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A comparative study of the reading comprehension component of the French and Spanish language programme at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine levels 1-3.

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Abstract

Nowadays, online learning has become increasingly popular and its influence continues to grow within the educational sector. Online mode of instruction provides an alternative to traditional learning practices, while it may offer many benefits it is not without its drawbacks. As a result, this dissertation examines the various obstacles faced by double major students (levels 1-3) of the French and Spanish degree programme at the University of the West Indies, St, Augustine. It specifically sought to gain a profound understanding of the students' perspectives and attitudes on the various teaching methods as it relates to the reading comprehension component of each language. The research placed emphasis on the strengths and limitations of each mode of instruction whilst proposing solutions with the goal of creating awareness amongst educational facilitators. As a means of data collection, electronic questionnaires were distributed based on willingness to participate to a sample size of 15 participants, selecting 5 students per level. The results revealed that blended learning (which is defined as the use of both online and in-person learning techniques) was the favoured teaching method, indeed the participants considered it to be more beneficial to their learning process.

Additionally, the research concluded that the respondents did not consider the online mode of instruction to be more worthwhile. It also indicated that in order to properly improve the learning outcomes of the students, blended learning should be employed.
Introduction

This research paper entitled "A comparative study of the reading comprehension component of the French and Spanish language programme at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine levels 1-3" investigated and examined the various modes of instruction while simultaneously determining which teaching style and approach proves more beneficial to students. Language acquisition has significantly evolved throughout the years, it has digressed from static learning which refers to traditional face-to-face classes and has adopted a more dynamic approach using virtual learning. Additionally, the use of technology has a role to play in the evolution of language acquisition. Technology has become a crucial element in society, as it is used daily, "integrating technology into education has become a useful and alternative agenda to educators" (Chen). It has also impacted on the educational sector and due to its increased accessibility, language learning has been transformed. Thus, it is imperative to examine the impact of technology integration in education, specifically in the domain of foreign language learning in order to determine the most suitable mode of instruction. According to Chen, technology provides an "effective technique for students to think, research, and present in an enriched and more powerful way". Though many students have expressed their uncertainty associated with the implementation of technology in language learning (Kim).

Chen also illustrated that an online learning environment allows students to develop "new strategies of learning, construct knowledge, and strengthen their content area proficiency". It must be noted that the utilization of technology can enhance "student motivation as well as enthusiasm for language learning" (Maxwell). The principle of motivation is a crucial factor with regards to learning as "learning won’t take place without motivation" (Bruner). The use of technology creates "extrinsic motivation" amongst students
which in turn "trigger[s] students’ intrinsic motivation because it is a more interesting technique that might be able to trigger students’ motivation" (Chen).

Numerous research has been conducted on online learning in general, but many have failed to examine the benefits and implications of learning foreign languages online. They also overlooked the importance of deciding which type of environment allows students to function at their best. This may be a consequence of the society's belief that physical contact is needed in order to properly learn a language and online learning is not as effective as the convention mode of instruction (Chen). As a result, this research does not neglect this fact and seeks to provide more data on this topic.

This study specifically focuses on the reading comprehension component of the French and Spanish language programme at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. The research also considers the many challenges faced by students. As a French and Spanish double major student at the University of the West Indies, the researcher's interest stemmed from observing the difference in approaches to the reading comprehension component as it is the only component of the two languages programmes that differs. The French language programme favours the use of physical sessions whilst the Spanish section employs an online mode of delivery. As a result, such a difference peaked the researcher's interest, thus leading to this comparative study.

The purpose of the research is to gain insight into the students' perspectives and attitudes on the various teaching methods. The research seeks to highlight the strengths and limitations of each mode of instruction whilst proposing solutions with the goal of bringing awareness to educational facilitators.
**Research questions:**

The following research questions were suggested for investigation in the present study:

1. What is the preferred mode of instruction?
2. Does virtual learning offer more advantages?
3. What can be done to improve students' learning outcome?

