Undergraduate Research TESOL Collection: Facing the Challenges of COVID-19

Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez &
Giannina Seravalli Monge (eds.)

Colección Inventarios

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Hecho el depósito de ley.

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Sixty years ago I knew everything; now I know nothing;
education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

Will Durant

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Contents

Introduction

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a halt; universities were no exception. On the contrary, due to the innovative nature of the university work, they were forced to push forward and keep the education of our citizens going. At Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica (UNA), we were witnesses of this process. We started a normal face-to-face (f2f) modality for our classes. It all changed only one month after the first semester began. Some professors were ready for the change, but most of our faculty needed time to adjust to the new reality. Our students also were faced with major decisions on the future of their education, since most of them are from the rural areas in a developing country where the Internet is not easily accessible everywhere. These challenges were but just a few of the challenges we, as an educational community, faced during the 2020 academic year.

Because this publication is a tribute to our students' resilience, we decided to focus on the challenges they faced to complete their research projects during the second semester of 2020. The first challenge was the change of educational setting. Students were forced to adopt a modality that was rarely used in their f2f classes. They had to adapt to a video conferencing software, one of the many Learning Management Systems (LMS), and the different creative ways in which instructors decided to deliver their classes. The second challenge was the fact that the research topics for which they had planned were for a f2f setting, not online classes. A third challenge was that after five months of the abrupt change, they were faced with the challenges of a newly designed Seminar course that expected them to be familiar with the new technologies both for study and for research. Lastly, they faced the challenge of working with the Ministry of Education which was struggling to find the appropriate way to deliver instruction. That caused a delay in the semester which became longer than that of the university. All procedures and data collection processes were affected by this delay.

To face these challenges, as the professors in charge of the co-taught course LLM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production), we decided to design the course so that we could minimize these challenges. Using the expertise in Emergent Technologies and LMS provided by one of us and the expertise in teacher preparation and practicum of the other instructor, we structured the course differently to give our students the tools necessary to face a new world reality, a new way to approach research in education, and a new way to work as a community. Students responded to these challenges with resilience and a desire to learn that is reflected in their work.

This book is divided into four sections. Each section was created based on the research topic selected and carried out by each research group. They are organized in a way that also represents the teaching and learning process. The first section, Section A, is titled Student Engagement in the Virtual-Presence Classroom. The second, Section B, is titled Pedagogical Practice. The third, Section C, is titled Learner Factors: Anxiety. The fourth and last section, Section D, is titled Assessment. These papers represent a major achievement of our undergraduate students and their response to an ever-changing educational setting.

In Section A, Alvarado Chaves, Leitón Urbina, Miranda Pérez, Rojas Quesada, and Salazar Guillén analyze questionnaire responses from 10th-grade students on their engagement with remote learning classes during the COVID-19 pandemic and examine an in-depth interview with the instructor to understand what strategies have been used to manage the remote learning classes. Campos, Roda, García, Calderón, and Navarro compare three learning strategies (Collaborative Learning, Cooperative Learning, and Inquiry-based strategies) to evaluate their effectiveness in increasing students' engagement in classes. Arce Mena, Salas Murillo, Silva Acosta, and Víquez Fernández analyze the responses of 21 students using a Google forms survey with 12 questions to gather data about the influence of distance learning on EFL students' engagement in private language centers in the central valley of Costa Rica.

In Section B, Araya Vargas, Bolaños Solís, Jiménez Córdoba, and Sánchez Hernández study the level of interaction that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have during classes while using certain communicative activities and their effect upon the learners' speaking development.

In Section C, Calvo, González, Muñoz, Morales, and Paniagua examine what specific factors increase levels of stress and anxiety among third-year students after the change in the mode of delivery, and how specific traits (gender and location) can influence the increase of stress in remote learning settings. Along the same lines, Chaves Hernández, Fernández Soto, and Muñoz Villarebia study the reasons why beginner English learners restrain from participating in oral tasks in private English language institutes.

Lastly, in Section D, Angulo Bogantes, Benedict Castillo, Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Hernández Murillo analyze the double-loop learning theory for oral assessment as an alternative to the traditional speaking assessment.

All these research projects are, by no means, perfect; but they represent the research potential found at the undergraduate level at UNA. They also suggest that Costa Rica has a great potential in the scientific community with respect to research in the fields of Second Language Acquisition, Pedagogical Practices for Language Teaching, Language Assessment, among the many subareas of Applied Linguistics.

Reviewers offered comments such as "Excellent job in writing this paper! It is well written, the English is very impressive, and it is clear that you put

a lot of work into it," "Overall a well-written paper," "It was definitely based on a current topic that we were all interested in because of the difficult times that we were going through," "The article has a strong lit review and summarizes the findings well," "The study is interesting and I can see they put a lot of hard work into it!," and "*Excelente trabajo de investigación! ¡Enhorabuena! En general muy buena organización, expresado en su gran mayoría con un inglés formal y académico.*" [Excellent research paper! Good job! In general, it is well organized, and overall it is expressed in very formal and academic English (our translation)].

We encourage our readers to adopt best scientific practices on their quest to find solutions to our pedagogical problems. This book is also intended to be used in undergraduate research courses due to the quality and structure of each of the papers presented here. All the studies are presented as complete reports edited specifically for this publication, but they represent our students' work. Enjoy it!

Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez
Giannina Seravalli Monge

Section A
Student Engagement in the Classroom

Engagement in Remote Language Learning in Public High Schools in Costa Rica[1]

Álvaro Chaves Alfaro
Melany Leitón Urbina
Sebastián Miranda Pérez
Alejandro Rojas Quesada
María José Salazar Guillén

Introduction

Student engagement in the classroom could be a challenge in the learning and teaching process, and the reasons causing this phenomenon may vary; and students could find classes monotonous, class materials dull, or teachers' personalities uninteresting. A new scenario has emerged this year, and teachers and educational entities could be even more challenged to engage students.

With the COVID-19 pandemic that began in March 2020, the educational system started to apply an emergency remote learning strategy to prevent the massive transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus (MEP, 2020). This situation could affect Costa Rica's public education, and teachers could face issues such as students' unreliable Internet access or the lack of electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, or tablets to use in class. These difficulties could affect their learning process, making it impossible for them to connect to synchronous classes or do asynchronous work, and this influences another crucial aspect, which we refer to as engagement.

The different connectivity issues students face along with traditional motivation problems create an environment in which engagement and motivation are very low. The reasons for this could vary since students may not be accustomed to remote learning. It is important to identify the Costa Rican context and the situation here to be able to help students become engaged, with the teachers as their facilitator.

Engagement may be related to motivation and each concept could have different tools and strategies that can be used to achieve it. To help learners and teachers with language acquisition, these techniques could be applied to Costa Rica's remote learning in public high school education.

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[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Student Engagement

Because engagement is a topic that has been investigated extensively, this concept has been analyzed in many different ways. Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008) refer to Reschly and Christenson (2006) define engagement as a multidimensional construct requiring an understanding of affective connections within the academic environment and active student behavior. They pointed out that it is essential to understand that this concept varies according to context, and they have defined engagement not as something static, but rather as something flexible based on each student and the many different factors surrounding them. Some of these factors include the capacity of the school, family, and peers to provide consistent expectations and support for learning. Like Appleton et al. (2008), Fredricks et al. (2004) defined engagement as multidimensional, involving aspects of students' emotions, behavior such as participation, academic learning time; and cognition.

Motivation has also been studied from the perspective of the sub-topics it covers. Some academics support a broader concept of engagement that includes different aspects such as effect, liking, feelings of belonging, and valuing (Christenson et al., 2012). Others, according to Skinner and Pitzer (2012), prefer to narrow down the concept to measure it more easily and use it more effectively for research, and they define it as "the behavioral manifestation of motivation" (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012, p. 135).

1.2 Different Ways in Which Engagement Has Been Promoted

Student engagement is a crucial aspect to consider for a successful learning process. Learners go through many different stages, and are not always willing to participate; this is one of the many reasons why engagement must be nurtured. This has been carried out in several ways and investigated by different academics; their findings, therefore, must be considered for the present study.

Stone and Springer (2019) outlined important points in their research about students' engagement from the perspective of knowledgeable experts in online teaching. For data gathering, they conducted face-to-face, phone, and video-link interviews. After interviewing 151 academics and staff members from 16 different educational centers in 2017, the authors stated that there are interrelated factors to be considered to promote students' engagement. For instance, they addressed the phenomenon of engagement in the classroom as interaction among educational center, its staff, instructors and students. Regarding their findings, the participants point out that institutions must provide "policies and practices" such as institutional action plans to train educators for online environments, familiarizing them with the use of TICs and online resources, and to offer technical support whenever needed. The participants added that the educators' work, from personal traits to class strategies, along

with virtual presence, accurate interventions, approachability, welcoming class environment, and class flexibility were all aspects that characterize a successful educator and online class. The researchers emphasized the importance for the participants to have an online learning community of students and educators. As part of the research, the authors brought up the 2019 results of the implementation of the modifications in the curricula, authentic materials, and the new strategies proposed by the participants in online classes. Some of their results showed an improvement in the students' performance and engagement during this period. They concluded that a strong commitment is required from educational centers and instructors to promote students' engagement and learning, and it is their obligation to satisfy students' varying needs based on their respective backgrounds.

Young and Bruce (2011) researched the correlation between classroom community in online learning, students' engagement in online learning, and the community and engagement among disciplines in online education. They explained that student engagement is a concept that depends on teaching-environment factors such as an instructor's personal connection and dynamic virtual activities. It has four dimensions: skills engagement, participation/interaction engagement, emotional engagement, and performance engagement. Additionally, they defined the classroom community as the connection between student-student and student-instructor, which might be affected by students' confinement, dissatisfaction, and lack of interest. Nonetheless, the authors pointed out that a strong virtual social community promotes fruitful online classes, high scores, and meaningful learning for students. To collect data, the researchers created an online survey adapted from scales used in face-to-face classes to assess community and engagement. The research population included 528 students who had taken online classes over two semesters and were invited to participate by email. After collecting data, the researchers found that the classroom community consisted of two factors: the student-instructor versus student-student sense of community. In the first, the authors indicated that the 3 most important correlates were instructor proximity, instructor responsiveness, and instructor professionalism. For the second factor, they highlighted that the 4 most essential correlates were workgroup commitment, classmates' personal connection, peer interaction, and peer cooperation. Regarding student engagement, they found that the strongest correlation is students' self-organization. The authors concluded that it is imperative to create strong links between students and educators to build up a sense of community, and to design class activities that stimulate the learning process along with assignments that promote interaction to decrease virtual closeness and increase social interaction.

Martin and Bolliger (2018) investigated the importance of engagement in the classroom using Moore's (1993) interaction framework, which classifies engagement as learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, and learn-

er-to-content. They noted that each classification has different strategies or approaches to enhance engagement and learning. The instrument they used was an online survey applied to 155 participants from 8 different educational centers in the United States. The 38 items in their survey were distributed in Likert-type questions (29), open-ended questions (3), and demographic questions (6); moreover, to validate their instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Their qualitative findings showed that for learner-to-learner engagement, icebreakers not only are an effective strategy to engage students, but also contribute to a positive, friendly, and supportive class environment. They also stated that strategies such as collaborative work using communication devices and virtual lounges were classified as strategies that could promote engagement among students. In the case of learner-to-instructor engagement, researchers highlighted the importance of constant communication to keep on track during class. For learner-to-content engagement, the application of realistic scenarios and structured discussions along with guiding questions were classified as highly important. The authors' findings also showed that varied instructional material, including instructor generated resources, web resources, book chapters, multimedia resources, and instructional videos count as effective online teaching strategies. The researchers concluded that instructors are the most valuable element in online learning, and must be capable of applying new strategies to enhance engagement in the classroom.

1.3 Student Motivation

We analyze several aspects that make students feel uncomfortable during class and different actions that have been applied and investigated to benefit learners.

1.3.1 Factors That Keep Students from Being Motivated

Reasons that limit students from feeling motivated are varied, so it is useful to focus on the barriers o¡found in this setting to understand this issue.

Simonson et al. (2009) show that students do not feel motivated when faced with unfamiliar tasks, if instructors do not provide timely feedback, and when there is low student performance. Muilenburg and Berge (2005) mentioned other factors that cause students not to feel engaged such as administrative issues, the lack of social interaction, limited access to resources, technical difficulties, and academic and technical skills. Similarly, Arbaugh and Rau (2007) found that the more discussions students had to pay attention to, the less satisfied they were with the learning environment.

In a study conducted in an EFL classroom at an Anatolian high school in Adana, Turkey, Dişlen (2013) claims that students' level of motivation is spoiled when they have low self-confidence and self-esteem, high anxiety and inhibition as well as teachers' negative attitudes toward students and non-supportive classroom environments. She applied an interview with a teacher pro-

viding other reasons for lack of motivation in students such age (being an adolescent is a factor for less interest), difficulty in concentration, habits of solving multiple-choice questions (instead of challenging questions), overloading of content and exercises, class time (not the number of classes but receiving English during the last hour), syllabus density, and a scarcity of material. Dişlen found, from a student's perspective of motivation, how their interest is lowered when the teacher transmits information to students in a monotonous way. The classmates talk a lot and distract others from paying attention, and the teacher constantly repeats the same subject and assigns many similar exercises.

According to Legault et al. (2006), motivation has been linked to boredom, poor psychosocial adjustment to the educational center, and higher stress at school and while studying. They describe some generators of academic amotivation; for instance, when there is a questionable self-efficacy, failure is expected to occur. They also propose reasons why students lack motivation, such as the case of students who are most detached from school; they lack confidence in their academic ability. They also mentioned that motivation may be affected when a particular task is not significant to the learner; in other words, uninteresting school tasks may lead to a serious lack of motivation. Furthermore, their research reveals that to increase positive behavior through engagement, which will lead to motivation, people must develop some degree of interest. Concerning the nature of the activities themselves—the authors explain—when a task is not compelling due to being uninteresting, boring, and monotonous, that leads to amotivation.

Other factors may contribute to decreased motivation. Yadav and BaniAta (2012) list some of them, such as the teacher's relationship with learners, attitudes toward the subject, and the type of activities; besides, if the instructors do not show that they are caring, committed, and manage the course adequately, the probabilities of generating demotivation in students are high. Other demotivators cited by Yadav and BaniAta are how irrelevant and repetitive the teaching process can be, unsuitable school facilities, low self-confidence in students due to bad experiences, course books used in class, school environment, uncommunicative techniques, and the teacher's nervousness. They explain some data retrieved from a questionnaire applied to 100 students, where it is determined that the demotivating elements can be classified into two groups: the instructor's style of teaching and the students' personality traits.

1.3.2 Methods That Have Been Applied as Tools to Increase Motivation

That students are willing and inspired to learn may be relevant since the results of the learning process can be more beneficial for them and for the instructor when teaching a class. Different experts have inquired in this field to understand how learners can become more motivated; this information can be considered when analyzing the similarities among suggestions and strategies

applied, and later, related to the Costa Rican context to observe which may be useful for the public educational system.

It is important to identify some of the elements that produce students' satisfaction. Liaw (2008) associates this feeling with the way a class is managed; for instance, whether communication during class is possible, or how the teacher deals with course management issues. He also highlights that the way students perceive themselves, in terms of their social ability and efficacy, can influence them to feel more satisfied as well. Bolliger and Martindale (2004), similarly, consider the instructor, technology, and interactivity essential aspects that deal with how students feel during a class. Enhancing students' perceptions of meaningfulness and task value is another aspect mentioned by Harackiewicz et al. (2008).

Another element to identify is boredom, which could make students feel demotivated. Rosegard and Wilson (2013) propose using an external stimulus to capture students' attention by touting the ability to increase interest (i.e., decrease boredom), to focus attention, and to enhance learning and memory. Such external stimuli, they suggest, may include a hook, trigger, attention getter, or anticipatory set. The authors point out that concentration favors the cognitive processing of the stimulus, which then ends up in forming and storing a memory. They add the essential role of curiosity in learning, and recommend "beginning a class with a novel or unexpected question, puzzle, or poem" (p. 3, 2013). This arouses interest followed by curiosity, and this will motivate them to seek information needed to complete the task. Curiosity leads to increased learning and memory by solving the issue. Situational interest—rather than individual interest—is centered on the features of a certain activity, and it is crucial in capturing students' attention.

One tool used to increase motivation is a video. Bravo et al. (p. 4, 2011) analyze this by asking students about "low-cost educational videos," with a specific goal, which can be used alongside other resources. This research discovered that instructors found that students had fewer questions when explanations were given via video or used as examples of how exercises must be solved. Students also reported that being able to see the videos at their own pace helped them understand better and have clearer results. Simo et al. (2010) also researched this topic, and their findings conclude that "the sharing of educational videos and text resources … has been of high value and interest [and that] one of the main effects was improvement detected in student motivation and, consequently, improvement in the teaching-learning process" (p. 2940).

Another tool to achieve motivation is gamification. Merriam-Webster (2020) defines *gamification* as "the process of adding games or game-like elements to something (such as a task) to encourage participation." Alsawaier (2018) states that "fun is one of the elements that attract video game players to engage in playing activities and keep coming back for more. Gamification

borrows from video games the element of fun not only to gain the learners' engagement but also to positively increase their motivation" (p. 19). Alsawaier explains that this gamified environment allows students to enjoy themselves while doing classwork and permits them to not be afraid of failure, as they can try for success many times, and mistakes no longer seen as set backs but opportunities to try again and learn from mistakes. Buckley and Doyle (2016) also support this idea, by examining the performance of several students in tests after being subjected to a gamified data collection system in which they used the knowledge acquired from class. Students that had used this gamified system showed a greater engagement and a better performance on the tests.

Humor can be another way to stimulate students while learning. Rosegard and Wilson (2013) propose that the instructor's use of humor in the classroom enhances motivation and to a certain extent has a positive effect on learning. They believe a humorous message can capture students' attention making it relevant and suitable for learners. Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, and Abdullah (2011) also researched this topic by asking students about their thoughts on the benefits of using humor in ESL classes. The students reported benefits such as a strengthening interest, lack of boredom, an improvement of interpersonal relationships between them and their professors, lack of fear or intimidation by the professor, ease of understanding, and the ability to remember key information via the humorous language used.

Based on the findings of previous studies, we note that different factors can demotivate students in class. Therefore, we set out to answer the following questions in our investigation:

> What factors do students report as hindering in the remote learning environment compared to the old modality? and
>
> How can a teacher engage students in language acquisition in a remote learning environment in Costa Rican high schools?

2. Method

Since there are distinctive aspects of motivation that can be considered regarding student engagement, we set out to investigate Costa Rican public education in a remote learning environment considering different characteristics to contextualize this concept. The main aspects are the following: 1. interaction with the teacher and classmates; 2. levels of satisfaction with the knowledge learned in remote learning; and 3. attitudes toward activities presented in remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous).

2.1 Participants

The participants in the study were 34 students from the two groups in their last year in a technical high school, and one English teacher. According to the MEP

(Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2016), Costa Rican technical high schools offer two English class modalities: *Academic English* and *English for Communication*, popularly known as *Technical English.* Both students and teacher were asked questions and interviewed (respectively) based on the *English for Communication* classes.

These two groups are divided according to their specialties. The first one is called *Informática y Soporte* (Informatics), and 18 of 34 students were from this class. The second one is *Banca y Finanzas* (Banking and Finance) composed of 16 of 34 students. As stated by the MEP (2016), technical high school groups follow different structures to define the number of hours that students receive of English annually as of tenth grade; therefore, the structures that these specialties follow are 2.2.2 and 4.4.4 respectively. In general, 16 were female and 12 were male, and their ages were between 17 and 20. Their English proficiency level, according to the English teacher, was 4 out of 5, with 0 meaning very low and 5 meaning excellent. Thirty of the 34 learners joined the synchronous classes through Teams once every two weeks, the other 4 have not been able to connect to the synchronous classes because of Internet problems, and 2 of the 34 participants had trouble due to the lack of devices (computer, tablet or cellphone).

The second participant was an English teacher at the same high school. She was in charge of teaching the *English for Communication* course for these groups. She has taught for 13 years in Costa Rica, and 8 of those 13 are in the same technical high school where she is currently working. This instructor had worked with seniors before, but she had not had the experience of teaching in a remote learning environment before the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 Instruments

To gather data, two instruments were created and applied to the participants and the teacher. The students' instrument was a questionnaire administered via Google Form platform. It aimed to gather information regarding learners' engagement, motivation, perception of the class interaction, opinion about the class methodology and recommendations. We used colloquial Spanish and simple language to facilitate the participants' understanding, and it is specified that answers are private and anonymous for them to answer more confidently. The questionnaire contained four parts. The first two sections presented two scales: one to rate opinions based on aspects that are compared between the old and current (remote learning) modalities, and the other one for participants to rate their feelings regarding different points on the current modality. Each part had the ranking scales illustrated to make them more appealing and easier for the participants to understand. The third section asked for short answers. The students answered questions about their experience with remote learning, class activities, and the teacher's performance. The fourth and last subarea of the questionnaire was composed of open questions. Participants could express

their thoughts about their perspective on their engagement in a remote learning environment compared to the old modality, shared the synchronous and asynchronous activities that they like and dislike the most, and mentioned how they could feel more engaged under this current system.

The instructor's instrument was an in-depth interview used to collect data regarding the remote learning modality. The aspects investigated were the teacher's perception of students' engagement, the strategies applied to keep learners interested, the methodology used, adaptations and changes made by the instructor/educational center in the curriculum, their instruction in the use of TICs and virtual tools, and challenges affecting the performance as a teacher. The interview was conducted via Zoom to make it possible to record the session and have a face-to-face conversation with the teacher. It was conducted in Spanish to provide a more comfortable and enjoyable environment to talk.

2.3 Procedures

The interview was conducted with an English teacher from a technical high school. We made an appointment with the teacher to set up the interview on the Zoom platform, and it was carried out in Spanish. We started by asking about her experience, and then the interview became more like a conversation from which the information required was obtained. After that, we explained our goal with our next instrument (the questionnaire), so that the teacher could tell the students why we required this information. The teacher sent the questionnaire to her WhatsApp English class group with a message we had written to inform the students about the purpose of this part of the investigation. To be sure that the .participants understood all the questions properly, the questionnaire was written in Spanish, and it contained a short explanation of its purpose in this investigation. They had two weeks to answer, and responses were done individually. The following section corresponds to the analysis of the teacher's responses during the interview and the students' responses to the questionnaire.

2.4 Analysis of the Data

The data were examined to understand the obstacles students face when engaging in remote learning compared with the old modality, to propose a set of good practices that could help the teacher and the classroom to have an optimal academic performance in this current modality. The first instrument that we analyzed was the interview with the English teacher. Then, we analyzed the questionnaire. To examine the students' responses, we considered each participant's gender and specialty. Some data were gathered and analyzed in terms of the in-class learning and remote learning, considering participants' gender and specialty as variables to establish a comparison.

The first data of the questionnaire were grouped into two sections: Group 1: Old Modality (In-class Learning); and Group 2: New Modality (Remote Learning). The dependent variable was composed of the answers to the

questionnaire. The second part of the data of the questionnaire was grouped into two sections: Group 1: Banking and Finance; and Group 2: Informatics. The dependent variable was composed of the answers to the questionnaire.

After the analysis of the interview and questionnaire, we carried out a comparative study. This enabled us to have a broader panorama since the teacher's and the students' experience was combined to see whether their perspectives on the English class under this remote learning environment matched, and if not, in which points they disagree. Subject 1 was the English teacher, and Subject 2 was composed of seniors at a technical high school.

3. Results

3.1 Interview

The information compiled helped us understand the situation that the two groups of twelfth-grade students faced under this remote learning modality, as well as the teacher's point of view and experience during this time.

The teacher commented on the importance of creativity and improvisation during remote classes. She mentioned them due to her lack of experience with situations like the emergency caused by COVID-19; she even indicated the uncertainty teachers felt about returning to high school. She addressed the need for organization that not only teachers, but the institution itself must have. She added her perception of the independent study guides (*Guías de Trabajo Autónomo*, GTA), emphasizing that this method is not at all the same as regular classes.

For her it is crucial to attend different students' needs. She must to approach the students whenever necessary, especially during remote learning. For example, the teacher may spend more time with one student after class to answer questions or help with a particular issue. Similarly, providing students with information about any given situation—COVID-19, for example—helps students too. Another positive point is the modality itself; being at home, according to the instructor, helps students feel relaxed.

Concerning their habits while working during synchronous and asynchronous activities, students engaged with the four language skills, the teacher said. According to what she told us, there is collective participation, production, and interaction among students; actually, the integration entails every student. Specifically, one student with Curricular Adaptation wants to socialize with classmates, and does so, although the curriculum is different for that learner. Therefore, a sense of belonging is vital in the learning process, feeling engaged is 100% important, as the teacher described it. For synchronous lessons, there is an instrument named *Self-Study Guide*, which consists of writing the expected learning that the teacher will measure. In addition, some students do not have access to certain resources, so they work asynchronously. We must be flexible to include them in the learning process.

Continuing with the motivation generators, the instructor expressed that one is timely feedback, which led to good results. Positive feedback and correction, as well as collaborative techniques among students are ways the teacher encourages them to learn; in particular, she indicated that she uses motivational stickers with her students. Moreover, there was a question about whether she was trained to use any platform regarding this remote modality. She had received training to use Microsoft Teams, facilitated by *Instituto de Desarrollo Profesional.* Moreover, the teacher was chosen for training called "Project-Based Learning," which consisted of teaching through projects and tasks.

The interviewee also responded to the question about any instrument she would like to apply, and that would be a quiz, for example, so she can measure whether learning was meaningful. Similarly, participation in Teams has no representation in the final scores, so students sometimes do not feel forced to participate. She concluded with the lack of family support as a demotivator for students, and the need for formative assessment. Since the students are accustomed to summative evaluations, there is no way of informing students that they have reached an intermediate performance or has achieved learning.

3.2 Questionnaire

The total number of participants who received the questionnaire were 34 students from which we received 19 responses. We grouped the responses based on two variables, their specialty and their sex. We obtained 13 male participants and 6 female participants, whereas 10 participants were from Informatics (9 males and 1 female) and 9 participants were from Banking and Finance (4 males and 5 females). The following data were grouped based on each specialty and sex.

The first part of the questionnaire contains questions that help us compare the old modality with new modality. We presented a 5-point scale, in which 1 represents *Unsatisfactory/very bad*, 2 *Little Satisfactory/bad*, 3 *Regular/neutral*, 4 *Satisfactory/good*, and 5 *Very Satisfactory/Excellen*t. These categories were sometimes added and/or narrowed to present the data more clearly way depending on the results obtained; therefore, some tables and graphics will only show two or three of these categories according to their responses.

Regarding the students' perception of the change from old modality to new modality, Table 1 and Figure 1 show that males' and females' satisfaction was not very high: 23% for males, and 16% for females in comparison to the old modality. A significant number of students claimed to feel regular or neutral with the change from old to new modality: 50% for females, and 54% for male participants. The percentage of students who claimed to feel little satisfaction was considerable: females, 34% and males, 23%. The same behavior occurred when comparing the change from the old modality to new modality by specialty. The students were clearly neutral with the change: 50%

in Informatics, and 56% in Banking and Finances. In addition, the rest of the students from Informatics felt more unsatisfied. On the other hand, the rest of the students from Banking and Finances were equally divided into Satisfied and Little Satisfied, with 22% each.

Table 1. Students' Perception of the Change from the Old to the New Modality by Sex and Specialty

	Little Satisfactory	Neutral	Satisfactory	Total
Male	23%	54%	23%	100%
Female	34%	50%	16%	100%
Informatics	30%	50%	20%	100%
Banking and Finance	22%	56%	22%	100%

When analyzing the students' perception of the old and new modality according to gender, we observe that most students felt content with the old modality. As Table 2 and its corresponding Figure 2 show, 83% of females and 77% of males preferred it, whereas only 17% of females and 23% of females were neutral. However, when observing the results of the new modality, the percentage of satisfaction decreased to 34% of females and 69% of males. Clearly, for students, and especially for females, the new modality was not positive, as reflected in their rate of neutrality, which was 66% for females and 31% for males.

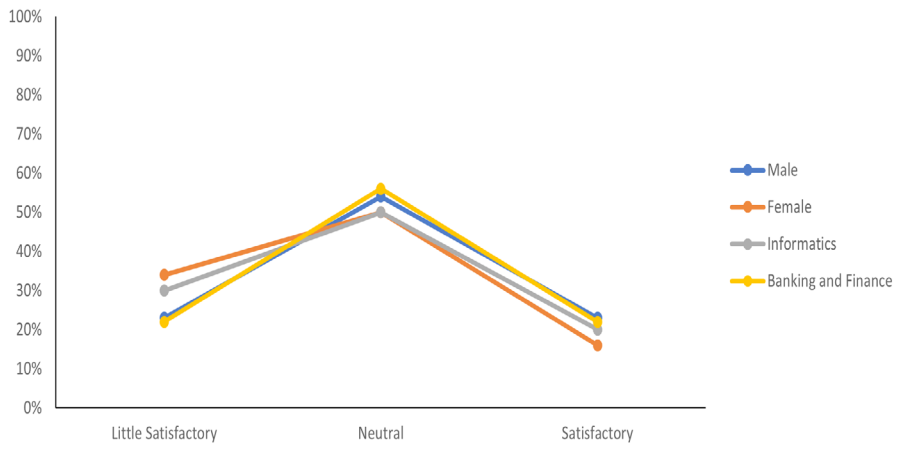

Figure 1. Students' Perception of the Change from the Old to the New Modality by Sex and Specialty

Table 2. Students' Perception of Assessment in the Old and New Modality by Sex

	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Female	17%	83%	100%
OldM-Male	23%	77%	100%
NewM-Female	66%	34%	100%
NewM-Male	31%	69%	100%

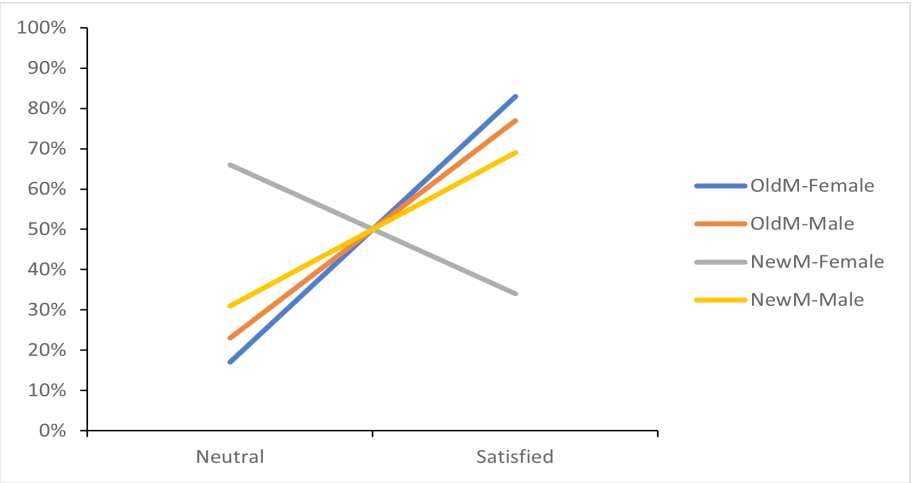

Figure 2. Students' Perception of Assessment in the Old and New Modality by Sex

By specialty, it is easily observed in Table 3 and the corresponding Figure 3 that most of the students felt satisfied with the old modality (70% of Informatics students and 89% in Banking and Finances), and only 11% of Banking and Finances and 30% of Informatics claimed to be neutral about the old modality. However, when observing the results of the new methodology, the percentage of satisfaction decreased to only 50% of Informatics students and 67% in Banking and Finances. Clearly, for students, especially in Informatics, the new modality is not too positive, as seen in their percentage in the neutral category with 50% in Informatics and 33% in Banking and Finances.

Table 3. Students' Perception of Assessment in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Informatics	30%	70%	100%
NewM-Informatics	50%	50%	100%
OldM-B&F	11%	89%	100%
NewM-B&F	33%	67%	100%

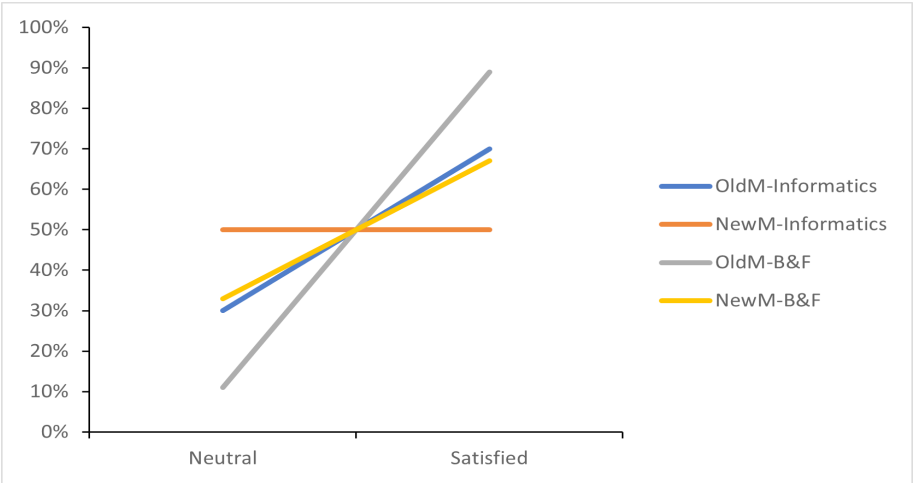

Figure 3. Students' Perception of Assessment in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

When studying the responses students had regarding the interaction with the teacher by sex in Table 4 and the corresponding Figure 4, it could be seen that in the old modality the students were very satisfied: 83% of the females, and 100% of the males, and only 17% of the females stated to be neutral with the teacher interactivity. However, In the new modality, the results were the opposite with the females as the ones who are 100% content with the interaction with the instructor and the males were 77% satisfied; and only 23% were neutral.

Table 4. Students' Perception of Teacher Interactivity in the Old and New Modality by Sex

	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Female	17%	83%	100%
OldM-Male	0%	100%	100%
NewM-Female	0%	100%	100%
NewM-Male	23%	77%	100%

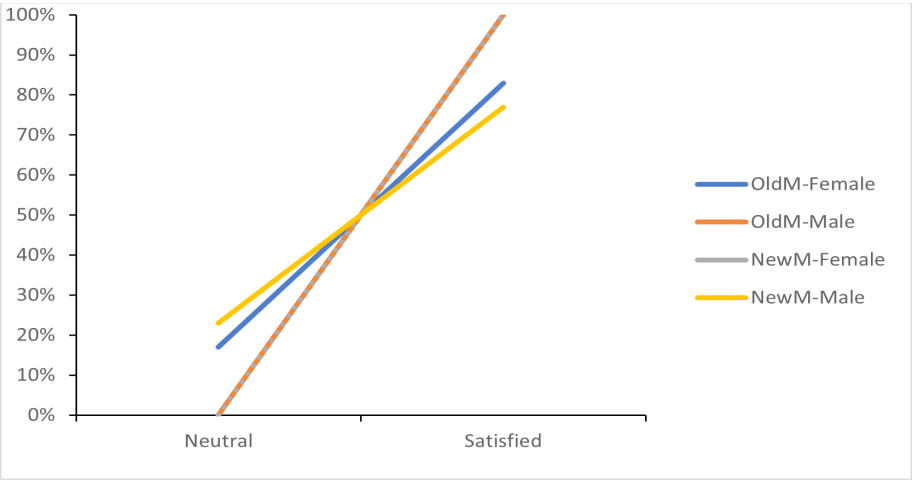

Figure 4. Students' Perception of Teacher Interactivity in the Old and New Modality by Sex

According to the students' answers by specialty in Table 5 and the corresponding Figure 5, it can be seen that in Banking and Finances the students are more satisfied than in Informatics because they had 100% satisfaction in both modalities. However, Informatics' students claimed to be just 90% satisfied and 10% neutral with the old modality, and 70% satisfied and 30% neutral with the teacher interactivity.

Table 5. Students' Perception of Teacher Interactivity in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Informatics	10%	90%	100%
NewM-Informatics	30%	70%	100%
OldM-B&F	0%	100%	100%
NewM-B&F	0%	100%	100%

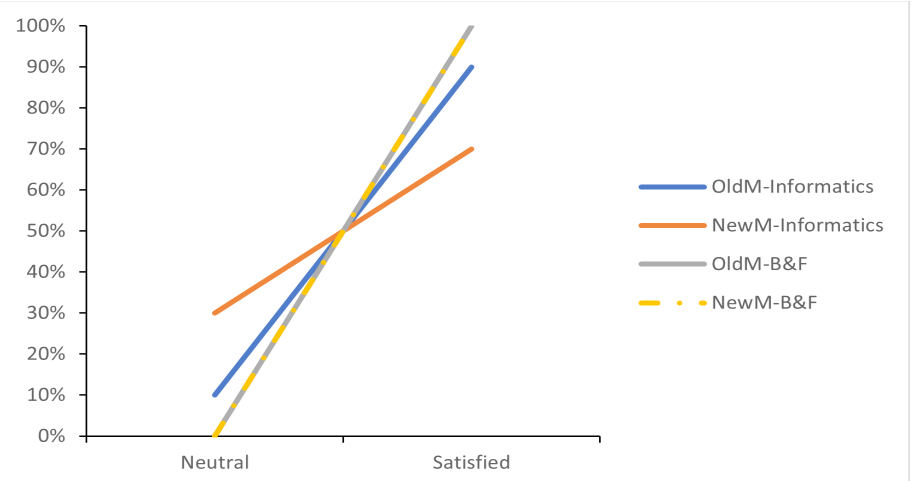

Figure 5. Students' Perception of Teacher Interactivity in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

Regarding the perception of interaction among classmates by gender in Table 6 and the corresponding Figure 6 in the old modality students indicated that 100% of the females and 92% of the males were satisfied and only 8% of the males unsatisfied with interaction in the old modality. On the other hand, with the new modality, the numbers of satisfaction decreased to 83% of the females and 61% of the males, and the number of students feeling neutral was 17% of the females and 23% of the males, and only 16% of the males feel little satisfaction with the interaction.

Table 6. Students' Perception of Classmates Interactivity in Old and New Modality by Sex

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Female	0%	0%	100%	100%
OldM-Male	8%	0%	92%	100%
NewM-Female	0%	17%	83%	100%
NewM-Male	16%	23%	61%	100%

Regarding the students' perception by specialty in Table 7 and the corresponding Figure 7, 90% of the students from Informatics and 89% of the students from Banking and Finances felt satisfied, and only 10% in Informatics and 11% in Banking and Finances are little satisfied with the old modality. In the new modality, satisfaction decreased for Informatics by 50% but stayed the same for Banking and Finances with 89%. In addition, 11% of Banking and Finances and 30% of Informatics are neutral regarding interaction among classmates and 20% of Informatics are little satisfied.

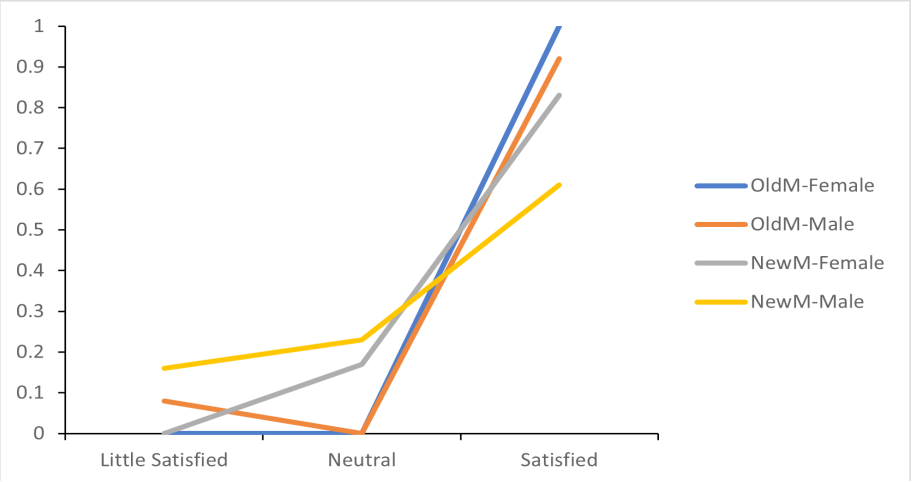

Figure 6. Students' Perception of Classmates Interactivity in Old and New Modality by Sex

Table 7. Students' Perception of Classmates Interactivity in Old and New Modality by Specialty

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Informatics	10%	0%	90%	100%
NewM-Informatics	20%	30%	50%	100%
OldM-B&F	11%	0%	89%	100%
NewM-B&F	0%	11%	89%	100%

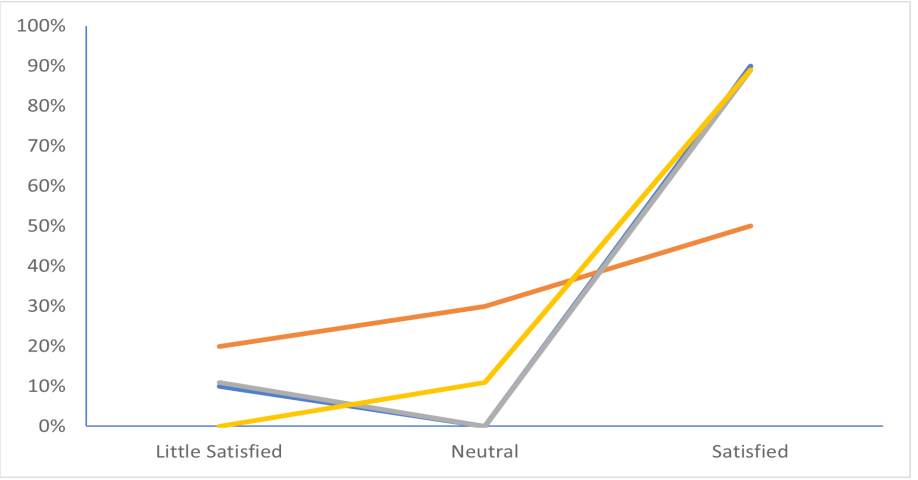

Figure 7. Students' Perception of Classmates Interactivity in Old and New Modality by Specialty

Regarding the students' perception of their participation in the old modality and new modality, Table 8 and the corresponding Figure 8 showed that males' and females' participation increased in the new modality by 24% for males and 33% for females in comparison to the old modality. Additionally, there was a significant change between the old and new modality for female and male participants which was a decrease in the neutrality of 16% and 31% respectively. For little satisfactory, females decreased their percentage from 17% to 0%, and males increased to 7%. The same occurred when comparing participation in the old modality with the new modality by specialty.

