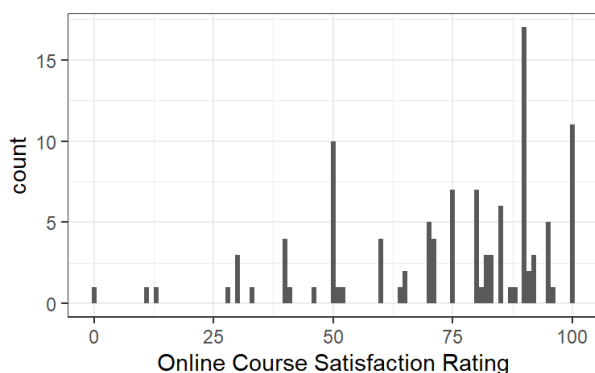


Figure 1. Histogram of online course satisfaction ratings

4.2. Research Question 2

To answer this question, we present, and later interpret, the qualitative data based on the first open-ended survey question and the quantitative questions regarding factors that could have led to positive experiences or posed challenges. The qualitative responses focused predominantly on challenges that instructors had perceived although some included a few positive takeaways as well.

Within the 110 open-ended responses, 157 statements were coded as challenges which shows that instructors perceived many difficulties with the switch to remote instruction. There were three main challenges that a majority of instructors discussed. The most frequently mentioned challenge pertained to the difficulty of keeping students engaged. Instructors explained that holding students' interest in the online format was more difficult, and that students' motivation was significantly lower. Getting students to interact and

participate was mentioned as a struggle. One instructor explained that students "lost their motivation to participate." while another commented that "only a select few kept answering." Many teachers connected the lack of engagement and participation to students being visually and audially absent on the screen. One responded noted that "Students hid behind cameras or passively engaged" and another teacher drew the conclusion that "Student energy was low due to cameras off and no affective interaction."

This leads to the second major challenge identified in the responses which was technology in general. Issues with unreliable or slow internet, lack of access to specific software or necessary hardware, as well as students not turning on their camera and audio were mentioned by a majority of instructors. The technological difficulties led to "equity issues," an absence of "enthusiastic sounds or other student reactions," as well as "relatively passive behaviors [and] just staring when the class was not in breakout rooms." One instructor summarized: "there were endless tech gaffes. Nothing worked well."

In connection to the technological issues and limitations, the third major challenge identified in the responses was a concern over assessing student work; particularly, many instructors were worried about their students cheating on assignments. Instructors mentioned that "Exam security was taken less seriously," and that "auto translate and cheating were the norm." Several instructors voiced frustration over this because "many of them never bothered to learn/memorize the writing system." Concerns were voiced over the use of google translate, reading scripts instead of speaking freely, or having more competent students or native speakers complete work for their students. However, not all instructors found assessment and cheating to be problematic. As one instructor noted, "I think teachers' role is not to be the 'cheating police' anyway. Use better assessments, then it won't be a problem." Some other responses also showed that instructors adapted their assessments to better fit the new teaching environment. One instructor mentioned having eliminated high-stake testing, and a few instructors explained that they switched to projects as the main source of assessment. Instructors developed innovative assessments to avoid the issue of cheating. One instructor, for example, "developed a new activity series cycle where students gave less formal presentations on whatever they happened to be involved in outside of their field of study." Even instructors who don't use standard tests had to "think outside of the usual box, including how to frame essays in interesting ways."

In addition to these three main challenges, another theme that came out in the open-ended responses was the increased workload and additional time it took to convert classes to an online format and redesign materials and assessments. While there appears to be consensus among those who mentioned this issue that "it was a lot of unexpected work," a few comments mentioned that time was saved not having to commute

to campus. Since this only came up in three responses, it can be assumed that this added bonus did not make up for the “extra work and stress” of the online courses. The time issue not only pertains to the extra hours it took instructors to prepare and teach online but also to the fact that it was impossible to cover “nearly as much content” as they normally would. Instructors felt that “it took twice as long to do half as much,” or even that it was “three times as much work to accomplish a third of what you can do face-to-face,” which “puts an unfair burden on instructors.” In spite of the general time concerns, one instructor noted: “I had more time to review students’ responses to language tasks and offered more specific and personalized feedback to all my students.”