**Methodology**

The research design is quantitative in nature, questionnaires were distributed electronically using google forms to 15 double major Spanish and French students, 5 students from each level were selected. These participants were selected based on convenience and willingness to participate.

The researcher chose this type of approach due to the numerous benefits of quantitative research such as the ability to create pre-determined responses. Additionally, questionnaires can be easily administered and analysed as it is less time-consuming. It also allows the researcher to make generalisations based on the findings. The use of questionnaires permits confidentiality as participants are not required to divulge their name. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and completely anonymous. The questionnaire employed the use of several categories of question such as dichotomous survey questions, multiples choice, open-ended questions. Dichotomous questions will allow for categorical or a nominal analysis of the data.

Through open-ended questions, the researcher is able to introduce qualitative data into the research. The researcher gains more insight as respondents are encouraged to elaborate on their answer. Consequently, the research becomes aware of why the respondents hold a certain view or attitude. The analysing of this type of question are deemed too time
consuming and may lead to research bias and subjectivity as the research must read all the participants' answers and put them into appropriate categories by coding the answers.

The data was automatically collected, stored and analysed electronically in google forms. By using questionnaires, the respondents' answers can be easily converted into quantitative data thereby allowing statistical analysis of the data. Additionally, the questions are standardized this signifies that the participants are asked the same questions in the same order. Thus, the questionnaire can be duplicated and tested for reliability and consistency.

The following chapter, chapter 1 will demonstrate how the subject matter was formerly studied by providing insights into previous research. It will also establish the theoretical framework for the research while simultaneously contextualising the study.

Chapter 2 will present the accumulated data using illustrative materials to represent key findings.

While chapter 3 gives an interpretation and synthesis of the findings, this chapter compares the findings of previous research with the current findings as well as illustrates new observations that the researcher has taken into consideration.
Literature of Review

In recent years there has been growing interest in the benefits of introducing an online mode of instruction with regards to language learning. There is a vast amount of literature on the benefits of the traditional approach as well as the online approach. However, the majority of these studies were conducted independently, that is to say, they weren’t comparative studies. This literature begins by examining the benefits as well as the limitations of each teaching style.

Walz (1998) highlighted the necessity to consider the fact that students learn in different ways and different settings. According to Klaus Brandl (2002), the integration of the Internet-based reading materials into a foreign language programme provides an endless supply of authentic materials while simultaneously improving the quality of the method of instruction as he considers the internet to be "a resource can enrich and expand language instruction" (2). Chun's research also listed the "universal availability of authentic materials" as one of the many benefits of such an integration into the curriculum (161). Thus, one of the most convincing arguments for the implementation of online-based reading materials is the access to an infinite number of authentic materials. The online environment permits the use of an extensive number of images and through these visual aids students can construct background knowledge and better contextualise what is being read. Additionally, in the online environment the students learn to depend less on instructional help and as a result, they acquire problem-solving skills. This approach is also supported by the National Standards (1999), which declared that the intent of foreign language learning should be to teach students to become autonomous with regards to reading critically since the inclusion of internet-based reading materials involves independent reading (Walz, 2001). This idea is further supported by Kritsonis as his analysis affirmed that one of the many benefits of the
integration of computer technology in foreign language acquisition is the fact that students can work on their learning material at any time of the day. As a result, the students gain independence with regards to their learning.

Brandl also encourages the online approach with regards to the reading comprehension component of foreign language learning. He indicates that "reading is a silent process that is best done individually" (4). Therefore, the virtual classroom enables students to read at their own pace. He further states that in the physical classroom, students tend to depend heavily on instructional help and as a result, they do not acquire problem solving skills which can be easily obtained through the virtual approach as it encourages autonomous learning.

However, in his research Brandl highlighted several issues that may arise such as difficulties in navigation and cognitive overload. Students often complained that these web-based activities are too tedious and take too long to complete, they often find themselves lost or feeling overwhelmed (M. Bansleben 2002). This, therefore, suggests the need to ensure that the Internet-based activities are not overly time-consuming through a proper screening and selection process. This idea is also supported by Carolina Arrieta Castillo et al (2015), in their research, students reported that the tasks were too taxing. Another issue brought to light is the constant change of URL links, consequently, instructors must continuously track the functionality of the hyperlinks (Brandl).