Table 8. Students' Perception of Their Participation in the Old and New Modality by Sex

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Female	17%	50%	33%	100%
OldM-Male	0%	31%	69%	100%
NewM-Female	0%	34%	66%	100%
NewM-Male	7%	0%	93%	100%

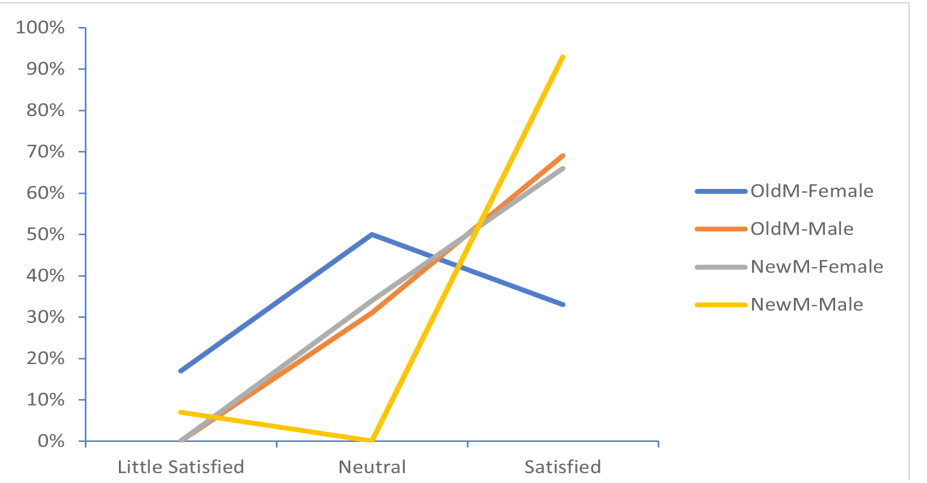

Figure 8. Students' Perception of Their Participation in the Old and New Modality by Sex

By specialty, we can observe in Table 9 and the corresponding Figure 9 that both in Informatics and in Banking and Finances' participation increased in the new modality. For Informatics, there was an increase of 20% while for Banking & Finances it was 33% in satisfaction. Moreover, the percentages of neutrality decreased in the new modality. For Informatics, there was a 30% decrease, whereas it was 22% for Banking and Finances. For little satisfactory, Informatics increased to 10% while Banking and Finances decreased from 10% to 0%.

Table 9. Students' Perception of their Participation in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
OldM-Informatics	0%	40%	60%	100%
NewM-Informatics	10%	10%	80%	100%
OldM-B&F	11%	33%	56%	100%
NewM-B&F	0%	11%	89%	100%

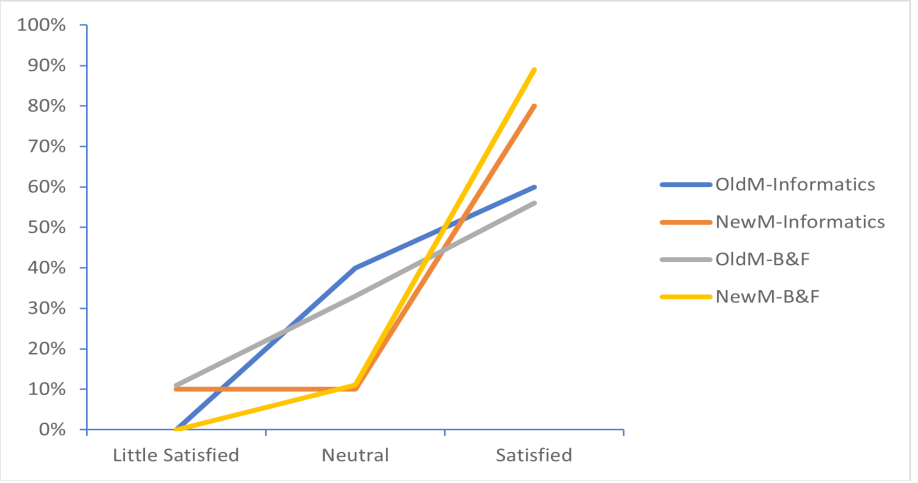

Figure 9. Students' Perception of their Participation in the Old and New Modality by Specialty

In Table 10 and the corresponding Figure 10 we can observe how students felt about the use of Microsoft Teams for class activities. Data showed that females were more satisfied than males with the use of Teams for class activities by 13%. By specialty, on the other hand, students in Informatics were more satisfied than those in Banking and Finances by 26%. Focusing on the other two columns of the table, the percentages of neutrality and little satisfactory were considerably high. This was more evident for Banking and Finances which was 44% for neutrality and 20% little satisfactory for Informatics.

Table 10. Students' Perception of the Teams Activities in Remote Learning by Sex and Specialty

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Male	15%	32%	53%	100%
Female	17%	17%	66%	100%
Informatics	20%	10%	70%	100%
Banking and Finance	12%	44%	44%	100%

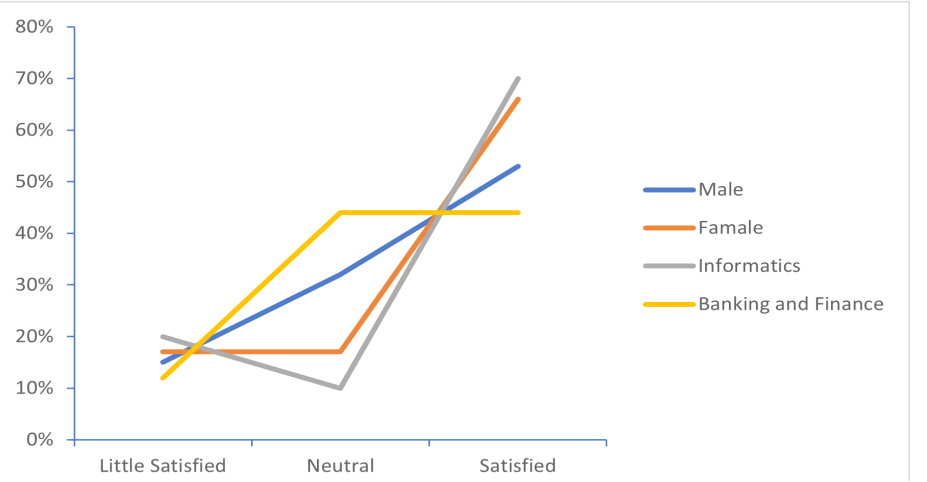

Figure 10. Students' Perception of Teams Activities in Remote Learning by Sex and Specialty

Regarding students' feelings, while doing asynchronous work in remote learning, we could see in Table 11 and the corresponding Figure 11 that by gender, 85% of males felt motivated whereas 66% of females did, with a difference of 19%. For the other percentages, there was a 2% difference in the regularly motivated between them, and only 17% of females reported feeling little motivated. By specialty, there was also a difference of 19% between Informatics and Banking and Finances where the latter scored 89%. Only 30% of Informatics students felt regularly motivated and 11% of Banking and Finances felt little motivated.

Table 11. Students' Feelings on Asynchronous Works by Sex and Specialty

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Male	0%	15%	85%	100%
Female	17%	17%	66%	100%
Informatics	0%	30%	70%	100%
Banking and Finance	11%	0%	89%	100%

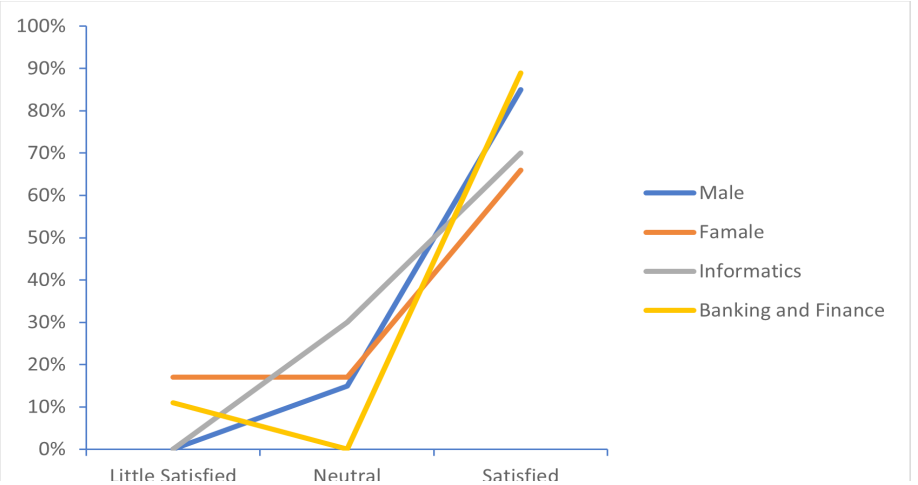

Figure 11. Students' Feelings while Doing Asynchronous Works by Sex and Specialty

In Table 12 and the corresponding Figure 12, we can see the results of students' perception of the knowledge acquired in remote learning with Microsoft Teams. There is a difference of 17% in motivation between males and females where the males' percentage is the highest. For regularly motivated, females report 25% more than males and only 8% of males feel little motivated. By specialty, on the other hand, the difference between Informatics and Banking and Finances is 19% in motivated, in which the latter reports 89% motivated. For regular, Informatics reported the highest percentage, which was 20% in comparison to 11% of Banking and Finances, and only 10% of informatics felt a little motivated.

Table 12. Students' Perception of the Knowledge Acquired in Remote Learning by Sex and Specialty

	Little Satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Total
Male	8%	8%	84%	100%
Female	0%	33%	67%	100%
Informatics	10%	20%	70%	100%
Banking and Finance	0%	11%	89%	100%

Regarding the last section of the questionnaire (open answer), the responses were gathered to observe the outcomes. We used the total number of participants, 19, to show the reasons for the participants when answering a question.

One inquiry was about students' perception of their level of engagement, so they were asked whether consider themselves to be more responsible in the previous modality or under remote learning; 5 participants reported to

be more responsible in class, 1 to have the same level of responsibility, 11 to be more responsible in remote learning, and 2 were not included since they did not answer the question.

We wanted to know whether students felt motivated in this remote learning style, and if not, how they could feel more interested. We were expecting to receive the second responses only if students did not feel satisfied; however, we obtained answers from motivated students as well. Thus, the results are based on these two groups. Of 19 participants, 13 said they felt motivated, 3 did not, and 3 answers were ambiguous. The recommendations provided by the motivated students are interacting in class, interacting with the teacher, paying more attention, and including new activities. Students who do not feel motivated stated that classes could improve if teachers provided more supporting material and if the current material were more appealing, if there were more dynamic activities, and if students participated more and became more engaged in activities other reading the self-study guide in teams. Six participants omitted this question, and 6 did not refer to it.

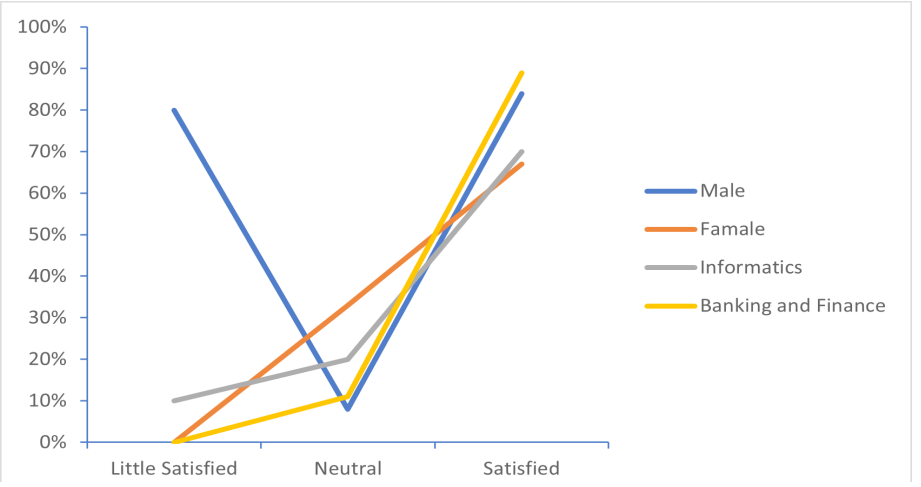

Figure 12. Students' Perception of the Knowledge Acquired in Remote Learning by Sex and Specialty

Participants were asked to list the activities from Teams that caught more their attention. Four participants responded that they liked the speaking activities (presentations or speaking with the teacher), 1 liked to be tested through games after a topic, and 2 participants mentioned that no activity caught their attention. Twelve participants did not answer the question since these responses had information from other subjects such as Mathematics and Spanish, and others stated that there were no activities, or few were included.

Students also listed the Teams' activities that caught their attention less. One participant mentioned giving oral presentations because it was hard-

er to express ideas using this platform. Two participants reported reading activities since they are long, and 1 wrote watching videos, due to the fact that with a poor Internet connection they cannot always be enjoyed. Eight gave none and 7 answers did not refer to the question.

In the asynchronous work, participants were asked to mention the most captivating activities for them. One student said that tasks in which little research was required; the participant referred to it as "investigation," since knowledge is acquired by students and multiple-choice questions as well since these activities are relaxing and students learn. Another referred to production since topics could be developed with enthusiasm and short answers as well because it was a way to review. Two students also listed short answer items, and one of them said that the reason to choose those is because knowledge can be tested. One mentioned grammar activities, 1 matching task, and 1 speaking. Another participant mentioned three that are speaking (because audios were sent through WhatsApp and she received feedback), listening (since their English teacher made them, and the participant understood), and reading. Eight answers were not related to the question, and 2 participants wrote none.

The less captivating activities for students in the self-study English guides were also requested. One participant mentioned reading long texts and answering too many reading comprehension questions. Two said watching videos, since some are too long and require too much time. One mentioned writing due to the number of questions that have to be answered, 1 referred to the production tasks since that participant found it hard to explain a specific topic, and another one said all the activities were less captivating. Eight answers did not correspond to the question, and 5 participants specified none.

3.3 Results on Students' Responses and the Teacher Interview

Based on the information compiled via the interview with the teacher and the survey for the students we can contrast their responses to determine whether both are experiencing the change of modality the same way. This information will also help us see whether the teacher has an accurate understanding of how her students feel. We were able to find corresponding information about three specific topics within the survey and the interview.

3.3.1 Learning Experience

Table 1 and the corresponding Figure 1 showed students having a mostly neutral and slightly more unsatisfactory perception of the change to the new modality. Table 2 and the corresponding Figure 2 showed most of the students are not as happy with the new modality as they were with the old one as their percentage satisfaction shows a clear decrease both for males and females. This dissatisfaction is also seen in students of both specialties, as they all showed a decrease in their satisfaction, especially the Informatics students as they have a lower percentage of satisfaction in the new modality.

This information matched the instructor's statement that although this new modality is handled with creativity and enthusiasm most if not all teachers were never prepared for this, so no one has a clear idea of what has to be done. She basically dislikes the MEP's self-study guides (*Guías de Trabajo Autónomo*), as do the students as well.

3.3.2 Teacher Interaction

Table 4 and the corresponding Figure 4 showed that most students were very contemptuous with their interaction with the teacher in the old modality, with only some females stating to be neutral on the subject, but this was flipped with the new modality as now some males are the ones stating to be neutral with it. There is also a slight majority of the Banking and Finances students that seem to be fully satisfied with the new modality, as seen in Table 5 and the corresponding Figure 5.

Table 6 and the corresponding Figure 6 showed how the students seem to be less satisfied with classmate interaction in the new modality. Whereas there is a significant decrease in satisfaction with both males and females, it is much more pronounced for the male students. Table 6 and the corresponding Figure 6 showed that Informatics students are far less satisfied with the new modality than those of Banking and Finances who seem to be slightly more satisfied with the new modality, going from 11% little satisfied to 11% neutral.

This trend of mostly satisfaction with some neutrality seems not to coincide completely what the instructor states, but it is better than what she expected. Her point of view is that of having a hard time with interactions with students, as most of them have a hard time with video conferences, either being embarrassed about showing their rooms or constantly interrupted by their parents.

3.3.3 Remote Learning Activities

Table 10 and the corresponding Figure 10 showed students' feelings about the use of Microsoft Teams during class. Female and Informatics students were slightly more satisfied but neither sex nor specialty variables reveal students' sense of happiness with remote distance learning activities. Table 11 and the corresponding Figure 11 showed the student' opinions on asynchronous work. Most students do appear to be motivated, with a slight majority for the male and Banking and Finances students. Table 12 and the corresponding Figure 12 showed most students motivated by their knowledge acquired in remote learning with, again a slight majority of it coming from the male and Banking and Finances students.

This, once again, seems to show a more positive reality than that suspected by the instructor. Her fears of lack of family support and lack of drive due to the participation in Teams not being mandatory do not coincide with the data coming from the students.

4. Discussion

Based on the results presented above, we analyze each instrument and compare students' responses to the questionnaire and the interview with the teacher.

4.1 Interview Analysis

Educators should be creative in their profession, but this new experience has made them adapt their style and become even more creative. That is why the teacher mentions the importance of creativity and improvisation, for it is something new for instructors. She also refers to the organization that both the instructors and the institution must have, because, as mentioned above, people were not ready for something like this; even the self-study guides (GTAs) are not the same as what teachers are used to, she said. As a result, we find some discomfort in this matter, so not only she but also many other instructors have struggled with that format.

The teacher highlights how vital approaching students is to attend their needs, since students may not understand just would occur in face-to-face lessons. Indeed, based on the survey, students prefer face-to-face lessons rather than virtual, but this will be analyzed later. Socializing with one another helps students develop skills in the target language, and therefore, the interviewee referred to socializing as an excellent tool.

It should be emphasized that the teacher was working the four skills with her students, and this is harder in this new modality. This is where creativity and improvisation arise; instead of complaining about the situation, or not making additional effort since this is something no one was ready for, the instructor had to think of other ways to work, so the learners could practice the four skills.

This interview shows how crucial motivation is for the teacher. She knows students must feel motivated in learning, so they can feel positive about this process, and one of the generators for motivation, according to the teacher, is providing feedback. She knows that if students receive feedback, they will feel engaged. Finally, when she mentioned that she would like to apply an instrument—like a quiz—to measure whether learning is meaningful for students, she expressed concern, because she is also aware that it is not only about getting good grades and learning mechanically. The teacher recognized that formative evaluation is necessary in this process and she stated how to evaluate students correctly.

4.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire

Analyzing the information from Table 1 and the corresponding Figure 1 we can argue that students were not happy with the change from the old modality to new one. There are no significant changes between sex and specialty. Since the change had to be made because of COVID-19, we can say that they are not very satisfied, but they are neutral because they know it is optional.

In terms of the students' perception of the old and new modality in

Table 2 and the corresponding Figures 2 and 3, we can see a very different perspective of the students in each category. We note the difference regarding males and females being more satisfied in the old modality, but when the change to new modality came, males are by far more satisfied than women. We could say that women prefer the old modality and males the new one. By specialty, the students of Banking and Finances are more content in both modalities. They appear more willing to learn and they have a better attitude toward the subject.

From the data gathered in Tables 4 and 5 and the corresponding Figure 4 and 5, we can say that by sex females are happier than males with the interaction with the instructor in the new modality, and males are happier with interaction in the old modality whereas women are not that satisfied in that situation. However, the numbers are still high so we can conclude that in general terms students are mostly content or satisfied with the Interaction with the teacher in both old and new modalities. By specialty using Table 5 and the corresponding Figure 5, it can be seen that the students of Banking and Finances are completely happy with the interaction they have with the professor, and again in Informatics they are not as satisfied. We can infer that the instructor has good relations with both groups, but the interactions flow more with the students of Banking and Finances.

Regarding the information gathered from Tables 6 and 7 and the corresponding Figures 6 and 7, we can state that females are more satisfied than males and the social interaction with classmates in both modalities satisfied their social necessities. Males are less satisfied than females; they require more social interaction than females. In the new modality, males are less satisfied since the social interaction decreases from the old modality. In terms of specialty, Banking and Finances students are equally happy with the interaction in both old and new modality, but Informatics students' decreased in the new modality. Their need for social interaction is greater and because of that they are not too satisfied with the new modality.

As seen in the results of the tables and figures 8 and 9, there are no differences between sex and specialty regarding the increasing percentage in the students' perception of their participation in the old modality and the new modality. As a result, we can associate this positive change with the strategies that the teacher applies in class; for instance, the use of personalized and positive feedback increased student participation in the new modality.

From the data in Table 10 and the corresponding Figure 10 we can conclude that in most cases, half of the groups analyzed are satisfied with the use of Microsoft Teams for class activities. The other half is neutral or little satisfied. This data tells us that participants do not consider this platform as convenient or student friendly, but their participation is not affected by using Microsoft Teams because the teacher implements other means of communication such as WhatsApp and other tools such as her own YouTube Videos.

Regarding data from Table 11 and the corresponding Figure 11, the percentages of students' feelings while doing asynchronous work in remote learning are high in motivation by sex and specialty. This reflects the importance of motivation outside of the virtual environment. As a strategy used by the teacher, creating a significant and meaningful connection with students to engage them in and outside class makes students feel motivated. For instance, the teacher uses instant messaging platforms to help students doing their tasks and answer their questions any time. Moreover, as mentioned by Martin and Bolliger (2018), learner-to-instructor engagement is promoted by quick and effective communication among students and educators in remote learning. This demonstrates the benefits of closeness and the effectiveness of good communication among participants and the teacher.

From Table 12 and the corresponding Figure 12, we observe the results of students' perception of the knowledge acquired in remote learning using Microsoft Teams. Data show that students mostly feel motivated regarding the knowledge acquired. According to the teacher, different activities applied in class, such as asking students for short recording audios and videos of presentations, engage students in the class. The teacher also creates her own videos to teach students. This can be related to what Bravo et al. (2011) mentioned about the use of low-cost videos to motivate students.

The results of the open questions from the questionnaire show different findings that can be divided into the students' perception of their engagement in classes, students' motivation, and their thoughts on how to improve it. They were more and less interested in Teams activities, and they liked and disliked tasks from the self-study guide the most.

Students were asked whether they think they were more responsible in the old or new modality. Comparing only the responses for one modality or the other, we have 11 students who felt more engaged in remote learning and 5 in class. It can be seen as a more positive perception of their responsibility level in remote learning. Answers were direct (*yes* or *no*), but one participant said that this was due to her having more time to do tasks now than when she went to high school. This aspect supports what Liaw (2008) thinks about motivation since he says it is associated with students' efficacy. Therefore, teachers should make students feel attended, and that they are taking advantage of their time.

Students' perspectives of their motivation were analyzed. Thirteen participants said they felt motivated and 3 were not. From the negative responses, one student indicated that if he were working, he would be interested in the remote learning environment, but since he was at home he is not, and he preferred face-to-face classes. This can be compared with the previous topic of efficacy since the feeling that he is not taking advantage of his time caused his motivation to decrease. The other two participants who answered "no" said that they were not learning. Although it cannot be confirmed that the students were not learning, it cannot be ruled out either, but the students' perception of

this could be influenced by another factor such as the lack of meaningfulness of a task. Harackiewicz et al. (2008) mentioned that students' perception of the value of tasks needs to be enhanced to increase motivation as well. This possible reason for students' negative perceptions is analyzed considering that we have two other participants who said they learned under remote learning and that, based on the recommendations provided by the unmotivated students, some factors show students do not refer to activities as valuable. They mentioned that they could feel more motivated if teachers provided more support material, and if the current material were is more appealing, if there were more dynamic activities, and if the students participated more and got more engaged in activities other than only reading the self-study guide in Teams. This should be studied in the future to see whether students are actually not learning or perhaps they could feel this way since they do not see the importance of the tasks they are doing.

Motivated students' recommendations to enhance engagement were also analyzed. They pointed out that they should have more interaction in class with other students and the teacher. Although this is something their English teachers tried to propitiate, students still feel it can be enhanced. They also recognized the role of paying attention to classes plays for them to be engaged. From the methods to enhance motivation presented, Rosegard and Wilson (2013) addressed the importance of catching learners' attention through curiosity and proposed starting a class by reading a poem. This also supports the students' last recommendation about including new activities. If class activities become monotonous, learners will become less engaged and their ability to pay attention can decrease.

Regarding the activities on Teams that caught students' attention more, only 4 of 19 participants responded. They favored speaking activities and indicated that most prefer to speak with their classmates and teacher when they connect to synchronous tasks. From the activities they like least in Teams, 1 participant said the opposite since it was more difficult to express ideas on this platform. This can be due to the student feeling uncomfortable speaking on Teams or experiencing anxiety or low self-confidence, factors that, according to Gökçe Dişlen (2013), make students' motivation decrease. One said that watching videos was difficult due to Internet interference, so teachers should consider students' accessibility and create ways to manage the class better. The activity they like the least was reading; 2 participants reported that the readings are long. This aspect is also seen in asynchronous activities.

Of the less-captivating activities for students in self-study English, three are presented. One participant again mentioned reading due to long texts and because of the number of questions that the readings had. In this case, the value of the task should be emphasized by the teacher since students are not understanding the purpose of the readings. On the contrary, the teacher explained that she uses this activity not only to enhance their reading and com-

prehension skills but also for them to practice pronunciation. Another student described production tasks as less interesting since for him it was hard to carry out specific topic production tasks; he found it hard to explain a specific topic. This led us to Muilenburg and Berge (2005), regarding how the lack of academic skills influences students' motivation. The least liked task was watching videos since some are too long and require too much time. Although Martin and Bolliger (2018) consider this to be an effective online teaching strategy to engage students, they can also be overwhelmed by all they have to do if teachers do not consider the amount of time they are requiring of students.

On the other hand, we have the most appealing activities from the self-study guides. Students referred to a specific section of the guide but also to the activities based on the different English skills. Grammar, listening, reading, speaking, matching, and multiple-choice tasks were selected by the participants, thus allowing us to see the varied likes that students have. Three participants liked short-answer activities most, making this one the favorite. One reason given for preferring this activity was that knowledge was tested; this means students have positive attitudes when they can see that they are learning. One of the participants, who preferred speaking and listening activities, said she liked to send audios to the teacher and receive feedback, and she liked the videos made by her teacher. These aspects support Simonson et al. (2009), who pointed out that the lack of feedback can demotivate students, and Martin and Bolliger (2018), who mentioned that an effective strategy for producing engagement is for the instructor to create authentic material.

4.3 Comparison Between Students' Responses and the Interview

Comparing the interview and the survey we can observe that neither the teacher nor the students are completely happy with the new modality. The teacher makes clear the lack of preparation she, and most other educators, had for such an eventuality. This coincides with the lack of enthusiasm on the students' side (Tables and Figures 1, 2, and 3). The GTAs provided by the MEP are also something both sides agree they do not like, with the teacher stating they are not the same as regular classwork and the students prefer alternatives for practice.

In terms of interaction, it seems the instructor is concerned about the students not being happy with remote learning and not wanting to participate but this is not entirely reflected by the students' responses. As the data showed (Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 and the corresponding Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7) students are mostly content with their interaction, both with her and with one another in the new modality. Although not everyone is as happy as before the numbers are still too positive to say outright they are not satisfied now. Students were apprehensive about Microsoft Teams, and as stated before, were not enthusiastic about the MEP's self-study guides for asynchronous work. They did express their liking, or at the very least neutral satisfaction, for synchronous

work during class time.

5. Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Limitations

The 2020 pandemic allowed remote learning to be incorporated into Costa Rican public education, and thus enabled us to investigate it; nevertheless, there were limitations in this context for research purposes. Communication with participants was the first hindering aspect since speaking face-to-face can propitiate a better understanding. The interaction with the teacher was not effective since we used email and we could not speak to her before the Zoom interview. Contact with students was a challenge since we did not have direct access to them. Consequently, the English teacher was the one who transmitted all our messages, and we were thus unable transmit the importance of the study or confirm whether students understood the instructions. Besides, participants could not communicate directly with us in case of consultations, questions, or clarifications regarding the instrument. This was reflected in the questionnaire responses since one section was empty; that led to another limitation regarding the results obtained. Of 34 participants, only 19 responded, hence reducing the percentage of raw data. Due to the limited number of responses, the decreased sample size, and the variety of different perspectives, opinions, and data were affected. Planning and timing were also obstacles. The instruments were designed based on a preliminary idea but after obtaining the results of the questionnaire, more information was required to carry out more complete research. Some of the modifications were achieved in time, but more detailed information about the participants' background was not included since we would have needed to apply the complete instrument again to gather all the information correctly. Aspects that we would have liked to incorporate were each student's Internet connection, equipment for connecting to Teams or to do asynchronous work, or age since we had this data but in general based on what the English teacher reported. In addition, the study focused on a rural educational center that only included the reality of this specific environment. It is valid to consider only a group from a rural area, but it does not fully represent the reality of Costa Rican education. This study provides a head start for further investigations, new proposals, and strategies to implement in remote teaching modes.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Several ideas can be considered for future investigation to be conducted in the Costa Rican context in public education. The instruments of this investigation can be applied to different groups in institutions located in urban areas to learn about the reality of different populations. In addition to the contact with the population studied, a closer approach and personal contact with participants would increase the amount of data that researchers could obtain and thus en-

rich future investigations. Other demographic data can be included to know more about each participant and their needs, such as connectivity, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family settings. Considering the provinces of Costa Rica can be also enriching so that studies can be more specific and then be compared for more accurate results of the whole country's situation regarding this modality. Another aim that can be pursued is to compare the results of this research with similar investigations focusing on other populations such as primary school or college students. The psychological reasons for either the presence or lack of motivation in students can be analyzed to understand the different barriers students may be facing to engage in this new modality.

Conclusion

This research enhances different areas. The information gathered contributes to the understanding of the situation experienced this year with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the way remote learning has been approached by teachers to promote engagement. We can also observe how this setting has been perceived by a rural population, how students have felt about it, and what levels of satisfaction learners have had in comparison with the previous modality.

In general, it can be seen that participants show more interest in the old modality in different areas such as peer interaction and class assessment. Nonetheless, their reaction toward remote learning is not completely negative, and there are even areas where students were more satisfied in this modality; for instance, most students felt they were more responsible than they used to be in face-to-face classes. We can conclude that students feel motivated to learn in the new scenario. Therefore, we can see that new generations feel comfortable with changes, and they show a willingness to adapt to new environments regardless of the situation. However, the levels of motivation toward the old modality tell us that the participants are still yearning for in-class learning and face-to-face interaction is also seen as relevant for students as part of their process of socialization and engagement.

Remote learning engagement in Costa Rican public education is a broad topic requiring investigation since it is a new challenge our country is facing. With this research, we provide an entry point for other English teachers to have a better understanding of activities that can be effective to stimulate students' engagement. Based on our findings, we aim to offer a realistic perspective to enable teachers to consider how their students feel, and be familiar with their satisfaction levels in different areas; this could be used when designing or teaching a class. Some recommendations include using short videos, propitiating spaces in Teams classes where students can interact with their teacher and classmates, providing positive feedback, being available when students have questions through instant messaging platforms that are accessible for students, creating authentic and contextualized material, among others.

Different obstacles can come up in remote learning, and students' en-

gagement is an aspect to be considered to promote an effective learning process. It is expected that further studies will be carried out to enhance public education in Costa Rica, so that we can continue to learn, improve and teach in a way students feel engaged and motivated.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Student Questionnaire

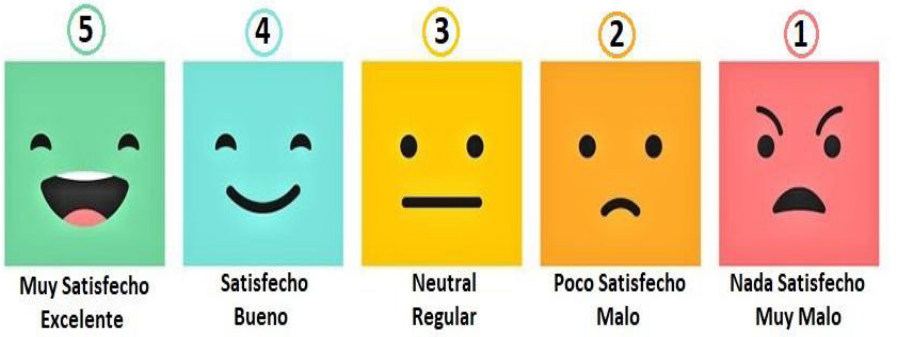
Encuesta al estudiante

Esta encuesta es 100 % confidencial y es de suma importancia que responda con la mayor sinceridad todas las preguntas meditando en ellas. La información recopilada se requiere para un proyecto de investigación realizado por estudiantes de la carrera Enseñanza del Inglés para III y IV ciclo de la Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. Este es un trabajo formal para lo cual también requerimos una participación seria. Agradecemos en gran manera su disposición de colaborarnos con su experiencia.

Edad: _____
Género: _____

Preguntas por Escala Likert

A continuación se presentan preguntas por escala Likert las cuales se deben contestar según la escala del 5 al 1 que presentamos a continuación, donde 5 representa la mayor calificación (Muy satisfecho/Excelente) y 1 la menor calificación (Nada satisfecho/Muy malo). Puede escribir la palabra o el número en la línea correspondiente a cada pregunta.



1. ¿Cómo calificaría la nueva modalidad remota de aprendizaje implementada este año? _____
2. ¿Cómo calificaría su aprendizaje en la modalidad remota? _____

3. ¿Cómo calificaría el desempeño del educador(a) en las clases remotas sincrónicas? _____
4. ¿Cómo califica la interacción con su profesor(a) durante las clases remotas? _____
5. ¿Cómo califica la interacción con sus compañeros y compañeras durante las clases remotas? _____
6. ¿Cómo considera el cambio de clases presenciales a clases remotas? _____
7. En la clase de inglés mediante la plataforma teams me siento _____
8. Realizando las guías de inglés me siento _____
9. ¿Cómo califica las actividades realizadas durante las clases mediante teams? _____
10. ¿Cuál es su participación de manera voluntaria en las clases mediante la herramienta Teams? _____

Preguntas de respuesta corta

En esta sección, se le pide al estudiante que conteste puntualmente lo solicitado de forma respetuosa y objetiva.

1. Enliste, por orden de importancia, las actividades tanto sincrónicas como asincrónicas o tareas favoritas que se realizan en la clase.
2. ¿Cuáles aspectos del desempeño de su profesor(a) admira o le gustan más?

Preguntas de respuesta abierta

En esta sección, se les solicita a los estudiantes ser lo más amplio posible con sus respuestas.

1. ¿Cómo se sienten acerca del compromiso con su aprendizaje?
2. ¿Qué áreas de la clase le causan mayor interés? Explique.
3. ¿De qué manera o forma puede sentirse más interesado y motivado durante las clases remotas?
4. ¿Qué mejoras emplearía usted en las clases remotas de Inglés técnico?

Appendix B
English Teacher Interview Instrument

Entrevista

La información recopilada se requiere para un proyecto de investigación realizado por estudiantes de la carrera Enseñanza del Inglés para III y IV ciclo de la Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica. A continuación presentamos una sección de preguntas las cuales se le realizarán en modo entrevista profunda al educador(a) vía Zoom la cual será personal y confidencial entre las partes involucradas.

Nombre de educador(a): _____
Centro educativo: _____

1. ¿Cómo ha sido su experiencia en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje remoto en estos meses de pandemia?
2. ¿Qué hace habitualmente/generalmente en su clase remota sincrónica? (actividades, etc.)
3. ¿Qué tipo de metodología utiliza durante sus lecciones?
4. ¿Ha modificado las clases sincrónicas según las necesidades de los estudiantes? Explique.
5. ¿Cómo percibe la interacción de los estudiantes?
6. ¿Cuáles son algunos desafíos o limitaciones que se le han presentado durante esta situación?
7. ¿Cómo motiva a sus estudiantes a participar?
8. ¿Ha recibido alguna capacitación en el uso de las herramientas virtuales y para mantener la atención de los estudiantes (aparte de Teams)? Sí es una respuesta afirmativa, ¿de parte de quién?
9. ¿Cómo ha proporcionado retroalimentación para mejorar las habilidades de los estudiantes?
10. ¿Qué le gustaría implementar para llevar a cabo la labor de una manera más exitosa?
11. En su opinión, ¿qué importancia tiene la interacción de un docente con los estudiantes en el proceso de aprendizaje?

Strategies to Encourage EFL Learners to Engage Actively in Online Intermediate English Classes[1]

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Introduction

The year 2020 welcomed the world with a pandemic that abruptly changed all human lives (Gonzalez et al., 2020, p. 1). In this global emergency, some changes were considered essential to prevent the spread of this disease affecting conventional educational methods, which had to be adapted to achieve quality online learning (Hyseni and Hoxha, 2020, p. 4). However, traditional pedagogical procedures were not adequate for virtual environments, leading in some cases to a much more teacher-centered lesson. The authors also remark that this situation has prompted the loss of engagement by a large portion of the student population (p. 6).

The core concern of this paper is the lack of engagement of learners in virtual English classes. The main objective of this research consists of identifying the strategy that most improves students' engagement in virtual English classes. With that end in mind, this study analyzes the main characteristics of the Collaborative Learning (CLS), Cooperative Learning (CPS) and Inquiry-based learning (IBL), applies three activities based on these strategies, and compares the effectiveness of the three strategies to increase students' engagement in online intermediate English classes. This study aims to test these three learning strategies and how they encourage EFL learners to actively engage in advanced online classes. They could be useful for students' engagement in online language teaching. This paper provides background on these strategies, a detailed explanation of the fieldwork, and discussion of the results obtained along with their most relevant limitations.

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

1. Literature Review on Learning Strategies

1.1. Inquiry-Based Learning Strategies

Sproken-Smith (2012) defines Inquiry-based learning (IBL) as a student-centered learning strategy in which learners construct their own knowledge, and the teacher becomes only a facilitator. Instead of repeating facts transmitted by the educator, students manipulate and investigate the information to come to their own conclusion (p. 2). This strategy proposes learning as a life-long process of acquisition; similarly, teachers consider learners' previous knowledge when planning their activities (p. 2). Sproken-Smith (2012) indicates that inquiry courses are mostly question driven. They begin with a general theme to develop the learning process; therefore, teachers must ask good researchable questions and enhance students' research skills (p. 3). Sproken-Smith (2012) maintains that, even though this strategy is more recommendable for advanced students, it can be incorporated at beginner levels so that students start to be responsible for their own learning and develop critical thinking. Furthermore, IBL has been shown to improve learners' engagement, motivation, and interaction due to its active-participation nature (p. 3). Sproken-Smith (2012) suggests that tasks must be challenging but at the proper level of difficulty to remain motivating. If they are too easy students will be bored, whereas if they are too hard, students will become frustrated (p. 7). Finally, Sproken-Smith (2012) presents a brief evaluation of IBL. He says that previous studies have suggested that IBL is more effective than traditional teaching methodologies because it generates good student outcomes in learning independence, linguistic skills, analytical thinking, and creativity (p. 12).

Lee (2014) discusses the effectiveness of inquiry-based learning for second/foreign language acquisition. He mentions that this strategy is well-known in the fields of science and math and can also be beneficial for L2 acquisition. Lee (2014) remarks that this learning strategy is about questioning, promoting a Socratic or Discovery approach in the classroom. Thus, teachers do not deliver the information explicitly or directly. In this way, students do not necessarily learn by memorizing but by discovering, thus improving the learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategies (p. 1237). He studied a total of eleven young students from a small-scale liberal arts college who enrolled in a Chinese language class for one semester. Lee (2014) applied the inquiry-based method during this semester along with a questionnaire that contained 16 statements regarding aspects such as attentiveness, motivation, anxiety, class interaction, and the use of visuals as well as general thoughts on this teaching approach. His results show that most students preferred inquiry-based teaching rather than expository lecturing (p. 1243). Students agreed that acquainting themselves beforehand with the lesson is important in this type of strategy (p. 1242). The questionnaire also showed that although more than half of the students believed that anxiety did not impact them negatively, it is an issue that

cannot be overlooked (p. 1242). He concludes, "Teachers need to integrate the vocabulary and grammatical structures intended to be taught into questions and deliver them in a recurrent pattern" (p. 1243). He suggests that a possible variable affecting this strategy is the instructor's ability to create a pleasant, comfortable, and trusting environment for the learners.

In another study on this strategy, Chang et al. (2016) point out that inquiry-based learning (IBL) has potential benefits for improving learners' motivation, learning attitude and their achievements in second language acquisition. Furthermore, the authors suggest that learning by doing encourages students to participate actively by acquiring information through exploration and observation instead of a traditional teacher-centered model (p. 101). To examine the distinctive advantages of mobile inquiry-based learning (M-IBL) activities for enhancing students' engagement, the authors evaluate 67 EFL students' levels of engagement at a university of science and technology in Taiwan for a six-week period. To carry out this analysis, the authors propose three phases for an effective inquiry task: Preparation, reflection, and the main phase. The first two are completed in class to prepare students for the activity and to be sure they know what they have learned, while the main phase is defined as authentic learning in which students experience the language by using it in distinctive contexts (p. 103). The authors conclude that by employing M-IBL activities, learners' motivation undergoes a significant change thus enabling the achievement of learning outcomes in their target language.

Luke (2006) presents the results of a qualitative research study that aims to increase foreign language learners' learning autonomy through an inquiry-based curriculum. The project was applied to a fourth-semester university Spanish class. During an entire academic semester, students were exposed only to technology-enhanced and inquiry-based activities. The author reports that all inquiry activities were structured following the *Inquiry Cycle Framework.* Luke's (2006) framework is based on the constructivist approach. He characterizes the approach as composed of seven phases: (a) exploring the topic, (b) brainstorming ideas and deciding on an inquiry question, (c) investigating and gaining multiple perspectives, (d) researching and revising, (e) engaging in self- and peer-assessment, (f) making learning public, and (g) reflecting on the process and planning for upcoming inquiries (p. 75). His data collection instruments included anecdotal records written by the teacher, field notes from classroom observations, phenomenological interviews, anonymous course reviews, self-assessments, self-reflections, questionnaires, a data sheet, and a final course evaluation. The results of his study showed both positive and negative responses from students. The students requested more grammar practice and book work. Some of them found autonomous inquiry not as effective as expected. The author reports that the great majority of students indicated that having the freedom to choose their inquiry topics provided them with much more motivation and engagement to learn. He points out that students

indicated having enjoyed non-traditional learning. Luke (2006) concludes that in attempting to meet the needs of all learners, instructors must recognize that some students may respond favorably to innovation and increased responsibility and that others may prefer and thrive in a more structured and guided learning environment.

1.2 Collaborative Strategies

Van Nguyen (2010) discusses the role of computer-mediated collaborative learning (CMCL) in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom with a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach. He follows Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development to focus on the nature of the learner, of the world and of their relationship, and to develop computer-mediated collaborative learning. Van Nguyen (2010) examines the Vietnamese educational context for second language acquisition. He mentions that, even though the Vietnamese educational system has focused on English teaching in recent years, it has dealt with some problematic issues. He says that the Confucian Vietnamese educational system finds itself in conflict with CLT. He states that Confucianism applied to classroom practice requires an epistemic teacher-centered mode of learning underlying knowledge transmission (p. 215). For this reason, he suggests that collaborative learning is the natural solution to this teacher-centered approach, and he defines collaboration as the interdependence of the pair/group members as they share ideas, negotiate all aspects of the task and co-construct conclusions (p. 218). He also suggests that computer mediation is a useful complement to collaborative learning and the CLT approach by stating that linguistic skills and pragmatic knowledge, as well as critical awareness, are developed through collaborative language learning via the Internet (p. 223). Finally, he suggests that empirical research must be done to support further analysis on the collaborative strategy since he provides only a theoretical analysis in this area.