Two more themes that emerged from the analysis include a dissatisfaction with the hybrid model that some universities adopted and mixed feelings about Zoom’s breakout rooms. Out of the twelve instructors who mentioned the hybrid model, only one mentioned a positive aspect and that was related to being able to better see students signing in a F2F American Sign Language class. Concerns over the hybrid model focused mainly on the added workload and “managing both online and in-person.” Instructors felt that the in-class students were suffering because the instructors “could not leave his / her spot because of the camera.” Additionally, “students at home could not hear their classmates in class.” One instructor sums up their feelings in the following comment “Teaching Hybrid was a disaster.”

Breakout rooms were mentioned 25 times with a majority commenting positively on them but a few instructors voicing concerns. Benefits of the breakout rooms included their facilitation of partner work, small group discussion and interaction and the instructor’s ability to give individual feedback. Instructors who disliked breakout rooms, indicated that “it’s hard to listen in on multiple groups while being in a break-out-room environment.” Others did not want to interrupt their students when communicating. One instructor noted: “I could not hover from afar and listen in to partner ex. If I wanted to interact with a pair, I had to join their breakout room and interrupt them.” All in all, several felt that the breakout rooms did not go as smoothly, were a bit cumbersome, and took more time, but the positive views outnumbered the concerns. As one instructor put it: “Zoom breakout rooms were essential.”

While the majority of respondents focused on challenges they perceived during remote online instruction, several responses included perceptions of what had gone well. The observed benefits were extremely varied and often mentioned only once. The two main themes in those responses were the ability to try out and learn new tools and teaching strategies that improved overall language instruction, and more equal participation. Several instructors mentioned that shyer students participated better and more dominant students were not as disruptive. Additionally, a few teachers saw an increase in enrollment and attendance.

One noted: “I had more non-traditional students in the last year than ever.” A few instructors noted that small class sizes worked especially well for online classes, and that upper-level and advanced courses were much easier to teach online than lower-level language classes.

Several instructors mentioned that “felt we really built a community in our online classes” through online teaching. One teacher was glad about “positive relationships with my online-live students whom I never met in real life.” Others indicated enjoying the ability to work from their own space and the overall added flexibility of online teaching, which meant it was easy to overcome time zones, and allowed some instructors to better keep up with other duties and maintain better work life balance. One instructor found online teaching to be “efficient,” and another praised it for its opportunities of self-paced learning.

Next, we turn to the quantitative results. Before presenting the factors that most impacted teaching satisfaction as revealed through a correlation analysis, the summary statistics for the non-demographic quantitative factors assessed in the survey are described below. The comparisons of the demographic factors outlined before with satisfaction ratings and all other quantitative variables are included in Table 1. Altogether, fifteen factors were investigated as can be seen in Table 1.

Beginning with the amount of time related to online training we investigated three different measures. First, the number of weeks participants had initially anticipated teaching online ($N = 110$, $M = 16.83$, $SD = 16.02$) as compared with the number of weeks actually spent teaching online ($N = 110$, $M = 41.76$, $SD = 18.46$). Based on this result, a joint measure of the number of weeks anticipated minus actual time taught online ($N = 110$, $M = 24.53$, $SD = 21.08$) was calculated. These results indicate that the average number of weeks actually spent online was much higher than the anticipated number of weeks online, with an average difference of 24.53 weeks. The high standard deviations for all three of these measures also relay the uncertainty about long online teaching would last.

Next, we investigated the number of different courses ($N = 110$, $M = 4.11$, $SD = 2.29$) instructors were asked to teach during the pandemic. The results indicate that the average number of different courses taught was 4. The majority of respondents (85%) made the shift to online teaching in Spring of 2020. Those that moved online during Spring 202, had on average on week to prepare before returning to teaching in an online format ($N = 93$, $M = 7.31$, $SD = 6.36$).

Another set of factors included the technological aspects of teaching online, such as the video platform and learning management system (LMS) instructors used. Most respondents (97) indicated that the video platform for instruction was Zoom. Only 5 respondents each used Google Meet/Classroom or Cisco WebEx, and less than 3 used Blackboard Collaborative, Microsoft Teams, and BlueJeans. A note regarding the video platform data, some respondents indicated more than one video platform, hence the total

of responses is greater than the total number of respondents. Several indicated that there was an “official” one but they chose to use zoom instead. Ranking the functionality and utility of their video platform from 1-10 resulted in a mean of 7.66 ($N = 110$, $SD = 2.08$) indicating general satisfaction with the video platform. The use of LMSs was more varied than video platforms (Blackboard = 11, Canvas = 53, Brightspace = 3, Google Classroom = 12, Desire2Learn = 13, Moodle = 14, Schoology = 3, Other = 11), although Canvas was the clear favorite. Again, some respondents indicated more than one LMS, hence the total of responses is greater than the total number of

respondents. The ranking of the functionality and utility of their LMS from 1-10 also indicated general satisfaction ($N = 110$, $M = 6.87$, $SD = 2.44$). The data indicates that video platforms were rated higher than LMSs, but only to a slight degree.