Brandl also emphasized the importance of a learner-determined and a learner-centred approach. This suggests that the learner should determine the topics and reading materials. Consequently, the teacher adopts the role of facilitator only offering necessary support and guidance where and when needed. Furthermore, on the authority of Gaspar (1998), an Internet-based approach to learning allows students to develop and enhance their questioning,
planning, gathering, sifting, synthesizing and evaluating skills. Nonetheless, the research failed to examine the possible outcomes of the face-to-face teaching method. It merely focused on the advantages and disadvantages of the online approach.

Lee (2002), stated that the use of computer technology in second language learning offer students more learning motivation, strengthens student achievement, enlarges the range of authentic reading materials, stimulates greater interaction between students and teachers and students and peers, accentuates individualistic needs and increases global understanding. The results of Schutte's research determined that online instruction can result in improved academic performance.

According to Taylor (1980), computer technology helps to reduce learning stress and anxieties, while heightening the linguistic skills and self-confidence of the second language learners. It creates "a stress-free learning environment" as characterized by Egbert and Hanson-Smith. With reference to interaction, shy or self-conscious learners can greatly benefit from the online learning environment (Warchauer 2004). It also encourages active participation amongst the students as participation is measured as opposed to attendance (Carolina Arrieta Castillo et al 2015).

Carolina Arrieta Castillo et al (2015) noted that the utilization of technology allows learners to work at their own speed, as there is increased flexibility. Learning and access to materials are not confined which occurs in the physical classroom setting.

Furthermore, students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia can gain tremendously from these online programmes (Mejia, Diaz, FlorianGaviria & Fabregat, 2012). Tools such as grammar and spell checker offer prompt feedback and corrections which in turn allows dyslexic students to rectify common mistakes.
However, the use of computer technology presents many limitations and disadvantages. To properly maximise the implementation of computer technology students and teachers are required to have specific computer literacy skills (Johannasen & Eide 2000). Nonetheless, many students and teachers may lack the necessary skills to profit from computer technology.

In addition, an online learning environment deprives the students of peer interaction. In Schutte's research, the students listed peer interaction as incredibly beneficial to their learning process. Also, online mode of delivery creates what Bartolic-Zlomislic and Bates (1999) label as “unrealistic expectations” of the course, both students and teachers believe they are obligated to constantly work online all the time. Additionally, the material posted online is available 24/7 this may cause a delay with regards to the completion of tasks which in turn affect other students notably in collaborative tasks. Similarly, the above-mentioned research is quite myopic in its view as it does not take into consideration other modes of delivery such as face-to-face, thereby suggesting the need for more comparative research.

Furthermore, Hurd (2007) in his study highlighted various concerns related to distance learning. As reported by Hurd, online learning leads to the "lack of instant feedback, difficulty assessing personal progress in comparison to other students" as well as "isolation", concerns which are not found in the traditional classroom setting. In his investigation into the subject matter Carman (2005), declared that one of the strengths of the physical classroom is the live sessions. These lives sessions allow students to receive instant "guidance", "motivation" and "supervision" of their activities. It also grants real-time communication between the facilitator and the students. Carman revealed that the conventional method creates the idea that the students are "participants in the community rather than isolated individuals in the virtual space". Generally, this is the feeling that teachers try to create in the
traditional setting. It also allows for more teacher-student discussion and interaction which is crucial to the learning process.

Moreover, whilst completing online tasks, some students are most likely to "lose interest", to be affected by the "lack of encouragement" due to unavailability of tutor assistance and peer collaboration. Online learning does not take into consideration that some students may require frequent interaction with their tutor and their peers (La Piana). Kim analysed the online environment and students found it to be "motivationally challenging".