Brindley et al. (2009) remark that active participation among learners is essential to provide engaging spaces for students; they observed students from a Master of Distance Education (MDE) program to identify the effectiveness of small group interaction in an online environment (p. 15). The authors point out that learning as part of a group where students can share ideas can improve students' skills such as critical thinking and self-reflection to co-construct knowledge (p. 2). In addition to those specific pedagogical benefits, quality learning contributes to better learning outcomes. The data were collected from students in module 1 and module 4, and participation levels were measured by the number of postings between graded and non-graded sections of the course. Findings do not present an instantaneous advantage in assigning grades to the collaboration. However, students' participation improved, demonstrating that learners who do not participate actively during a conference conversation do so in small groups even when the assignments are not

graded (p. 7). Although the authors conclude that small group collaborative learning has significant benefits in students' knowledge acquisition, educators must regularly test strategies to encourage students' participation (p. 15).

Hernández et al. (2014) investigate practices and planning in collaborative learning considering that it has had a strong presence in technology-supported education. They suggest that collaborative learning necessarily considers technological resources, methodology and group configuration to boost exchange and learning in the community (p. 25). To analyze the importance of Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) in terms of planning, its essential components, and its usefulness in team building and performance, the researchers applied a questionnaire to 106 undergraduate students from 5 different CSCL-based subjects (Hernández et al. 2014). In this way, they establish the ongoing collaborative perspective as "'built knowledge' which refers to the interaction and reflection process that allows the group to configure meanings together" (p. 26). Similarly, they suggest that since the relevance of human unity to pursue a common goal or ideal is evident, in the case of learning environments, the common goal is to achieve learning objectives (p. 26). Therefore, the authors recommend that, while planning any proposal for online collaborative learning, the instructor should contemplate and integrate pedagogical as well as social aspects efficiently (p. 26). Some of the aspects mentioned by Hernandez et al. (2014), such as effective design of CSCL planning, include: establishing the relationship between method and objectives; assigning group roles in problem-solution, project-development, or discussion activities, while the teacher ensures collaboration; taking location, time, and availability into account when forming the groups; and forming groups of five members (p. 27). Hernández et al. (2014) also stated that collaborative scripts would help establish a basis for group organization, and this would insure efficient group interaction at the same time. Finally, the authors maintain that "the interrelations of all these factors inevitably condition the potential to teach and learn and, furthermore, that teaching, and learning are possible through cooperation" (p. 30).

2.3. Cooperative Strategies

Astuti and Lammers (2017) tested the use of Cooperative Learning Strategies (CLS) to improve EFL students' communicative competencies in combination with individual accountability tasks. To gather pertinent information on the effectiveness of the relationship between CLS and individual accountability, the authors used participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Because English has not been of utmost importance in the Indonesian educational system, Astuti and Lammers' (2017) investigation took place in two secondary schools, one middle school and one high school. They also used a constructivist approach since reality is constructed together between researcher and research subjects and modeled individually through experiences

(Creswell, 2012, as cited in Astuti and Lammers, 2017, p. 216). Both students and teachers were subjects of the study. Due to financial and time limitations, the investigators could only obtain two teachers and applied a convenience sample strategy to recruit students for the interviews. The authors examined the implementation of Cooperative Learning in EFL classrooms to enhance the learning process. They used activities such as Think-Pair-Share and Whispering Game in EFL classrooms. They believe that these activities provide more opportunities for students to use the target language. Astuti et al. (2017) state that it teachers who want to use Cooperative Learning in their classrooms should be well informed to apply it as well as possible. The authors suggest that new teacher using Cooperative Learning should follow the activities exactly as they are proposed until becoming more experienced.

Alipour and Barjesteh (2017) affirm that English has become an essential skill in academic settings (p. 1); therefore, aiming to improve students' speaking fluency, they studied the effect of incorporating cooperative learning strategies in EFL classes. Iranian male EFL high school students were randomly assigned to an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG). The researchers conducted a pre-test to ensure that both groups had the same English level. Then they practiced two strategies of cooperative learning (Numbered Heads and Think-Pair-Share) in the EG for six weeks. Descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test were used to analyze the data. The researchers' (Alipour and Barjesteh 2017) conclusions show that CL has a positive effect on English-learning students since it leads to more active interaction among students than other learning approaches; this results in students outperforming those taught by lectures (p. 9).

Johnson and Johnson (2011) offer a guide to the cooperative strategy where they determine that the nature of CL involves working in small groups, ensuring that all members master the assigned material, engaging in a win-lose struggle to see who is best, and working independently on their own learning goals at their own pace and in their own space to achieve a preset criterion of excellence (p. 2). They believe that in order to learn one needs a learning partner, since students benefit from teaching one another (p. 2). Additionally, they state that CL has five basic elements that must be carefully structured to conserve its essential qualities, namely positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing (p. 3-4). In addition, Johnson and Johnson (2011) highlight that Cooperative Learning strategies use three main ways of grouping students: formal (lasting from one class period to several weeks), informal (lasting from minutes to one class period) and cooperative base groups lasting from 1 to 7 years (p. 5). They conclude that these steps lead to the best way to maximize students' learning using the CLS (p. 10).

After reviewing the previous literature, we seek to answer the following question:

Between collaborative, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning strategies, which one most encourages EFL learners to actively engage in synchronous online advanced English classes?

2. Methodology

It is important to consider a unified use of terminology for each strategy. Collaborative and cooperative learning are often used interchangeably or are confused. For this study, *cooperative learning* will be defined as a strategy that involves working in small groups or independently to achieve a common goal as Johnson and Johnson (2011) suggest. Note that for this definition, the division of tasks or roles is a relevant aspect of this strategy. *Collaborative learning*, however, involves sharing ideas and negotiating all aspects of a task to co-construct a conclusion; competitive or individual goals are also the main focus of this strategy as defined by Van Nguyen (2010). Finally, *inquiry-based learning* is characterized as a student-centered strategy based on a driven question approach to encourage a discovery/Socratic method where the teacher is just a facilitator as Sproken-Smith (2012) and Lee (2014) suggest.

This study focuses on the comparison of these three learning strategies to encourage EFL learners to actively engage in online classes.

2.1 Participants

The participants included 2 males and 12 females, with ages ranging from 14 to 29, who were students in an online intermediate English class. The strategies were applied during a synchronous 2-hour session through the Zoom platform.

2.2 Instruments

The three activities chosen were based on inquiry-based, cooperative, and collaborative strategies (see Appendix A). The researchers (each in a different breakout room) completed an evaluation checklist containing the main aspects of each strategy to verify that the instructions were followed during the activities (see Appendix C). The data collection instrument contained eight statements related to class engagement in which students rated their agreement (see Appendix B). The subjects were asked to complete the instrument after each activity was finished. Finally, the data collected from each activity were compared to determine which strategy promoted learners' engagement the most.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the instruments applied (activities and the survey) are organized in tables and figures to facilitate further discussion. For this study, a binary scoring system was selected; it awarded one point to the agreement variable and zero to the disagreement variable. The scale of the survey indicated a range from one to four to prevent neutral answers, so the participants se-

lected the degree in which they agree or disagree with the statements provided in the survey. Although the participants had four options to choose from, only two variables were studied in this analysis: the amount of agreement and disagreement each activity was given. The sample size analyzed in this research study was small, so each individual response has a large impact on the final quantification of the answers.

3. Results

Before clarifying general scores, we must add that during the application of the activities, there was an attrition rate of 7%: for this reason, the maximum total number of agreements varies from one activity to another.

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the overall results by activity and strategy. IBS scored a total of 86% agreement and CLS scored 92%. CPS had the highest score among the three activities with 94%. In general all three activities are almost equally valued by the participants.

Table 1. Overall Results by Activity

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	96	86%	98	94%	96	92%
Disagree	16	14%	6	6%	8	8%
Total	112	100%	104	100%	104	100%

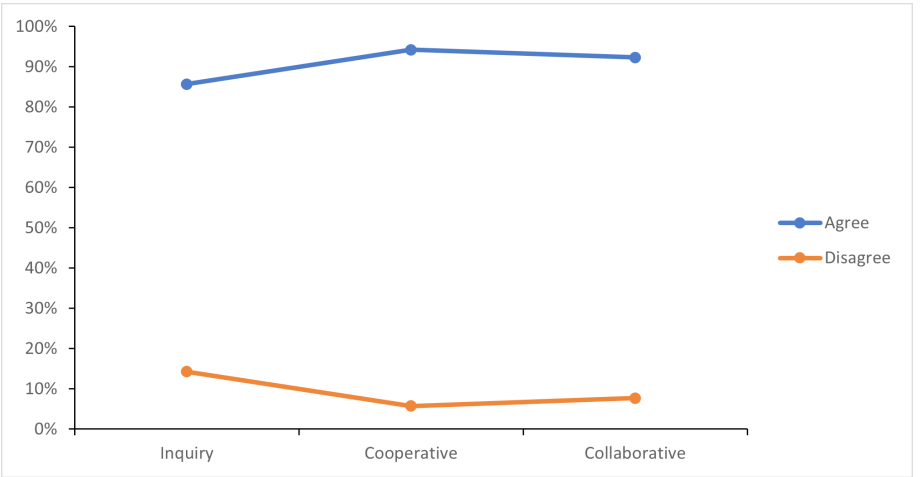

Figure 1. Overall Results by Activity and Strategy

Table 2 and Figure 2 represent the variable of interest for statement 2 in the survey. These three strategies received almost equal scores. IBS obtained a total of 93% agreement with only 1 participant—out of 14—in disagreement, represented by 7% in the table. CPS obtained a total of 92% agreement representing a total of 12 participants, and 8% disagreement representing 1 participant out of 13. In the case of CLS, all participants indicated agreement for a total of 100% in the graph.

Table 2. Summary Results by Activity: Interest

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	13	93%	12	92%	13	100%
Disagree	1	7%	1	8%	0	0%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

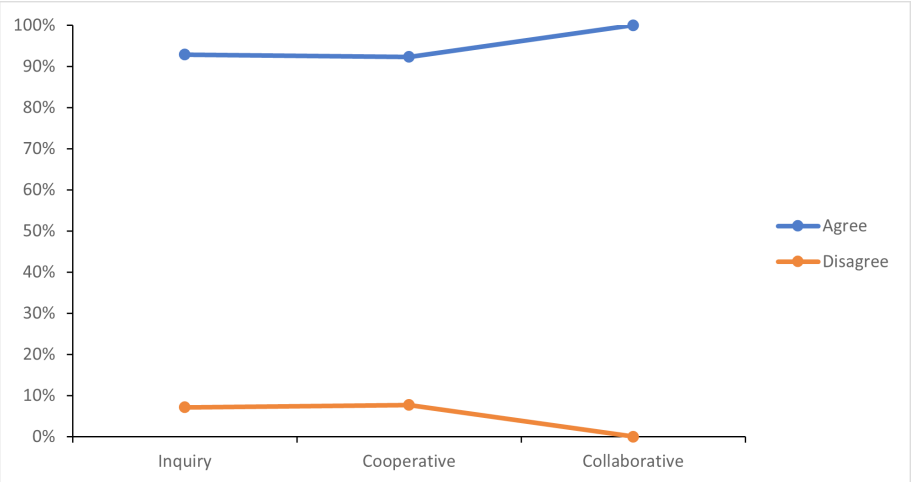

Figure 2. Summary of Results by Activity: Interest

Table 3 and Figure 3 represent the variable of concentration. IBS was given a score of 93% agreement while CLS and CPS each scored a total of 92% agreement. IBS scored 7% disagreement representing 1 participant of 14 individuals, and CLS and CPS scored 8% disagreement representing a total of 1 participant out of 13 in each strategy.

Table 3. Summary of Results by Activity: Concentration

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	13	93%	12	92%	12	92%
Disagree	1	7%	1	8%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

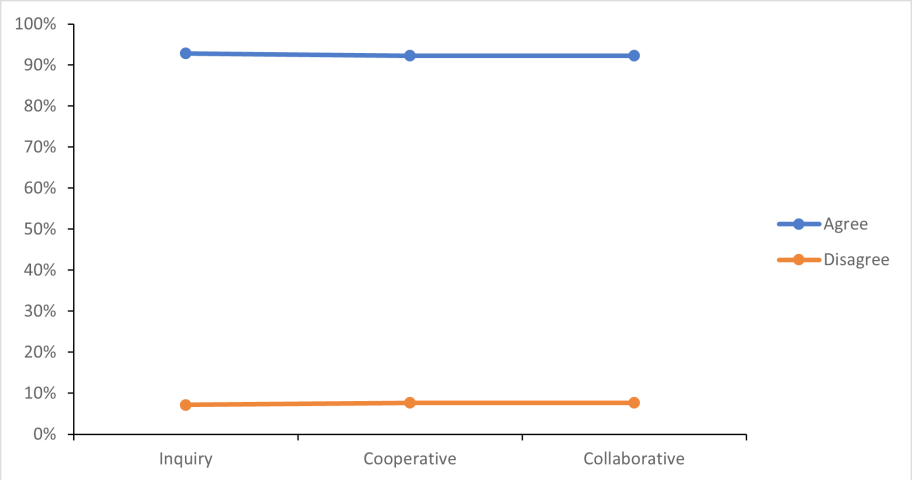

Figure 3. Summary of Results by Activity: Concentration

Table 4 and Figure 4 represent the variable of motivation. Here two strategies received equal scores: CPS and CLS obtained a total of 92% agreement with only 1 participant out of 13 in disagreement, represented by 8%. However, IBS obtained a total of 71% agreement representing 10 participants and 29% disagreement representing a total of 4 participants out of 14.

Table 4. Summary of Results by Activity: Motivation

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	10	71%	12	92%	12	92%
Disagree	4	29%	1	8%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

Table 5 and Figure 5 represent the variable of participation. These three strategies obtained different percentages from each other. IBS received a total of 93% agreement representing 13 of 14 participants and 7% disagreement representing a total of 1 participant. CLS obtained a total of 92% agreement representing 12 of 13 participants and 8% disagreement. Finally, CPS

obtained agreement from all students, indicating this activity as the one in which they had the most active participation.

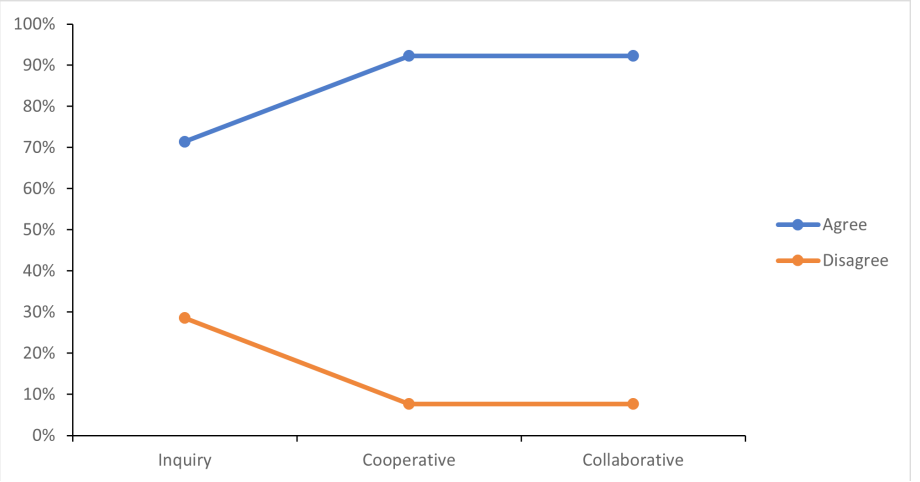

Figure 4. Summary of Results by Activity: Motivation

Table 5. Summary of Results by Activity: Participation

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	13	93%	13	100%	12	92%
Disagree	1	7%	0	0%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

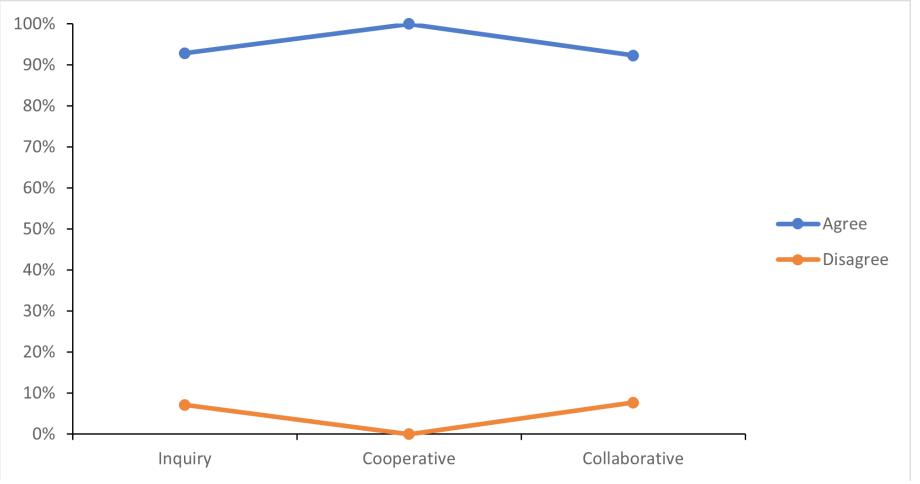

Figure 5. Summary of Results by Activity: Participation

Table 6 and Figure 6 represent the variable of initiating interaction. In IBS received a total of 71% agreement representing 10 of the 14 participants and 29% disagreement representing 4 participants. CLS obtained a total of 85% agreement representing 11 of 13 participants and 15% disagreement. CPS had the same unanimous student agreement as in the previous activity, in which students had more interaction.

Table 6. Summary of Results by Activity: Initiating Interaction

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	10	71%	13	100%	11	85%
Disagree	4	29%	0	0%	2	15%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

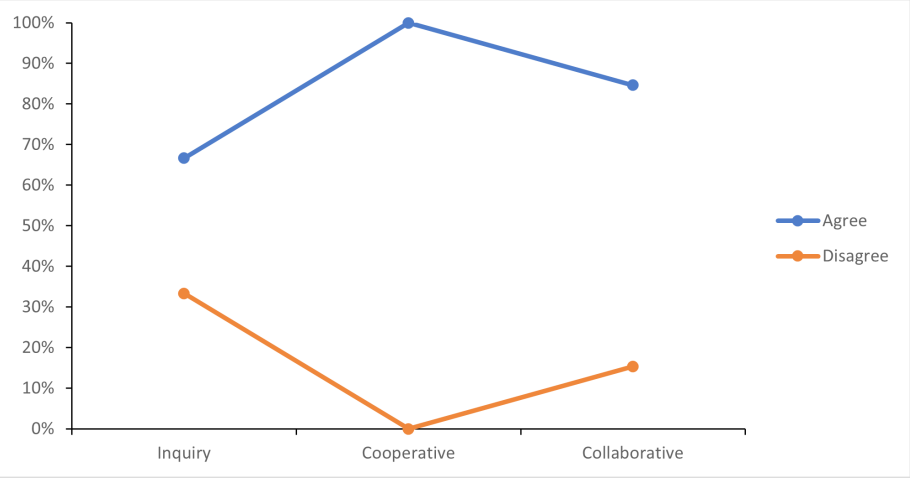

Figure 6. Summary of Results by Activity: Initiating Interaction

Table 7 and Figure 7 represent the independent variable of maintaining interaction. As seen, IBS scored the lowest percentage of agreement with a total of 86%, representing 12 out of 14 participants, while CLS scored a total of 92% agreement, which represents 12 out of 13 participants. CPS scored the highest percentage with 100% agreement. From these results, it can be observed that CPS is not only perceived as an appropriate strategy for initiating interaction, but also for maintaining it.

Table 7. Summary of Results by Activity: Maintaining Interaction

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	12	86%	13	100%	12	92%
Disagree	2	14%	0	0%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

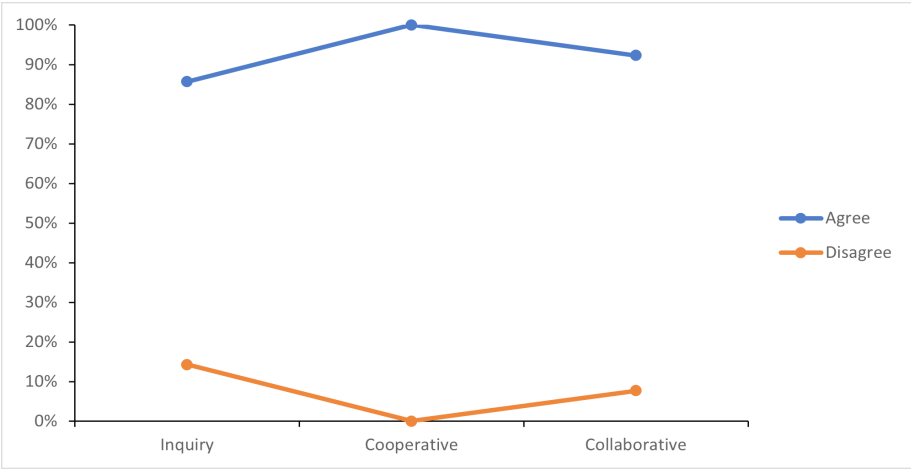

Figure 7. Summary of Results by Activity: Maintaining Interaction

Table 8 and Figure 8 measure the independent variable of meaningful learning. For IBS, 11 of 14 participants agreed that this strategy encourages meaningful learning, represented by 79%, but 3 of them, represented by 21%, did not agree in this area. CPS received 85% agreement, representing a total of 11 students out of 13 and 15% disagreement, represented by 2 participants. Finally, CLS scored a total of 92% agreement representing 12 participants and only 1 participant disagreed in this area, represented by 8% in the graph.

Table 8. Summary of Results by Activity: Meaningful Learning

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	11	79%	11	85%	12	92%
Disagree	3	21%	2	15%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

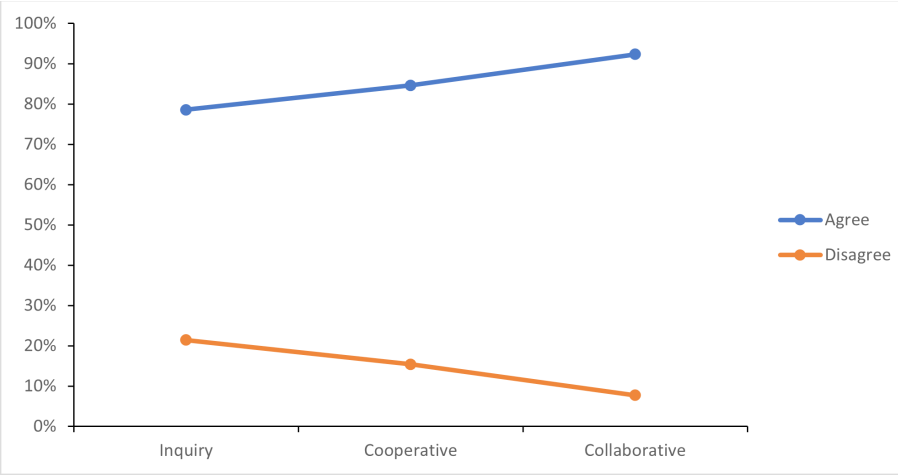

Figure 8. Summary of Results by Activity: Meaningful Learning

Table 9 and Figure 9 represent the independent variable of activity acceptance. In this case, both CLS and CPS scored 92%, represented by 12 of 13 cases of agreement, with only 1 participant who disagreed represented by 8% in the graph. On the other hand, IBS scored 100%, which represents 14 out of 14 participants. Thus, it can be concluded that IBS is the strategy most accepted by participants. However, CLS and CPS are not that far from the 100% obtained by IBS; this means that all the activities are welcomed.

Table 9. Summary of Results by Activity: I liked it.

Activity	Inquiry	%	Cooperative	%	Collaborative	%
Agree	14	100%	12	92%	12	92%
Disagree	0	0%	1	8%	1	8%
Total	14	100%	13	100%	13	100%

4. Discussion

Although the overall data show that the strategies are relatively similar to each other, it is useful to break down the results by the other variables provided in the survey: interest, concentration, motivation, participation, initiation of interaction, maintaining interaction, meaningful learning, and activity acceptance. The variables of interest, participation, and activity acceptance seemed to be equally effective with all 3 strategies to keep students engaged in each task. However, the strategies show relatively greater fluctuations in terms of the other variables. Regarding the variable of motivation, IBS scored

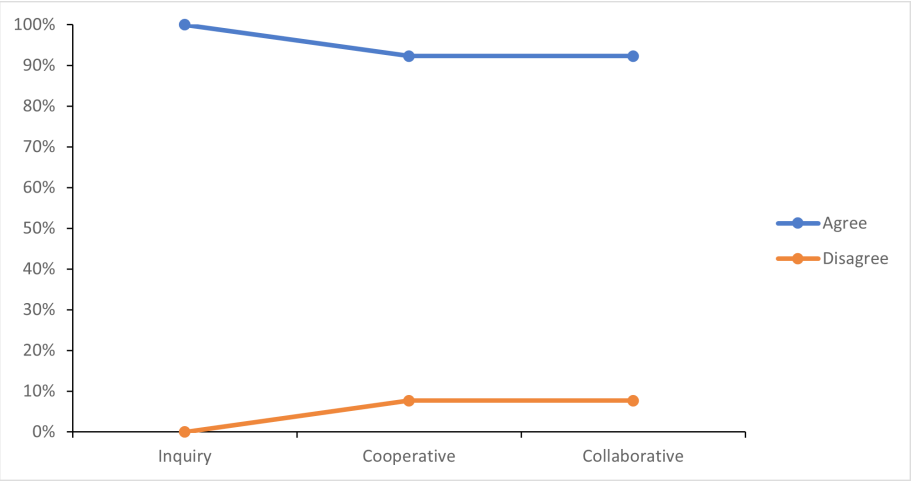

Figure 9. Summary of Results by Activity: I liked it

71%, a notably lower percentage compared to the other two strategies. This indicates that the participants did not consider IBS as effective as the other strategies in increasing their motivation for language learning. CPS was considered the most useful strategy for participants to sustain their interaction; however, CLS is almost as effective as CPS in this area, differing only by one answer. Here again, IBS is the least valued strategy for maintaining interaction throughout the task. In the variable of meaningful learning, IBS and CPS are the two strategies that did not meet the participants' standards for promoting their language learning process, although the number of participants that disagree is not outstanding. CLS proves to be the strategy most accepted by participants for this variable. This suggests that most participants valued collaborative tasks more for their learning process. Finally, it is worth noting that to initiate interaction in the classroom, IBS is not a desirable strategy for these participants, while again the other strategies more focused on student-student interactivity were highly accepted.

5. Limitations

Regarding the limitations of the study, the sample size was small, and we had an attrition rate of 7% while carrying out the activities and the surveys. The class selected was intermediate rather than advanced, and that affected the use of the target language usage during the activity. Another survey was developed by the researchers to obtain additional information, and it may have influenced the participants' answers and perception of activities; however, this survey was not answered by all the participants. Thus, the analysis of these other factors was not included in this study. Further research may establish the relationship between these independent variables and other factors such as personal background and individual learning style.

Conclusions

This research study was intended to identify the strategy that most improves students' engagement in virtual English classes from among inquiry-based, cooperative, and collaborative strategies. To accomplish this objective, this paper included a representative literature review and the development of three activities based on these strategies. The results of the study suggest that, in general terms, these three strategies are equally effective in improving students' engagement in virtual English classes. Despite this, the independent variables provide a clearer view of the usefulness of the strategies in terms of interest, motivation, and the other factors included in the survey. When interpreting our findings some strengths as well as limitations had to be considered. The main strength of the fieldwork was that it was conducted as part of the first of the course. For that reason, the instructor and classmates did not know one another, so that enabled the study to test the students' engagement stimuli without the interference of interpersonal matters.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Activities

Strategy	Activity	Topic	Time
Inquiry-Based Strategy	Problem-solving: The instructor provides a situation for students to solve. Using the Zoom break-out rooms, the teacher divides the class into groups of three. Each group has to investigate and discuss their solution. Once back in the main room, each group presents their solution in a 2-minute oral presentation.	Margaret is a 25-year-old woman who wants to go backpacking in Costa Rica by herself. She does not really know the best options for transportation, lodging, affordable tourist sites, and food. She is contacting you for advice. What would you suggest?	30 min.
Cooperative Strategy	Numbered Heads: The teacher introduces students to a specific topic and briefly explains it. Then the teacher asks a question based on the topic previously explained. The teacher gives time for students to individually think of an answer or answers. Then, the teacher uses the Zoom break-out rooms to divide the class into three groups. Inside the group, the teacher assigns a number from 1 to 4 to each member. Each group has 10 minutes to share their ideas and come up with a general answer. Once back in the main room, the teacher randomly calls a number from 1 to 4. Each person with that number explains their group's answer to the rest of the class.	Advantages and disadvantages of online lessons	30 min.

Collaborative Strategy	Debate: The teacher presents general ideas about a two-counterpart topic. The teacher divides the group into two smaller groups, each with a moderator. The teacher selects a team that argues in favor and against the given topic. Each group is sent to a break-out room for five minutes to plan their arguments. Once back in the main room, each group has five minutes to present their ideas consecutively (one minute for each member). Right after this phase, each group has two minutes to refute the other groups.	Work for money or work for love	30 min.

Appendix B. Survey

Universidad Nacional
Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Educación
División de Educología

Estimado participante:
Esta encuesta es parte de una investigación del curso *Seminario de Investigación, Innovación y Producción Educativa*. El objetivo general es identificar algunas estrategias de enseñanza que promuevan el compromiso activo del estudiante hacia su aprendizaje. La información recolectada será tratada de manera confidencial y con un uso académico. Agradecemos su participación.

Encuesta	**Completamente en desacuerdo**	**En desacuerdo**	**De acuerdo**	**Completamente de acuerdo**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Esta actividad me hizo sentir interesado durante la tarea.				
Esta actividad me mantuvo atento y concentrado en la clase.				
Esta actividad aumentó mi motivación en el aprendizaje de idiomas.				
Esta actividad me animó a participar en clase.				
Esta actividad fue una buena estrategia para iniciar la interacción en clase.				
Esta actividad me hizo mantener la interacción en clase.				
Esta actividad hizo que el aprendizaje de idiomas fuera más significativo.				
No me gustó esta actividad, por eso no participé.				

Appendix C. Characteristics of Learning Strategies

Cooperative Learning Characteristics	Yes	No	To some degree (please explain)
Positive Interdependence			
Individual Accountability			
Promotes Interaction			
Social Skills			
Group Processing			

Collaborative Learning Characteristics	Yes	No	To some degree (please explain)
Forming groups of five members			
Assigning group roles in problem-solution or discussion activities			
Development of effective teamwork and communication			
Promoting learning from other perspectives			
Demonstrating a collective achievement			

Inquiry-Based Learning Characteristics	Yes	No	To some degree (please explain)
Student-centered			
Question-driven			
Development of self-directed learning skills			
Active learning is about learning by doing			
Negotiation of meaning			

The Influence of Distance Learning on the Engagement of EFL Students[1]

Fabián Arce Mora
José Pablo Salas Murillo
Pablo Josué Silva Acosta
David Víquez Fernández

Introduction

Life as we know it has changed radically due to the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary a pandemic is "an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a broad geographic area (such as multiple countries or continents) and typically affects a significant proportion of the population: a pandemic outbreak of a disease." To be safe, people have decided to stay home to stop the spread of the deadly virus. In addition, the time spent at home has taught people that everyone is vulnerable, and that we should adapt our daily lives to keep progressing. Teaching has also been affected. Since the start of the pandemic, teachers and students have been working and learning from their homes. Although technology has helped students maintain a positive learning process, some of those students do not feel good about learning this way.

The present investigation relies on different factors regarding English as a second language learning in the distance learning modality during the current pandemic situation. The English language is known as the universal language for communication, meaning that it is used for many purposes worldwide. In Costa Rica, the teaching of English was implemented when high schools were founded (Cubillo, Keith & Salas, 2005, para. 6). However, in these last months of 2020, education has been affected by the pandemic, turning face-to-face classes to virtual classes.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify how distance learning influences EFL students' engagement in private language centers in the central valley of Costa Rica. The data collected will help to determine which modality students prefer (online or the traditional face-to-face classes). Diverse key elements that motivate students to learn a foreign language either in a traditional face-to-face classroom or in distance learning, so particular factors are considered to describe how it affects those students from virtual classes. During the lockdown, students spent more time at home; thus, mechanisms must be found

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

to enhance the effectiveness of virtual lessons to analyze the main aspects that affect and enrich autonomous learning when acquiring a second language. Knowing that education is influenced by the current pandemic, it is critical to identify the factors involved in the issue, such as the role of not only teachers but also students, as well as how distance learning affects students' engagement when learning a second language.

1. Literature Review

Through the years, education has been changing, adapting new modalities based on adversities everyday life presents. Like many other aspects of everyday life, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on students, instructors and educational organizations around the world (Mailizar, Almanthari, Maulina, & Bruce, 2020). This pandemic has caused many educational centers to close with the purpose of keeping the population safe, following the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the virus (Toquero, 2020). As Crawford et al. (2020) explain in their research, education has evolved based on the obstacles of the environment; for instance, the environment of conventional education has been changed by distance and virtual learning classes in order to adapt toward the new modality; however, this change has taken time as there are several challenges to meeting expectations. Kaur (2020) states that since nobody can foretell when this pandemic will fully disappear, technical sources have come up to provide benefits to create material for students of different areas around the globe.

Online learning seems to be an option to keep the student population safe from getting Covid-19; however, as Adnan and Anwar (2020) state in their research, online learning is not achieving the expected outcome, and is reducing the effectiveness of the learning as compared to the regular face-to-face classes. The authors studied a group of higher education students to find general attitudes toward compulsory and distance learning in university courses. By applying an online survey, they explain that "Online learning cannot produce desired results in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, where a vast majority of students are unable to access the Internet due to technical as well as monetary issues." Moreover, Adnan and Anwar address the lack of access to Internet facilities, lack of proper interaction and contact with students, as well as instructors' ineffective technology as challenges and obstacles that the education process might have during this mode of learning.

Therefore, knowing that there is some limitation with distance education, it may be critical to be acknowledge what distance learning is and how it works since it plays a key role in connecting students from different geographic locations during the pandemic. Schlosser and Simonson (2011) define it as an "institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors" (p. 126). Moreover, distance learning

fosters online learning by providing positive benefits on the development of the learning process. According to Sandars and Langlois (2005), thanks to the vast range of sources nowadays due to technology, it is easier to be up-to-date and to get information that helps them in their learning process. Additionally, it provides resources not only for the student, but also for teachers who want to obtain ideas to apply to their online classes (Cantoni, Cellario, & Porta, 2004).

According to Knipe and Lee (2002), when considering the role of online learning, there might be weaknesses when applying it in education. Knipe and Lee (2002) state that teaching, flexibility, and pedagogy can be challenged when developing an online learning procedure. The authors add that one of the issues with technology is that sometimes it fails; for instance, one day the computer may not turn on, or the cellphone might need a new battery. Despite the fact technology tends to be a helpful and effective resource when planning and teaching online classes, some negative points could be considered due to the technology gap that may exist. Therefore it is important to acknowledge not only the role of instructors, but also the role of students to fully understand the effect that gap has on the students' engagement (Knipe & Lee, 2020).

A teacher in a distance learning classroom is critical to foster the development of skills that help students be more active in learning (Morgan, 2020). As Morgan (2020) states, the teacher's role is that of a facilitator to "create an environment in which students take ownership of their learning." Therefore, Little (2000) emphasizes the role of the instructors in guiding students to become autonomous. Holec (1981) first defined Learning Autonomy, as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). Holec shows that autonomy is an approach in which students can get involved in the learning process on their own. Later, Little (1994, p. 81) described autonomy "as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action," letting students be more active and aware of their academic process. By applying different tasks when teaching, teachers can change students' minds and create active learners, thus encouraging them to take advantage of the autonomous behavior to acquire the second language (1-10). Morgan (2020) explains that establishing different learning strategies using digital platforms and virtual environments can motivate students to become problem solvers and innovative students. Furthermore, teachers must acquire new skills to become familiar with the use of technology (Morgan, 2020).

Students also play an important role in the educational process as they are the ones affected by the provided learning process (Sava, Virga, & Palos, 2020). According to Sava et al., by satisfying students' psychological needs, they can feel intrinsically motivated to participate more and more as the class develops. For teachers, it is critical to promote an environment that fosters students to participate in class and become more active learners.

Adapting to a new modality is complicated, and it is more difficult for those who do not know the technological components (Alkış & Taşkaya,

2018). According to Alkış & Taşkaya (2018), the participation might be different in virtual classes than in the commonly taught face-to-face courses, making it more important to get the students' attention so that they commit to learning online. Alkış & Taşkaya researched the Big Five Personality Models based on Costa & McCrae's investigation (2012) and sought data about the participation of different personalities among the population. The authors argue that students are not motivated to participate if they feel uninterested in what is being taught (Alkış & Taşkaya, 2018).

It is essential to comprehend the students and give them advice about how to approach online classes (Alkış & Taşkaya, 2018). Dennie, Acharya, Greer, and Bryant (2019) explore in depth the teacher/student relation and its possible effect on the students' perception of engagement and self-motivation in the classroom. The authors acknowledge different types of engagement in terms of the students' perspective toward the class (Dennie, Acharya, Greer, & Bryant, 2019). First, Dennie et al. (2019) describe emotional engagement as being characterized or related to the different reactions, positive or negative, that students may have toward schooling procedures, such as teachers, classmates, participation, paying attention, and working on tasks. Then, cognitive engagement, which is related to the psychological issues, deals with the students' willingness to put in effort in participation (Dennie et al., 2019). The teacher/student relation is crucial for the formation of the learners.

According to the research on the measurement of student engagement, Fredricks and McColskey (2012) note 3 types of aspects that should be taken into account to measure student engagement: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. First, they identify cognitive engagement by measuring reports of fun and excitement, building supportive and positive relationships with teachers and peers. Second, emotional engagement may entail attention, attendance, time on homework, class preparation, class participation, concentration, participation in school-based activities, and effort. Third, measures of behavioral engagement may include the beliefs about the importance or value of schooling, cognitive strategy use, self-regulatory or metacognitive strategies, and going beyond the requirements of school.

2. Methodology

This research addresses the engagement of students in private institutions in the central valley of Costa Rica in a virtual format. To accurately measure the involvement of students within a virtual lesson it is vital to analyze different aspects that may affect their engagement such as their readiness to study a language through a video conferencing tool, willingness to carry out tasks assigned, and the teacher-student interaction presented. The instrument applied is a survey created with the tool of Google Forms. The questions aim to measure the level of engagement students experience in their distance learning lessons and find out the factors that hinder or boost their involvement.

2.1 Participants

The participants include two groups of ten EFL students in a private language center. The ages of the students range from 18 to 32, but the private institution has no limit of age. Thanks to the convenience of distance learning in terms of place, these students are from all around the country. As a result, the consideration of the participant's background is of the utmost importance for a more accurate analysis of data. Moreover, gender will be taken into account to test whether there is a significant difference in terms of engagement between women and men.

2.2 Instruments

As for the instrument, the survey is divided into three sections. These are: a section to collect sociodemographic information from the participants, a Likert Scale, and one open-ended question. The answers are anonymous to prompt honesty from the respondents and have more reliable data. In addition, since the participants belong to a basic level English group, the survey is translated into Spanish so that they do not have any problems answering them.

This survey is composed of closed-ended questions for the purpose of collecting quantitative data. Since this research seeks to determine the level of engagement of distance learning students in private institutions, neutral data may hinder the data analysis; therefore, a four-item Likert scale is used in the survey. Nemoto and Beglar (2014) pointed out three main aspects of this type of scale, "First, Likert-scales ... should be conceptualized ... as physical measurement. (...) Second, middle categories cause statistical problems [since] ... neutral categories disturb measurement. (...) Third, researchers should only include items on a questionnaire that respondents can answer" (p. 5).

The application of this survey might not be exact due to the number of participants; however, it allows a better picture of English teaching in private institutions in the virtual format. The approach used is suitable for the investigation due to the nature of the research and the population to be analyzed as "Quantitative research focuses on objectivity and is especially appropriate when there is the possibility of collecting quantifiable measures of variables and inferences from samples of a population" (Queirós, André, Faria, & Almeida, 2017, p. 370).

2.3 Data Analysis

The participants involved in this study were two groups of 10 EFL students in a private language center. Background data on the samples was taken into consideration to analyze the data collected, which was grouped into ten different variables (See Table 1). The scale used for students' questionnaires has four different levels, where 1 represents *never*, 2 *rarely*, 3 *often*, and 4 *very often*. This format was used for the researchers to provide the results with a clear analysis and description.

3. Results

In this section all the data are tallied in tables and presented in percentages. Figures are used to represent the results visually.

3.1 Sociodemographic Data

Table 1 shows the results of the participants' demographic data.

3.2 Variables

As seen in Figure 1, most of the answers show a negative result in which 71% of the participants answered that they never turn their cameras on and 14% rarely turn them on; that is, 85% of participants are reluctant to turn on their cameras. On the other hand, 15% of students show a positive result in this area.

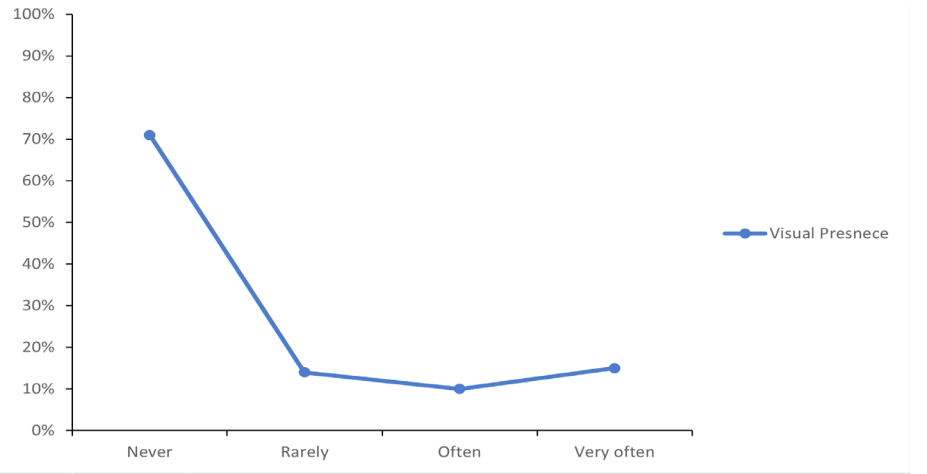

Figure 1. Results on Visual Presence

Most participants acknowledged that the instructor provides the materials necessary for the lesson as shown in Figure 2, where 85% agreed that usually they do not lack material to work on in class, and where 14% think that they rarely receive enough material to work on in class. None of the participants answered *never*.