The following correlation table displays the results for each quantitative variable. For the variables related to training, the correlations reflect only those participants ($N = 59$) that indicated they received training. Correlation strengths were interpreted in light of Plonsky and Oswald's (2014) estimates for applied linguistics which “suggest that r s close to .25 be considered small, .40 medium, and .60 large,” (p. 889).

Table 1. Matrix of Pearson's correlations for all quantitative variables

	Online Course Satisfaction	Age	Teaching Exp in Years	Weeks Anticipated Online	Weeks Actually Online	Actual Expected Online Diff in Weeks	Diff Courses	Days Prep	Training in Hours Spring 2020	Training in Hours Summer 2020	Training in Hours Fall 2020	Language Focused Training in Hours	New Training Rating	Video Platform Rating	LMS Rating
Online Course Satisfaction	1.00														
Age	.40	1.00													
Teaching Exp in Years	.38	.96	1.00												
Weeks Anticipated Online	.30	.39	.25	1.00											
Weeks Actually Online	-.49	-.21	-.28	-.05	1.00										
Actual Expected Online Diff in Weeks	-.54	-.41	-.36	-.74	.71	1.00									
Diff Courses	-.37	.11	.15	-.16	.25	.28	1.00								
Days Prep	-.19	-.23	-.19	-.29	-.48	-.12	-.10	1.00							
Training in Hours Spring 2020	-.01	-.19	-.13	.00	-.48	-.32	-.42	.78	1.00						
Training in Hours Summer 2020	.02	-.26	-.15	-.10	-.48	-.25	-.35	.30	.56	1.00					
Training in Hours Fall 2020	-.01	-.16	-.08	.09	-.44	-.36	-.32	.65	.94	.63	1.00				
Language Focused Training in Hours	-.02	-.12	-.02	-.08	-.45	-.24	-.37	.30	.59	.95	.64	1.00			
New Training Rating	.63	.07	.09	.02	-.50	-.35	-.61	.07	.26	.57	.21	.56	1.00		
Video Platform Rating	.64	.16	.18	.06	-.36	-.29	-.39	-.40	-.33	.11	-.34	.12	.64	1.00	
LMS Rating	.52	.05	.14	-.23	-.35	-.07	-.21	-.15	-.12	.27	-.12	.28	.62	.71	1.00

Beginning with the correlations between the quantitative variables and the primary variable of interest, satisfaction in teaching online, the two positive strong correlates were video platform rating ($r = .64$) and new training rating ($r = .63$).

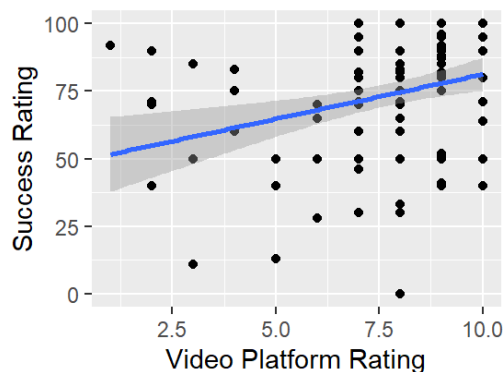


Figure 2. Video platform rating by teacher satisfaction

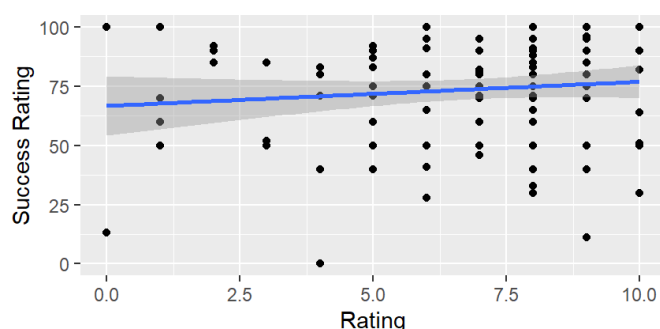


Figure 3. LMS rating by teacher satisfaction

Three medium positive correlations were found for LMS rating ($r = .52$), age ($r = .40$), and teaching experience in years ($r = .38$). It is clear that age and teaching experience in years are correlated ($r = .96$) and capture a collinearity effect. And there was also one weak positive correlation for anticipated weeks online ($r = .30$). There were also medium negative correlations between weeks actually online ($r = -.49$) and the difference between weeks actually online versus weeks expected to be online ($r = -.54$). These two variables are strongly correlated with one another ($r = .71$) and are also capturing some collinearity. The final medium negative correlation to highlight is the number of different courses the instructor was teaching online ($r = -.37$). A weak negative correlation was found between the days of preparation an instructor had and satisfaction ($r = -.19$), and no correlation was found between the amount of training in hours and satisfaction.