In his research, Kulik (1994) discovered that with regards to the writing capabilities, language students who were instructed using a computer-based platform tested higher than the average student in the traditional classroom. Thereby suggesting that the online approach produces better students. However, Brownstein and Gerlowski (2008) in their comparative research noted that the written work produced by the students were identical. Similarly, in a study conducted by Cahill & Catanzaro which tested two groups of students, one group instructed virtually whilst the other was instructed traditionally. Both groups of students produced "identical essays". This, therefore, implies that there is no difference in terms of the outcomes of either mode of instruction. An idea which is also supported by the study conducted by Chen and Jones (2007) which illustrated both groups of students achieved similar learning and scoring outcomes. One of the many drawbacks of conventional learning is the fact that the face-to-face teaching method is instructor centred as opposed to virtual which is student-focused (Sipes and Ricciardi, 2006) which ultimately affects the learning experience and effectiveness of the face-to-face style. Teacher-centred learning as the name suggests refers to a mode of instruction where the instructor is placed at the centre of the learning process. The educators teach with little to no input from their students. This mode of instruction fails to encourage communication and collaboration amongst the students and
their peers. On the other hand, student-centred learning includes the involvement of students in their learning, they become active participants in their learning outcome. Learning becomes more individualised as they are able to learn at their own pace. While, in his study, Gibson (2008) observed high test results from students who were taught in a traditional classroom.

As suggested by Marta Pedra, the answer to the debate between traditional versus online approach seems to be blended learning. As defined by Alonso et al (2005) blended learning is “learning that mixes various event-based activities: self-paced learning, live e-learning, and face-to-face classrooms”. It is also described as “the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (Garrison & Kanuka).

Blended learning offers the benefits of the online mode of instruction without "neglecting" the "human interactive learning experience". It also promotes social inclusion and interaction. Students can benefit from increased "academic excellence" as "it increases motivation" (Marta Pedra). Additionally, Graham, Allen and Ure (2003) highlighted a plethora of benefits such as ameliorated pedagogics, its economic benefits, being cost-effectiveness as well as an augmentation in flexibility and access.

In conclusion, the majority of the researchers agreed that implementation of ICTs enhances the overall language learning experience as students are able to access a large array of authentic reading materials. Also, students are able to gain autonomy and flexibility, they become less dependent on instructors help and become problem-solvers. It also creates a stress-free environment for shy-learners. It allows for greater participation. Dyslexic learners can benefit from programmes such as spell-checkers thereby reducing their anxiety. However, many concerns were illustrated with regards to the online learning such as the
functionality of URL links, suitability of exercises. Students often complained that online-based activities were in fact too time-consuming and exhausting. Other drawbacks included the lack of instant feedback as well as physical interaction amongst peers. Additionally, both students and facilitators are required to be technologically literate. Therefore, the benefits of the traditional mode of instruction in instant feedback, these live sessions allow students to receive prompt guidance. Additionally, students are encouraged and exhibit higher levels of motivation due to this face-to-face contact.

However, many of these studies failed to do a comparative study. They were quite myopic in view as many merely focused on the benefits and drawbacks of traditional or the virtual approach, thereby highlighting a gap in the literature of comparative analysis.
Findings

This chapter presents the results of the electronically distributed questionnaire which compares and analyses the Spanish and French reading comprehension component. As a double major student of the French and Spanish degree programme, the researcher was privy to various complaints amongst his peers. Students often expressed their dissatisfaction related to the reading comprehension component of both the French and Spanish language programme. The researcher, belonging to the sample population had his own personal opinions, however, was more intrigued by the thoughts and the point of view of his fellow peers. Questionnaires were employed due to the many advantages such as being easy to administer, quick and simple for participants to respond. Due to the anonymous nature of questionnaires, students may not feel uncomfortable thereby reducing the possibility of them hesitating to divulge their personal opinions. The questionnaires were electronically distributed as response time is usually faster, information is gathered instantly. This method is also more accurate as results are entered in the system, decreasing the possibility of human errors.