Figure 3 shows that most participants reported that they very often do the assignments they are given: 76% in total, and 14% answered "often." However, a small number of students answered "rarely." In contrast, 10% of them do not seem motivated enough to do the homework.

As seen in Table 1 above, most students study at home what they learned during class. Figure 4 shows that only eight 8 rarely study after class, 38% of the total. On the other hand, 9 people often review the subject covered during class and 4 very often (equivalent to 43% and 19% respectively).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	N	%	Total
Age: 18-32	21	100%	21
Gender			
Female	14	67%	21
Male	7	33%	
Job Situation			
Full time	8	38%	21
Part time	4	19%	
Unemployed	9	43%	
Study status			
Yes	14	67%	21
No	7	33%	
Field of Study			
Business	5	24%	21
Medicine related	2	10%	
Informatics	3	14%	
Languages	3	14%	
N/R	7	33%	
Languages and other	1	5%	
Economic Situation			
Self	10	48%	21
Parents	7	33%	
Other	4	19%	
Parents' Profession			
Retired	1	5%	21
Construction	5	24%	
Business	6	29%	
Medicine related	1	5%	
Freelance	4	19%	
N/R	4	19%	
Studies			
Ninth grade	1	5%	21
High school diploma	14	67%	
University major completed	4	19%	
University major incomplete	2	10%	

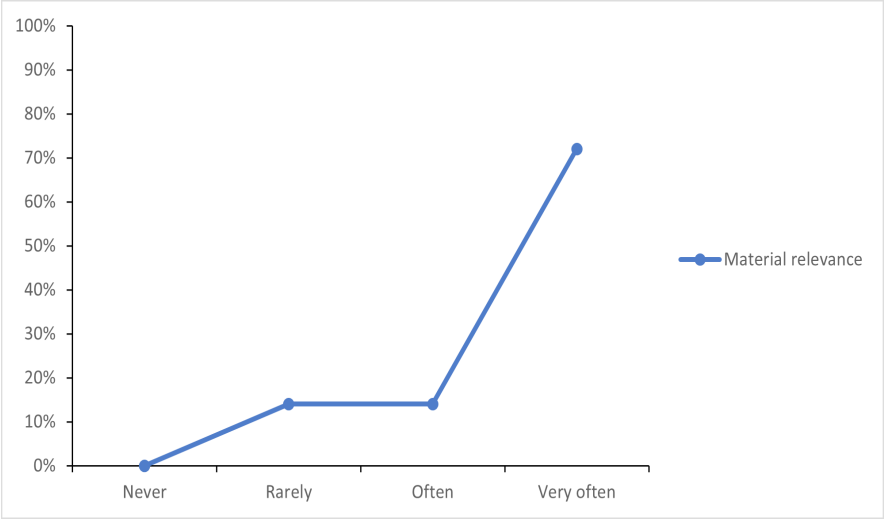

Figure 2. Results on the Relevance of the Material

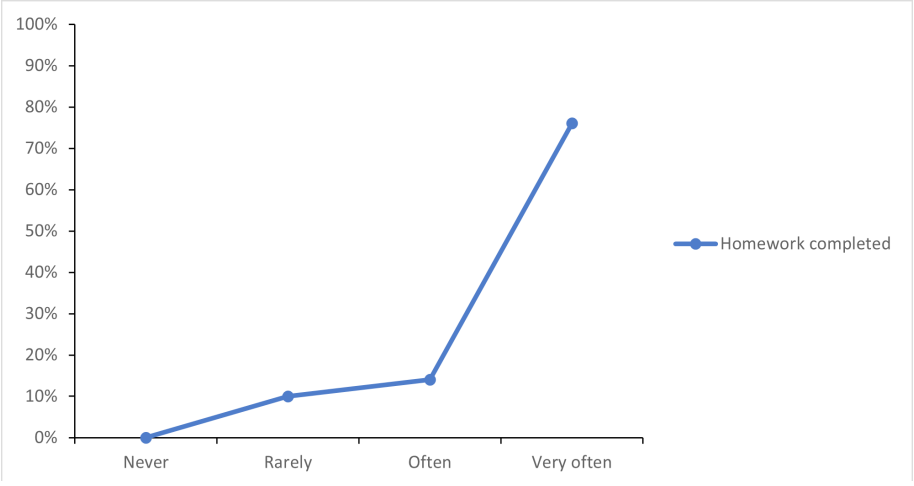

Figure 3. Results on the Homework Completed

Figure 5 shows a high perception of peer participation during class. Only 19% perceives that their classmates participate *little* or *never*; 5% perceive that their peers never participate whereas 14% perceive that they rarely do so. On the other hand, 81% of the students think that there is a high rate of participation in the classes; 38% think that their classmates participate frequently and 43% very frequently.

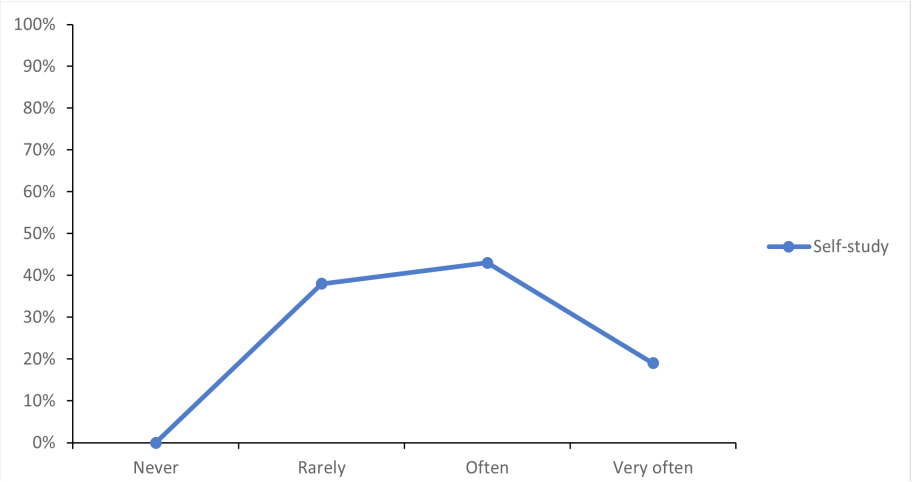

Figure 4. Results on the Self-Study

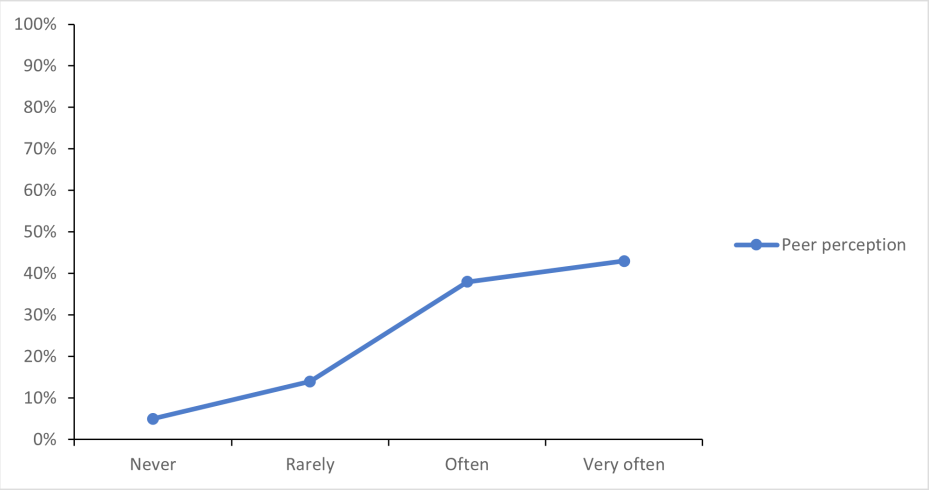

Figure 5. Results of Peer Perception

Regarding teamwork outside class, Figure 6 shows that not many students work with their classmates after the class is dismissed; that is, 58% of the participants do not work with their partners outside class (48% of the learners never work with other students outside class hours, and 10% of the students rarely do so). Meanwhile, 43% of the participants usually work with their classmates after the classes are done (14% of the students often work with their peers, while 29% of the participants work with their classmates outside class very often).

In terms of the application of knowledge to real situations, Figure 7 shows how regularly the students use what they learn in their classes; 38%

rarely use information covered in class, while 62% of the students usually use what they learn in the course; 48% of the students often apply that knowledge, while 14% use it very often.

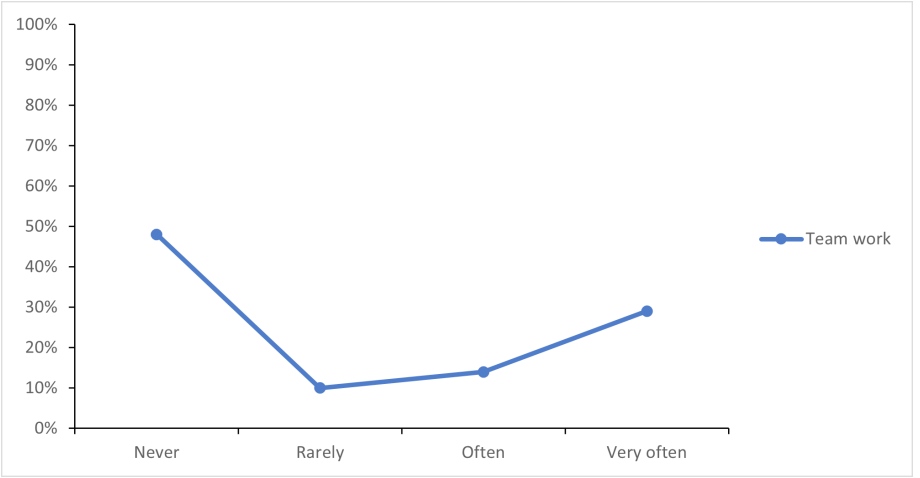

Figure 6. Results on the Teamwork

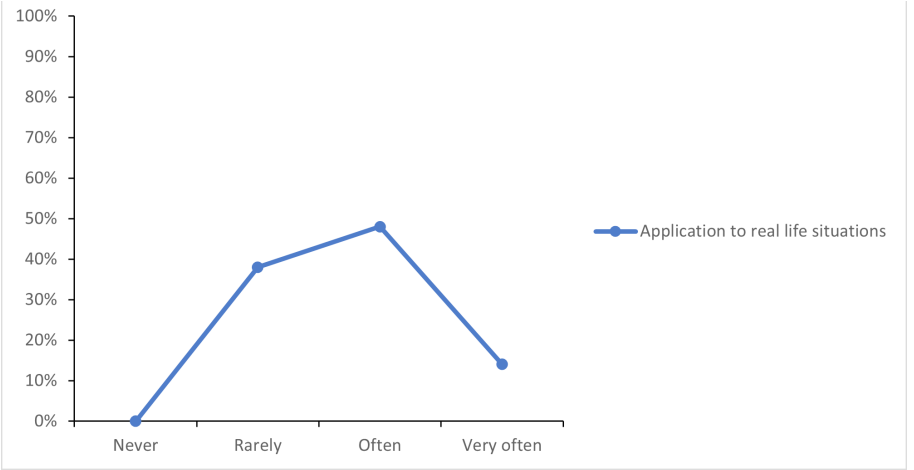

Figure 7. Results on the Application of Knowledge to Real Situations

Figure 8 shows that 43% of the samples stated that they participate very often during the virtual classes, and 24% answered that they participate often; because no students (0%) participate, it can be concluded that students are quite active in their classes. However, 33% of them rarely take part in the virtual class.

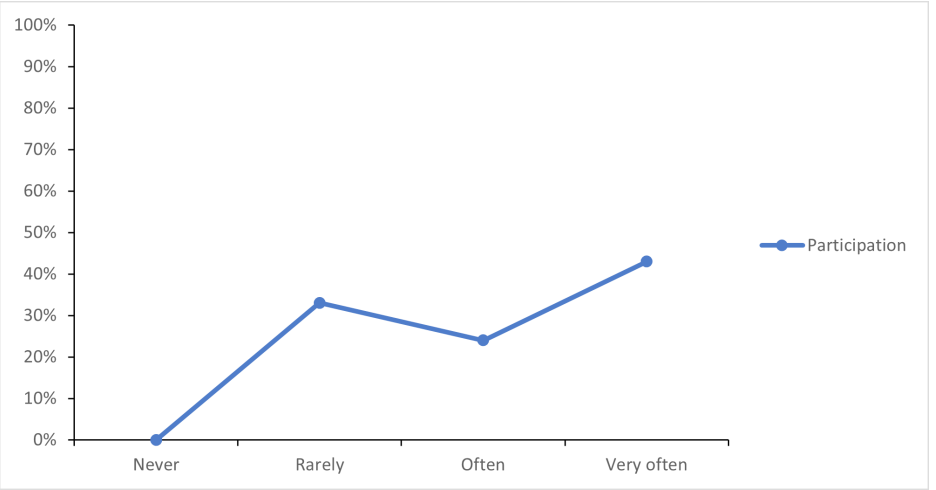

Figure 8. Results on Class Participation

Regarding the feedback received, Figure 9 shows that most students agree that they obtain feedback from their instructors very often (62% of the samples stated so), plus 19% said that they often received feedback. Only 5% said that they never get feedback, and 14% reported rarely receiving feedback.

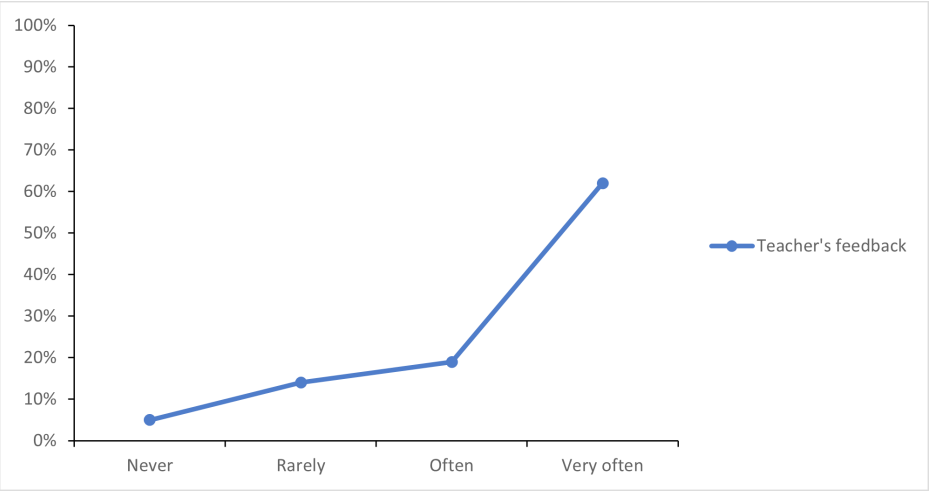

Figure 9. Results on the Teacher's Feedback

Figure 10 shows that students report having a few distractions during the virtual classes; 14% stated that they never get distractions and 48% stated that they rarely have distractions during the learning process. While 29% of the samples said that they often are surrounded by distractions, 10% admitted that they are very often affected by them.

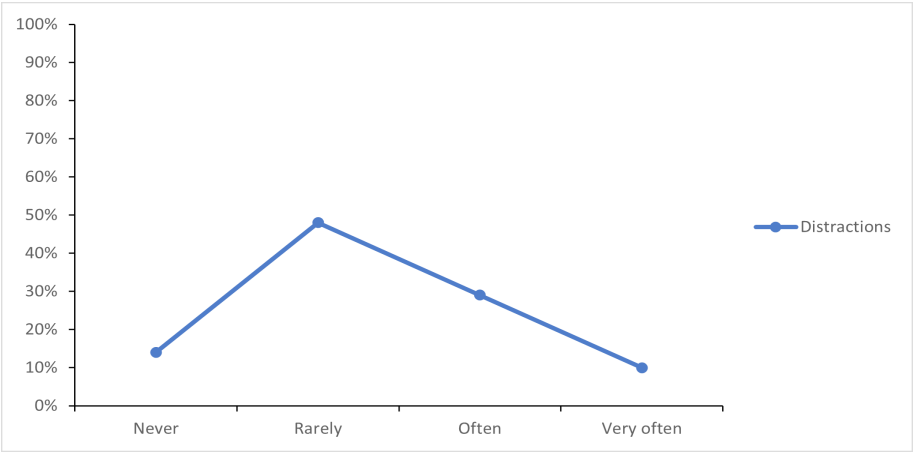

Figure 10. Results Regarding the Distractions

Figure 11 shows that the participants of the survey are engaged with their virtual classes. Certain aspects need improvement, such as visual presence and teamwork, as seen in the figure.

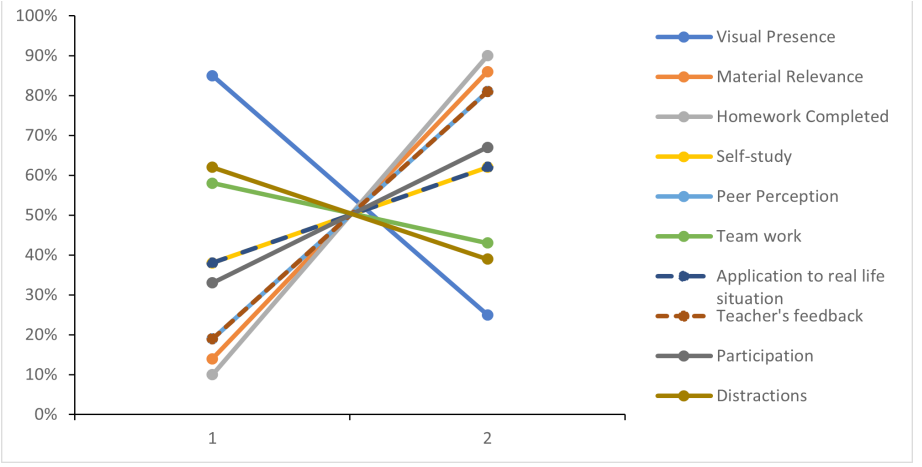

Figure 11. All the Variables Presented in a Comparison Graph

Seen in a different way, Figure 12 shows all the variables organized by the results of either high or low engagement. There are two variables—visual presence and teamwork—that do not follow the pattern of showing high engagement, but rather contrast with the other variables. The two odd variables have in common the lack of interaction with classmates and instructor as being the defining factor in learning a language.

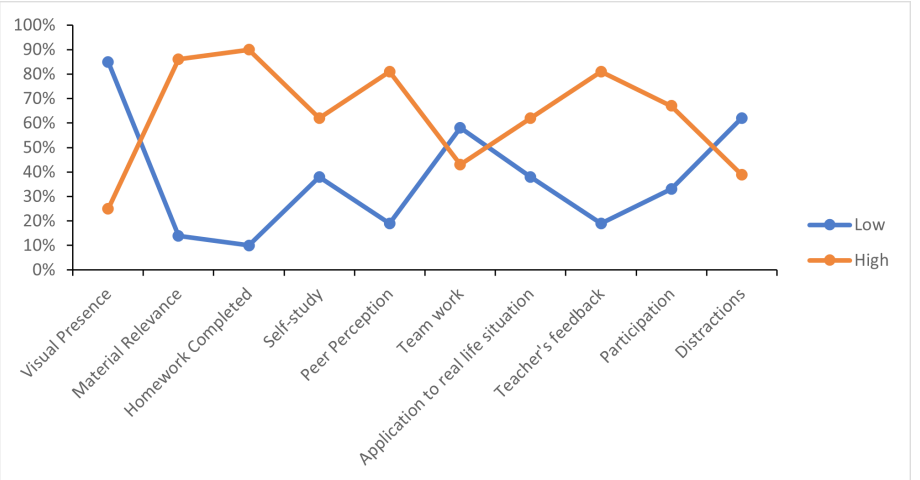

Figure 12. Variables Analyzed by Low and High Engagement

Figure 13 shows participants' answers to one open-end question regarding the change of the class modality. The responses were divided into three categories (positive, negative, and ambiguous) showing whether the students feel a positive or negative influence affecting their engagement. These answers were analyzed and discerned based on their content to determine their category. Due to the type of narrative of some answers, it is hard to tell whether the students give a positive or negative comment, showing ambiguity in the responses. Six participants give a negative answer.

4. Discussion

This study found that engagement experienced by students in private institutions in the Central Valley is mostly positive according to the answers they gave in the survey. The participants agree in almost every question intended to measure the engagement. However, the data analyzed pointed to low peer interaction in this type of virtual format. Moreover, students seem to be highly motivated as they develop autonomy and independence learning when they study asynchronously. Likewise, the teacher's feedback, as well as the activities, increased students' class participation.

To prevent biased replies, students were asked a question in which they do not take themselves into consideration in their answer, and they must tell whether their classmates participate or not. The results regarding class participation indicated that most students are willing to participate in the activities. Therefore, their participation is boosted their motivation, as determined by Sava et al. (2020).

Unlike the results that showed a high level of engagement in terms of participation, other results indicate that the groups analyzed had low peer

interaction outside class. Students usually build a relationship as they interact with each other. Consequently, Dennie et al. (2019) underscore emotional engagement as being "characterized or related to the different reactions, positive or negative, and the students may have toward schooling procedures such as teachers, classmates, participation, paying attention, and working on tasks." Given the results, it may be assumed that students find it harder to build these emotional ties, and thus it may affect their engagement in virtual classes.

The open-ended question indicates that most students find themselves less engaged in distance learning classes they can focus more easily in the face-to-face format. Despite students finding face-to-face classes more appealing, it does not mean that their motivation regarding virtual classes is low. For instance, one of the participants answered that he would rather be in a face-to-face class, but he felt comfortable having classes virtually: "It has been good for me this way, but I do not doubt that face to face class would be much better due to concentration issues." In addition, some students seem to be motivated due to the convenience of the format rather than the lesson itself as one student expressed, "I, because I am a mother, prefer virtual classes."

Students are more engaged in their learning if autonomous learning is promoted. Based on the data collected, because it can be seen that the students are doing their homework, they are committed to the process not only in class but outside of it, since 85% of all students responded positively, while only 10% responded negatively in regard to the development of all their homework. Additionally, students are, not only doing their homework, but also studying autonomously, since 62% of the students of the population in research stated that they are reviewing on their own in their time outside of virtual classes.

With relation to the above data, Little (2020) also shows that autonomy outside the classroom can provide students with positive outcomes when learning a second language. Students seem engaged during the distance learning classes as they have an active role in their commitment to do the homework, study, and practice what is learned outside of the virtual class. These are some of the leads received from the data showing that the students are engaged in the process while being on distance learning. Little (2000) also mentions that the learning process is a matter of learner control and self-direction, and remarks that those that are autonomous students tend to acquire the second language easier than those that lack skills for autonomy. Also, Little (2020), Knipe and Lee (2002), and Thomsen (2000) point out that the role of the instructor is key since they are in charge of guiding students and planning their classes, giving students the chance to practice not only during the class but outside class, to motivate students to spend more time using the language.

Table 2 presents the students' perception of their own performance.

Table 2. Each Student's Answers (in Spanish) on Perception of Self-Performance

Did the switch from face-to-face classes to virtual classes influence your performance? Why do you think it happened?
No, sinceramente es más fácil porque el material está ahí y si no entiendo la clase de igual manera se graba.
Sí, porque es totalmente diferente a clases presenciales pero si uno se lo propone de las dos formas aprende.
No, igual sigo participando y aprendiendo.
Sólo he recibido virtuales, pero siento que sería muchísimo mejor presencial.
Sí, siento que las clases presenciales son mejores y más fáciles de comprender.
Empecé a estudiar cuando ya estaban virtuales; sin embargo, siento que influye un poco pues en clase siento que es más participativo y se tiene más confianza.
Sí, administro mejor mi tiempo de estudio con clases virtuales.
Sí, porque siento que no aprendo mucho.
No, no he ido a clases presenciales entonces realmente no ha afectado o ha influido en mi desempeño.
Sería mejor tener clases presenciales.
Creo que uno debe adaptarse a los cambios... Para mí ha sido bueno de esta forma... Pero no dudo que sería mejor en forma presencial por un tema de concentración.
Nunca he estado en clases de inglés presenciales.
No, igual práctico pero el cambio se sintió en la carrera.
No, yo por ser madre prefiero virtual.
Sí, mejor porque me gustan más ahora.

Thus, the data collected indicate that both teachers and students are acting satisfactorily to engage students in the learning process.

As seen in the literature review, the role of the teacher affects how students perceive their classes and their learning (Dennie et al., 2019). Figure 9 shows that the participants usually receive feedback from their teacher; to be precise 81% of the participants receive feedback very often from the teacher. In addition, according to Dennie et al. (2019), if the teacher gives the students feedback, the learners are more focused on class, and are thus more engaged.

Although the instructor gives the students feedback, the learners must keep on participating to develop their language skills. Morgan (2020) points out that as a teacher in distance learning classes, it is critical to help students develop skills that enable them be more active in the learning process. Based on Figure 8, 67% of the students participate very often in their classes, while just 33% rarely of them volunteer to participate in class. For Morgan (2020) and the data collected, students need to participate and practice in order to

be engaged. Sava et al. (2020) found that 33% of the participants who rarely participate may not be totally motivated. They also say that the students' motivation is an indication of their eventual class participation.

Furthermore, the students perceive their peers' participation in class. Based on Figure 5, 81% perceives that their classmates participate very often in class, while 19% of the learners perceive that their peers rarely participate in the activities provided by the teachers. By applying self-assessment, students show that they are more motivated by the fact that they must give feedback to their classmates at the end (Lefever, 2005). Following Lefever (2005, cited in Bajrami, 2015) and Figure 5, students feel more engaged when they help or peer-evaluate another classmate during the learning process.

Conclusion

Identifying the roles of teachers and learners as well as other factors of distance learning is of great importance to know the influence of this modality on the engagement of EFL students. After analyzing the information gathered, it could be seen that the different factors characteristic of the classes in the virtual modality showed a high engagement index toward the course but not toward the learning process as two elements indicated opposite results: visual presence and interaction between classmates. The results illustrate the effort needed to enhance the engagement by promoting activities that prompt interaction with classmates, and thus more significant learning. Individual tasks are important, but there must be a balance between student-student interaction, and instructor-student to avoid the fronted-teacher lesson and aim for a student-centered approach. Besides, the population consulted during the research leaned in favor of traditional face-to-face classes, but they were willing to continue in the remote mode. As an assumption, this thought might come from the customary face-to-face classes and the lack of exposure to this type of methodology of distance learning; however, it needs to be investigated in depth since this research cannot support this statement. Moreover, it is additional research should be conducted to measure students' engagement, such as having more participants from different private centers to measure the gaps between them.

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8 Appendix

Survey

1. Confidentiality
The purpose of this survey is to discover the engagement and motivation that EFL students experience in private language centers as part of scientific research at Universidad Nacional. By accepting to take part in this survey you have also accepted to respond honestly. The answers are completely anonymous, and any information given in the survey will be treated strictly for the purpose of the investigation.

2. Background Questions

1. Gender
   Male / female
2. Age
3. Work situation
   a. Full time job
   b. Part time job
   c. Jobless
4. Do you study
   a. Yes / No
5. Who pays for your education in this English course?
   a. I do
   b. I have a scholarship
   c. My parents do
6. What are your parents' occupations?
7. Education
   a. Elementary school complete
   b. High school incomplete
   c. High school complete
   d. University incomplete
   e. University complete

3. For the virtual class format (Likert scale).
1 Never; 2 rarely; 3 Often; 4 Very often

1. I turn on the camera when I am in the class.
2. I find too many distractions at home.
3. I am provided with the necessary tools to receive the class.
4. I do the homework the instructor assigned.
5. I read and study the material provided in class.
6. I work with my classmates to complete tasks in the lesson.
7. I work with my classmates outside the online class.
8. I discuss the topics studied in class outside of it.
9. I volunteer to answer questions the instructor asks in class.
10. I receive feedback from my instructor.

4. My Experience Compared to That of Face-to-Face Classes

1. Where do you feel more comfortable to participate?
2. Did the switch from face-to-face instruction to virtual classes affect your engagement in your English class?
3. I am interested in continuing to use this virtual format after the face-to-face class are allowed back again.

Preguntas generales
1. Género (hombre, mujer)
· Edad
· Situación laboral
· ¿Estudia?
· ¿Qué estudia?
· ¿Quién paga por su educación en este instituto?
· ¿Cuál es la profesión de sus padres?
· Educación (seleccione el último título que haya recibido)

Ítemes basados en la escala Likert
· Enciendo la cámara web en clases.
· Suelo tener distracciones en casa.
· Hago la tarea que el profesor asigna.
· Leo y estudio la materia vista en clases.
· Mis compañeros participan en clase.
· Uso lo estudiado en clases durante la semana.
· Soy voluntario para contestar preguntas que el profesor hace en clase.
· Recibo retroalimentación del profesor.

Section B
Pedagogical Practice

Changes in Oral Communication Activities to Enhance an EFL Video-Conference Private Language Center Class[1]

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Introduction

Because learning processes have been taken to virtual modalities due to technological advances and unexpected situations such as the health emergency caused by COVID-19, the inquiry about how oral communication activities can enhance communicative processes in distance-presence learning modalities becomes of utmost importance.

In earlier studies, Baniabdelrahman (2013) examined how online activities, specifically oral diaries, could help English as a foreign language (EFL) university students develop their speaking proficiency determining that the students' response was more positive once they had access to a digital tool. Romaña Correa (2015) investigated the efficiency of using technological-based tools such as Skype to teach English and promote language proficiency skills among EFL learners. Furthermore, Vurdien (2019) explored the usage of videoconferencing to foster students' speaking skills and gather students' perceptions about their learning experience while using synchronous tools in English classes. The results of these investigations have broadened the knowledge about the efficiency of web-based tools in developing students' communicative skills and social interaction in a technological era.

The current study is concerned with the level of interaction that EFL students have during classes while using certain communicative activities and their effect upon the learners' speaking development. Consequently, this research aims to analyze whether the oral communicative activities enhance the communicative process in student-student interaction in an EFL classroom in a videoconference, distance-presence environment in a private language center.

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Videoconferencing as a Tool for Enhancing Oral Communication

Alshahrani (2016) investigated the influence of using videoconferencing to improve Saudi EFL speaking skills. He followed Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis of language acquisition and development approach, which associates input, attention, and output through encounters that can facilitate language acquisition (p. 3). The researcher gathered 36 third-year students from the bachelor's degree in their early twenties from a university located in southern Saudi Arabia. Alshahrani stated that the students had a proficiency level of pre-intermediate to intermediate according to the Common European Frame of Reference. The author then proceeded to randomly divide the students into two groups: an experimental group with 17 students and a control group that had 19 students. Then, he proceeded to divide the students into two groups: The experimental group of students was involved in 1 hour of videoconferencing conversations twice a week for 12 weeks, whereas the participants from the control group received an English-speaking course imparted by an EFL instructor that lasted 100 minutes once a week. Regarding data collection, the researcher stated: "The study adopted a non-equivalent, pretest–post-test, quasi-experimental research design and a combined inductive–deductive research approach to fulfill its research purpose and respond to the research questions" (p. 5). Additionally, Alshahrani included other data collection methods such as interviews, a speaking test, and video recordings. To analyze the data, "A thematic analysis of the interview qualitative data was conducted" (p. 8). The results obtained by the author showed a visible difference in the scores of the post-test between the control and the experimental group, in which the experimental group scored higher than the control group. The author concluded that "the evidence reveals their positive impact on Saudi EFL students' enjoyment and enthusiasm in speaking English" (p. 13).

Baniabdelrahman (2013) examined how the usage of oral diaries—as technological tools—could help EFL students to improve their speaking proficiency levels. The author considered the new needs of the 21st century in terms of digitalization in the classroom and the interaction between learners to make their learning process more significant. Through oral diaries, the speakers could have more opportunities to develop their oral communicative skills. The author's data collection included a speaking pre-test and post-test applied to a total of 40 first-year university students divided into male and female sections who were separated into an experimental group and control group. Regarding the main difference between the groups, the author explained that the experimental group had access to online shared diaries while the second group did not. In this case, these Saudi Arabian participants from the city of Riyadh were in level two in terms of the English domain at the moment of the study. Baniabdelrahman developed and administered a speaking proficiency

test worth 30 points and lasting no more than 12 minutes. The exam used by the author was composed of two parts and had a total score of 30 (p. 82). The author used an assessor and an interlocutor to guide the participants, who work in pairs as candidate A and candidate B, through the completion of the test. The results presented by Baniabdelrahman showed that the gender division did not alter the effectiveness of the performance, but the group using the diaries tool responded more positively to the process. As the author stated, "The use of oral diaries gave students confidence in their abilities, by facilitating language practice daily without exception" (p. 85). He recommended the use of technological tools, such as oral diaries, in developing communicative skills among EFL learners, for they have more opportunities to interact and participate through speaking rather than writing.

Loranc-Paszylk (2015) examined the different options and possibilities video conferencing can give to the English learning and teaching process to develop speaking skills. The author took information about the three main areas of knowledge and skills as a basis for the project. Stating the differences between the grammatical, strategic, and sociolinguistic competences, the author recognized the main three elements for a proficient oral interaction related to input, attention, and output in regard to interaction and acquisition of a new language. By defining the concept of videoconferencing, Loranc-Paszylk established the difference in computer-mediated communication as a whole different story in terms of communication. The author opted to use questionnaires and Polish students to measure the effectiveness of videoconferencing as a tool to enhance speaking skills. The population used by the author were 24 students from the University of Bielsko-Biala in Poland of the B.A. in English within a range of B1 to B2 in English proficiency. The analysis of the data gathered by the author was done according to the questionnaire provided, which the author defined as "an anonymous evaluation questionnaire that consisted of eight 4-point scale close-ended questions and two open-ended questions" (p. 195). The answers obtained by Loranc-Paszylk provided insights into the participants' use of videoconferencing to apply the activity. The results obtained by the author portray a summary of the general overviews by the participants using the mean, standard deviation, and mode. The author concluded that videoconferencing as a tool for enhancing speaking skills worked well (p. 201). The information presented by the author highlights relevant aspects the participants mentioned about their personal experiences. Loranc-Paszylk determined two main possible factors that affected the results: the clear and explicit instructions of the activity and the appropriateness of the activity for self-monitoring their language. The author remarked that the activity was chosen to adopt a register-sensitive approach.

Romaña Correa (2015) analyzed the opportunities for improving speaking skills in the teaching and learning process of English by using Skype as a tool. The population chosen by the author consisted of 12 EFL young

adult students from the language institute of Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas in Colombia. Their ages ranged from 18 to 40 years old. They were four men and eight women with different socio-economic and academic backgrounds and basic English knowledge (A1). Romaña Correa chose a qualitative research approach since its data portrayed information gathered from the participants and their experiences during his research. The instruments included the researcher's reflection journals, surveys, and focus groups. The author used pre-, while-, and post-pedagogical implementation. The pre-stage consisted of just communicating with the participants about the implementation. The while-stage was the enactment of Skype as a tool for 8 weeks—50 hours—in virtual sessions. Romaña Correa used up to 4 students plus the instructor planned the sessions with topics chosen for testing the speaking skills covered previously in face-to-face classes (p. 149). The post-stage was the execution of two instruments to compile information (p. 150). Both instruments implemented by the author were focused on the experience of using Skype for conference calls encouraging speaking skills. For the data analysis, the author followed Corbin and Strauss's (2008) steps of coding starting with open coding for breaking the data into pieces for categorizing in a personal way (p. 150). Then, the author used axial coding for linking and relating concepts, and selective coding for establishing a central category and justify relationships among concepts. Romaña Correa found that participants agreed that Skype did not only enhance their language skills but also their social interaction. The author acknowledged other categories related to the main issue such as reinforcing fluency and oral communication boosting of course contents. Romaña Correa presented crucial information on English, the teaching and learning processes, and even a definition for the computer-mediated communication (CMC) method of teaching languages (p. 154).

Sritulanon, Chaturongakul, and Thammetar (2018) explored a model to teach English by using videoconferencing in distant courses. The authors mentioned several approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT), the flipped classroom approach, and presentation-practice-production (PPP), all of which were used in their study. The authors divided the methodology into four phases: survey the previous distance learning (DL) English course circumstances and interview; model design; model development and the initial model implementation; and model revision and evaluation. Sritulanon et al. developed their research with 2,116 DL students from a specific university, six administrators of a distance learning center, and five teaching assistants. The authors used a questionnaire, unstructured interviews, observation notes, and pre- and post-speaking tests to gather the information. The authors coded the data gathered from the interviews based on Miles and Huberman (1994) and Saldana (2009) (p. 423). The authors also used descriptive statistics to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaires filled by the students. Sritulanon et al. found that "teamwork is a must in this model as mentioned in Mason and

Davis (2000)" (p. 430). Sritulanon et al. mentioned that "students' speaking performance assessment should be conducted three times: before the course, in the middle of the course and at the end of course" (p. 431). Sritulanon et al. concluded that some aspects such as language awareness promotion and vocabulary are necessary to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Vurdien (2019) explored how videoconferencing can be an instrument to improve students' speaking skills and what students consider as the most important results of their learning process. The study was carried out in a private institution in Spain with 30 participants (20 females and 10 males) with ages ranging from 20 to 30 years old who were studying different majors. Their speaking proficiency ranged between levels B2 and C1. Thirty participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group with 18 participants and a control group with 12 participants. The author decided to implement the same activities for both groups but implementing technological tools such as Google Docs, web material, and Zoom in the experimental group, while the control group used face-to-face activities and materials. Vurdien collected the data by recording the meetings, making observations, applying two questionnaires and conducting individual interviews (p. 278). The author found that video conferencing might have positive effects on the students and might increase their interest in the subject (p. 280). Vurdien mentioned that the experiment seemed to be more independent, and participants tried to use the new vocabulary in their conversations since this modality gave them more time to prepare themselves in terms of reading and vocabulary (p 281). The author suggested that the effectiveness of online learning is based on the time students take to be prepared for the classes. In the findings, the author mentioned that students improved their speaking skills by using video conferences and this can be attributed to the time preparation time before the class (p. 282). The author indicated that body language helped participants to understand what their partners were saying when the connection was unstable (p. 287). Vurdien suggested that the videoconferencing modality might help the students in the development of speaking skills, but they are more familiar with the use of the face-to-face technique (p. 288). The author concluded that videoconferencing can enhance communicative skills in students, but there might be technical problems that might affect task performance. The author also suggested the possibility of giving a chance to students to choose which modality to use for the learning process according to what they feel would be the best for them.

1.2 Effect of Virtual Classes on Speaking Skills

Hamouda (2020) studied the effects of virtual environments on Saudi EFL students' speaking skills. The author proposed the usage of virtual tools for improving the communication skills of the students. Hamouda highlighted the advantages of incorporating a virtual teaching method to enhance speaking proficiency and to change the teaching curricula in Saudi Arabia. The author

opted to use a quasi-experimental design with the help of pretest and posttest design. It was conducted with 70 English students at Qassim University. According to the author, a mixed methods design was applied to accomplish their goal because the different ways data were gathered. (p. 181). The population was divided into two groups and taught by the same teacher, but one of the groups continued using the traditional speaking teaching method while the other applied a virtual method varying just in tools but using the same topics (p. 181). To obtain data, the author applied a quick placement test on both groups, an attitudinal questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) speaking test as the pre- and post-test (p. 184). Both tests were applied in different moments to test before and after the listening tasks, and afterward, the results were examined via a paired *t*-test to understand differences and contrasts (p. 184). In terms of results, the author divided the results according to the research questions. According to the outcome, the usage of virtual classes was attributed to the enhancement in terms of pronunciation and comprehension (p. 186). Hamouda stated that the attitudinal questionnaire answers showed that most of the participants agreed on the beneficial effects and usage of virtual classes with minimal disagreement; also, the interviews worked for supportive information for the questionnaires (p. 201). The author concluded by portraying the significant difference in using virtual classes in a language teaching environment (p. 201). Hamouda mentioned that the participants' opinions supported the idea of a beneficial classroom environment for students' development and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in terms of speaking skills.

1.3 Virtual Interaction

Jauregi and Bañados (2008) studied the possibility of enriching the quality of foreign language curricula by providing a motivational environment for purposeful interaction using video-web communication tools. They followed the social constructivism and second language acquisition approach. The research was done in a class of 20 students of Spanish as a foreign language from the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, and 20 Chilean trainee Spanish teachers from the University of Concepción, Chile. For data collection, the authors used three instruments to gather qualitative data: a questionnaire administered to the learners, a recording of each data collection session, and information posted in a blog (p. 190). The researchers found that participants experienced some technical difficulties that affected communication, such as the sound not working or the conversation being delayed (p. 196). Additionally, the authors reported that there was a difference between the two groups of participants since one of them preferred the usage of face-to-face interaction rather than the digital environment. They also reported that Chilean participants recognized that the usage of video-web communication allowed them to recreate environments and helped them learn better about other cultures. Jauregi and Bañados

analyzed the data gathered by using a 5-point scale for the questionnaires, looking at how participants deal with linguistics and intercultural meaning in the assigned tasks, and the blogs were used to analyze the participants' experience in the project. The authors concluded that video-web technology gives teachers and students a pleasant environment for learning a language and culture. Synchronous communication might be difficult for technical problems, such as vision-audio connection and lack of webcams or microphones.

Lee (2007) explored how to enhance oral skills while teaching a second language in a classroom by the usage of one-to-one desktop videoconferencing. Lee's objective was to assist with a useful method for the oral communication skills of students that do not have opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom by using computer-mediated interactions (pp. 635-636). The approach used by the author to develop this research was the Social Constructivist Approach to second language (L2) Learning in CMC, which views language as a cognitive tool to help learners to express and develop ideas in a setting where the teacher assists the student. Lee suggested that through social mediation students expand their linguistic and cognitive skills, which will help them know what things they can achieve by themselves and which ones they need assistance from the teacher to achieve (p. 637). Lee stated that using videoconferencing can help compensate for students' linguistic breakdowns because students can use body expressions. She developed the research at a state university in the northeastern United States and included 36 participants, from which 18 participants were students and the other 18 were advanced speakers (p. 638). Lee applied a videoconferencing survey about the linguistic background and technological skills of the participants (p. 638). She mentioned that for the task design of the research, two activities were used to promote collaborative interactions and form negotiations to complete the tasks. The author indicated that these tasks were completed by using one-to-one videoconferencing in the language lab; moreover, these activities took place outside of the class (p. 639). The author kept the recordings of the task to provide student work samples (p. 640). Lee (2007) found in the students' reflection logs that most of them felt comfortable using videoconferencing as a tool to enhance their speaking skills; however, some students stated that interacting with an expert speaker through videoconferencing required more concentration to interpret and respond in the target language (p. 640). The author concluded that videoconferencing is a useful tool to enhance the acquisition of second language oral skills. Furthermore, Lee expressed that the careful designing of the task and the selection of the participants can maximize the benefits of videoconferencing to foster speaking activities for English as a L2 (ESL) or EFL students.