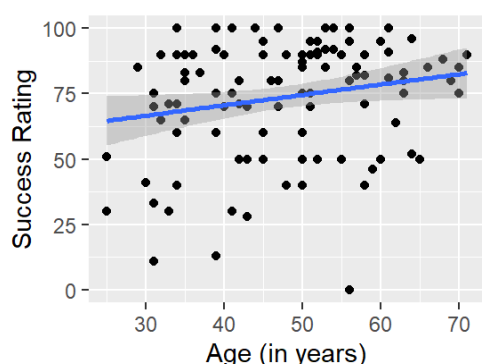


Figure 4. Age by teacher satisfaction

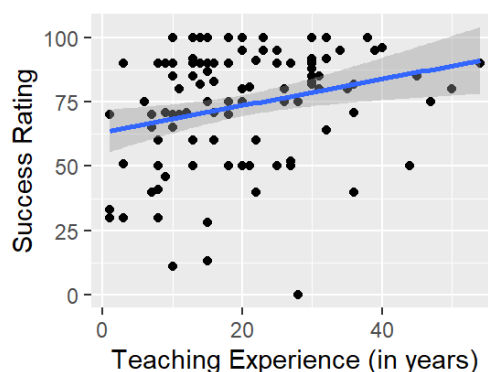


Figure 5. Teaching experience by teacher satisfaction

4.3. Research Question 3

Of the total 110 respondents, 59 teachers indicated that they received training prior to moving online. The number of training hours for those who received any in Spring 2020 ($N = 59$, $M = 11.31$, $SD = 14.74$), Summer 2020 ($N = 59$, $M = 18.69$, $SD = 21.69$) and Fall 2020 ($N = 59$, $M = 15.35$, $SD = 22.99$) was similar. The average amount of time dedicated to training did not differ much between these three time periods, but the standard deviation indicates that the amount of training by individual varied to an immense degree.

From the 59 respondents who indicated they received training, this training was mandatory for only one instructor, voluntary for 36, and some mandatory, some voluntary for 22 teachers. The majority of instructors (45) did not receive any compensation for this training. Four respondents answered that they were always compensated for the training, and ten instructors were sometimes compensated.

Responses showed that instructors found the training somewhat helpful. When asked to rank the usefulness of their training on a scale of 1-10, the median was 6.83 ($N = 59$, $M = 6.83$, $SD = 2.60$). The second open-ended question shed more light on instructors' perception of any new training they received in preparation or support of their online language instruction. One major theme that emerged was the usefulness of training target directly at online language instruction while general training on online teaching was perceived as less applicable. As one instructor noted: "The training I sought out from professional organizations like ACTFL and IALLT was helpful because it was specifically directed towards teaching languages online. I attended a couple of workshops that were quite useful." In contrast, another instructor explained about the general training provided by the university: "The training I received from my university was entirely general, on the topic of online teaching in general and on particular uses for technology tools that my institution supports. This training was not very helpful." The majority of instructors received training in one or more of the following five categories: (1) using ZOOM or other software to deliver instruction, (2) specific tools and other technology to support teaching, (3) effective use

of the course management system used at the university, including how to edit and upload files and create synchronous and asynchronous assignments, (4) how to create online assessments, (5) and engaging students online. Only two of the 59 instructors who received training mentioned that it included research in SLA and online language teaching.