1.4 Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Toro, Camacho-Minuche, Pinza-Tapia, and Paredes (2019) determined the use of the CLT approach in the English classroom and the strategies and resources used by the teachers to improve students' oral skills. For the instruments, the authors used a questionnaire with close-ended and open-ended questions and an observation sheet. The participants were six English teachers and their 105 students of second, third, and fourth grades of a public elementary school located in southern Loja, Ecuador. The authors applied a questionnaire to the teachers before the observations to gather information about the teacher's opinion of the CLT to enhance their speaking skills (p. 114). Toro et al. used the observation sheet to take notes about the activities and techniques applied by the teachers and to compare the information provided by the teachers (p. 114). The authors found that the usage of pair groups, target language, feedback, activities such as task-based activities, dramatizations, manipulatives, and authentic materials represent an advantage for the learners and have more impact on the communicative process (pp. 115-117). The authors concluded that some activities such as tasks and hands-on activities are not used in the classroom. Moreover, they mentioned that strategies to develop learner's communicative competence were not giving the expected results and providing feedback by the usage of metalinguistic explanations and elicitations to the learners improved their communicative skills (p. 117).

Given the results and outcomes of previous studies in areas of learning through virtual environments and students' speaking skills in virtual environments, the present study seeks to answer the following question:

> How can oral communication activities enhance the communicative process in student-student interaction in an EFL classroom in a videoconference, distance-presence environment in a private language center?

2. Method

The present study integrated quantitative and qualitative data including questionnaires, a class observation, a lesson plan, and checklists that were analyzed through variables in open coding processes to determine pre- and post scores for the outcomes of the investigation.

2.1 Participants

The population of this study were six EFL learners, five females and one male, taking classes on Mondays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in a private language center through the cloud-web video conferencing tool Zoom. They studied in a semi-intensive modality (i.e., bimester schedule) and their proficiency level is B1 according to the CEFR.

2.2 Instruments

For the development of the data collection different quantitative instruments were applied. Because the study intended to evaluate the interaction in terms of student-student oral communication, a background questionnaire with open and closed questions in Google Forms (see Appendix A) was applied to gather general information about the participants and specific details about the students' perception of the oral activities they used in their EFL classes.

Another Google Form questionnaire (see Appendix B) was completed by the teacher to gather information about her teaching style and the oral communication activities that she was applying in her EFL classes through Zoom.

After collecting the information from the questionnaires, one of the students' Zoom sessions recording was observed by the researchers as a pre-treatment to compare the information compiled in the first instruments with classroom-based development in a real setting. To proceed with the analysis, a checklist adapted from Cassar and Jang (2010; see Appendix C) was used to collect pretreatment data. The checklist comprises 10 different statements about the interaction in the class in terms of student-student interaction, and the items are distributed into four scales: interaction, oral activity, digital tool, and participation. Student participants rated each of these statements using the following Likert-type scale: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always.:. This questionnaire was used to to collect details about quantity, quality, or presence.

For the second phase of the data collection, through a 40-minute lesson plan (see Appendix D), an oral communicative task was proposed to increase participants' oral interaction. A pre-task involved a short class discussion about any place that the students would like to visit for 5 minutes. Regarding the speaking activity, it was an oral presentation named "Travel Fair" a technology-mediated task that used breakout rooms in Zoom for the participants to interact while developing their own virtual business stand using PowerPoint to promote a landmark of any part of the world in groups during 25 minutes. The remaining time was set for the groups to present their work in the main room and react to their classmates' work for 10 minutes. The materials required to carry out the task were a computer, tablet, or cell phone with an Internet connection, microphones, webcams (preferably), student books, and Microsoft PowerPoint. To assess the outcomes of this activity, the same checklist applied during the first phase was implemented as a post-treatment. In this case, the instrument was applied separately for each of the two groups made in the breakout rooms.

Lastly, a third Google Forms questionnaire (see Appendix E) was elaborated to gather final insights from the participants about the oral communicative activity employed in the second phase of data collection. This instrument included three closed questions: The first question was directed to ask whether the participants were present during the development of the "Travel Fair" activity, and the other two asked their perceptions and experiences after

the activity. These final questions were based on Likert scales of quality (very poor, poor, fair, good, excellent) and agreement (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree).

2.3 Procedure

Due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all communication for the negotiation with the private language center were done via email. After the letter of consent was approved, the researchers proceeded to contact the collaborative teacher to start with the data collection process.

To gather information for the background questionnaires, both instruments were sent via WhatsApp considering that it was the means of communication that the collaborative teacher had with the students. The background questionnaire for the teacher was delivered directly to the teacher using WhatsApp, and the second questionnaire was delivered to the students by the collaborative teacher. The results from both instruments were compiled by Google Forms.

For the observation, the researchers had access to a recorded Zoom session of the group under study that the private language center's administrators provided. The observed recording corresponded to a 2-hour lesson, and it was stored in the OneDrive application in which it was played. The analysis of the recording was done through the pre-treatment assessment instrument and focused on the usage of communicative activities applied, student-student interaction, and student participation. Each of the researchers rated the checklist based on the information found in the recording, which contributed to the inter-rater reliability. Finally, the researchers agreed on one general score.

Based on the results from the observation, an oral activity named "Travel Fair" was proposed through a 40-minute lesson plan that the teacher applied as a treatment in the class. The day of the activity, two of the researchers entered into the Zoom meeting to corroborate the completion of the task and record the session in the breakout rooms. There was no interaction between the researchers and the participants; the researchers kept their cameras and microphones off during the Zoom meeting. The class was randomly divided by the teacher into two groups: group one with two participants and group two with three participants. At the time of the study, one student had dropped the course. In the breakout rooms, the students discussed the place they were going to present to the rest of the class; then, they organized the information on a PowerPoint slide. After they finished the first stages of the activity, the students returned to the main room and presented their work to the rest of the class. When the activity ended, the researchers left the meeting, saved the recording, and uploaded it to Google Drive so that it could be assessed by each of the researchers with the same assessment tool used for the pre-treatment stage. Afterward, the researchers met and applied an inter-rater reliability procedure to get the final scale.

For the last instrument, the researchers sent a third Google Forms' questionnaire with three closed embedded questions to gather information about students' perceptions of the "Travel Fair" activity. Ideally, this instrument would help to provide qualitative data regarding the efficiency of oral communicative activities in EFL classrooms working through videoconference, distance-presence modalities.

For the analysis of the post-treatment stage, the recordings of the activity were analyzed by each of the researchers using the same checklist applied in the pre-treatment stage. For the inter-rater reliability, the researchers as a group determined the results, and the collected data were moved to an Excel sheet so that it could be tabulated and categorized.

2.4 Data Coding

For data coding, the procedure followed a mixed analysis with a predominance of quantitative instruments over the qualitative. The instruments were applied and analyzed depending on the raw data gathered from the participants and the pre- and posttest. Regarding the qualitative data, for the students' questions, an open coding method was applied to look for categories that showed a pattern of repetition to evaluate the number of answers; however, for the teacher's questionnaire, the data are presented as originally stated by the collaborative teacher to show her opinion.

Concerning the quantitative data, the information from the instruments was compiled and tallied in tables and charts. Since the instruments follow statements and single choice questions with categories, the tables show the percentages of participants that answered and the similarity in the replies. This procedure was applied to both the teacher's and the students' questionnaires.

For the pre- and post-treatment, the same instrument was applied to compare the development of the class before and after applying the activity. The aspects were measured with a Likert scale from never to always. In some statements, a different scale was used to match the variables being observed during the class. In the end, the data gathered from the rubrics is portrayed in charts that show if there is any difference in improvement from the pre-treatment to the post-treatment.

Lastly, the final insights and perceptions of the treatment questionnaire are displayed in a table to analyze the answers given by the participants to conclude the students' points of view about the activity. The information was tallied with percentages and number of answers to check the veracity of and further analysis of the data.

2.5 Data Analysis

For each Likert scale, participants' and teachers' responses were tallied. The survey has two parts. The first one was the background information questions and the second was the survey of participants' perception of class related is-

sues such as student-student interaction, oral activities, and issues related to the remote learning environment.

A pre- and posttest was used to determine students' level of language proficiency. All items in the survey were tallied and analyzed as aggregated data. Inter-rated reliability was used on items where raters employed rubrics to assess students' performance in the class. All changes between the pretest and posttest scores were considered an improvement and vice versa. All data were tallied in tables showing the variable, category, number of answers, and percentages.

3. Results

The students' questionnaire first part answers present information about personal information from the participants. As displayed in Table 1, the students were asked about their age, gender, length of study, and accessibility to Internet and technological devices.

Table 1. Students' Information

Variables	Categories	n	%
Gender			
	Female	5	83%
	Male	1	17%
	Total	6	100%
Age			
	12-19	2	33%
	20-30	0	0%
	30+	4	67%
	N/A	0	0%
	Total	6	100%
Length of Study			
	Less than 6-month	3	50%
	About a year	2	33%
	1+ Years	1	17%
	Total	6	100%
Devices Owned			
	Computer	5	50%
	Cellphone	5	50%
	Tablet	0	0%
	Other	0	0%
	Total	10	100%
Webcam			
	Yes	5	83%
	No	1	17%
	Total	6	100%
Internet Connection Type			
	Wi-Fi	6	100%
	Landline Phone	0	0%
	Mobile Data	0	0%
	Total	6	100%

Regarding the second part of the students' questionnaire, the questions were focused on the activities they encountered in their classes. Table 2 portrays information about different activities and their overall participation in oral activities.

Table 2. Information on Students' Activities

Variables	Categories	n	%
Activities for Communication			
	Voki	0	0%
	Zoom Breakout Rooms	5	42%
	Forums	0	0%
	ClassDojo	0	0%
	Role Plays	1	8%
	Dialogues	3	25%
	Story Telling	1	8%
	Oral Diaries	2	17%
	Voice Thread	0	0%
	Total	12	100%
Preferred Oral Activity			
	Yes	4	67%
	No	0	0%
	Sometimes	2	33%
	Total	6	100%
Reason for Previous Answer			
	Learning	1	17%
	Shyness	1	17%
	N/A	1	17%
	Necessity	2	33%
	Opportunity	1	17%
	Total	6	100%
List of Activities			
	Talking about Daily Life	1	17%
	Activities from the Book	1	17%
	N/A	4	67%
	Total	6	100%
Activity Type			
	S-S	1	20%
	T-S	2	40%
	S-T	0	0%
	Presentation	2	40%
	Total	5	100%
S-S Interaction			
	Low	2	33%
	Fair	2	33%
	High	2	33%
	Total	6	100%

The teacher's questionnaire was also divided according to the type of questions. Table 3 shows the background data from students and the collaborating teacher, and the answers to a subjective question on the perception of the classes.

Table 3. Teacher's Information.

Variables	Categories	n
Length of Teaching		
	Less than a year	0
	Between 1-4 years	0
	Between 5-10 years	1
	More than 10 years	0
	Total	1
S-S Interaction		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
S-S Participation		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
Activities Promote Oral Comm.		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
Tech Used in Tasks		
	Always	0
	Often	0
	Sometimes	1
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1

The questions in the second-part refer to the teacher's class distribution. Questions about digital tools to create oral activities, her teaching philosophy, her point of view about her students' participation in oral tasks, and general information of the development of her class were included in the questionnaire and explained in Table 4. This information is compiled and is needed for further discussion by comparing it with the pre- and post-treatment instruments.

Table 4. Teacher's Background Information

Variables	Categories	n
Communication Activities		
	Voki	0
	Zoom Breakout Rooms	0
	Forums	0
	ClassDojo	0
	Role Plays	1
	Dialogues	1
	Story Telling	1
	Oral Diaries	0
	Voice Thread	1
	Other	0
	Total	4
S-S Response		
	Always	1
	Often	0
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
Speaking Distribution		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
S-S Interest		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
No tech interruption		
	Always	0
	Often	1
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1
No tech interruption		
	Always	1
	Often	0
	Sometimes	0
	Rarely	0
	Never	0
	Total	1

Differences between the pre- and post-scores are represented by 0, *no improvement*, and any number above 0, *improvement,* as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Pre- and Post-Scores.

Variable	Pre-Scores	Post-Scores	
	All Student	Group 01	Group 02
S-S Interaction			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	1	1
Voluntary Participation			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	0.5	1
S-S Comm. Promotion			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	1	1
Teacher Amount of Tech Provided for the Tasks			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	1	1
Ss. Positive Response in the Activity			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	0.5	1
Class Distribution with S-S Oral Comm. Activ.			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	0.5	1
Sts. Interest in Activ.			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	0.5	1
No Tech Interruption			
No	0	1	0
Yes	1	0	1
Amount of S-S Activ. Used			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	0.25	0.25
S-S Comm. Enhancement			
No	0	0	0
Yes	0	1	1

As planned in the activity, the class was divided into two different groups, each of which had different results that were compared in the discussion of the data compiled. The graphs show improvement when the result was above 0. Smaller upward lines define a lesser impact in the enhancement according to the Likert scale used.

Last, Table 6 displays the information gathered in the last questionnaire. Data were tallied introducing variables, categories, number of answers and percentages.

Table 6. Final Insights and Perceptions

Variables	Categories	n	%
Active Participation			100%
	Yes	5	
	No	0	0%
	Total	5	100%
Quality of Activity			
	Very Poor	0	0%
	Poor	1	20%
	Fair	2	40%
	Good	2	40%
	Excellent	0	0%
	Total	5	100%
Agree/Disagree			
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Disagree	1	20%
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	0	0%
	Agree	3	60%
	Strongly Agree	1	20%
	Total	5	100%

4. Discussion

Some differences were found during the analysis of the background questionnaires and the recording provided by the private language center. The information about the activities used in class did not match the recording observed. Certain factors might influence the usage of student-student communicative activities. The time was insufficient for the teacher to develop a variety of activities in the class since she only had 2 hours each Monday for the class. The methodology used by the private language center required the teacher to cover one unit per week, so she needed to adapt the lesson plan to the activities presented in the book to accomplish this objective. However, these activities and the contents of the class might be changed to work on communicative skills by implementing student-student oral communicative activities.

Regarding the enhancement of the student-student communicative process by the usage of communication activities in a video-conference, distance-presence environment, it was found that the activity proposed increased the speaking interactions in the lesson. By the comparison of the pre-treatment stage with the post-treatment stage, an improvement was noticed in the student-student interaction for group one and group two. In addition, voluntary participation increased in group two while in group one it was not as high; however, some improvement could be noticed since about 50% reported participating voluntarily. The differences between both groups are relevant because

they were not arranged manually; instead the teacher assigned the participants randomly. That affected voluntary participation, the positive response to the activity, class distribution, and technology interruptions. The implementation of the activity increased students' interest in the activity and student-student communication.

The final insights and perceptions questionnaire support the information found in the data analysis since the participants expressed their opinions about the activity employed. From the participants that were in the activity, most of them agreed that the innovation helped them to develop their oral communicative skills to a certain extent, and they rated the activity as good in terms of quality.

5. Limitations and Future Research

5.1 Limitations

The research has some limitations regarding the formulation of the questions on one of the surveys and the development of the proposed activity in the classroom. As mentioned above, one of the questions on the student questionnaire was not properly formulated since the age groups were not accurately divided. In addition, one of the students left the course after completing the first instrument. One limitation found during the application of the proposed activity was that two researchers had to be present in the breakout rooms so that the session could be recorded. According to the teacher in charge of the group, the students in group one felt uncomfortable because of the presence of the researcher causing issues during the breakout room activities. The short amount of time and participants in this study affected the generalization of the outcomes. In terms of the rubric used to analyze the pre-treatment stage, some of the researchers had an outdated version of the instrument, which led to different perceptions when the inter-rater reliability was applied.

5.2 Future Research

This project only involved students from a private language center who belonged to different age groups. Further research should include an interview with the collaborative teacher to know more about his or her technological skills so that the activities proposed would be easy to apply for them. Future studies can also consider students in a specific age range so that the researchers can identify the differences between age groups and how the activities are developed among peers from the same age group. Additionally, research can be conducted in a larger group so that the researchers can observe interactions among students.

Conclusions

The data analyzed provides insights into the enhancement of the communica-

tive process in student-student interaction in an EFL classroom in a video-conference, distance presence environment. The information gathered about the innovation implemented suggests that the oral activities are an effective way to enhance the oral communicative process. The comparison of the pre-treatment and post-treatment stages demonstrated important changes regarding students' participation, positive response to the activity, and voluntary participation.

The students' and teacher's perceptions are important quantitative data that must be considered when implementing oral communication activities in the class. This information allows the researchers to understand whether students liked the activity and if they experienced an improvement during the activities regarding the communicative process.

To enhance the student-student oral communication process in a video-conference, distance-presence environment, teachers might implement activities with the characteristics of an oral presentation. These types of activities allow a constant student-student communication process whereby students can put into practice the target language and organize and share ideas about specific topics with their classmates. Video-conferencing also allows teachers to teach different topics in ways that catch students' attention.

Oral activities can enhance the student-student oral communication process in a video-conference, distance-presence environment. However, there are many factors that must be considered by teachers such as the use of technological tools, students' participation, students' interest in oral communicative activities, class distribution, and the time assigned for each class to carry out a variety of activities that enhance oral communication process in a distance-presence environment.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Student Background Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about the students' perceptions of oral communication activities that enhance an EFL video-conference private language center class. All the information requested in this questionnaire will be kept confidential, and its usage will be specifically for research purposes.

Gender: _____

How old are you?
- ○ Between 12-19
- ○ Between 20-30
- ○ More than 30
- ○ Prefer not to answer

How long have you been studying at CTI?
○ Less than 6 months
○ About a year
○ More than a year

Do you have a webcam?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Through a landline phone
○ Through mobile data

Do you like participating in oral communication activities?
○ Yes
○ No
○ Sometimes

Which of the following technological devices to you use to connect to your online classes?
□ Computer
□ Cellphone
□ Tablet

Which of the following activities have you used during your classes?
□ Voki
□ Zoom Breakout Rooms
□ Forums
□ ClassDojo
□ Role play
□ Dialogues
□ Storytelling
□ Oral Diaries
□ Voice Thread

Which activities implemented by the teacher during the class to practice speaking skills do you like the most?: _____

How would you rate your interaction with your classmates for oral communication activities?
○ Low
○ Fair
○ High
○ Very high

Appendix B: Teacher Background Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information about the instructor's teaching style regarding the students' oral communication activities to enhance an EFL video-conference private language center class. All the information requested

in this questionnaire will be kept confidential, and its usage will be specifically for research purposes.

1. How long have you been teaching English?
○ Less than a year
○ Between 1-4 years
○ Between 5-10 years
○ More than 10 years

2. Do the students interact in small groups during the class?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

3. Do the students participate without being asked by the teacher?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

4. Do the activities employed promote oral communication?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

5. Do you implement digital tools to create the tasks?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

6. Which of the following activities have you used during your classes?
□ Voki
□ Zoom Breakout Rooms
□ Forums
□ ClassDojo
□ Role play
□ Dialogues
□ Storytelling
□ Oral Diaries
□ Voice Thread

7. Do the students respond positively to the activities?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

8. Is the majority of the class used for speaking interaction?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

9. Do the students show interest in the type of oral activities implemented?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

10. Can the students communicate clearly without internet connection issues during the activities?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

11. Do you use a variety of oral activities during the class?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

12. Is communication enhanced through the activities?
○ Always
○ Often
○ Sometimes
○ Rarely
○ Never

13. Which activities do you use for enhancing communicative skills?: _____

14. How would you define your teaching philosophy at CTi?: _____

Appendix C: Pre-Treatment and Post-treatment Rubric

Scale	Statement	N	R	S	O	A
I	The students interact in small groups during the class.					
I	The students participate without being asked by the teacher.					
OA	The activities promote (student-student) oral communication.					
DT	The teacher implements digital tools to create the tasks.					
P	The students respond positively to the student-student activities.					
I	The majority of the class is used for speaking interaction.					
P	The students show interest in the type of student-student oral activities implemented.					
DT	The students can communicate clearly without internet connection issues during the activities.					
OA	The teacher uses a variety of student-student oral activities during the class					
OA	The student-student communication is enhanced through the activities.					
Notes: I = Interaction; OA = Oral Activity; DT = Digital Tool; P = Participation N = Never; R = Rarely; S = Sometimes; O = Often; A = Always						

Appendix D: Lesson Plan

Date: November 9th, 2020
Level: 7th
( ) Children (x) Adolescents (x) Adults
Schedule: 7:00 pm -9:00 pm

Number of students: 5
Unit :14
Week 8

Teacher: REDACTED

Book title: *Interchange 2*

Main objective: Talking about landmarks around the world

Specific objective	Grammar/ Vocabulary	Procedures in all the skills	Time	Assesment
To describe landmarks around the world	- Clauses with because - Passive voice with the particle by	PRE-SPEAKING T. asks the Ss. about countries they would like to visit. Ss. mentions some landmark or reasons why they like that place. SPEAKING Ss. are randomly distributed in two breakout rooms to prepare an oral presentation about a landmark around the world. Ss. are expected to include structures such as clauses with because and passive voice. The presentation is supported by a visual aid of their preference (picture, collage, video) designed with Powerpoint. Ss. interact in the breakout rooms preparing the ideas and the visual aid The chosen place is presented to the rest of their classmates on a "travel fair" POST-SPEAKING Ss. remark about their positive aspects of their classmates´presentation MATERIALS -Computer, tablet or cellphone with internet connection -Microphones -Webcam -Student book -Powerpoint	40 minutes - 5 minutes to brainstorm (pre-speaking) - 25 minutes for preparing the visual aid and the information - 10 minutes to present the information to their classmates (5 minutes each group)	Ss. will be able to present information about places and their landmarks using their target language Ss. will be able to ask and answer questions about places around the world

Appendix E: Final Insights and Perceptions Survey

On behalf of the students from the course "Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa ELM 400" of the Universidad Nacional—Paulo Araya Vargas, Daniel Bolaños Solís, Karona Jiménez Córdoba and Josselin Sánchez Hernández—the following questionnaire has been developed to gather final insights or perceptions about the experiment in the oral communicative activity "Travel Fair."
All the information requested in this questionnaire will be kept confidential, and its usage will be specifically for research purposes.

Did you participate in the activity "travel fair" developed during your classes at CTI on Monday, November 9th?

○ Yes ○ No

If your answer was yes, how would you rate the quality of the activity?

○ Very poor ○ Poor ○ Fair
○ Good ○ Excellent

Do you think that this type of activity may help you to develop your oral communicative skills more?

○ Strongly disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither agree or disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly agree

Section C
Learner Factors

Factors Affecting Stress and Anxiety Levels of Third-Year Students in the UNA English Teaching Major in the Remote Learning Process During the Covid-19 Pandemic[1]

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Introduction

While attending English classes at a university and taking six courses or more, some students might start experiencing some episodes of stress and anxiety. Other factors increasing this problem might be related to the lack of proficiency in the language, a heavy academic load, or personal reasons such as lack of motivation or self-confidence (Jin et al, 2018). Although some factors can affect students' levels of stress and anxiety during the regular class period, it is necessary to inquire whether the migration to a remote learning mode of English classes could generate an unnecessary increase in the levels of stress and anxiety among third-year students from the English Teaching major at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica (UNA). COVID-19 emergency has forced the migration to remote classes, and has led to additional factors increasing episodes of stress and anxiety among students. The number of hours using electronic devices, limited human contact, and the need to adapt to a new learning model are some examples of external factors that have increased stress in students.

This investigation aims to find specific factors that increase levels of stress and anxiety among third-year students after the change in the mode of delivery, and how specific traits (gender and location) can influence the increase of stress in remote learning settings.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Definition of Anxiety and Stress in English Classrooms

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

Stress and anxiety are common problems in language classrooms affecting both teachers and students (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). First, it was essential to understand the concepts of anxiety and stress because they have had an important role in learning. As Ansari (2015, p. 2) said, "broadly speaking, anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system." Stress has been another factor to consider in the research purpose of this paper. Related to the state of anxiety, Clunies-Ross et al. cited by Lazarus (1993) proposed:

> Stress is defined as a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities. Often, an individual experiencing stress has appraised a situation as threatening and holds a belief that they do not have adequate resources or strategies to deal effectively with its demands. (p. 694)

The definitions of both anxiety and stress not only showed emotions to be part of serious diseases that can be acquired in different ways, but also indicated that they can reduce people's performance. Specific factors trigger the effects of stress in the human body.

1.2 Factors Triggering Stress and Anxiety

Stress and anxiety may have negative academic, cognitive, and social effects on learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre, 2017); however, to understand how students' levels of stress and anxiety have been affected by the migration to remote learning, one must first familiarize oneself with the factors which trigger the stress and anxiety in the English classroom. Gkonou (2013) not only provided a list of triggering factors but also contextualized them due to the nature of the researcher's experiment—a diary study. According to Gkonou's results, "input, language skills, the teacher, mistakes made in class, high reliance on marks, tests, and extrinsic motivation" (p. 53) can be perceived as the major stressors. Starting with input and low self-efficacy, both seemed to be concerning factors for students because of the elevated impact they have on their levels of stress and anxiety (Gkonou, 2013). These factors can be a result of the fact that older students tend to seek independence mentally and behaviorally (Jin & Dewaele, 2018); not fulfilling that desire can be reflected in triggering stress and anxiety.

The four skills were also considered boosting factors because of the obstacles that students face while trying to complete activities. The most common difficulties students experienced while completing tasks were limited knowledge regarding vocabulary, anxiety caused by time limits, lack of real-life goals to fulfill practices, and sentiments of fear of self-exposure while participating (Gkonou, 2013). This last aspect goes together with the two factors addressed below, the teacher and the mistakes made in class. Gkonou stated how the teacher's attitude influenced the students' stress and anxiety

levels. In the author's research, since the teacher's behavior toward a student's low performance was questionable, and the learners expressed high levels of anxiety referring to the language (Gkonou, 2013). In contrast to this situation, through their Post-Structural Feminist Pedagogical Learning experiment or PFPL, Liao and Wang (2015) achieved positive results due to their feedback system which consisted of not correcting students in front of their peers. Furthermore, she added that the diary entries revealed an overall student tendency to be intimidated by and disappointed by the mistakes they make in class. This last statement is connected to the "fear of self-exposure" since students' behaviors and thoughts were highly influenced by their classmates' perceptions of them (Jin & Dewaele, 2018).

Reliance on grades and tests led to high levels of stress and anxiety among students as well (Gkonou, 2013). Students expressed how concerned they tended to be about their final grade; nonetheless, regarding the tests per se, learners indicated that they felt more stressed and anxious due to their perceptions of tests rather than the actual tests. The last factor listed by Gkonou was extrinsic motivation which, in contrast to the other factors, created a positive correlation between stress, anxiety, and motivation. This happened because an external reward might emerge through studying and succeeding.

1.3 Strategies to Cope with English Classroom Anxiety

Jin and Dewaele (2018) noted that high levels of anxiety can impact students' learning process negatively; that is, anxiety could interfere with students' learning process as well as their self-confidence in Foreign Language (FL) classes, and might strengthen their anxiety levels to create a vicious cycle later. Jim and Dewaele also stated that when difficult situations, such as anxiety or stress, emerge in a classroom, applying effective strategies to cope with it is crucial. From the perspective of the facilitators, one of the techniques that could help students cope with the situation is including positive orientation in the classroom. As students grow older, they tend to seek mental and behavioral independence. Thus, students may benefit more from being oriented in their learning process. Indeed, positive orientation is a more reliable predictor of FL classroom anxiety, for students relate their positive feelings with their teacher's and classmates' support, and at the same time, are encouraged to offer help to others. The authors specified that learners—and especially adult learners—report benefiting more from peer support rather than teacher support; therefore, they suggested that another important aspect that should be considered in FL classrooms is promoting and fostering inter-peer relationships among students. A peer refers to the person with whom the learner interacts the most; the learning might eventually be influenced in terms of behavior and thoughts. Strengthened inter-peer relationships offer the comfort learners need during their learning process to cope with anxiety (Jin & Dewaele, 2018).

Studies have largely explored the teachers' perspective (that is, how

the teacher can cooperate), but it is also necessary to focus on how students construct the terms and conditions of their own learning (Bandura, 1989). The author pointed out that since students are in control, they can also manage the affective side of their learning process. This means that they have the ability to reduce their anxiety levels. For Guo et al. (2018), students who report lower levels of anxiety and stress tend to implement self-regulatory strategies more often than those who report higher levels of anxiety and stress. They confirmed that the use of affective and cognitive strategies could bring potential benefits to the learners. Through moderating their perceptions of self, of others, and of their foreign language learning and performance, students could regulate and, eventually, decrease their anxiety and stress levels. This could also indicate that students are aware of the importance of self-motivation, self-encouragement, the boosting of self-confidence, and positive language learning beliefs (Guo et al., 2018). As these authors stated, a class environment—albeit face-to-face or virtual—should be comfortable and secure for students to allow them to take control of their learning process by applying effective strategies that will enhance their learning process.

1.4 Covid-19 and the Current Situation in Higher Education

The year 2020 has been difficult for many social sectors due to the ongoing outbreak of Covid-19. The educational sector has been one of the most affected as most curricula were based on face-to-face interaction, including developed countries such as the United States, Germany, Italy, China, and developing countries like Brazil, South Africa, and India (WESP, 2020). With restrictions establishing social distancing, a drastic change seemed to be urgent in the adaptation to the new reality. Wu (2020) stated that this pandemic has impacted the global higher education sector so severely that universities worldwide have converted their curricula to an online environment. Their responses varied depending on the severity of people infected as well as the countries' resources. An analysis of the first wave response from universities toward COVID-19 showed that it depended on the severity the disease as well as on countries' resources. It suggested that nearly all of the developed countries closed campuses moving to online instruction whereas developing countries, like Brazil and Singapore, only had localized closures, not a country-wide policy, and implemented an online instruction strategy to support students (Crawford et al., 2020).

The authors also stated that variables such as the number of cases per million, the economic status, and the geographical position of each country determined the type of response in this pandemic scenario (Crawford et.al., 2020). To exemplify, a description was provided regarding the response of countries closer to China or with a large number of infected cases per million to apply digital strategies for higher education, especially Hong Kong that went through the intense extradition law protests (*South China Morning Post*,

2019). This is the reason their response to the outbreak was considered accurate. Nonetheless, Wu (2020) remarked that the abrupt transitioning of content to an online environment was not necessarily pedagogical; thus, as data connectivity has become an essential element either for work or study (Morris, 2020; Perez, 2020), the inquiry to be questioned is whether the sources of higher education institutions enable them to be prepared for such forced digital era of learning (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020).

The previous information established a new focus in education during pandemics, which was not only the virtualization of the curricula, but also the implementation of an online pedagogy in the variety of teaching strategies to be used in classrooms due to the inequality of online access faced by some students, and even teachers (Crawford et al., 2020).

1.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Remote Learning

For many students, remote learning might be a new process. Although in most cases it was introduced due to the necessity of continuing the learning process, which was interrupted by Covid-19, studies have shown some advantages and disadvantages of this learning modality. Guo et al. (2018), suggested that remote learning had advantages depending on the mode of delivery. Biggs (1996, 1998) studied Hong Kong students and provided a less stereotypical description of Chinese learners. The researcher believed repetition was a better way of understanding and improving remote learning. Moreover, for students whose first language was not English, the online environment provided them with more privacy and extra time to respond to class discussions (Zhang, 2013). Instructors were seen as figures of authority in the classroom; however, in remote learning, teachers served as a guide, and students took control of the class. This helped them feel comfortable and created an improvement in class participation.

Astutik et al. (2020) found that remote learning had disadvantages such as depression, stress, and anxiety in students. Such factors could affect students not only academically but also in a personal manner as well as affecting self-confidence. They stated that stress was the worst obstacle to academic performance, and almost 60% of university students in Uganda dropped out due to depression, anxiety, and disability. In addition to the academic load, students had to create a balance between social relations, family, and personal necessities, which could lead to episodes of stress and anxiety due to the high levels of pressure. For students, the need to do well socially and academically increased stress and could eventually be followed by the need for mental guidance to overcome and control external factors that might have triggered unnecessary stress. Astutik et al. (2020) also stated that common mental health disorders among students were also associated with social, demographic, behavioral, and educational factors, and students did not receive the appropriate psychological support required to overcome the situations that might have

caused stress and anxiety. The authors said that the fact that the prevalence of depression and stress were greater among lower level students could be explained by the greater pressure to adjust to the new learning environment faced by the lower-level students. The adaptation to remote learning could be a difficult process for students since they had to find new learning strategies, and psychological counseling was key in this manner.

1.6 Remote Learning at Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje

A survey related to urban and rural areas was carried out to determine the geographical location of the students of each major at each site. The percentage of students per area showed a large difference with the rural area taking 17.99% and the urban area with 82% of the total (Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica, 2020b). The results of the survey suggested that in the English teaching major at Escuela de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje on the Omar Dengo campus, most students come from urban areas and less from rural areas. The students from the Great Metropolitan Area (GMA) of Costa Rica represent 73.38% and people coming from outside the GAM cover 26.62% of the total number of participants (Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica, 2020b).

After obtaining the previous results, each of the UNA colleges developed specific strategies to support students who had problems in their learning process, such as poor Internet connectivity or lack of technological sources. In the case of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (FFL), to which students from the English Teaching major belong, the steps taken included collecting lists of students with connectivity issues or in remote areas to acknowledge the problem so that they could be offered SIM cards and equipment (Universidad Nacional, 2020a). These procedures helped counteract the imbalance of learning opportunities among students because some of them live in remote areas. As expected, we assumed that the university would be able to tackle stress and anxiety among those students with a more disadvantaged condition.

One of the decisions made by UNA during this pandemic was the implementation of remote learning and virtualization of its curriculum in addition to several strategies to support all the students (Universidad Nacional, 2020a). Nonetheless, the abrupt change of the institution's operation related to learning settings cannot be ignored. For this reason, the main research questions of this paper are the following:

> Could the migration to remote learning of the English classes generate unnecessary stress and anxiety among the third-year students from the English Teaching major at UNA?
>
> If so, what factors trigger stress and anxiety in remote learning among the third-year students from the English Teaching major at UNA?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

A total of 19 third-year UNA students in the English Teaching major participated in the study. Male and female students, either from an urban or a rural area, were considered to ensure the diversity of the pool. Prior to the research the participants had taken four semesters in a face-to-face modality; nonetheless, due to the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, students were required to receive most—if not all—of their fifth-semester courses by remote learning. The study was carried out while they were attending the sixth semester of their major.

2.2 Instruments

To identify the possible external factors influencing the levels of anxiety and stress in students, a quantitative method was adopted. Since there was no existing instrument, a survey was developed (see Appendix) to measure the impact that several determinants could have on the affective spectrum of students' learning process. Participants were asked to indicate their gender (female/male) and the area they come from (urban/rural). The previous social variables were requested to analyze the survey. The survey was divided into five different categories: adaptation process, task deployment, communication with the teacher, learning setting, and feeling about learning. Each category contained different statements which the students had to answer by choosing from 1 Strongly disagree to 4 Strongly agree on a 4-point scale. This scale was selected to prevent participants from choosing the "neutral" option as it could alter reliable results, as well as the true essence that was expected to be collected in the research.

2.3 Procedures

To do the survey, the target population was selected and then contacted. First, a third-party person was requested beforehand to choose the target population to meet the participants. This person had direct contact with the specific population, so the process was fast. A third-party person was required to give the researchers the numbers of people to distribute the survey. Then, with the population already contacted, the survey was given to each of the participants. The survey had a one-week time limit to be filled out; it was carried out during the second week of October, so the participants would not feel pressured to do it quickly.

2.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data elicited, t-tests were used to examine the differences in the responses in each of the triggering factors increasing stress and anxiety according to the social variables of sex and location. The first set of data collected depicted a general panorama of all the triggering factors based on gender and

location to determine which factors are the most significant. The following t-tests described specific information about each of the variables and how they varied to establish whether gender or residence location had a relevant role in the impact of the triggering factors.

3. Results

Figure 1 provides a general picture of the factors triggering stress and anxiety taking into consideration the social variable of sex. There has been an increase in the levels of stress when considering gender. This social variable represents a significant feature, for men have experienced more stress and anxiety compared to women in 10 factors. Furthermore, Figure 1 describes how women were more affected by stress and anxiety only in the factors of total credit workload and lack of an appropriate setting. When it comes to gender, Figure 1 shows that both men and women present a considerable increase in their levels of stress and anxiety, and considering all the triggering factors, whereas men are more affected by the factor of procrastination and less affected by the delayed communication with the instructor, women's stress is more recurrent in the total credit workload and less frequent in the lack of tools.

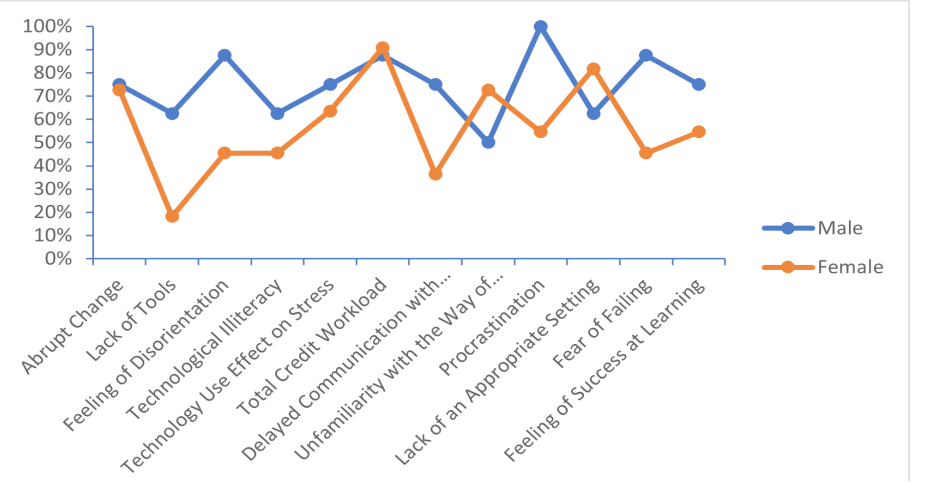

Figure 1. Overall View of Factors Triggering Stress and Anxiety by Sex

Figure 2 shows the variables that can trigger stress and anxiety, and compares them by location. It also shows that the difference between students from urban and rural areas does not have a large gap for most of the variables; however, the increase of stress and anxiety is higher in some of those variables. For example, the abrupt change in urban areas is twice the percentage compared to rural areas. Despite the differences in some of the variables, the urban population reports higher levels of stress and anxiety. Whereas only 5 variables are higher for the rural areas, 7 are higher for urban areas. In short,

the urban population shows higher levels of stress and anxiety than the rural population.

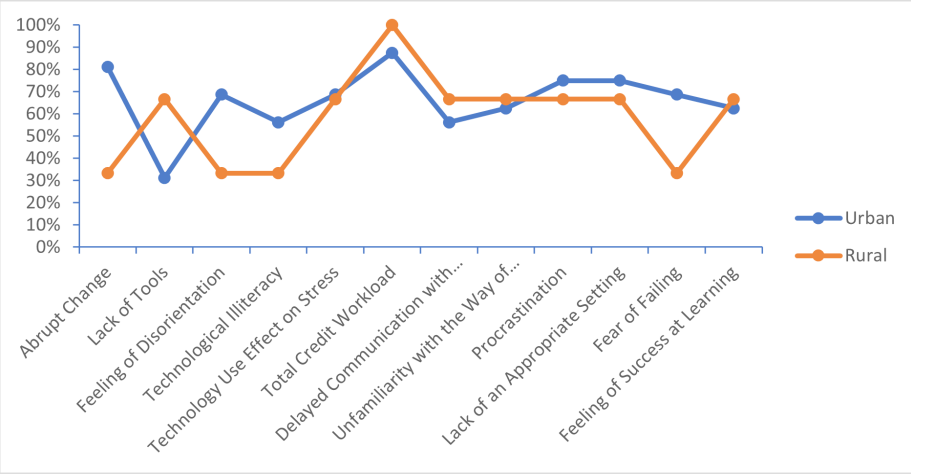

Figure 2. Overall View of Factors Triggering Stress and Anxiety by Location

Exploring the triggering factors further, Table 1 shows how the abrupt change, lack of tools, feelings of disorientation and technological illiteracy affect the levels of stress and anxiety in third-year college students in the English Teaching Major during remote classes. It shows the results for the adaptation process. The abrupt change, lack of tools, feeling of disorientation and technological illiteracy are the triggers for students' increased levels of stress and anxiety regarding the adjustment to remote learning. The abrupt change from face-to-face classes to remote learning affects most of the participants; 14 of them (73.68%) answered "yes" to this factor. Students appear to be less affected by the lack of tools as only 7 (36.84%) consider this a triggering factor. The feeling of disorientation seems to have a greater impact on students' adaptation to the new way of delivery given that 12 (63.16%) perceive it as a stress and anxiety cause. The last factor divides the participants almost in half; only 10 (52.63%) students out of 19 selected this item as stress-triggering.

Considering the variables of gender and location regarding the adaptation process category, it is possible to determine the influence of these two variables in the levels of the participants' anxiety. In terms of the abrupt change, regarding the gender variable, there is not much difference between males and females since 6 (75%) and 8 (72.73%) answered "yes" respectively. Nevertheless, the location variable shows discrepancies since 13 (81.25%) participants from the urban area and only 1 (33.33%) from the rural area responded "yes" to this same item. With respect to the lack of tools, although most participants do not seem to be struggling with this factor, Table 2 clearly shows males were most affected by this trigger.

Table 1. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Selected Triggers

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Abrupt Change	14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100%
Lack of Tools	7	36.84%	12	63.16%	19	100%
Feeling of Distorientation	12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100%
Technological	10	52.63%	9	47.37%	19	100%
Total	43	56.58%	33	43.42%	76	100%

Table 2 shows how the social variables of gender and location influence the triggering factors of abrupt change, lack of tools, feeling of disorientation, and technological illiteracy in the levels of stress and anxiety. As we can see, 5 (62.50%) males represent the most affected population. Additionally, the location variable does not show a great influence either; nonetheless, people from the urban area received a greater impact because 5 (62.50%) of them determined this as a triggering factor. It appears that a feeling of disorientation impacted more males than females. Table 2 shows how 7 (87.50%) out of 8 (100%) males considered this triggering factor relevant. The females' section looks a little more divided as only 5 (45.45%) out of 11 (100%) view this factor as triggering. Not to mention the split answers regarding the location variable, 11 (68.75%) participants from the urban area report this factor as triggering whereas only 1 (33.33%) participant from the rural area considers it relevant. The final factor shown in Table 2 represents an evident difference between males and females. Males appear to be more affected by technology illiteracy, for 5 (62.50%) out of 8 (100%) marked this item as a triggering factor for them whereas for females, only 5 (45.45%) out of 11 (100%) considered it relevant. The location variable also provides important insights because the urban area is determined to be the most affected by this triggering factor. 9 (56.25%) participants out of 16 (100%) from the urban area report that technology illiteracy caused an increase in their levels of stress and anxiety. Only 1 (33.33%) of the students from the rural area considers this item relevant in terms of stress and anxiety.

Table 2. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Selected Triggers by Gender and Location

Triggers		Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Abrupt Change		14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100.00%
Sex						0	
	Male	6	75.00%	2	25.00%	8	
	Female	8	72.73%	3	27.27%	11	
Location						0	
	Urban	13	81.25%	3	18.75%	16	
	Rural	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	3	
Lack of Tools		7	36.84%	12	63.16%	19	100.00%
Sex						0	
	Male	5	62.50%	3	37.50%	8	
	Female	2	18.18%	9	81.82%	11	
Location						0	
	Urban	5	31.25%	11	68.75%	16	
	Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	
Feeling of Disorientation		12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100.00%
Sex						0	
	Male	7	87.50%	1	12.50%	8	
	Female	5	45.45%	6	54.55%	11	
Location						0	
	Urban	11	68.75%	5	31.25%	16	
	Rural	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	3	
Technological Illiteracy		10	52.63%	9	47.37%	19	100.00%
Sex						0	
	Male	5	62.50%	3	37.50%	8	
	Female	5	45.45%	6	54.55%	11	
Location						0	
	Urban	9	56.25%	7	43.75%	16	
	Rural	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	3	

Figure 3 illustrates the increased levels of stress and anxiety in regard to the abrupt change by gender and location.

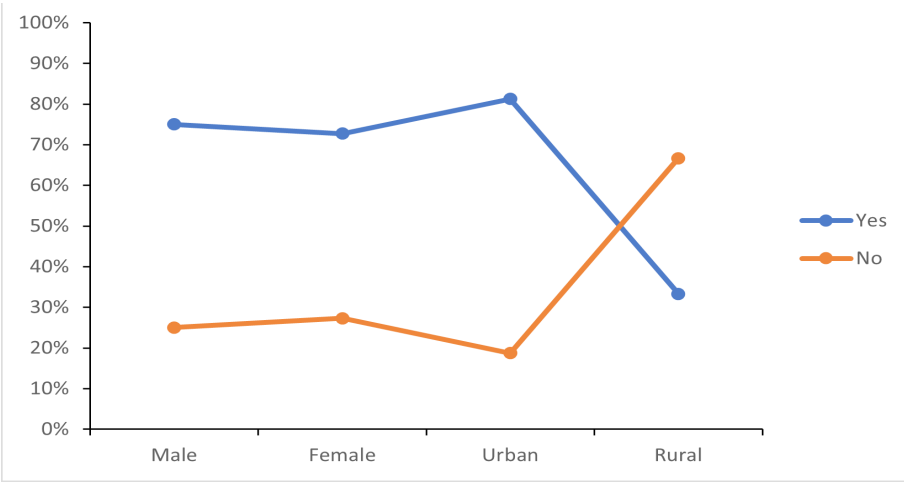

Figure 3. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Abrupt Change by Gender and Location

Figure 4 illustrates the increase in stress and anxiety regarding the lack of tools by gender and location.

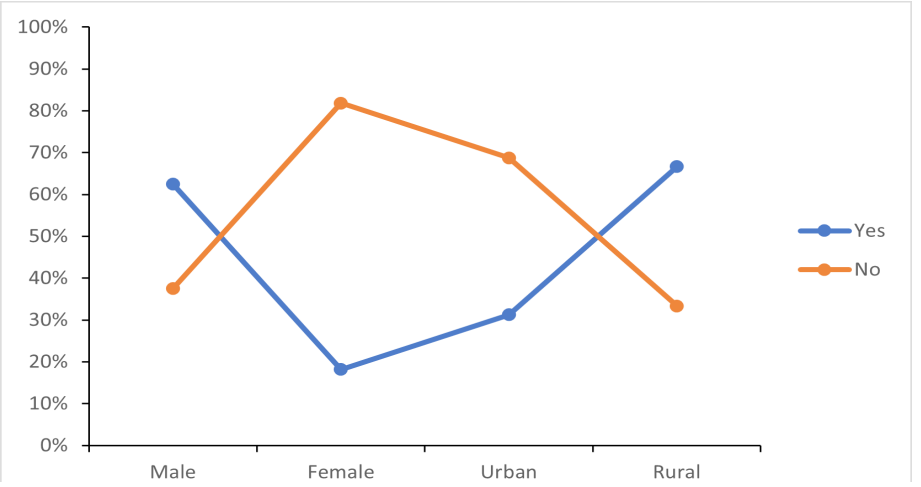

Figure 4. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Lack of Tools by Gender and Location

Figure 5 illustrates the increased levels of stress and anxiety regarding the feeling of disorientation by gender and location.

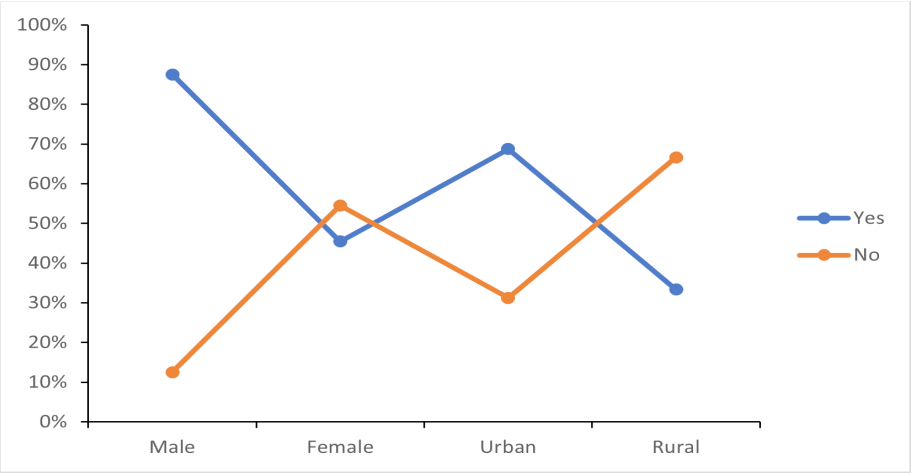

Figure 5. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Feeling of Disorientation by Gender and Location

Figure 6 illustrates the increased levels of stress and anxiety regarding the technological illiteracy by gender and location.

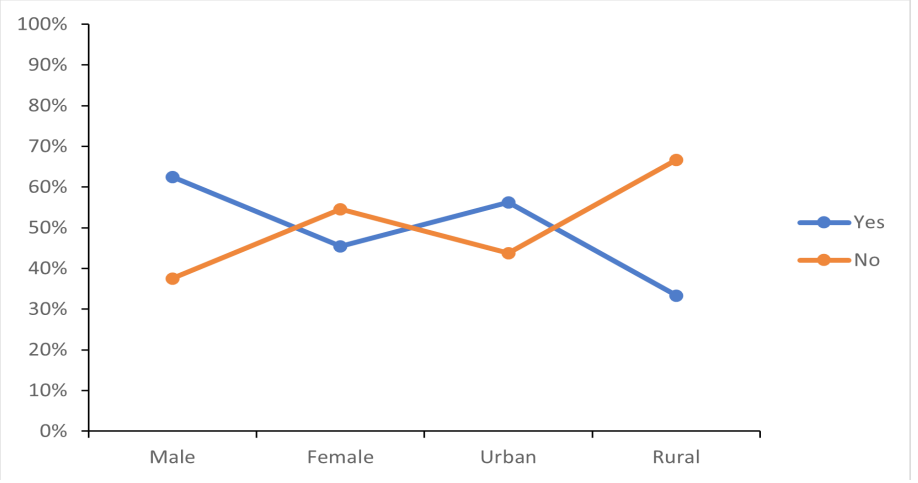

Figure 6. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Technological Illiteracy by Gender and Location

Regarding the factors related to task deployment, Table 3 shows how technology use and total credit workload affect the levels of stress and anxiety in third-year college students from the English Teaching Major during remote classes. It shows how the trigger of technology use effect generally has a lesser impact on the students, 13 of which (68,42%) consider this factor as a trigger for stress and anxiety. The trigger of total credit workload is reported to have a

greater influence on the increase of stress and anxiety because 17 participants out of 19 (89,47%) recognize it as stress-and-anxiety triggering. Table 3 shows that the technology use effect is perceived as having less influence on the increased stress and anxiety than the total credit workload.

Table 3. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Technology and Workload

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Technology Use Effect on Stress	13	68.42%	6	31.58%	19	100%
Total Credit Workload	17	89.47%	2	10.53%	19	100%
Total	30	78.95%	8	21.05%	38	100%

Taking into consideration the social variables of gender and location specified in the factors of technology use effect and total credit workload, results show a broader scenario. For the former, in the results shown in Table 4 and Table 6 (75%) men out of 8 report the negative influence of technology use in their levels of stress and anxiety, and 7 (63,64%) women out of 11 agree with this statement. Additionally, location contributes to the increase of the levels of anxiety and stress, for 11 participants (68,75%) from urban areas out of 16 and 2 rural ones (66,67%) out of 3 share the feeling that the technology use effect is a relevant triggering factor. The answers do not vary much regarding the social variables. Figure 7 shows the increase in the levels of stress and anxiety regarding technology use by gender and location. It shows a slight difference between women and men regarding this factor though men present higher levels of stress and anxiety than women. Figure 7 also shows how the answers of the students from urban and rural areas are almost equal.

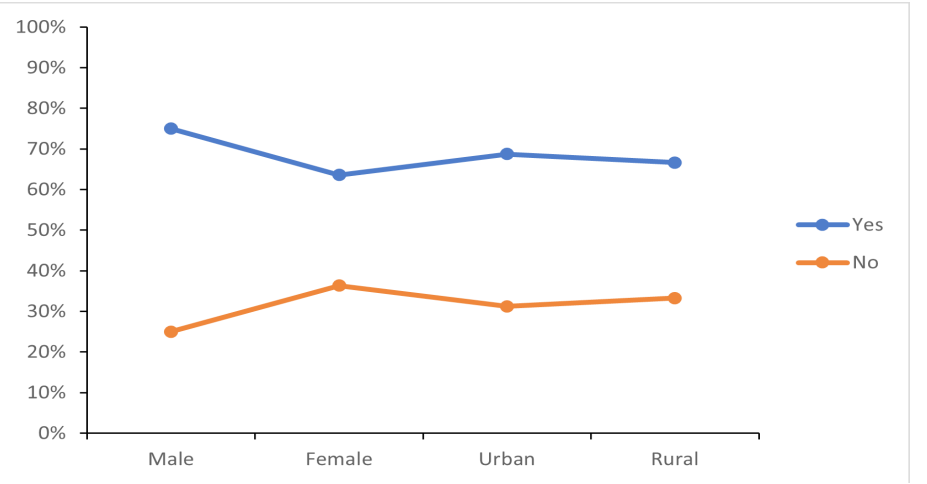

Figure 7. Increase is stress and Anxiety due to Technology by Gender and Location

Table 4 shows how the social variables of gender and location influence the triggering factors of technology use effect and total credit workload in the levels of stress and anxiety. The percentage of answers supporting its negative influence on the increase of stress and anxiety are of concern. 7 (87,50%) out of 8 men and 10 (90,91%) out of 11 women consider that the total credit workload has been determinant during remote learning. As for location, almost all the participants from urban and rural areas (87,50% and 100% respectively) refer to the total credit workload as an impact factor.

Comparing the variables among each other, Figure 8 illustrates the increased levels of stress and anxiety considering the total credit workload by gender and location. It shows the substantial effect that the total workload has and the small difference in the responses of the variables. In short, when analyzing task deployment during remote learning, both factors (technology use effect and total credit workload) have a significant impact on the level increase of stress and anxiety in the students.

Table 4. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Technology and Workload by Sex and Location

Triggers		Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Technology Use Effects on Stress		13	68.42%	6	31.58%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	6	75.00%	2	25.00%	8	
	Female	7	63.64%	4	36.36%	11	
Location		13	68.42%	6	31.58%	19	
	Urban	11	68.75%	5	31.25%	16	
	Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	
Total Credit Workload		7	36.84%	12	63.16%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	7	87.50%	1	12.50%	8	
	Female	10	90.91%	1	9.09%	11	
Location		17	89.47%	2	10.53%	19	
	Urban	14	87.50%	2	12.50%	16	
	Rural	3	100.00%	0	0.00%	3	

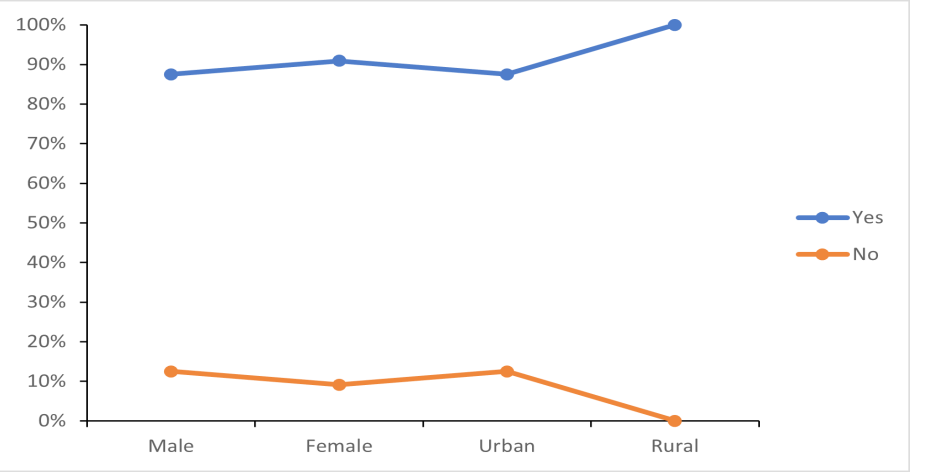

Figure 8. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Total Credit Workload by Gender and Location

Table 5 shows the general results on the increase levels of stress, and anxiety increase taking into consideration delayed communication and unfamiliarity with the way of delivery. It shows that this factor has more influence on students' levels of stress and anxiety. 10 participants (52.63%) report that this factor has an influence on their levels of stress and anxiety. Regarding the factor of unfamiliarity with the way of delivery, 12 participants (63.16%) report that this factor does not influence the levels of stress and anxiety. In general, the delayed communication with the instructor is the factor that affected students the most in comparison with unfamiliarity with the way of delivery, which has less influence.

Table 5. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Communication Delays and Unfamiliarity with the Way of Delivery

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Delayed Communication with the Professor	10	52.63%	9	47.37%	19	100%
Unfamiliarity with the Way of Delivery	7	36.84%	12	63.16%	19	100%
Total	17	44.74%	21	55.26%	38	100%

Table 6 shows the results of increased levels of stress and anxiety considering the two variables of sex and location on delayed communication and unfamiliarity with the way of delivery. It shows that males are more likely to feel an increase in the levels of stress and anxiety than females. A group of 6 (75%) out of 8 males agree that there is an increase of stress and anxiety relat-

ed to delayed communication with the instructor while only 4 (36.36%) out of 11 females agree with such an increase. When it comes to location 2 (66.67%) out of 3 rural participants, and 9 (56.25%) out of 16 urban ones, report communication as an influence on stress and anxiety.

Table 6. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Communication Delays and Unfamiliarity with the Way of Delivery by Gender and Location

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Delayed Communication with the Professor	10	52.63%	9	47.37%	19	100%
Gender						
Male	6	75.00%	2	25.00%	8	
Female	4	36.36%	7	63.64%	11	
Location	11	57.89%	8	42.11%	19	
Urban	9	56.25%	7	43.75%	16	
Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	
Unfamilirarity with the Way of D	7	36.84%	12	63.16%	19	100%
Gender						
Male	4	50.00%	4	50.00%	8	
Female	8	72.73%	3	27.27%	11	
Location	12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	
Urban	10	62.50%	6	37.50%	16	
Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	

Figure 9 also shows the results of increased levels of stress and anxiety.

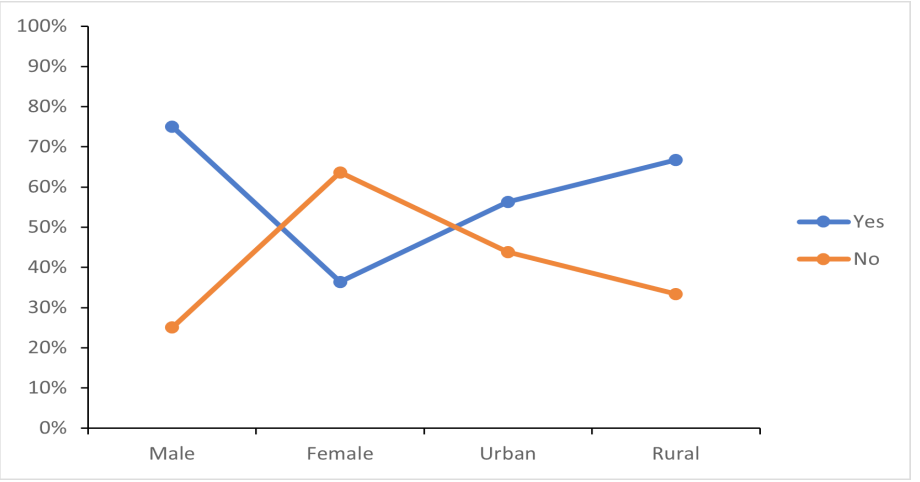

Figure 9. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Delayed Communication with the Instructor by Gender and Location

Figure 10 shows the increased levels of stress and anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the Way of Delivery by sex and location. Results show a signif-

icant increase in female stress and anxiety levels compared to males. When it comes to location, Table 6 shows that 10 (62.50%) out of 16 participants from the urban area reported an increase in the levels of stress and anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the way of delivery, and 2 (66.67%) out of 3 participants from the rural area agreed. Considering these results, Figure 10 shows that both rural and urban participants agreed that the factor previously mentioned did not affect the levels of stress and anxiety among students.

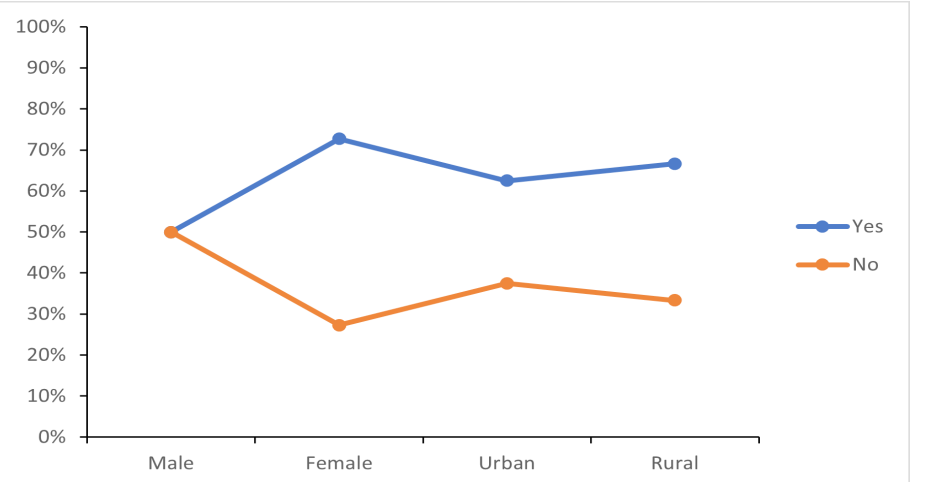

Figure 10. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Unfamiliarity with the Way of Delivery by Gender and Location.

Table 7 shows the general results of students' levels of stress and anxiety increased by an increase in levels of procrastination and the lack of an appropriate learning setting. It shows that procrastination and the lack of an appropriate study setting have an impact on the students' stress and anxiety levels. It is noted that these triggers are relevant since both of them showed ed a consistency of 73.68% of the students—that is, 14 out of 19 participants—who consider them as influential determinants of their emotional being during a remote learning modality, which contrasts with 26.32% of the students who disagree with the above statement.

Table 7. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Procrastination and the Lack of an Appropriate Learning Setting

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Procrastination	14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100%
Lack of an Appropriate Setting	14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100%
Total	28	73.68%	10	26.32%	38	100%

Table 8 shows how higher levels of procrastination and the lack of an appropriate learning setting influence the levels of stress and anxiety according to the social variables of gender and location. There were some discrepancies when it comes to the triggers mentioned.

Figure 11 illustrates the increased levels of stress and anxiety due to higher levels of procrastination by gender and location. There is a significant difference in the case of sex since all male participants consider that their increased levels of procrastination as a result of their extended stay at home did affect them emotionally. Six female participants (54.55%) out of 11 (100%) indicate that this is an influencing factor in their stress and anxiety levels, whereas 5 females (45.45%) reveal that this is not the case for them. In relation to location, the results suggested that for most residents from urban and rural areas, this was a stress factor. Men report a significant increase in stress and anxiety levels due to this determinant. Yet, for urban and rural locals, the results were consistent since most students—75% for urban areas and 66.67% for rural areas—consider this factor as influencing.

When it comes to the lack of a suitable learning environment, Table 8 shows that 5 male participants (62.50%) consider that not having a convenient learning setting alters their levels of stress and anxiety, and for female participants, 81.82% of them consider it a significant cause while 18.18% do not. That is a significant difference within the female variable.

Table 8. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Procrastination and the Lack of an Appropriate Learning Setting by Gender and Location

Triggers		Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Procrastination		14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	8	100.00%	0	0.00%	8	
	Female	6	54.55%	5	45.45%	11	
Location		14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	
	Urban	12	75.00%	4	25.00%	16	
	Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	
Lack of an Appropriate Setting		14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	5	62.50%	3	37.50%	8	
	Female	9	81.82%	2	18.18%	11	
Location		14	73.68%	5	26.32%	19	
	Urban	12	75.00%	4	25.00%	16	
	Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	

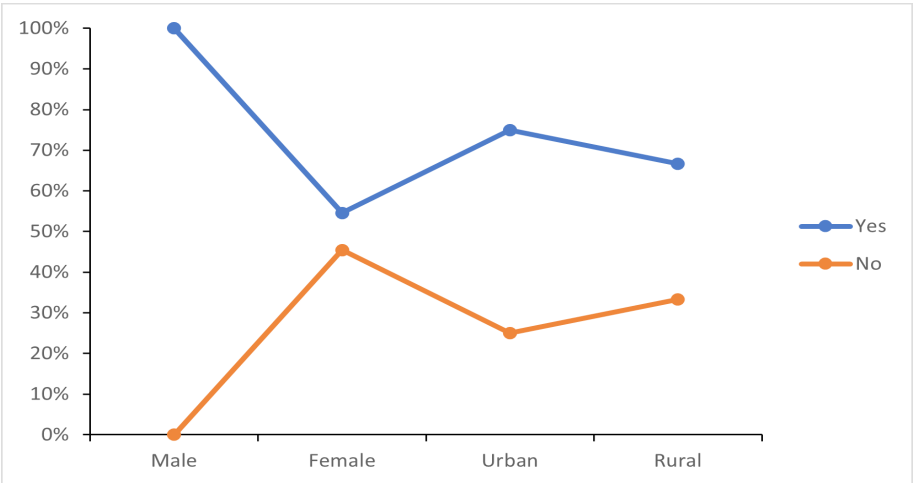

Figure 11. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to Procrastination by Gender and Location

Figure 12 shows the increased levels of stress and anxiety due to the lack of an appropriate learning setting by gender and location.

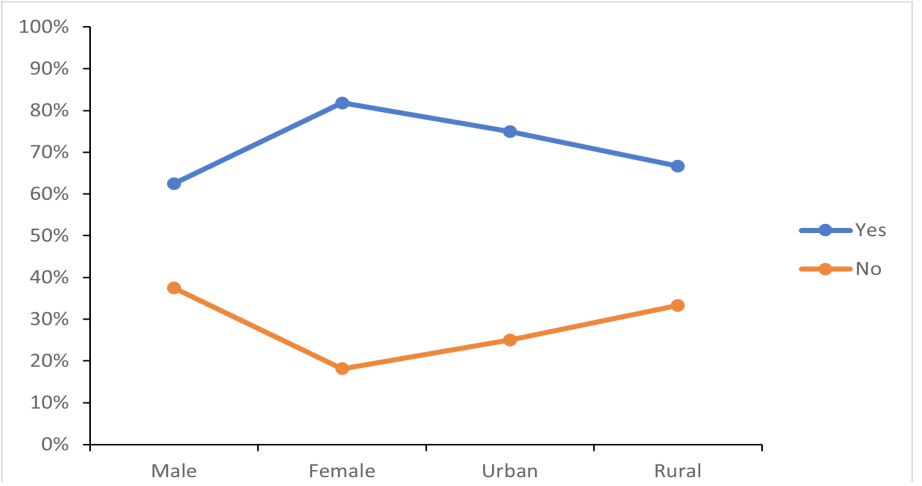

Figure 12. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Lack of an Appropriate Learning Setting

In terms of sex, there is a difference between the variables of males and females. More females consider the deficiency of a proper environment as a decisive circumstance, but it still affects both sexes. Regarding location, most students from both areas—urban and rural—believe that this is a crucial aspect affecting their stress and anxiety levels. A group of 12 students (75%) out of 16 from urban areas and 2 students (66.67%) out of 3 from rural areas agree with the significance of this factor on their stress and anxiety levels. For

location, both areas are similar because most participants from both areas consider this factor as a determinant in their increased levels of stress and anxiety.

Stress and anxiety are triggered by the fear of failing and the feeling of success at learning. Table 9 shows the general results of students' stress and anxiety due to these two variables; most of the participants agree with their increased level of stress and anxiety with a percentage of 63.16% in both triggers. The results showed that the factors influenced the level of stress and anxiety; the data are split into gender and location, with a difference between men and women as well as urban and rural.

Table 9. Increase in Stress and Anxiety to the Fear of Failing and the Feeling of Success at Learning by Gender and Location

Triggers	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Fear of Failing	12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100%
Feeling of Success at Learning	12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100%
Total	24	63.16%	14	36.84%	38	100%

Table 10 and Figure 13 show the increased stress and anxiety levels due to the fear of failing by gender and location. The data show a higher percentage of the level of stress and anxiety in men over women in both triggering factors. In the first factor men report almost double the increase in their level of stress and anxiety and in the second, the difference is still noticeable. The higher percentage is related to the fear of learning; men perceive remote English classes boosted their stress and anxiety due to their fear of failing the course.

Table 10. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Fear of Failing and the Feeling of Success at Learning by Gender and Location

Triggers		Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Fear of Failing		12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	7	87.50%	1	12.50%	8	
	Female	5	45.45%	6	54.55%	11	
Location		12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	
	Urban	11	68.75%	5	31.25%	16	
	Rural	1	33.33%	2	66.67%	3	
Feeling of Success at Learning		12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	100%
Gender							
	Male	6	75.00%	2	25.00%	8	
	Female	6	54.55%	5	45.45%	11	
Location		12	63.16%	7	36.84%	19	
	Urban	10	62.50%	6	37.50%	16	
	Rural	2	66.67%	1	33.33%	3	

Regarding the location, there is a difference as presented in Figure 13, in which urban students were more affected by remote learning than students from rural areas.

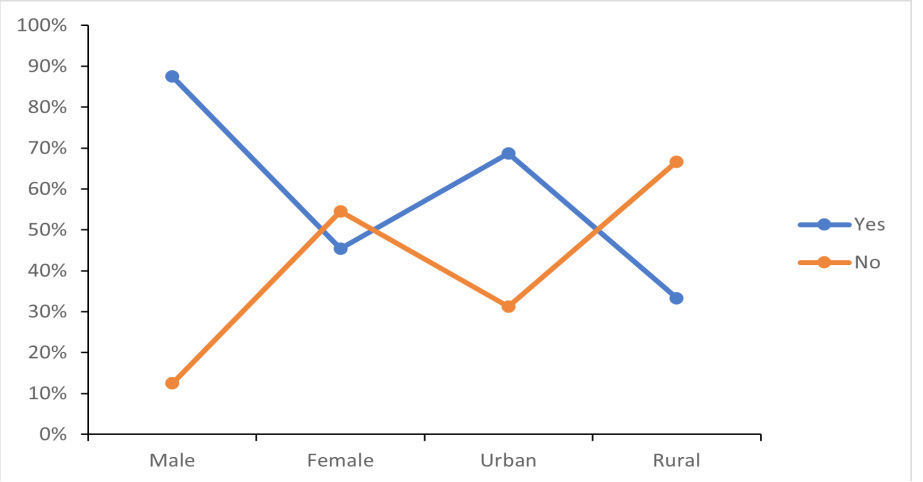

Figure 13. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Fear of Failing by Gender and Location

Figure 14 shows the increased stress and anxiety levels due to the feeling of success at learning by gender and location. There is a more equal result reported on the levels of stress and anxiety, where people from urban and rural areas report the same levels of stress and anxiety.

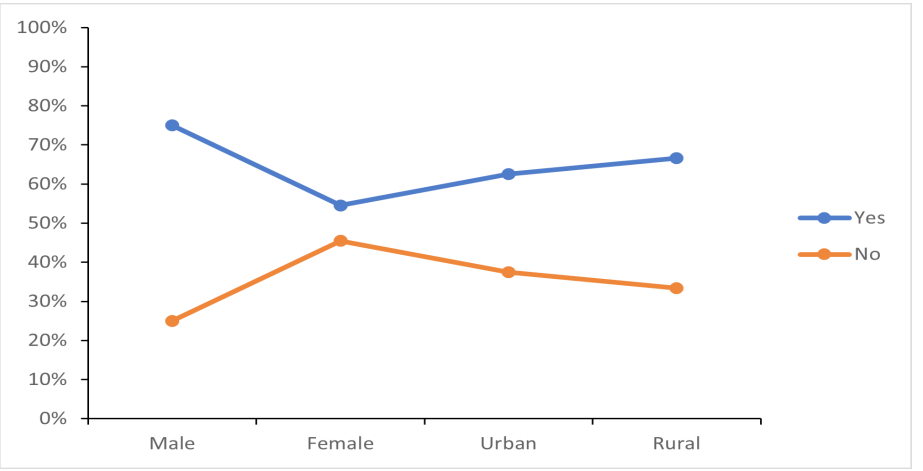

Figure 14. Increase in Stress and Anxiety due to the Feeling of Success at Learning by Gender and Location

4. Discussion

As shown in Figure 3 and Figure 5, the previous results demonstrated that the abrupt change and the feeling of disorientation were the most influential factors for students in terms of the adaptation process section. Figure 3 shows how regardless of gender or location, the abrupt migration to remote learning represented a relevant cause of stress and anxiety for the students in general. One reason behind this phenomenon may be the fact that most students—if not all—are used to receiving face-to-face classes. The fact that none of the students were expecting this sudden change did not let them prepare properly to start receiving classes from home. Being used to going to school for 2 years and suddenly changing that routine to attend classes online, sometimes without the proper tools as Figure 4 shows, could be disruptive for many students. This factor is not as prominent as the other two previously, but there were students who experienced an increase in their stress and anxiety due to what this item asked. This situation could be a result of the abrupt change as well since not all students had the necessary tools to quickly adapt to this new modality. In addition, libraries on Omar Dengo campus are used by students not only for the books, but also to take advantage of the desks, computers, Wi-Fi, or even only the quiet space which is taken away with the usual way of delivery. Technological illiteracy shows some of the most evident discrepancies in regard to their results among the variables since going from one way of delivery to another without any proper transition or guidance is difficult under any circumstances. Although the university staff and faculty tried to help students as much as possible, it was impossible for them to achieve a smooth transition into remote learning. As a result, feeling overwhelmed due to the lack of knowledge regarding the new tools that had increased the levels of stress and anxiety in many students.

The results presented in Table 4 are very revealing as the factors of technology use and total credit workload have contributed considerably to the increase of stress and anxiety, according to the data obtained. Before the pandemic most of the institutions worked on a face-to-face modality, as did the UNA, and this system certainly represents less time in the use of electronic devices because the students attended physical classrooms in their learning process. Nonetheless, due to the total migration to remote learning, students were spending time not only doing homework or projects digitally, but also attending their classes from their computers, cellphones, or tablets. A third-year college student's schedule at UNA normally includes attending 3 to 5 hours of face-to-face instruction. That means that the same amount of time is spent in front of electronic devices during remote learning, and students did not seem to be prepared for such drastic change. This scenario is reflected in figure 7, in which more than half of the participants in each of the social variables stated that the technology use has had a negative effect on the increase of their levels of stress and anxiety. In relation to the second factor, students confirmed the

increase in their levels of stress and anxiety due to the total credit workload regardless of sex or location. This negative perception about this factor can be related to technology use, in which students are not accustomed to spending so much time using electronic devices for learning purposes.

The results revealed that a delay in communication is a factor that increases the levels of stress and anxiety while not being familiar with the method does not have much relevance in stress. This result is important because before the pandemic, the students could talk to the instructor before or after the class to ask questions and clarify class content. In remote learning, communication is more difficult since there could be miscommunication in the process, and responses might not arrive as soon as expected. Looking into social variables such as sex and location, the results in Table 6 reflect an impact of delayed communication. Males (75%) were more likely to feel an increase in the levels of stress and anxiety while most females did not agree with this answer. Since females tended to be better and more proactive at investigating to complete a task, that might have an influence on the results. On the other hand, in terms of location, there was a delay in communication, and rural and urban participants agreed that this factor had an influence in terms of stress and anxiety, as stated above Furthermore, the factor of unfamiliarity with the way of teaching delivery reflected that males were less affected than females since 8 (72.73%) out of 11 claim a negative effect from this triggering factor, and males, on the other hand, had a 50/50 stand. Males were technologically more skillful than females due to the influence of video games and computer programs, and that is reflected in the result previously given. The location had a negative effect as shown in delayed communication as well. Figure 10 reveals that females in both, urban and rural, agreed on the increase of stress and anxiety levels whereas males are more negatively influenced by a delay in communication.

Overall, procrastination and the lack of an appropriate learning setting were determinants in the increased levels of stress and anxiety in students; both triggering factors present an equal percentage in the results gathered. Because of the abrupt lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students had to stay at home while attending classes in the remote modality; this may increase their procrastination levels. As portrayed in Figure 11, in terms of gender, prolonged procrastination boosts the levels of anxiety and stress more in males than females, with 100% of the male participants indicating this issue. More males than females found that staying home continually further influences their delay in academic tasks, yet women were also affected. That may be related to the way students felt that they had to find a balance between the academic load and their social relations, family, and personal necessities (Astutik et al., 2020). Students may be more prone to procrastinate since reaching a balance between multiple tasks and the emotional charge of a worldwide pandemic along with the uncertainty that comes with it may be challenging. In

terms of location, participants from both urban and rural areas showed a consistency in terms of results since most of the students from each area suggest procrastination as an influencing factor, which may demonstrate that location itself does not include a significant difference. As seen in figure 12, when it comes to sex, the majority of men and women pointed out that not having an appropriate learning setting was stressful for them, with a higher percentage of females feeling this way. In fact, there is a significant difference among females who consider this aspect as influential and those who do not. The question is not only whether higher education institutions are prepared for a remote learning modality (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020), but also whether students are. As an example of the previous statement, the setting in which the learning process takes place is crucial and it plays a key role in the affective spectrum of the students' learning process. Regarding location, students from both urban and rural areas revealed that for most of them, lacking a suitable space for their online classes and academic task was a troublesome aspect of the remote modality. The fact that some students found this circumstance difficult may be related to not having a place that is quiet and comfortable or that has proper access to the Internet. Overall, the learning setting—including prolonged procrastination because of lockdown and the deficiency of a satisfactory study setting—increases the levels of stress and anxiety in students.

The current situation is affecting students all over Costa Rica, and the increase of stress and anxiety can also be related to the change to the remote modality. The factor of the fear of failing is also one of the most relevant according to the data collected and analyzed. Students are afraid of failing a virtual course even more than in face-to-face classes. Overall, fear is a specific feeling that can affect students' progress, and sometimes they can also receive lower grades. The factor of feeling success at learning is also related to fear; if the students are afraid of failing a course, the feeling of success will decrease. Another reason why the fear of failing, and consequently the level of stress and anxiety, can increase is students' loss of confidence and motivation, and that may be reflected in their class performance.

5. Limitations and Future Research

5.1 Limitations of the Study

Throughout the investigation, it is possible to determine some troublesome aspects which either took place while developing the research or were notable limitations after carrying out the project. First, it is important to acknowledge the issues in terms of the participants; for instance, although all the students answered the survey, they did not complete it until they were asked by one of their instructors to do so. The researchers were forced to ask for help from one of the participants' instructors, so all the participants would fill out the survey; this situation shows a common issue that researchers tend to face which is a

lack of participants' commitment. Another problem is the number of answers obtained from urban and rural areas which especially affected the location variable. This research has a relevant gap in the amount of people from urban areas (16 participants) and rural areas (3 participants). Due to this matter, an explicit issue that can be found here is how the difference in regard to this variable may not illustrate balanced results. Furthermore, by not diversifying the research population (including only students from the same major), and not from other years or from other majors, the results turn out to be extremely specific, and that would require further research to support the findings.

5.2 Suggestions for Future Research

It would be essential to have a similar number of participants from both rural and urban areas for a better representation of both variables and therefore, a more reliable point of comparison to generalize the results presented. A complete understanding of the affective spectrum of remote learning in academic institutions requires the consideration of a wider perspective in future research. Given the fact that this research study focuses on students' perspectives, it is imperative for further research to focus on the point of view of instructors who had not encountered a remote learning modality until the Covid-19 pandemic. Highlighting the consequences of an abrupt and unexpected change to a remote learning mode (focusing specifically on their emotional being, challenges faced as professionals, and their perception of students' response to the newly employed modality) is crucial. As stated in the limitations section, this investigation is aimed toward third-year students from the English teaching major, but covering other majors would be necessary since this situation has affected students all around the world.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic forced universities, and institutions in general, to move to a remote learning environment, which caused students to perceive an increase in the levels of stress and anxiety. Although some factors can affect students' levels of stress and anxiety during the regular class period, this research focused on the remote learning modality and how some specific factors such as delayed communication, technology use, fear of failing, and total credit workload, generate an unnecessary increase in the levels of stress and anxiety among third-year students of the UNA English Teaching major. Similarly, an analysis of the influence of social variables such as gender and location was carried out.

Although many external factors might influence the increase of stress and anxiety, the abrupt change and the feeling of disorientation can be found as the most relevant factors among the findings when the necessity to move quickly to remote learning caused by Covid-19 pandemic was imperative. Another relevant factor in which students show a negative response was a feeling

of being overwhelmed by the lack of knowledge regarding the new tools. The use of technology—being in front of a computer, cell phone, or tablet—has become a habit that influence negatively on levels of stress and anxiety according to the data collected. Students also confirm an increase in their levels of stress and anxiety due to the total credit workload, and this is a very important result since there are no discrepancies in gender or location. Delayed communication and being unfamiliar with the way of delivery also influence the increase in the levels of stress and anxiety; however, unfamiliarity with the way of delivery seems to affect females at a higher level than males. Overall, procrastination and the lack of an appropriate learning setting are determinants in the increased levels of stress and anxiety in students; nevertheless, not having an appropriate learning setting is equally stressful for students, and affects the levels of stress and anxiety negatively regardless of gender. Finally, being afraid of failing or not acquiring the amount of knowledge expected seems to affect male students almost twice as much as female students; this reveals that male students are more afraid of failing the course.

The results in this research provide the instructor with the students' perspective on remote learning as well as their necessities and limitations. Administrators and teachers can use this data to build better strategies in the delivery of classes taking into consideration those results because they have access to the information provided by the students. Since remote learning is new for most institutions, this research gives a different perspective taking into account sex and location in the students' view and perception of remote learning, which could help to create a better educational delivery system.

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Appendix

Survey Applied to Students Instructions: For each statement, choose 1 for *strongly disagree*, 2 for *disagree*, 3 for *agree*, and 4 for *strongly agree.*
Adaptation Process
- The abrupt change from face-to-face classes to virtual classes causes a serious increase in my stress and anxiety levels. - Not having the essential tools to migrate to the virtual mode makes me experience a serious increase in my stress and anxiety levels. - The feeling of being lost or disoriented toward the new system causes my high levels of stress and anxiety. - Not knowing how to use the required *apps* for the classes represents a source of anxiety and stress for me.
Task Deployment
- The constant use of the computer/cellphone/tablet boosts my levels of anxiety and stress. - Receiving the same amount of "class time" in the virtual besides doing extra class-work makes me feel overwhelmed and stressed out.
Communication with the Teacher
- Not having immediate communication outside the classroom with the instructor increases the levels of stress and anxiety. - The unfamiliar teacher-student interaction in remote learning classes influences my level of stress and anxiety. - If you agree, please give an example.
Learning Setting
- My level of procrastination can be boosted by the fact that I am always at home. - Not having a place to study different from my home makes the setting stressful.
Feeling about Learning
- I am afraid of failing the course because of the difficulties I am experiencing and that causes me high levels of stress and anxiety - I do not feel prepared for more advanced courses due to the current situation, which increases my stress and anxiety levels.
Final Thoughts
- From the following items, select the ones that you considered affected your levels of stress and anxiety in face-to-face classes before the pandemic. Adaptation process Assignment of tasks Communication with the teacher Learning setting Feelings about learning

Why Do Beginner English Learners Refrain from Participating in Oral Tasks in Private English Academies?[1]

Mariela Chaves Hernández
Karla Fernández Soto
Vera Muñoz Villarebia

Introduction

It is usual for beginner learners of a second language to feel afraid now of producing the target language, especially if this display of the language must be done in front of others. Therefore, it is very important to know the main factors affecting students' oral participation in the different activities carried out in the classroom. During the learning of a foreign language, different types of feelings may arise, including fear of speaking in front of others, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and nervousness; and they may affect the oral production of the language (Hamouda, 2012; McCroskey and Beatty 1986; Young, 2012). The present project analyzes the main reasons why beginners refrain from participating in oral tasks as a basis for recommendations for future language instructors on how to help students manage those feelings and to increase students' willingness to participate during class time to improve their oral production.

1. Literature Review

Students' reluctance to participate orally in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class has been investigated from different angles. These studies include the relationships between learner and other speakers, such as levels of anxiety in the classroom and personality issues. What follows is the review of relevant research related to students' reluctance to participate orally in the foreign language class.