A few instructors explicitly mentioned that the training was not helpful. One noted: “After going through several pieces of training, I realized I am not learning what I need to know to teach a language online. I asked the training facilitator to provide me with resources or guidance, but none of them could assist me.” Another lamented that the training “was dumb and I boycotted the rest b/c it was a waste of time” and one instructor found it to be an “overwhelming introduction to way too many online apps.” On the other hand, more instructors felt a positive impact on the training they received. They especially liked “to connect with other faculty at the university,” and workshops that “focused on online language teaching where we all shared ideas and tools.” Training that included “a specific instructor’s successful practice or student panels reporting on lived experience as online language learners” were evaluated as particularly helpful. All in all, seven instructors used the word helpful to speak about the training they received and two each mentioned the training was useful or good. A few respondents indicated that they were already experienced in online teaching and/or also involved in training others for the transition to remote online instruction

5. Discussion

Our exploratory study sheds light on a few key takeaways from language instructors’ experiences with the anomalous shift to synchronous online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic in the US that can hopefully be used to ease future transitions to crisis teaching. The interesting contrast found in the qualitative data is that the negative aspects of pandemic teaching were grouped around three main challenges, while the positive aspects were quite diverse. Therefore, it might be more important for administrators to focus on mitigating these more generalizable negative factors than attempting to enhance positive ones.

One of the main challenges for US language instructors was building community. Whether the issue was teaching while only seeing black boxes or attempting to simulate group-work through breakout rooms, the interactions that teachers typically use to build a sense of community with their classes was disrupted. Studies from other contexts have also outlined that language instructors felt a special need to build an online community of learners (Mueller & Oguro, 2021), and that an inability to see or be seen during class if video was turned off during online instruction negatively impacted their sense of satisfaction and teaching effectiveness (Zou et al.,

2021). The necessity to create a strong community in online teaching has already been recognized prior to the pandemic (Lin & Zheng, 2015; Sun, 2011) but has become a real challenge during the pandemic when all instruction, not just selected courses, was shifted online.

Giving students greater opportunities to express themselves, such as through chat features of video platforms, has also resulted in some positive experiences for language instructors in the present study. It is unclear from our data what the best practices should be for building community in this type of environment when it is not the preferred or selected mode of instruction but work from the field of computer-aided language learning could provide insights for crash-courses on community building when sudden shifts to online instructional formats occur. Gacs et al. (2020) suggest that an online community can be established by designing assignments that include a lot of student-to-student interaction, and by promoting students’ expression of creativity and personality. Further recommendations for building an online community include being authentic and present as instructor and interacting with students in different formats (Lomicka, 2020). From teaching languages online prior to the pandemic, we can also learn some important steps for increasing community building which can include a stronger focus on task-based activities, problem-solving tasks, and pair or group collaboration (Sun, 2011). Fostering virtual engagement in online classes is an important way to create a learning community. This can be achieved through different tools including Padlet, Kahoot, Flip, through including polling activities, regular check-ins and feedback for students, holding online student café/lounge, or integrating social media into language learning (Lomicka, 2020).

The two additional challenges that emerged as common themes in the open-ended response will be discussed alongside the quantitative findings related to technology. The first demographic variables that we considered were the age and years of teaching experience of the respondents. While age and years of teaching experience were collinear, we will treat them as separate for this discussion because of our initial hypothesis. We originally thought that age would have a significantly weaker impact than it did. We supposed that age might affect comfort with some of the technological aspects and hurdles related to online teaching and therefore would have less of an impact than years of experience. In contrast to this, age did not seem to cause much of a hindrance to satisfaction in this sudden shift to online teaching. This is in line with findings by Scherer et al. (2021) whose study showed that age was unrelated to readiness for online teaching and others who showed that age was unrelated to teachers’ job satisfaction (Green-Reese, 1991). Demirtas (2010), on the other hand, found lower job satisfaction for teachers older than 41, while Shaukat et al. (2018) found significantly higher teaching satisfaction in the older population. While this previous research is not all in the field of language instruction, it

appears that more research is needed to determine whether there is a correlation between age and language teaching satisfaction, whether online or not.

On the other hand, we did expect to see a strong correlation between years of experience teaching and satisfaction, which we did find. Previous studies don't show consensus on the impact of years of experience on teachers' job satisfaction. While some found that that years of experience was not a predictor of overall teaching satisfaction (Camilli, 2004; Ece & Kazazoglu, 2021; Topchyan & Woehler, 2021) others revealed that teaching experience is a determining factor for job satisfaction (Ferguson et al., 2012; Howe et al., 2018).

Next the anticipated, actual, and difference between anticipated and actual time teaching online were all strong indicators of satisfaction. The longer a teacher anticipated being online, the more satisfaction they had teaching online, and conversely, the longer they actually had to teach online, the less satisfaction they felt they had. The difference between the anticipated and actual time teaching online also tells us that the bigger the difference between the anticipated and actual time teaching online, the less satisfied the instructor felt they were. This difference leads us to a possible way to improve changes to teaching during a crisis. The teachers who expected the longest shift felt they had satisfaction, while those who expected the shortest shift felt they had less. This means that teachers would do better in future such situations to anticipate a longer state of abnormal teaching conditions. This notion should be indicated to teachers by their administration, rather than short timelines in which the goal-post for return to normalcy is inevitably moved back again and again.