1.1 Communication Apprehension

McCroskey and Beatty (1986) carried out a study on communication apprehension and how it affects the students' communicative skills. The researchers compare the relationship between shyness and communication apprehension

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

and state that both terms share common characteristics, but at the same time, they are different from one another. They emphasize this difference through two comparative tables in which they show the correlations of both. The first table, a Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), contains twenty-four items that describe different feelings that may be presented in communication with other people. The second is the McCroskey Shyness Scale, designed to measure shyness as conceptualized in the study. As a result of the correlations, the authors state that shyness is presumed to result from a variety of causes with CA being just one of those causes (p. 279). The researchers mention that previous studies catalogued CA either as trait-like or state-like predispositions, but instead they characterize it four different ways: trait-like, generalized context, person—group, and situational CA They define "trait-like" CA as a relatively enduring, personality-type orientation toward oral communication across a wide variety of contexts, and generalized-Context CA as a relatively enduring, personality type orientation toward communication in a given type of communication context (p. 281). According to the researchers, a difference between trait-like and generalized context CA is that the former assumes apprehension about communication in one communication context and it is believed to be substantially correlated with apprehension in other contexts while the generalized-context view does not require that assumption. They state that constructs such as "stage fright" and "audience anxiety" are representative of this generalized-context approach. They defined person/group CA as a relatively enduring orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people. They explain that person/group CA is not viewed as personality-based, but rather as a response to situational constraints generated by the other person/group. Lastly, they define situational CA as a transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people. They do not view it as personality-based, but rather as a response to the situational constraints generated by the other person/group.

1.2 Anxiety and Personality Factors

Young (1990) carried out a study to examine students' perspectives of anxiety and speaking by applying a four-page instrument to 135 university and 109 high school students to identify which class oral activities in class cause anxiety. Their questionnaire was divided in three sections. The first one was an agree and disagree section on general foreign language class anxiety and in class activities. The second section required students to rate their level of anxiety in the face of 20 different in-class activities by using a Likert scale. The third section of their questionnaire was instructor-oriented, and the students had to specify the instructor's behaviors and characteristics that reduced anxiety in class. Results from the first section of the questionnaire yielded three significant categories. These activities, Young points out, which were working in pairs, previous practice of the language, and not being forced to stand up

when participating, produced less anxiety, among other factors such as speaking errors and preparedness. Young's results show that students reported being less willing to speak in class when a debate was scheduled due to fear of making mistakes or speaking in front of their classmates and instructor; or they simply did not want to risk their self-esteem by having to publicize their errors in the foreign language. The author also found that the majority of the students felt that they would not be so self-conscious about speaking in class if it were commonly understood that everyone makes mistakes. Young also found that preparedness, that is, previous hard-studying and acquaintance with peers, made students feel more comfortable with class activities. Results from the second section of the questionnaire show that speaking-oriented activities were rated as anxiety-provoking since, the author argues, foreign language students experience a fear of self-exposure, they are afraid of revealing themselves or being spotlighted in front of others. Young concludes that students feel anxiety when participating orally in class because the real anxiety-evoking situation is having to speak or perform in front of others. The last part of Young's questionnaire showed that if instructors allow students to take the initiative to participate and let them know everybody makes mistakes, that decreases anxiety toward oral tasks in the class. Overall, results of the study showed that students' fear of speaking in front of others, anxiety over making a mistake in front of their peers and instructors, willingness to participate in activities that do not require them to be "spot-lighting" could also relate to student personality issues such as low self-esteem.

Hassan (1992) investigated any possible relationship between self-esteem and the oral communicative ability of ESL learners. Additionally, the author analyzed several researchers (Fink, 1962; Williams and Cole, 1968) using various subject populations and measurement procedures that reported significant positive relationships between self-esteem and academic achievement. Hassan (1992) studied the responses of two interviews in a group of 114 sophomores, 51 males and 63 females, whose ages ranged from 19 to 22. For this study, the author used The Foreign Language Self-Esteem Scale (FLSES), which consists of 25 items and was specially developed for this study. The subjects were administered the FLSES in one class session. The author also administered The Test of Oral Communicative Ability (OCA) by holding individual appointments for students with two language instructors working at the College of Education. Both interviewers were instructed to follow the same guidelines in conducting the interviews. The results of the interviews suggest that students are better trained and well-experienced in taking achievement tests which usually tend to focus on reading comprehension, structure, and vocabulary, but do not typically relate to self-esteem and academic achievement. In addition, for future research Hassan recommended that university students be tested with the FLSES or any similar instrument to identify their degree of self-esteem toward foreign language learning.

Woodrow (2006) carried out a study on second language speaking anxiety as experienced by English learners studying in Australia. It proposed a dual conceptualization of second language speaking anxiety, reflecting the distinction between classroom communication and communication outside of class. The data were collected using four instruments: 1) a questionnaire developed for this specific purpose, consisting of 12 items on a five-point Likert-type scale; 2) the Second Language Anxiety Speaking Scale; 3) an IELTS-type oral assessment; and 4) a face-to-face interview. The participants were all in their final months of studying English. Many were from Asian countries with students from China being the largest group in the sample. Woodrow (2006) used tables to analyze the data collected. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The results showed that the participants attributed anxiety to a range of factors such as speech anxiety, fear of failing, and feeling comfortable when speaking with English native speakers. The results also identified low levels of anxiety in the participants when working in small discussion groups. The author supported the use of collaborative techniques focusing on student-student interaction. For some students anxiety is clearly an issue in language learning and has a debilitating effect on their speech. For that reason, the author pointed out that teachers must be sensitive to this in classroom interaction and provide help to minimize second language anxiety. Finally, they found that students would benefit from instruction in language learning strategies and scaffolding of skills whereas an anxious student would benefit from desensitization and relaxation techniques.

Hemerka (2009) mentioned that different learners can have different reasons for learning a foreign language such as increasing confidence in deciding to learn a new language, keeping the brain fit, or using time productively. Discussing communication from a broad point of view and emphasizing the importance of building communicative competence is a basis for good language production to ensure students' oral performance. It also ensures that there are other conditions for successful oral communication aside from knowing grammar and vocabulary. Another finding in Hemerka's study is that students realize the importance of good speaking and communication in both in EFL learning, and in everyday life. Students also realize, the author points out, the importance of simply being able to speak. In his research, 90% of the students are dissatisfied with their speaking or lack confidence. For that reason, Hemerka (2009) considered that one of the aims of teaching is to ensure learners gain more confidence. He suggests that teachers need to reflect on the way they teach to encourage students to speak confidently.

1.3 Fear as a Factor

Juhana (2012) conducted a study on specific factors that hinder students from using the target language during class. The participants were 62 second-year students at a high school in Indonesia. The data were collected by observations

of the students' participation and responses in a speaking activity, a five-choice open-ended questionnaire to collect students' responses as written data, and an interview in which students were selected by reference of their English teachers. The population was composed of 4 students categorized as high achievers, 4 medium achievers, and 4 low achievers. Each of the questions in the questionnaire referred to a specific factor that may be the cause of the lack of participation: anxiety, shyness, fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. The study revealed that the highest psychological factor affecting students' use of the L2 in class is fear of mistakes (37%). Juhana states that students were afraid of being laughed at by their classmates if they mispronounced words. The second variable was shyness (26%). The author found that some of the students argued that they were naturally shy, and this was interpreted by the author as students feeling shy when talking to others even in their native language. Anxiety ranked third at 18%. Juhana reports that students responded that making mistakes noticed by others, not being understood due to those mistakes, and lacking vocabulary made them feel anxious. Lack of confidence ranked fourth at 13%. Students expressed, the author reports, that limited knowledge and lack of ability toward the L2 were their major causes of lack of confidence. Last, lack of motivation rank fifth at 6%. Juhana reports that students pointed to the instructor's way of teaching as the trigger for their lack of motivation. Juhana (2012) findings are very informative in the field of SLA since they introduce factors that are sometimes regarded as irrelevant for the process of acquiring a second language in an instructional setting.

Similarly, Hamouda (2012) investigated the causes of the non-participation of students in EFL classrooms in a university in Qassim, Saudi Arabia. The participants in this research project were 159 first-year non-English majors who were enrolled in a program in the first semester of the 2010-2011 school year. The instrument used in his research was a questionnaire which consisted of 66 items. In addition, the questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. In the first, there were 58 questions asking about the causes of their non-participation in the class, and in the second, the author tried to investigate some strategies that the students used when they participated. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed by using the software Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and were represented in tables (Hamouda, 2012, 20). In the first part of the questionnaire (section A) Hamouda considered some causes of non-participation such as speaking in front of the whole class, lack of preparation, calling on students, incomprehensible input, and shyness. Results from the second part of the questionnaire (section B) suggests that some strategies used by participants to lower students' anxiety in the classroom include preparing more topics related to the students' lives, introducing new opportunities for students to speak English outside the class, and improving the students' vocabulary. Hamouda concluded that most students want to study conversational English and were willing to interact with

others in oral English language classrooms. Despite this overall willingness, many factors such as lack of confidence, anxiety, cultural beliefs, and personality affect students' participation in class.

Al Hosni (2014) studied the principal speaking difficulties students have in Oman. The research focused on students who did not participate. The instruments used for this research were class observations of the difficulties when using the second language, interviews, and curriculum analysis. The data gathered were analyzed using qualitative methods. Regarding the results of the instruments, the researcher mentions that some of the students did not have the necessary grammatical tools to create proper sentence structures to produce utterance in the foreign language. Another finding was that most of the participants presented a noticeable lack of vocabulary. Finally, the fear of making mistakes in front of peers is another factor mentioned. According to the researcher, students' fluency tends to be affected by the fear they feel when speaking in public. Al-Hosni (2014) points out that this fear causes nervousness, and numbs the student's ability to carry out a conversation.

Ariyanti (2016) focused her study on the psychological aspects of the barriers of EFL students at an Asian University In her research, Ariyanti (2016) described some aspects focused on the help that students receive from their teachers to increase participation in English speaking. The study used two surveys to collect data about the psychological factors of students during some activities. The instrument was applied to 50 students of EFL as a sample for the research, the students and the instructors received a questionnaire about oral skills in classes. The results of the instruments shed light on affective learning strategies or techniques for motivation and interest in how the beginner students can control and increase their oral production level. Results also show that beginning students had many psychological problems such as fear, which hindered class participation. Ariyanti found that students participated in activities such as small group discussions because they felt comfortable when speaking, but they did not participate in front of the class because they were afraid of making a mistake. Moreover, Ariyanti reported that students received many opportunities to increase participation in the oral aspects, such as in grammar, new vocabulary, and expressions practice activities.

Abrar et al. (2018) carried out a phenomenological study following Moustakas (1994) and Patton (1990), who suggested methodology for conducting qualitative research. The study was conducted with 8 second-year EFL student teachers who obtained a grade of C and B in the three compulsory modules in an English teacher education program in a public university in Jambi, the southern part of Sumatra, Indonesia. The results identified three main themes or phenomenological strands. The first theme was language barriers, in which they identified that an appropriate mastery of language made it difficult for the students to use the L2. Students, they report, were challenged by vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency which impeded a partic-

ipant's speaking in English. Within this factor, all participants reported that vocabulary was their main concern when they wanted to speak English. The second strand reported by the authors is psychological factors, which was divided into three sub-strands that include anxiety, attitude, and lack of motivation. Anxiety, they found, is prevalent in second/foreign language classes, particularly in speaking since speaking itself is the most anxiety-provoking factor. Participants' attitudes in speaking, they found, influenced students' efforts to complete spoken activities. Consequently, the authors point out, participants' attitudes affect their speaking attainment and proficiency. In their study, participants reported that under some circumstances, they were less motivated to speak English, but it was not due to anxiety or their attitude. The last phenomenological strand is learning environment. The researchers found three consistent issues that characterized this strand. They are lecturers, peers, and topic of the speaking module. For the first one, the authors report that the students reported that the instructor affected their willingness to participate in oral tasks by expressing things like "I often forget the [words] when speaking. It happens because I have got nervous and [this] depends on the lecturer(s)" (Abrar et al., 2018, p. 16). For the second, the authors report that all participants described the same feeling regarding the issue of peers and speaking materials with comments like "I normally speak English by myself in front of the mirror, not with friends" (p. 16). For the third, topics of the speaking modules, the authors report that responses indicated that casual friends and an uninteresting topic of discussion hindered their eagerness to engage more in speaking activities inside and outside the classroom

Often, students refrain from participating in oral tasks in the second language classroom due to different contexts, personality, or foreign factors. In the current situation during a pandemic, research on what affects students' ability to communicate orally is moved to the spotlight. After reviewing relevant literature in this area, we set out to answer the following question:

> Why do beginner English learners refrain from participating in oral tasks in private English academies?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The study was carried out with 10 beginner EFL learners from a private academy in Costa Rica. The participants were selected due to access convenience. The groups were randomly selected from the pool of groups available to the researchers. Their ages range from 19 to 45 years. The data were collected using two instruments.

2.2 Instruments

The first instrument is a multiple-choice survey, a translated extract from the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (Hendriks, Hofstee, & De Raad, 1999). The aim of this instrument is to determine whether the participants have an introverted or extroverted personality. It consists of twelve questions all related to how the participants feel within different situations of daily life.

The second instrument consists of six open-ended questions for which participants must explain their answers. The questions for the open-ended questionnaire are all related to the feelings the participants have when asked to participate in different oral tasks into the classroom. For these questions, the type of oral interaction between class participants was considered: student-student, teacher-student, and student-teacher. Each question was provided with a background so that participants could visualize the situations and answer in a more trustworthy manner.

2.3 Data Coding

A quantitative method was implemented to analyze the participants' responses to find the factors that cause beginner EFL students' reluctance to participate in oral tasks. For the analysis of the first instrument, we created a comparison table with the answers of the participants and each of the questions, as shown in Table 1. This table will be analyzed later. For the analysis of the second instrument, all responses were analyzed in search of phenomenological strands following into four main categories used by Abrar et al. (2018). The answers to these questions are coded according to their phenomenological strand. These strands are willingness or reluctance to participate, and feelings in impromptu presentations. This strand groups positive and negative feelings that students have when being called on to participate in class; voluntary participation in which students report their willingness to participate when on their own in different oral activities; and student-teacher communication: asking the instructor questions, as a reflection of the student-teacher relationship and whether students feel comfortable asking their instructor questions in class.

3. Results

This section is divided into 5 subsections to present the results of the questionnaire on personality, willingness to participate, feelings in called impromptu presentations, voluntary impromptu participation, and student-teacher.

3.1 Personality

Table 1 shows the results of the Five-Factor Personality Inventory (Hendriks, Hofstee, & De Raad, 1999), in which we can see that all but one participant scores higher than 2 in the overall score, which classifies most of our participants as extroverts (9 out of 10).

Table 1. Introverted and Extroverted Personality

Personality	Participant and tally									
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
People around	3	1	3	3	3	0	4	4	2	0
Ease of Laughter	1	1	3	3	4	2	4	4	3	3
Self-unhappy	2	4	3	1	1	3	4	4	3	3
Enjoy talking to others	2	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	0
Rather to work alone	2	1	3	4	1	3	4	4	3	0
Enjoy being in the middle of the action	2	3	4	2	4	4	4	3	3	4
Feel full of energy	1	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	0
Happy and cheerful	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	2
not optimist and happy	2	1	3	1	1	2	4	4	0	2
Fast-paced life	3	1	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	2
Active	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	2
work alone instead of leading	3	3	4	2	4	1	4	0	3	4
Introversion										1.83
Extroversion	2.08	2.3	3.25	2.5	2.83	2.6	3.33	3.58	2.83	

The results of the first instrument *Cómo es tu personalidad* revealed that the two personality traits (introversion and extroversion) do not play an important role in the students' willingness to participate in oral tasks during English class time. The analysis of the students' responses of the showed that only 10% belonged to the group of introverts, while the remaining 90% reported to be extroverts. These results are shown in Figure 1.

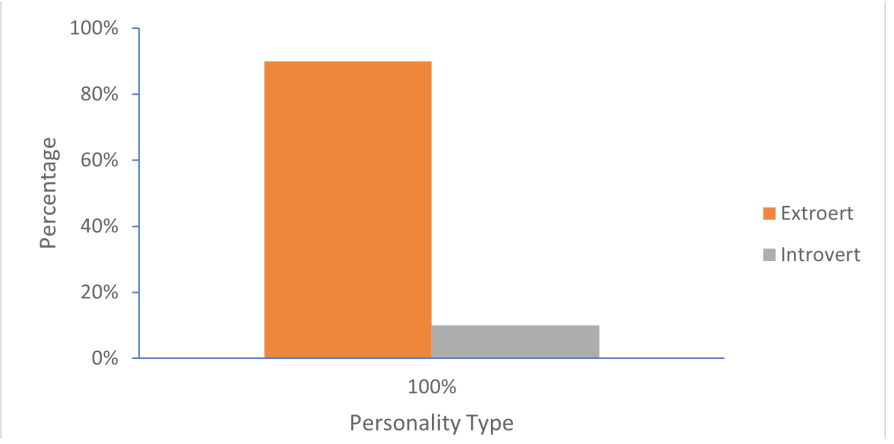

Figure 1. Participants' Personality

Attention is given below to the second part of the questionnaire and the four main phenomenological strands.

3.2 Willingness and Reluctance to Participate

Table 2 and Figure 2 show that overall participants are willing to participate in class in all three categories. However, their willingness is higher when they are in groups with about 90% of responses being *yes* or *sometimes*. Willingness is followed by public speaking with 80% of responses being *yes* and *sometimes*.

Results can be interpreted as students being more likely to participate in oral tasks when they are divided into small groups. The participants' responses the indicate that they are less afraid to speak freely in front of smaller audiences because it is less frightening to speak in small groups; some of the answers reported by the participants were:

> "*Es más fácil hablar en grupos pequeños. Así aprovecho al máximo. Me da menos miedo participar en grupos más pequeños*." It is easier to talk in small groups. I take advantage to the maximum. I am less afraid to participate in smaller groups. [our translation]

Table 2. Willingness and Reluctance to Participate

Response	Speaking/Participation Type						Total
	Public Speaking	%	Group Participation	%	Prepared Presentational mode	%	
Yes	2	20%	5	50%	2	20%	9.7
Sometimes	6	60%	4	40%	4	40%	15.0
Do not participate	1	10%	1	10%	4	40%	6.2
Other	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	1.1
Total	10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	32.0

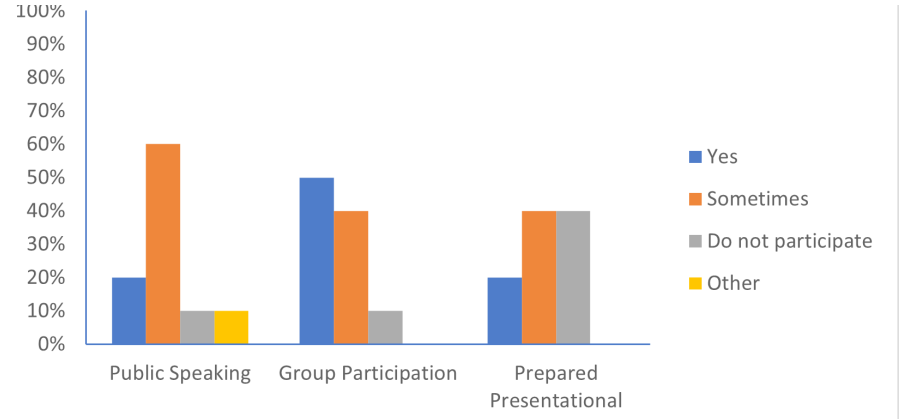

Figure 2. Willingness and reluctance in participation

The participants also stated that although speaking in public makes them feel afraid, they are still doing it because it is the best way to achieve a better production of the language, some of their responses were:

> "*Participo con un poco de miedo por si se ponen a reìr, pero me arriesgo*". I participate with a bit of fear that they are going to laugh at me, but I risk it. [our translation]
>
> "*Aunque me da miedo siempre lo hago*". Even though I am afraid, I do it. [our translation]
>
> "*Me siento entusiasmado por participar pero de igual manera me da nervios*". I feel enthusiastic when participating, but I still feel nervous. [our translation]

In relation to the students' reluctance to participate, we see an increase in aversion toward participation when it is a prepared presentation, with 40% responding that they do not participate, but this category still shows a high percentage (60%) of participants willing to participate with answers of *yes* and *sometimes*. The reason for this behavior seems to be that students feel extremely nervous, anxious, and they would prefer not to have this type of oral activities. Students' responses are of the following types:

> "*Porque me da miedo equivocarme*". Because I am afraid of making mistakes, [our translation]
>
> "*Desearía no tener que exponer*". I really wish I didn't have to present [our translation]
>
> "*Porque me da mucho miedo equivocarme*". Because I am very afraid of making mistakes [our translation]
>
> "*Son nervios por la pronunciación y en cuadrar bien la frase*". I am nervous because of pronunciation and to prepare the phrase well [our translation]

3.3 Feelings in Called Impromptu Presentations

Table 3 and Figure 3 show the results of the second strand. As we can see, 60% of the students report a negative feeling (nervous or ashamed) while only 40% report a positive feeling (well or comfortable).

Respondents stated that they were sure that in case of making mistakes, the instructor would correct them and this way they would have a higher chance to learn. Additionally, they said that activities such as dialogues are entertaining. Some of their answers are:

> "*Pues bien, en las prácticas si me gusta hacer diálogos*". Good! I like to speak during practice [our translation]
>
> "*Bien, no me da miedo y si no sé la pronunciación de alguna palabra entonces pido ayuda al profesor*". Well, I haven't felt fear and, if I do not know the pronunciation of a word, then I ask the instructor for help. [our translation]

Table 3. Overall Results: Feelings in Called Impromptu Presentations

Response	Amount	%	
Well	3	30%	40%
Comfortable	1	10%	
Nervous	5	50%	60%
Ashamed	1	10%	
Total	10	100%	

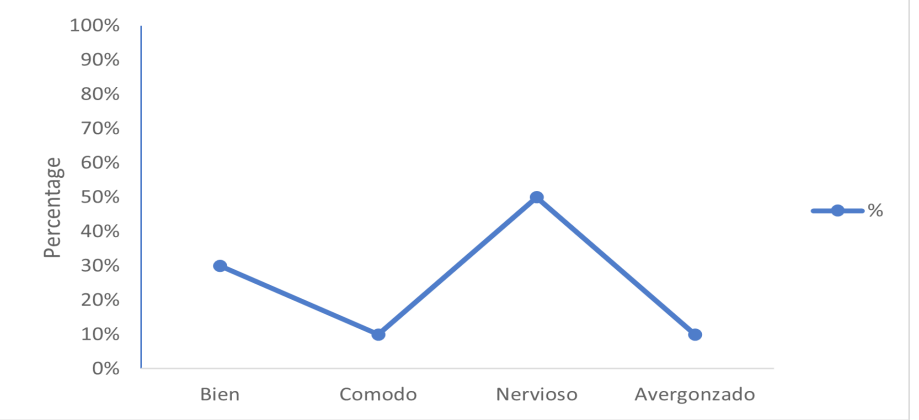

Figure 3. Feelings in an Impromptu Presentations

The students stated that aspects like fear of making mistakes and lack of study are two of the factors that trigger nervousness. They express statements such as:

> "*Un poco nerviosa porque me da miedo equivocarme*". A Little nervous because I am afraid of making mistakes [our translation]
>
> "*Nerviosa, ya que me gusta practicar pero me da pena decirlo mal*". Nervous, because I like to practice, but I am afraid of mispronouncing it [our translation]

3.4 Voluntary Impromptu Participation

Table 4 and Figure 4 show the results for the third strand. We can see that 70% of the participants report having voluntary impromptu participation in class.

Table 4. Voluntary Impromptu Participation

Response	Participants	Percentage
Yes	7	70%
No	3	30%
Total	10	100%

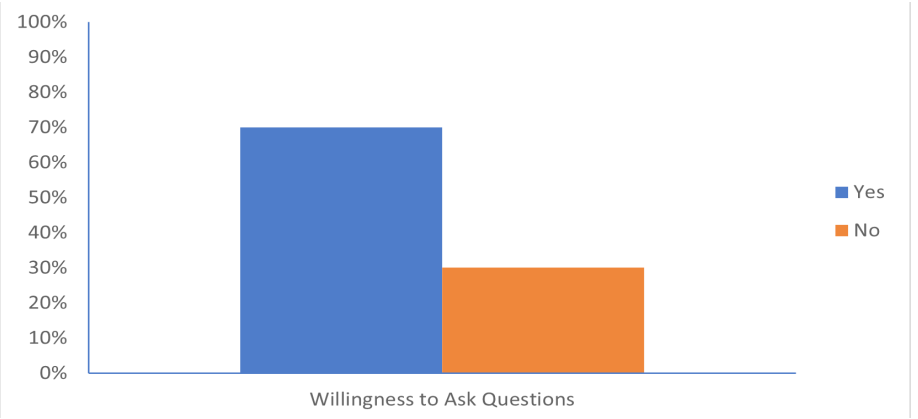

Figure 4. Voluntary Impromptu Participation

Students justified their answers as follows:

> "*Sí. Es una forma de practicar y perder el miedo a equivocarse*". Yes. It is a way of practicing and to lose the fear of making mistakes [our translation]
>
> "*No, porque me da vergüenza que mis respuestas estén mal, o mi acento no sea el mejor,*" No, because I am ashamed when my answer is wrong, or my accent is not the best [our translation]
>
> "*No, no me gustaría que otros piensen que soy tonta porque contesto mal*". No, I wouldn't like it that others think that I am dumb because my answers are wrong [our translation]

4.5. Student-Teacher Communication: Asking the Instructor Questions

Table 5 and Figure 5 show the results of the last strand, student-teacher communication, asking the teacher questions, where 90% of participants feel comfortable asking questions during class.

Table 5. Student-Teacher Communication: Asking the Instructor Questions

Response	Participants	Percentage
Yes	9	90%
No	1	10%

Total	10	100%

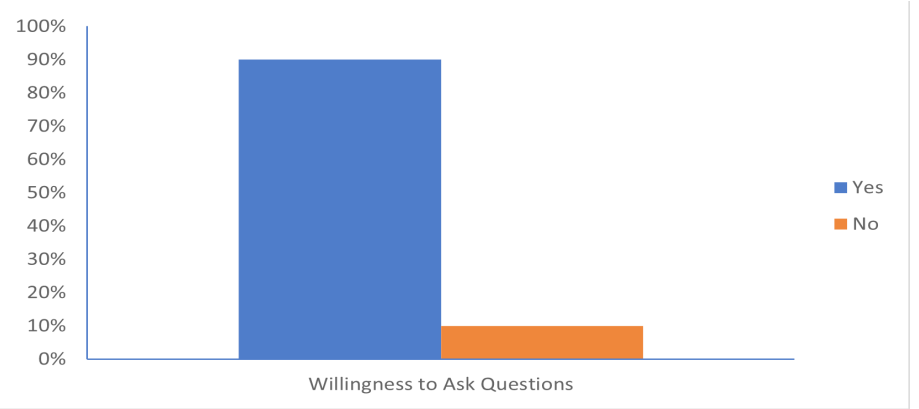

Figure 5. Student-teacher communication

Students point to the fact that answering questions is essential for good language acquisition. Some of the answers that they gave include:

> "*Sí, porque necesito aprender bien*". Yes, because I need to learn [our translation]
>
> "*La profe siempre está a disposición de ayudarnos a entender todo*". Our instructor is always willing to help us understand all of it [our translation]
>
> "*Depende del profesor, hay unos que no dan la confianza para preguntar*". It depends on who the instructor is. There are some that do not instill confidence to ask questions [our translation].
>
> "*No me gusta hacer preguntas por vergüenza a qué se rían de mí*". No, I don't like to ask questions because I am afraid people are going to laugh at me [our translation]

4. Discussion

Although we thought that personality would be a factor preventing student participation in class, we see that in this population, it was not. All participants show similar patterns and fear of participating in class.

The study also showed that of the four categories of analysis, the one in which students were more reluctant to participate is the *called impromptu presentation*. In addition, after comparing this category and the *voluntary impromptu presentation,* the differences in the willingness of participation are noticeable since this last category had the highest willingness to participate. Abrar et al. (2018) reported that the students' attitudes toward speaking may influence their willingness to use the language. This finding is supported by

the fact that in this study most of students showed a willingness to participate voluntarily during impromptu exercises. However, almost the same percentage expressed reluctance in called impromptu activities. This suggests that the nature of the activity rather than oral proficiency prompts reluctance. This finding is consistent with results of previous studies on this topic.

Another important finding in this study is that most of the participants agreed on feeling willing to participate in group activities. Woodrow (2006) mentioned that group work during class time lowers the students' levels of anxiety. For Woodrow, this is beneficial for language learning since anxiety affects output. In addition, Young (1990) mentioned that there is strong scientific support for the benefits of having students learning and working in groups. The author added that collaborative work promotes both academic achievement and collaborative ability. A possible cause for this is that students feel more confident and less afraid to use the language when speaking in small groups. Once again this is a sign that the nature of the activity is essential in finding out why students are not willing to participate in class.

Speaking in public showcases most of the participants' insecurity since this is a general category. It is consistent with Juhana's (2012) proposal that students' greatest concern is to make mistakes in public. The prepared presentational mode seems to be the most problematic for students and that is consistent with Young's (1990) assertion that students are less willing to participate orally when the activities are programmed. This low percentage of participation may be because students have more time to think about their feelings toward the output of the language, their peers' attitudes, their own knowledge and pronunciation. In other words, they have more time to develop anxiety.

The results of this study coincide with those of previous studies on anxiety as directly affecting how students produce language (McCroskey and Beatty, 1986), Juhana (2012), Young (1990), Hassan (1992), Hamouda (2012), and Ariyanti (2016). They agreed that the feelings of anxiety, pronunciation skills, lack of knowledge, and their peers' attitudes are some of the most important factors that cause them to be reluctant to produce the language naturally and confidently.

Finally, the highest category in the willingness of participation is *student-teacher communication*. Many participants mentioned that the attitude and confidence of the instructors played an important role in their willingness to communicate with them. Young (1990) stated that the teachers' attitudes may lower the students' levels of anxiety toward speaking the language. How an instructor teaches students may have a significant impact on how they receive, process, and produce the language. Since teachers are the figure of authority in the classroom, it depends on them to control the way in which the different communicative interactions are carried out during class time, and hence the confidence with which students perceive the oral tasks.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Recommendation for Future Teachers

This study has shown, in general, that a relaxed environment in which the students feel free to participate voluntarily helps them enhance their participation in oral activities during English classes. We propose the implementation of a more relaxed class environment, in which the students are not always called on to participate. The instructor should give the students the confidence to participate by will. We believe that this relaxed environment will raise levels of class participation since students will feel more comfortable during oral activities. The fact that most of the responses in this study centered on the fear of being ridiculed by peers leads us to recommend that instructors should not let their students mock others during their classes and correct those students who do it. This will create an optimal environment in which students will feel more comfortable about participating and less afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers, thus enhancing their participation and their language production.

5.2 Recommendations for future investigations

The role of personality, more explicitly introversion and extroversion, in oral participation have been mentioned many previous studies, but most focus on one these personality traits. Future investigations should conduct comparative research on both, and on how they affect the output of the foreign language.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to analyze the factors that play a role in beginner students' reluctance to participate in oral tasks during English classes. As stated in the results, the possible feeling of anxiety developed by the pressure on scheduled activities, fear of being mocked by peers, the instructor's attitude, and lack of confidence are the major factors that affect students' willingness to participate in the different oral activities during class. An important finding is that implementing small work groups during class is beneficial for students. This strategy not only may improve the input and processing of the language but also may highly enhance its production, since students may be more willing to use the second language more confidently. Contrary to what has been stated in previous studies regarding anxiety and oral participation, we found that in this specific group of students, personality did not appear to be an influencing factor in their willingness or reluctance in oral participation. Taking into account these findings, we also recommend that future teachers help students develop their confidence in the production of the second language, to create a safe classroom environment where students are not afraid of being mocked by their peers, so they are confident enough to produce target language; teachers

should allow students to participate on their own initiative without the pressure of being called on to participate orally.

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Appendix
Instrument

I parte: Personalidad

Me gusta estar en medio de la acción
- ○ Totalmente de acuerdo
- ○ De acuerdo
- ○ No estoy seguro(a)
- ○ No estoy de acuerdo
- ○ Totalmente en desacuerdo

No soy un optimista alegre
- ○ Totalmente de acuerdo
- ○ De acuerdo
- ○ No estoy seguro(a)
- ○ No estoy de acuerdo
- ○ Totalmente en desacuerdo

II parte: Preguntas abiertas

Si usted tiene un trabajo de exposición y es su turno para participar, ¿cómo se siente antes de empezar a exponer?

a. Emocionado(a) y con ganas de comenzar su exposición
b. Un poco nervioso(a) pero con ganas de empezar
c. Un poco nervioso(a) y ansioso(a) desearía no exponer.

Por favor justifique (explique) en el siguiente espacio y con sus propias palabras su respuesta.

Si usted está en clases de inglés y su profesor le pide que lea un párrafo del libro en voz alta frente a sus compañeros o simplemente hablar frente a ellos, ¿cómo se siente? Por favor justifique (explique) en el siguiente espacio y con sus propias palabras su respuesta

Section D
Assessment

Double-Loop Assessment for Second Language Acquisition[1]

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Introduction

It is hypothesized that alternative assessment has not been further developed since relatively less information refers to this type of evaluation. For instance, the narrowest definition for non-traditional assessment found is regarding student-centered instead of teacher-centered assessment(Bell, as cited in Thomas, 2012). To propose an alternative way of assessing students' speaking production, it was necessary to first define what traditional assessment is. Furthermore, literature about traditional and nontraditional assessment, double-loop learning, and teaching approaches was consulted to finally define and exemplify what assessment is. This information is provided in the literature review below, as well what the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica (MEP) proposes as assessment methods. Traditional methods have carried a washback effect. That is why double loop theory is proposed to ameliorate this effect, as in between the loops, feedback is given and a workshop is performed aiming to upgrade students' development in the first loop. In other words, the goal of using double-loop learning for an oral assessment is to review students' weaknesses and strengths to improve their speaking skill execution, thus enhancing student-centered and individual learning.

Hernández-Nodarse (2017) states that current predominant assessment practices tend to focus on the summative evaluation instead of formative feedback. This is a pattern that has been followed in education since ancient Greece and ancient China where competition was favored when seeking for a new job position. Generally speaking, this paradigm did not change until the appearance of the first formative assessments in 1981 by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Hernández-Nodarse, 2017). Still, it was not be until the 21st century that double-loop learning began to be hypothesized as formative assessment by Banta (2011). In educational environments,

[1] The authors of this text were students of the UNA course ELM400 *Seminario de Innovación, Investigación de Campo en Inglés y Producción Educativa* (Seminar on Innovation, Field Research in English, and Educational Production) during the second semester of 2020.

double-loop learning has had beneficial results as a remedial plan in community colleges (Doren, 2013), in formative process for in-service teachers (Peeters & Robinson, 2015), reading comprehension facilitators (Basri, Salija & Weda, 2018), and EFL vocabulary acquisition technique (Hwang & Wang, 2016). Considering this research, oral assessment—the focus of this study—is among the topics that have not been analyzed in detail from the double-loop learning perspective.

Our objective is to determine whether teacher intervention based on double-loop learning as oral assessment could improve students' proficiency in an oral task rather than traditional assessment, while being administered to tenth graders from an private urban high school in San Jose. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected. The quantitative data are the result of both loops. Moreover, students' speaking abilities are qualitatively described in observations and interviews. To avoid the Hawthorne effect, which refers to the alteration of behavior by the subjects of a study due to their awareness of being observed, the students were asked to do a couple of activities instead of an assessment form. In addition, definitions of traditional and non-traditional assessment, the oral production assessment forms established by the MEP for Costa Rican teachers, and learning approaches and theories are discussed in the literature review section.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Traditional and Non-traditional Assessment

Rodrigues (2010) defined "assessment" as a group of manners and activities that help to indicate the performance of a student in an educational setting. She stated that this process affects anyone who takes part in a subject's education. In fact, she referred to the use of assessment methods as a process that surpasses the purpose of testing as it covers the performance of every student better. The author emphasized the importance of assessment as a tool that improves the learning process. At the same time, she suggested the use of alternative procedures to assess students, showing that the assessment process is integrated into the teaching and learning process. This improves the achievement of teachers' and students' goals while helping students to improve their own learning process. She presented a new paradigm oriented to change traditional assessment; the main reason is to improve the procedures already applied inside a classroom to optimize teaching and learning process and have a more student-centered assessment which, in fact, fits in the reality of the learning process. Although her purpose was to encourage educational institutions and colleagues to change into a new assessment paradigm, the author was concerned about the challenges that take place when this paradigm is in use; collecting more information from the students could be used to reinforce the areas of each student's lacks.

Nasab (2015) referred to traditional assessment as testing. The author defined testing as a formal, standardized series of tasks students perform to obtain a score. Testing attempts to measure students' learning under single-occasion-timed exercises. As a result, both the product and process of learning lack descriptive information. Examples of traditional exercises are multiple-choice items, true-false statements, fill-in-the-blanks, and matching exercises that are not adequate for foreign language curricula. Even so, testing strength is noticeable when measuring certain learning aspects such as students' achievement under certain conditions. Nonetheless, most professionals argued that testing does not resemble real-life language usage, and it does not inform students' progress or difficulties because it is a single-occasion test. Nasab (2015) explained that the existence of standardized tests leads to a teacher-centered assessment. Thomas (2012) defined teacher-centered assessment as the usage of tests, quizzes, exams, and textbook exercises to assess students' learning. This teacher-centered assessment approach affected teachers' methodologies since they not only focus on exam preparation practices instead of other didactic activities but also cause students adopt more superficial approaches (Nasab, 2015).

In the case of Costa Rica, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) provided a manual with the technical norms to follow during the design, administration, and evaluation of the oral production and listening comprehension test to students belonging to this curriculum (Departamento de evaluación de los aprendizajes, 2018). This document established the different parts that tests must contain according to the levels, terms and modalities of the educational system. The guidelines to produce both types of tests establish that the time spent in the classroom, vocabulary, and experience with similar situations must be considered when creating the test. The test must be administered of the test must be done by the teacher of the subject, who should provide a good atmosphere and prevent possible distractions for students. Regarding the evaluation, the grade must be the result of the points obtained multiplied by the total points of the test divided by 100, and it must be returned to each student in a maximum of eight days. The document established that preparation time may be granted and support material may be provided. Two types of production can take place: interaction where the student is supposed to have an interactive conversation with a classmate asking and answering specific questions; and, continuous production where the student, individually, must carry out a structured production directed to the audience or a monologue showing their communicative competence. Regarding the types of oral assessment, the MEP established that it can be a presentation, a description, a personal interview, a simulation, or a dialogue about a specific topic that can be done individually, collectively, or with the teacher. Interviews, role-plays, presentations, and descriptions may have additional material such as images or videos. Interviews must be based on closed questions corresponding to the Common European

Framework of References for Languages (CEFR levels) where students must accept or reject invitations, ask for data, facts, concepts, principles, and generalizations, or simple questions whose answers go from easy to difficult. Descriptions, presentations, and role-plays do not require a specifications chart; however, they should test students' development. These activities may be accompanied by questions about vocabulary and knowledge of the topic. This document stated that the teacher must communicate the duration of the test to the students and must make sure that they understand the dynamics of the test. They may record the test and must grade it immediately. In the case of bilingual institutions this test must be done in the presence of another teacher. The official test must contain two parts: the administrative and the technical part that must contain the assessment strategies, process steps, indicators, the assessment scale, and the criteria for assigning scores.

When referring to non-traditional assessment, some researchers and professionals in the field referred to it as alternative assessment or student-centered assessment. Nasab (2015) referred to alternative assessment as new approaches and techniques that inspire and motivate students to examine themselves and consider the world around them. Equally important, Price et al. (2011) argued that student-centered assessment provides certain important traits since first, by using high-quality teacher-designed assessments, students' learning is reflected in time to adapt instructions; second, a broader range of abilities and skills along with content recall can be assessed; and third, new roles are given to students in a process which transforms assessment into a learning experience (Price et al, 2011). In addition, Buhagiar (2007) showed that the perspective of using an alternative assessment strategy comes from several assumptions, wrong perceptions, and non-valid measurements used inside regular classrooms since early ages of education. He asserted that because the use of traditional assessment hinders the learning process, it is necessary to look for an improvement in the field. He explained that using an alternative method may not correct every issue presented in the traditional assessment; however, he claimed that most of the deficiencies from wrong measuring would be improved. He defined classroom assessment as a process that must be divided into six uses inside a regular classroom (no further information for other educational sets). Buhagiar (2007) concluded the importance of a classroom assessment in alternative paradigms; it was explained that the importance of using an alternative assessment relies on the improvement of the psychometric model.

To exemplify non-traditional assessment methods, Price et al. (2011) presented six alternative assessment strategies they considered should be part of the 21st century learning environment. First, rubrics make it possible to measure certain skills and abilities not assessed in standardized testing systems that focus on discrete knowledge (Price et al., 2011). Second, performance-based assessments (PBA) evaluate both students' knowledge and their

ability to apply that knowledge in a real context by designing a final product for a specific purpose. Third, portfolios compile students' effort, development, and achievement over a determined period. This strategy favors applying knowledge of students' abilities rather than memorization. Fourth, self-assessment allows students to recognize strengths and weaknesses so they can work on them and improve to reach specific criteria. Fifth, peer assessment where students give feedback to each other about their work's quality and value is another strategy. Finally, the student response system (SRS) uses technological tools to apply formative assessment in the classroom, allowing teachers and students to see the results instantly instead of having to wait for days.

Regarding the assessment of oral production, McNamara (2000) explained that communicative language tests are based on Hyme's communicative competence theory which includes language understanding and ability to use the language in context according to the settings' demands. For example, addressing friends in a spoken or written manner would be different from addressing strangers or other colleagues in professional contexts (McNamara, 2000). This new approach was rapidly adopted after its appearance; however, the impact in the communicative language testing development was felt after a decade. Two features are important to mention. First, since they were performance tests, the students had to be assessed while the task was being developed through an extended act of communication, and second, demands of social roles from the real-context setting were given to students so they can comply with what was expected from them.

1.2 Learning Theories

The English curriculum established by the MEP is based on the action-oriented approach to guarantee the development of the students' communicative competences (*Programas de estudio de inglés, tercer ciclo de educación general básica y educación diversificada*, 2016). This approach "views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents,' i.e., members of society who have tasks to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action" (CEFR, 2001, p. 9). The assessment activities and tasks the MEP posed are meant to assess what students "can do" and what they know. Examples of these tasks are those that imply imagining a different world and domain within the classroom's walls; for example, writing newspapers, playing game cards, ordering at a restaurant, creating a brochure for tourists, a blog entry, and a fundraising project. Their focus should be not only on the result or the individual general competences but also on the processes. Regarding the teachers' role, the MEP established that they must guarantee the usage of language in real-life contexts and scenarios with authentic materials, and must provide an autonomous place of students with intercultural awareness. Language learning or teaching should be concerned with strategies, tasks, texts, individual's general competences,

communicative language competence, language activities, language processes, contexts, and domains (CEFR, 2001). Tasks are actions carried out by an individual to achieve something; even though tasks do not especially involve language activities, they require an individual's communicative ability to perform in a specific context under specific conditions. Strategies are lines of actions chosen to carry out the task, and texts are the result of language activity: reception, production, interaction, or mediation. The individual's general competences refer to their knowledge, skills, existential competence, and their ability to learn. Communicative language competences comprise *linguistic, sociolinguistic*, and *pragmatic* competences; linguistic competence includes lexical, phonological, syntactic knowledge, and skills; sociolinguistic competence refers to sociocultural conditions of language use; and pragmatic competence is concerned with the scenario. Language activities and language processes involve reception, production, interaction, and mediation; guaranteeing these four types is of utmost importance for oral and written production. The contexts of these language activities lie in the domains, which are the sectors in which the agents operate; domains are classified as public, personal, educational, and occupational, respectively.

For pedagogical conceptualization, the MEP appealed to socio-constructivism since it "perceives the learner as a responsible member of a world community and views teachers as social engineers" (Programas de estudio de inglés, tercer ciclo de educación general básica y educación diversificada, 2016, p. 19). Therefore, the syllabus was designed with this principle demanding learner's participation, interaction, and adaptation. This approach was proposed by Vygotsky deriving from his theories regarding language, thoughts, and mediation (Kanselaar, 2002). The author stated that the approach is focused "on students' active participation in problem-solving and critical thinking regarding a learning activity that they find relevant and engaging." Thus, by testing ideas and approaches, students are shaping their own knowledge resulting from the situations that happen to them. In addition, the experience is the basis of this approach, with the understanding that students react based on previous experiences, in other words, the pre-gained intellectual constructs. The learning environment must provide different representations of realities and their complexity and emphasize knowledge construction while focusing on authentic tasks resulting from real-world settings or case-based learning. Critical reflection on experience and social negotiation should take place (Jonassen, 1994, as cited in Kanselaar, 2002). Learning and building communities are two socially accepted examples of learning environments based on this approach. For instance, the main objective is to provide a place (normally computer-supported) where students, collaboratively, produce their own knowledge by establishing common goals which processes will construct their knowledge; for example, publications and illustrated models (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1994, as cited in Kanselaar, 2002). Another example is group discus-

sion on a book that students had to read (Ann Brown, 1989, as cited in Kanselaar, 2002) and project-based learning activities. The author concluded that socio-constructivism attaches not only to activities but actually to the whole process, separate from the idea of the final grade as the only assessment scale.

Although the MEP syllabus is not fully based on the communicative approach, for an eclectic view this is applied along with the action-oriented approach. They have complementary teaching perspectives. For instance, the major difference was that this approach focuses on the objectives and means where actions are part of simple tasks (Puren 2014, as cited in *Programas de estudio de inglés, tercer ciclo de educación general básica y educación diversificada*, 2016). The communicative approach (CA) was highly associated with the term linguistic competence since both imply that teaching itself is a communicative process (Demirezen, 2011). The outstanding principles of the CA include first, the learner's needs and interests, so teaching materials should satisfy them. Second, errors are part of the process and should be tolerated. Third, speaking should be integrated from the beginning, as well as fluency and accuracy. Fourth, real-life and real-world language are highly recommended; therefore, authentic language and materials must be used. Fifth, the emphasis lies on the message and the process of understanding the meaning and employing the language in the development of the same (Harmer, 2007, as cited in Demirezen, 2011). Sixth, cooperative work is expected; thus, role-plays and dramatizations are a great source of cooperativeness. Seventh, a student-centered classroom in which the teacher was the mediator, facilitator or observer, and the students the main character is advocated (p. 64). He compiled three applications of the approach in lesson plans. The first application required the presence of a situation or context, a brainstorm or discussion to list vocabulary, questions and answers about the situation, a study of the main expressions for the dialogue, discovery of generalizations or rules for those expressions. This is followed by an oral recognition and interpretative activities, reading, and copying the dialogues, an oral evaluation with the guided use of language, homework, and a discussion about the possible opportunities to apply the language (Mora, 2002, as cited in Demirezen, 2011). The second application is similar since the objective is to provide a situation and lead students to communicate with the grammar hidden in the context given. The use of songs and games is stimulated for a natural environment to enhance correct pronunciation. Feedback and correction were given after the tasks were completed. Finally, the third application followed the same structure as the first. The author concluded by highlighting the importance of real situations since "it emphasizes a functional view of language in the language teaching process from communicative sources, using language appropriately in real communicative situation that promotes or lead to the teaching and learning of a language as and for communication" (Nunan, 1999, as cited in Demirezen, 2011, p. 69).

1.3 Double-loop Theory

Argyris (1976) stated that double-loop models promote effective decision making as well as feedback. It is based on the hypothesis that single-loop models are unaware of their surrounding variables. Furthermore, single-loop models encourage deceptive strategies and competition between individuals which will affect the problem-solving effectiveness. In contrast, double-loop models have a better notion of its variables, which are composed of valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment. Since double-loop models allow the individuals to confront themselves, they will not tend to compete with other participants. Argyris (1976) remarked that the participants will be inspired to share knowledge and are open to learn from the feedback based on their previous mistakes that will help to achieve better problem-solving skills.

When it comes to assessment, Banta (2011) argued that it could be enclosed in a loop model composed of planning, implementation, analysis of findings, and improvement. Each time the loop is repeated, a revision of the approach should be carried out based on the learning outcomes and improvements of the students. This will lead to a second loop, which will be worth more than the first loop, and it will measure again the improvements made in the first loop to confirm the constructive changes in the student. However, it is recognized that further discussion is necessary due to the limited existing theory existing between assessment and double-loop learning.

As seen in Figure 1, the governing variable is the planning stage for Banta (2011). Actions mean implementation, and the consequences mean the analysis of findings. It can be inferred that single loop models do not consider modifying the governing variables (planning) every time they start while the double loop model adjusts the governing variables in the second loop.

To refer to the double-loop implementation in classrooms, DeHaan et al. (2012) studied the usage of a free and access-controlled wiki in the improvement of oral communication skills. Their study was carried out on Japanese EFL students. They took into consideration Dewey's (1938), Lewin's (1951), Kolb's (1984), and Argyris and Shon's (1996) theories on the "Double-Loop" learning process where students are expected to fail and reflect during the "second loop" of experience. They analyzed the outcome of surveys and interviews of 13 participants, who were undergraduate volunteers from a public university in a large Japanese city. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22 years. They scored between 455 and 850 on the TOEIC IP test one week before the study. The investigators relied on interviews to follow the students' progress during the learning process. Their results indicated out that the participants were able to improve syntactic accuracy as well as pragmatic knowledge and communicative abilities. The implementation of the second loop ended up changing the participants' fundamental knowledge and abilities in their target language. Moreover, the participants were able to communicate authentically while completing the assigned scenarios. Due to the nature of double-loop learning, they

were able to notice their improvement by watching, transcribing, self-correcting, and discussing their action. This exercise eventually leads learners to gain confident with their usage of the target language. However, one of the major concerns related to double-loop learning is that it is time-consuming. In fact, the double learning process (rehearsal, performance, and debriefing) will normally take about one or two 90-minute sessions. The authors suggested that the study will encourage teachers with a solid framework to promote authentic communication between students.

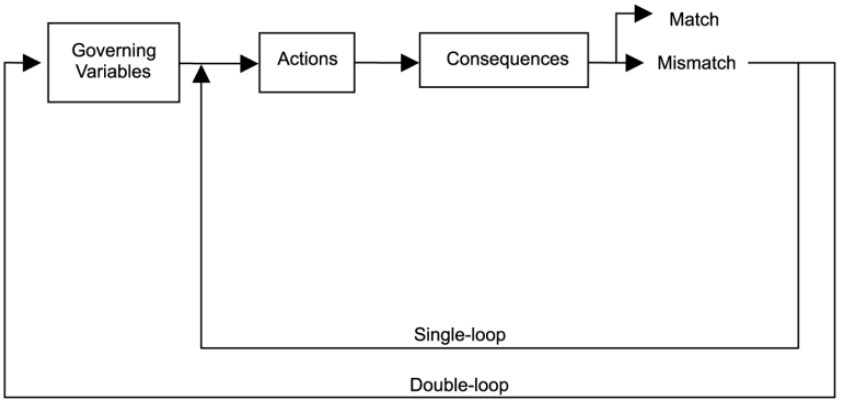

Figure 1. Double Loop Model
Taken from Argyris and Schön (1996) as cited in Blackman, D., Connelly, J. &, Henderson, S. (2004) explaining the double-loop learning model.

After the review of the literature on this topic, we set out to answer the following question?

> Can teacher intervention based on double-loop learning as oral assessment improve students' proficiency in an oral communication in tenth graders in an urban private high school in San Jose, Costa Rica?

2. Methodology

The researchers proposed an intervention based on double-loop learning for oral assessment to improve students' proficiency in oral tasks. As mentioned above, the main purpose of this project was to observe, analyze, and compare the differences between traditional oral proficiency tests and alternative tasks as assessments.

2.1 Participants

In this study, the data collected were taken from a group of 6 students in 10th grade from a private urban high school that follows the MEP curriculum and

has a conversational program that any of the participants can take advantage of. In addition, the English area works with DynED, a tool used to indicate the proficiency level based on the CEFR. The subject group has an age range from 15 to 16 years old, 2 females and 4 males: Their proficiency level varies, even though they are all from the same level in school. To guarantee participant's confidentiality, the codes P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 were assigned randomly to the five students; the pre-intervention proficiency level study showed that students P2 and P3 had a higher proficiency level than the rest of the group (see Appendix C). One of the students (P5) has the condition of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, specifically Asperger. Since P5 belongs to a different population inside a mainstream classroom, we decided not to use the data collected from this participant, due to the lack of accessibility that P5 had while performing the tasks. Similarly, P6 was not taken into account for the data collection nor for his/her performance within the double-loop process as this participant was absent in the observation stage, first-loop, and intervention; however, he actively participated in the second loop. For data analysis, only P1, P2, P3 and P4 were considered as active participants in the whole process.

2.2 Instruments

Seven instruments were used in the development of this research. They included the students' previous speaking assessment files, the students' proficiency level scale, the teacher's interview, the students' interview, the guidelines for first loop and second loop as well as their respective rubrics, and the feedback and intervention document.

The first instrument was a previous speaking assessment rubric provided by the teacher, which consists of a copy of the traditional rubric used for speaking activities (see Appendix A), to determine teacher's language expectations regarding students' level.

Along with the students' files, a language proficiency scale was adapted from Brown (2001), as our second instrument, to test students' development in the class during the observation stage. This scale evaluated students' grammar, vocabulary, oral comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation with the aspects "needs improvement," "satisfactory," "good," "very good" and "excellent." At the bottom of the page there was a space to write comments for the researchers (see Appendix B). The purpose of this instrument is to measure students' language proficiency level during their normal classroom activities.

The third instrument is the students' interview, and includes their ages, their favorite speaking tests (during both face-to-face classes and virtual classes), and the types of speaking assessments they have noticed (see Appendix C). This interview was conducted to find out students' age and opinion about their academic background regarding the speaking assessment forms.

The fourth instrument is the teacher's interview, which contains personal questions about the teacher's major, time working as a teacher, and the

academic rank for the MEP. There were questions about assessment methods used by the teacher, as well as about limitations perceived in those methods, and whether he or she has tried to eradicate those limitations (see Appendix D). This interview was conducted to explore the teacher's profile with respect to the curriculum applied to the students.

The fifth instrument is the first loop's guideline and rubric, whose purpose is to measure the students' single loop development before administering the intervention by the researchers. The guidelines included the objective of the activity, general instructions, and the specific instructions which contain the scenario that students must develop. The rubric used to evaluate students' performance is the same as that used for the students' proficiency level except the difference that this rubric is graded; therefore, the grading scale includes not only the labels mentioned above (needs improvement, satisfactory, good, very good and excellent) but also the assigned number from 1 to 5. At the bottom of the instrument, a space for feedback is provided to use during the intervention stage (see Appendix E).

The sixth instrument was designed to intervene with the students before applying the double-loop task; the main purpose is to give feedback to the students to expect an improvement in the second loop. This consists of the Google Slides presentation for the intervention stage with the information taught based on students' limitations, and new strategies given to the students in an infographic (see Appendix F).

Lastly, the seventh instrument is the second loop's guidelines and rubric. This task had the purpose of determining whether there is an improvement between the first loop and second loop. The rubric is like the first loop; however, the guidelines were changed to implement the characteristics considered necessary for the students' improvement since the second loop is an upgraded version of the first one, this time consisting of a conversation in trios about a different topic (see Appendix G).

2.3 Procedure

The research procedure consisted of several steps. We visited a total of four classes for one hour. On the first day, the researchers asked the teacher for a previous speaking rubric (see Appendix A). That same day we carried out an observation to evaluate students' oral proficiency level by using the language proficiency scale (see Appendix B for further reference). By doing this, we were able to know what students were expected to do at their own level to create the first loop. Each researcher evaluated each student, and then the outcomes were compared to validate the results for integrated reliability in a following work session. Minutes before the class finished, we interviewed the students to collect the data specified in the Appendix C. After the class finished, we interviewed the teacher to collect the data required in Appendix D.

Once the students' proficiency level was known, we proceeded to design the first loop and applied it in the following class. For instance, we took control of the class to explain what the students would do for the next 20 minutes to comply with the first loop. All five students were separated in three pairs consisting of P1 and P3, P2 and P3 while the other one was P4 and P5. We asked P3 to participate twice, because P6 was absent; however, the data were taken from the conversation with P1. During the task, they were asked to have a conversation (see Appendix E for further reference) while recording it for the researchers'.

Our next step was to analyze the data. We listened to the recordings and assessed each student's performance. After all five students had been evaluated and given individual intervention on the rubrics, we proceeded to plan the workshop based on the deficiencies identified in the first loop. In the third class, we conducted the intervention stage where the limitations were presented in a Google Slides presentation as well as in an infographic (see Appendix F) with the same information to help students to improve in certain areas based on the first loop findings.

After the intervention, we proceeded to enhance the first loop variables to plan the second loop basing this improvement on students' deficiencies (see Appendix). In the fourth class, we repeated the process of the second class. We took control of the class to explain to the students what they were going to do for the following 20 minutes to comply with the second loop. All five students were separated in two trios (one group consisted of P3, P4 and P5 while the other one was P1, P2 and P6). We proceeded to listen to all the recordings and grade each student in a work session.

The final step of this procedure was a comparison between the results from the second loop with the ones from the first loop along with previous language proficiency assessments and language proficiency scale to determine the effectiveness of applying the double-loop learning theory to a speaking test based on the students' outcomes.

2.4. Data Coding

The evaluation of each oral production task was assessed by a 5-point rubric divided into five parts evaluating different language skills, including grammar, vocabulary, oral comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. The scoring of the rubric was done with a minimum of 1 point ("needs improvement") to a maximum of 5 points ("excellent"). All four researchers scored each rubric together; this rendered a unified score for each participant in each task. It was our hope that this would ensure a high mark in interrater reliability. This scoring procedure was applied to all tasks.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data elicitation was divided between the interviews with the class and the results of each one of the rubrics applied the tasks representing loop one and loop two. This information was tabulated to analyze the scores for each of the 4 students as well as their performance in each of language skills (i.e., grammar, pronunciation, oral comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency). The second part of the data analysis consisted of the comparison of scores using one tailed *t*-tests. Results of the *t*-test were used to determine whether there was a significant difference between variables, and whether there was a significant improvement between loop one and loop two after intervention. For each analysis, the *t*-value, degrees of freedom, and *p*-value are reported.

3. Results

The results of a one tailed t-test showed a non-significant difference between the first and the second loop. With a *p* value = 1, the students experimented no improvement in grammar, and even the standard deviation value from the second loop suggests that the results were less homogenous, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Grammar

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	p
First	4	3.5	1	3	p = 1
Second	4	3.5	1.29		

As illustrated in Table 2, the mean between both loops is 1.25 while a standard deviation value of 0 was achieved in the second loop. However, the results of one tailed *t*-test showed a non-significant difference between the first and the second loop.

Table 2. Vocabulary

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	P
First	4	3.75	1.5	3	p = 0.15
Second	4	5	0		

Table 3 shows a difference in the mean value of 0.75 and a standard deviation value difference of 0.6 between both loops. The results of one tailed t-test showed a non-significant difference between the first and the second loop.

Table 3. Oral Comprehension

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	P
First	4	3.75	1.65	3	p = 0.5
Second	4	4.5	1.05		

The mean value difference between both loops in Table 4 was 1. The standard deviation value difference is 0.91. One tailed t-test results showed a non-significant difference between the first and second loop.

Table 4. Fluency

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	P
First	4	3.5	0.5	3	p = 0.39
Second	4	4.5	1.9		

The mean value in Table 5 had a slight difference of 0.25 between both loops. In contrast, the standard deviation value in the second loop increased by 1.4 compared to the standard deviation value of the first loop. The results of one tailed *t*-test showed a non-significant difference between the first and second loop.

Table 5. Pronunciation

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	P
First	4	3.25	0.5	3	p = 0.14
Second	4	3.5	1.9		

Table 6 refers to the general percentage given to the students between both loops. The mean value difference between the first and second loops was 13%. Similarly, the standard deviation value difference between both loops was 9.26%. At the end, one-tailed *t*-test results showed a non-significant difference between the first and the second loop.

Table 6. Percentage

Loop	n	mean	s.d.	df	P
First	4	71	25.58	3	p = 0.42
Second	4	84	16.3		

4. Discussion

The results given in Tables 1-5 show that the data analyzed indicates whether there is a valid statistical improvement in students' proficiency in oral tasks based on the use of a double-loop intervention process. They show a non-significant improvement between both loops in regards of *p* values; however, the mean and standard deviation values of tables 2, 3, and 4 suggest a tangible improvement between both loops.

The findings before and after the intervention state a slightly positive difference in some areas such as vocabulary, oral comprehension, and fluency based on the mean and standard deviation values. On the other hand, grammar and pronunciation had an extremely small or no improvement between both loops. Nevertheless, all *p* values are far from the desired 0.05 value. That indicates that the results of all tables are statistically insignificant. As a result, more participants are needed in further research to improve the reliability of the results.

Figure 2 shows the behavior of the skills in the second loop in comparison with the first loop. For instance, grammar became more dispersed on the second loop while on the first loop it was homogenous. Vocabulary and oral comprehension became more homogeneous, while fluency and pronunciation became heterogeneous; in other words, more dispersed on the second loop. In terms of language acquisition, Figure 2 shows that fluency and pronunciation were affected since the participants had more information to acknowledge as well as more active participation; consequently, more grammatical mistakes were made. Vocabulary and oral comprehension are passive skills since the outcome is the memorization of vocabulary and remembering the instruction of the first loop. Consequently, they are easily accessible after the first loop.

The reason for these results might be due to the limited number of active participations during the process of the second loop, leading to positive and negative results for validity purposes. Since grammar and oral comprehension were not reinforced, an improvement in the results was not expected. Conversely, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation behaved as expected due to the intervention objective, which was to reinforce conversation strategies; specifically, rejoinders, intonation patterns, and consonants /v/ and /θ/ pronunciation (see Appendix F).

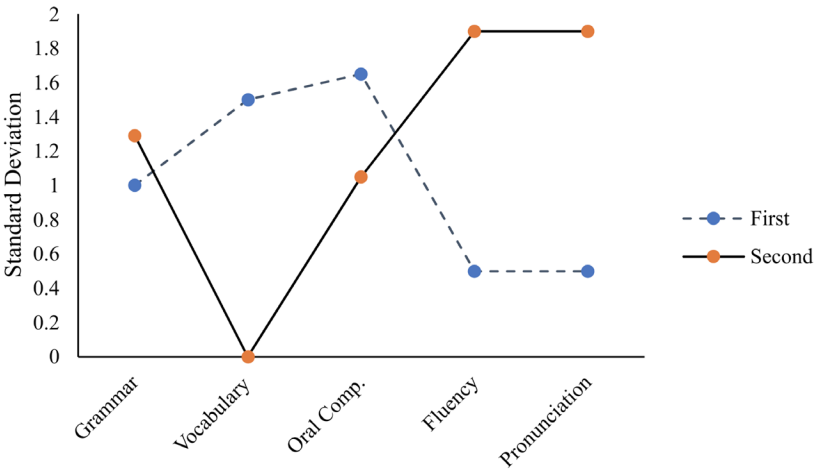

Figure 2. Comparison of Standard Deviation Results by Skill

Conclusion

Due to the lack of statistical significance of the data based on the *p*-value, it is not possible to support the oral assessment based on double-loop learning to improve students' proficiency in an oral task rather than the traditional assessment administered to tenth graders from an urban private high school in San Jose. However, the data do indicate that an improvement took place in vocabulary and oral comprehension for the intervention focusing on those skills. In fact, a pedagogical improvement was inferred based on homogeneity represented with the standard deviation values on those two variables.

This research project had to be adapted due to COVID-19 outbreak in Costa Rica in 2020. Most of these adjustments resulted in certain limitations that could not be avoided, such as connectivity issues, background noise interruption, use of third-party software, and availability of high schools. As part of the smaller number of students available, it was not possible to set a control group for comparison, and the data available from the participants were non-existent as the person in charge claimed that the required information was never given to either the students or the high school. In addition, students reported they did not have any oral evaluations during face-to-face classes or the virtual counterpart. The researchers faced a second limitation in the validation of the process, as the washback effect hindered the possible results obtained from a regular double-loop process as proposed by Argyris (1976), in addition to the lack of research on foreign language learning tests using the proposed double-loop. It was imperative to understand and analyze non-traditional assessments in Costa Rica; however, there was no information available for this purpose, so foreign data had to be adapted. Finally, the scores were given in a group discussion among the members of the research group, for which there was no interrater reliability test, so the collected data are open for further dis-

cussion and research.

Further research related to double-loop learning for oral production assessment needs certain considerations. First, others may conduct research on non-traditional assessment in public and private institutions in Costa Rica. Second, researchers are encouraged to look for a larger control group to observe if the *t*-test results are significant. Third, two groups can be tested having an intervention in one of the groups to measure whether the intervention is helpful or not. The results of both groups would determine if the second loop implies a significant output. Fourth, researchers are encouraged to grade each student individually and obtain a common grade securing the interrater reliability. Fifth, an investigation about the influence of the washback effect on performing the task in front of the rest of the students or in separate sessions may be carried out. Finally, the researchers must guarantee students' active participation to have data that resembles meaningful conversations. In short, these suggestions would likely improve the results of the *p*-value.

Finally, since written tests and oral presentations are the only two evaluations administered, and oral tests are not conducted in the school where we conducted the research, to assess students' knowledge, these two represent traditional assessment approaches. As a result, oral production is left aside and only assessed during classroom interactions and exercises. The innovation of this research relies on adapting the double-loop designed for knowledge management into language assessment as an alternative approach that would help the teacher to evaluate students' oral proficiency taking into account students' deficiencies (see Appendix H). The importance of this innovation is that feedback is usually given to students who probably ignore or do not understand what to do with it. By going back to their deficiencies and weaknesses, students are able to understand those weaknesses and overcome the deficiencies by using the techniques the teacher provides.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Previous Speaking Assessment Rubric

Elocution Rubric

Rating scale: 1 = Completely disagree. 2 = Somewhat disagree. 3 = Disagree minimally. 4 = Agree. 5 = Strongly agree.

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Opening catches audience attention.						
Follows a logical order.						
Expresses the main idea clearly.						
Grammar errors are minimal and structures are on level.						
Pronunciation is very clear and has very few errors.						
Non-verbal skills (body language) add to the message.						

Appendix B

Speaking Ability Proficiency Scale

Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica

Researchers: Juan M. Angulo Bogantes, Wilton I. Benedict Castillo, María J. Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Johel F. Hernández Murillo

Participant's Code:

Objective: To assess students' speaking ability proficiency level before administering a speaking second loop based on the double-loop theory.

Grading Scale	Grammar	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Pronunciation
Needs improvement	Errors in grammar are frequent. The speaker can be hardly understood by the teacher and classmates.	Speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs.	Within the scope of his very limited language experience, can understand simple questions and statements if developed with slowed speech repetition or paraphrase.	Hesitant and uneven speech.	Errors in pronunciation are frequent but can be understood by the teacher and classmates.
Satisfactory	Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	Speaking vocabulary sufficient to express themselves simply with some circumlocutions.	Can get the gist of most conversations of non-technical subjects (i.e., topics that require no specialized knowledge).	Can handle with confidence but not with facility in most social situations.	Pronunciation is intelligible though often quite faulty.
Good	Control of grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations.	Able to speak the language with sufficient vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations. Vocabulary is broad enough that they rarely have to grope for a word.	Comprehension is quite complete at a normal rate of speech.	Can discuss particular interests of competence with reasonable ease. Rarely has to grope for words.	Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb other speakers.

Very good	Able to use the language accurately on all levels. Errors in grammar are quite rare.	Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of precision of vocabulary.	Can understand any conversation within the range of their experience.	Able to use the language fluently on all levels normally pertinent in professional needs. Can participate in any conversation within the range of this experience with a high degree of fluency.	Errors in pronunciation are quite rare.
Excellent	Minimal errors in grammar.	Speech on all levels is fully accepted by the teacher and the students.	Can maintain a long conversation with a speaker.	Complete fluency in the language such that their speech is fully understood by the teacher and classmates.	Clear pronunciation understood by the teacher and classmates. Errors are almost never perceived.

The rubric above adapted from Brown (2001), by Juan M. Angulo Bogantes, Wilton I. Benedict Castillo, María J. Gutiérrez Fuentes, y Johel F. Hernández Murillo (2020).

Comments

Appendix C

Student Interview

Universidad Nacional
Heredia, Costa Rica

Researchers: Juan M. Angulo Bogantes, Wilton I. Benedict Castillo, María J. Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Johel F. Hernández Murillo

Student Interview

Objective: To know the students' academic and personal background

Personal Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

Academic Questionnaire

1. Under normal circumstances (face-to-face classes), how often do you take speaking tests?
2. Under normal circumstances (face-to-face classes), what kind of speaking tests have you taken?
3. Due to the pandemic, how often has your oral production been evaluated?
4. During the pandemic, what kind of speaking tests have you taken?
5. What is your favorite kind of speaking test? Why?

Appendix D

Teacher Interview

Universidad Nacional
Heredia, Costa Rica

Researchers: Juan M. Angulo Bogantes, Wilton I. Benedict Castillo, María J. Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Johel F. Hernández Murillo

Teacher Interview

Objective: To know the teacher's academic and pedagogical methodology

Academic Questionnaire

1. What is your teaching major?
2. How long have you been teaching in high schools?
3. How long have you been teaching in this high school?
4. What is your academic rank in the MEP?

Pedagogical Methodology Questionnaire

1. What kind of oral speaking assessment do you use in this grade?
2. What limitations do you perceive in those oral speaking assessments?
3. Have you tried to eliminate those perceived limitations?
4. Do you think that the MEP curriculum establishes oral speaking assessment?

Appendix E

First Loop Guidelines and Rubric


INTONATION
WH- QUESTIONS
How are you feeling?
Who wrote it?
When do we eat?
YES/NO QUESTIONS
Can you help me?
Are you ready?
Have they finished?
STATEMENTS
I am happy to meet you
This is a pen
She is my friend


Speaking Improvement
Workshop
Hello!
Hi!

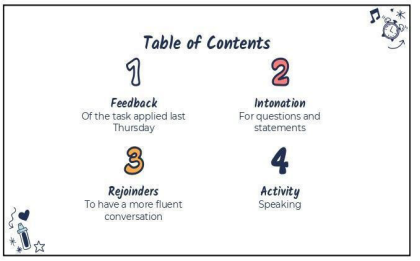
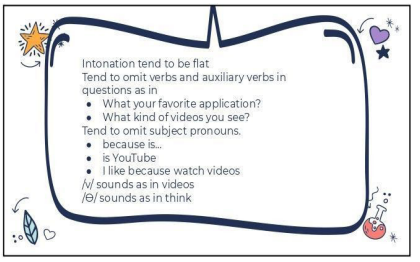
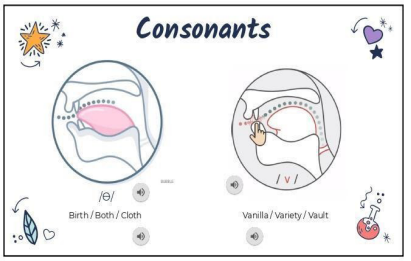


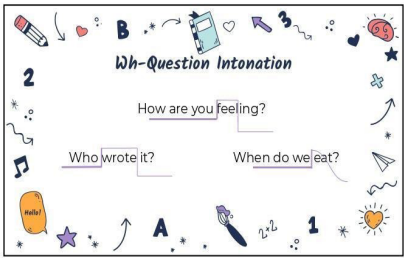
Table of Contents
1
Feedback
Of the task applied last Thursday
2
Intonation
For questions and statements
3
Rejoinders
To have a more fluent conversation
4
Activity
Speaking

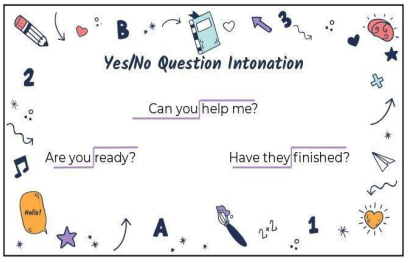

1
Feedback


Intonation tend to be flat
Tend to omit verbs and auxiliary verbs in questions as in
What your favorite application?
What kind of videos you see?
Tend to omit subject pronouns.
because is...
is YouTube
I like because watch videos
/v/ sounds as in videos
/ɵ/ sounds as in think


Consonants
/ɵ/
Birth / Both / Cloth
/ v /
Vanilla / Variety / Vault

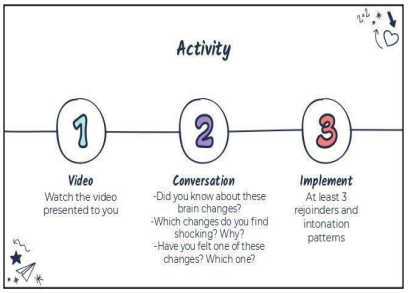

2
Intonation
patterns

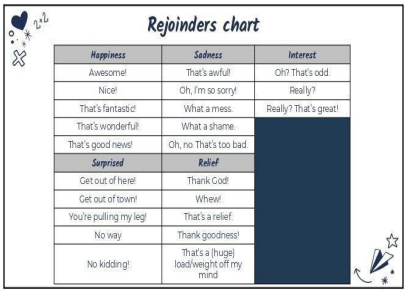

Wh-Question Intonation
How are you feeling?
Who wrote it?
When do we eat?

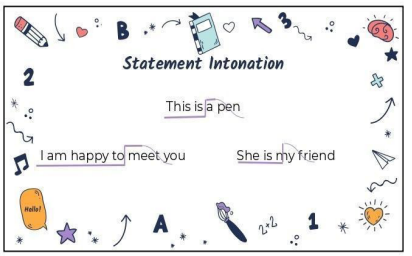

Yes/No Question Intonation
Can you help me?
Are you ready?
Have they finished?


To show...
Relief
Thank God!
Whew!
That's a relief.
Thank goodness!
That's a (huge) load/weight off my mind.

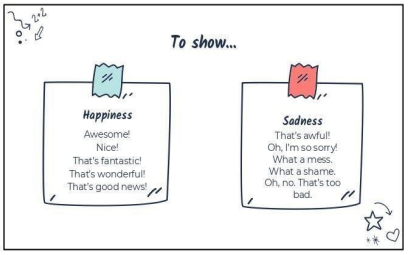

Activity
4


Activity
1
2
3
Video
Watch the video presented to you
Conversation
-Did you know about these brain changes?
-Which changes do you find shocking? Why?
-Have you felt one of these changes? Which one?
Implement
At least 3 rejoinders and intonation patterns


Rejoinders chart
Happiness
Awesome!
Nice!
That's fantastic!
That's wonderful!
That's good news!
Sadness
That's awful!
Oh, I'm so sorry!
What a mess.
What a shame.
Oh, no. That's too bad.
Interest
Oh? That's odd.
Really?
Really? That's great!
Surprised
Get out of here!
Get out of town!
You're pulling my leg!
No way
No kidding!
Relief
Thank God!
Whew!
That's a relief.
Thank goodness!
That's a (huge) load/weight off my mind


Statement Intonation
This is a pen
I am happy to meet you
She is my friend
Hello!


Rejoiners
Hi!
3


To show...
Happiness
Awesome!
Nice!
That's fantastic!
That's wonderful!
That's good news!
Sadness
That's awful!
Oh, I'm so sorry!
What a mess.
What a shame.
Oh, no. That's too bad.


To show...
Interest
Oh? That's odd.
Really?
Really? That's great!
Surprise
Get out of here!
Get out of town!
You're pulling my leg!
No way
No kidding!

Appendix G

Second Loop Guidelines and Rubric

Private High School
Academic English
Teacher's name
Third Period
Student's Name: _____
10th Grade
October 6th, 2020

Total time: 5 minutes each student.
Total points: 25 points
Total percentage: _____
Points obtained: _____
Percentage obtained: _____
Grade: _____

Objective: to describe your favorite technological application to a classmate.

General Instructions: Each group will have a total of eleven minutes for the task. The first two minutes are for preparation. For the eight minutes remaining, talk about your favorite technological application with your classmate.

Instructions

1. Think about your favorite technological application.
2. Have a conversation with your classmate about that app.
3. Ask your classmate the following questions: How does it work? Why do you need to use it? What does it look like? What can you do with it? Is it user friendly? Why do you like it? What do you use it for?
4. Feel free to ask your classmate your own questions.

Rubric

Grading Scale	Grammar	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Fluency	Pronunciation
Needs improvement 1	Errors in grammar are frequent. The speaker can be hardly understood by the teacher and classmates.	Speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs.	Within the scope of his very limited language experience, can understand simple questions and statements if developed with slowed speech repetition or paraphrase.	Hesitant and uneven speech. .	Errors in pronunciation are frequent but can be understood by the teacher and classmates.

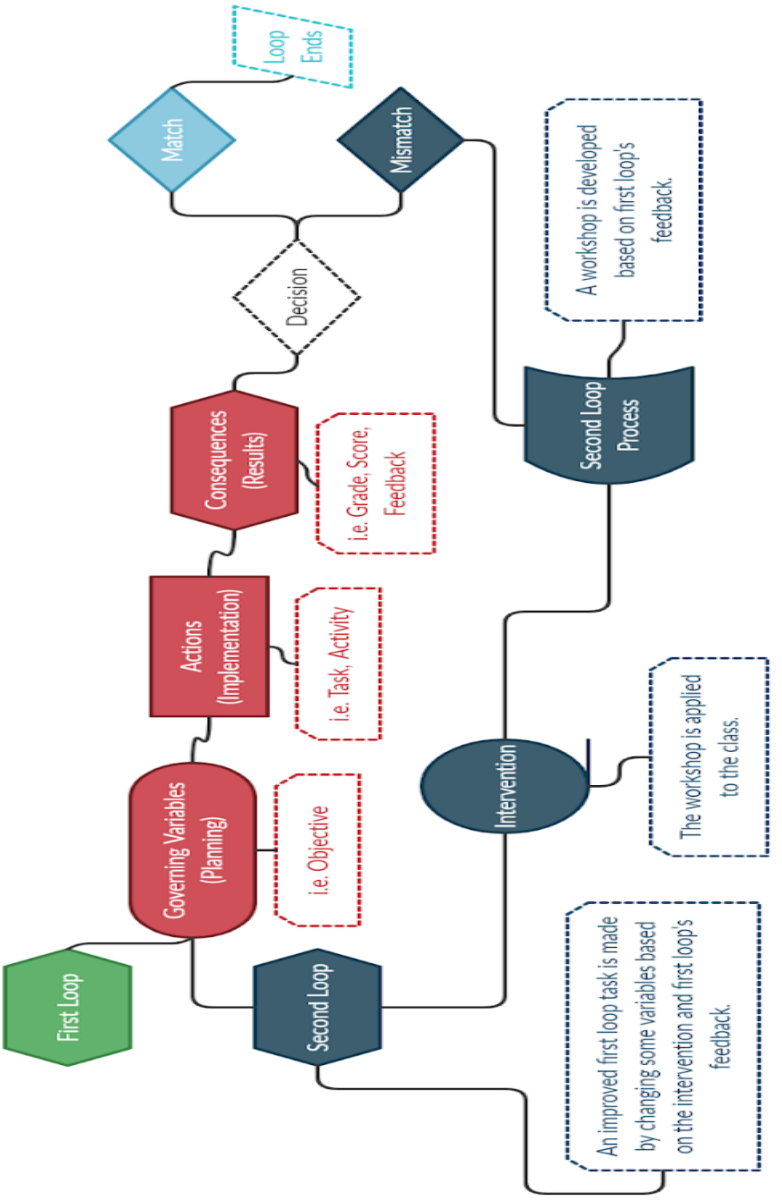
Satisfactory 2	Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	Speaking vocabulary sufficient to express themselves simply with some circumlocutions.	Can get the gist of most conversations of non-technical subjects (i.e., topics that require no specialized knowledge).	Can handle with confidence but not with facility in most social situations.	Pronunciation is intelligible though often quite faulty.
Good 3	Control of grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations.	Able to speak the language with sufficient vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations. Vocabulary is broad enough that they rarely have to grope for a word.	Comprehension is quite complete at a normal rate of speech.	Can discuss particular interests of competence with reasonable ease. Rarely has to grope for words.	Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb other speakers.
Very good 4	Able to use the language accurately on all levels. Errors in grammar are quite rare.	Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of precision of vocabulary.	Can understand any conversation within the range of their experience.	Able to use the language fluently on all levels normally pertinent in professional needs. Can participate in any conversation within the range of this experience with a high degree of fluency.	Errors in pronunciation are quite rare.

Excellent 5	Minimal errors in grammar.	Speech on all levels is fully accepted by the teacher and the students.	Can maintain a long conversation with a speaker.	Complete fluency in the language such that their speech is fully understood by the teacher and classmates.	Clear pronunciation understood by the teacher and classmates. Errors are almost never perceived.

Rubric based on Brown (2001), adapted by Juan M. Angulo Bogantes, Wilton I. Benedict Castillo, María J. Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Johel F. Hernández Murillo (2020).

Individual feedback:

Appendix H
Double Loop Process Adapted for Foreign Language Oral Production Assessment for the Costa Rican Educational Environment



Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, COVID-19 brought the world to a stop and universities were forced to respond to the challenges that came with it. Our UNA students faced these challenges with the desire to become familiar with characteristics of Costa Rican high school students.

As we can see from the articles presented here, the students were able to follow the scientific method in all its rigor. They also were able to face their fear of a new setting, a new model of education, and a new mode of class delivery, having been prepared to teach face-to-face. They were able to learn from the circumstances as they acquired the skills to fulfill their duties as students, researchers, and teachers.

Each of the sections in this publication and their authors provide the reader with insights on the realities that most language learners faced during the transition year. They also provide insightful recommendations for future teachers on how to facilitate learning in times of change, with emergent technologies, in communities of practice without neglecting the importance that research has in the teaching praxis.

In Section A, Alvarado Chaves, Leitón Urbina, Miranda Pérez, Rojas Quesada, and Salazar Guillén contribute to the understanding of the situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the way remote learning has been approached by teachers to promote engagement. Campos, Roda, García, Calderón, and Navarro concluded, in general terms, that Collaborative Learning, Cooperative Learning and Inquiry-based strategies are equally effective in improving students' engagement in virtual English classes. Arce Mena, Salas Murillo, Silva Acosta, and Víquez Fernández show the effort needed to enhance the engagement by promoting activities which prompt interaction with classmates, and thus more significant learning. Furthermore, they acknowledge the importance of individual tasks combined/balanced with student-student interaction, and professor-student interaction. They favor adopting a student-centered approach.

In Section B, Araya Vargas, Bolaños Solís, Jiménez Córdoba, and Sánchez Hernández show us that, contrary perhaps to current beliefs, oral-presentation-type activities allow constant student-student communication process where they practice the target language to organize and share ideas about specific topics. The students' perceptions of this type of activities were positive but must be taken into consideration with factors that may affect their development such as the use of technological tools, student participation and interest in oral communicative activities, class distribution, and the time assigned for each class to carry out the activity in a virtual classroom.

In Section C, Calvo, González, Muñoz, Morales and Paniagua illustrated the feeling of being overwhelmed by the learning curve due to the use of the new tools, being in front of a computer, cell phone or tablet all day, and

delayed communication with instructors. They all have a negative influence on levels of stress and anxiety, and must be taken seriously when planning remote learning courses. Similarly, Chaves Hernández, Fernández Soto, and Muñoz Villarebia found that possible feelings of anxiety developed under pressure for scheduled activities. The fear of being mocked by peers, lack of confidence, and the instructor's attitude are the major factors affecting the students' willingness to participate in the different oral activities carried out during class. These feelings were minimized by the implementation of small workgroups during class.

In Section D, Angulo Bogantes, Benedict Castillo, Gutiérrez Fuentes, and Hernández Murillo showed that their data indicate that an improvement—though not statistically significant—took place in vocabulary and oral comprehension for the intervention focusing on those skills while using the double-loop for assessment.

It is our hope that this collection of student research at the undergraduate level will become an example for future generations. We also hope that these findings provide a point of departure for future teachers in their quest to understand similar situations and seek possible solutions based on empirical data.

We would like to conclude with a shout out to the young authors featured in this issue and encourage future language instructors to use data-driven decision-making in their professional careers. We also would like to encourage all educators to continue looking for solutions at uncertain and difficult times and most importantly to systematize all their experiences to be shared with the teaching community to enrich our daily practices.

Jorge Aguilar-Sánchez
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Undergraduate research deserves as much attention as research in general, especially in second language acquisition in Costa Rica. This collection was put together to showcase the quality work undergraduates can produce. It presents research in the areas of pedagogical practice, engagement in the classroom, factors that affect learning, and assessment, all of which require further exploration in Costa Rica. This collection is presented with the hopes of promoting best practices in research, teaching, and publishing undergraduate research. Others are also encouraged to contribute to this field and to promote the dissemination of the work done at the undergraduate level.

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