The number of different courses taught online was also negatively correlated with feelings of satisfaction. That means that instructors who had to teach multiple different courses in an online format were generally less satisfied with online remote teaching. Prepping for multiple sections of a single course led to greater feelings of satisfaction than prepping for multiple different classes at the same time. While this might seem obvious as workload has been shown to be a factor related to overall teaching satisfaction in normal times (Butt & Lance, 2005), our data indicate that it may be important to shift teaching load and schedules during times of crisis to minimize the total number of preps the instructor has. As Gacs et al. (2020) suggest, release time or extra compensation should be given to instructors for the additional workload that developing and teaching online language courses presents.

The number of days to prepare for the shift to online teaching was surprisingly negative. We had anticipated that more time to prepare for the shift to online teaching would be positively correlated with feelings of satisfaction. While Scherer et al. (2021) found that teachers with more time to prepare showed higher readiness for online teaching, in the present study there was no correlation between satisfaction and time to shift teaching online. This may be due to a number of possible factors. Some of them could be that

teachers did not know exactly what to expect and so more time did not necessarily lead to more preparation, or that the experience of teaching online was something that had to be mastered "on the job". In other words, teachers may have gained more confidence and practical knowledge about how to go about teaching online once they started, so the actual amount of time they had leading up to the start of the shift did not matter as much. The negative direction of this correlation could also imply that too much time before the start of the shift also had a detrimental impact, wherein instructors wanted to get back to the classroom and not continue to wait. With this knowledge, administrators should limit the amount of prep time before a huge shift in teaching and instead build in time throughout the crisis in order to provide teachers time to reflect on their real-world experience teaching through the crisis. In saying this we are not implying that teachers would not need more time to prep than in a normal semester. Instead, we believe that additional time for prep and planning could be made available throughout the semester, rather than front loading all of the prep time before the return to teaching. Some universities, for example, cancelled spring break during an online pandemic semester which was experienced as stressful for both students and instructors. Breaks and time for preparation and planning are crucial.

The amount of time for new training which instructors received was surprisingly not correlated with more satisfaction in teaching during the pandemic. We had anticipated that more training, or even differences in when training occurred, would have led teachers to feel more satisfied with their teaching experience. It seems that more time dedicated to training was not sufficient to improve instructors' feelings of satisfaction. Even training dedicated to language teaching online did not show any positive correlation. However, instructors' rating of their training was positively correlated with feelings of satisfaction. This indicates that the quality and usefulness of the training is more important than the overall amount of training that is provided, which is a recommendation echoed by Zamborová et al. (2021) and Lin and Zheng (2015). The qualitative responses to training questions also revealed mixed feelings. With the likely increase in time needed to prepare classes, instructors may have been overwhelmed by additional time spent on training, as MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Mercer (2020) attest. This means that for future abnormal teaching situations, administrators should be selective in their training and listen to instructors about the type and amount of training they would like to receive. Administrators should also be aware that any extra burden from mandatory training should also be compensated for.

The two technology-related pieces of our survey, the video platform rating and LMS rating, were both positively correlated with feelings of teaching satisfaction, and were brought up as challenges and opportunities by many participants in the open-ended responses. The challenges of assessment and

connectivity lie at the heart of respondents' dissatisfaction. Most of the issues related to assessment come from the difficulties associated with trying to implement traditional methods in a new environment. While some technologies may make it possible to continue traditional means of assessment in a similar way, it may be important to shift assessment to new, innovative methods that work better in an online environment, but still allow teachers to capture students' knowledge and skills. Additionally, problems with connectivity created hurdles that cannot easily be overcome without significant investment in expanded access to high-speed internet. To the degree possible, administrators should make every effort to provide required technology to any students or faculty in need, and opportunities for equal access to reliable internet connections. The importance of technological aspects emphasized in these findings is not surprising, as these tools were the gateway for interactions with students and delivering course content. This adds to the findings from Gillis and Krull (2020) and Santos et al. (2021), who pointed out the importance of technological disparity between students, and extends it to teachers. Importantly, the video platform and LMS ratings were also moderately correlated, indicating that an overall satisfaction with the technology for interacting with students as a whole is as important as any single technology. Therefore, administrators should make sure that all of the technologies required for future crises and abnormal teaching integrate well with one another.

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