Descriptive Statistics

The research population was comprised of 15 double major students of the French and Spanish language programme from the University of the West Indies. 5 students per level were selected based on convenience, thus opportunity sampling was employed. More than half of the respondents were female (53.3%).
According to figure 1, two-thirds of the respondents feel more relaxed participating in a virtual setting. Additionally, a predominant number (60%) of the students experience feelings of anxiety such as feeling afraid and nervous whilst asking a question in the traditional classroom. Thereby, suggesting that an online setting facilitates more participation as it doesn’t produce feelings of anxiety and fear amongst students in comparison to the physical classroom setting.
The above diagram illustrated that only 40% of the students experienced difficulties concerning navigation on the Spanish reading comprehension online forum whereas 60% have not encountered any difficulties. These results infer that most of the students are technologically literate and students who may encounter difficulties may be less computer savvy and technologically advanced.
A predominant number of students (66.7%) indicated that the Spanish reading comprehension online activities were too exhaustive. In addition to being exhaustive, more than half (60%) of the students are confronted with difficulties relating to group activities. As a result, the facilitators should carefully examine and calculate the time required for the completion of these activities.

Difficulties with group work

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<tr>
<td>Members not contributing in timely manner</td>
<td>55.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
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Table 1.

The study revealed that the most common problem is the lack of timely contribution amongst group members (55.6%), followed by the lack of participation (33.3%) and a small proportion (11%) encountered conflict.
A superior number of students (66.7%) declared that the greatest drawback of the Spanish reading comprehension online is the delayed lecturer response time. The research noted that only 20% listed being easily distracted as one of the shortcomings and 13.3% considered the lack of physical interaction amongst their peers as a flaw.

However, a greater number (73.3%) of participants considered some of the Spanish online activities to be unrewarding. Whereas 26.7% considered the activities to be beneficial. Subsequently, implying the need for the educators of the Spanish reading comprehension component to revise the suitability of their teaching resources to include more interactive and stimulating activities in order to encourage learning as well as enhance the learning process of the above-mentioned students.
According to figure 5, 80% of the students desire to have the Spanish reading comprehension component taught online. While an insignificant 20% opt for the traditional physical mode of instruction.

Similarly, most of the students (66.7%) of the participants would prefer the French reading comprehension online with only 33.3% choosing face-to-face.
11. Do you think the french my e-learning page enhances the learning process?

A vast majority (93.3%) of the participants indicated that they do not consider the French my e-learning page aids in the improvement of their learning process. Furthermore, a unanimous 100% of the respondents recognise the lack of content and the page's inactivity as the main reason as to why the page is unable to enhance their learning process.

13. Do you think more should be done on this forum?

93.3% of the students are of the firm belief that more should be done to this forum, whereas 6.7% believe that the forum is satisfactory. The same 93.3% suggested the posting of activities and articles as a means of improving the French language's my e-learning page.
15. Which do you consider more beneficial and productive to your learning process?

Fig 8.

Precisely half of the respondents consider the physical approach to be more beneficial and productive due to the availability of instant feedback/instant clarification. Whilst, the rest consider online to be more productive as they can get more done. Additionally, 78.6% of the students indicated that they test higher online, whereas only 21.4% obtain higher test scores in the traditional tests. Also, 53.3% of the research population have higher levels of motivation thru the virtual approach and 46.7% experience the same feelings but in the traditional classroom.

With regards to the preferred mode of instruction, the majority (73.3%) would rather a blended learning approach, 20% preferred face-to-face and a small proportion (6.7%) chose online.

In conclusion, these results were based on the responses of 15 double major French and Spanish students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Although it was a
small sample size, nonetheless the researcher was able to analyse and generalise the findings as shown in the following chapter.
Discussion

The various sources of data were analysed in order to establish and determine to what extent the research findings confirm or contradict previous research noted in the literature review, as well as to respond to the posed research questions.

According to Brandl's research, the majority of the students complained about having encountered difficulties navigating the web-based forum. His findings contrast those of the current research, as more than half (60%) of the students were not confronted with such difficulties. As a result, one cannot generalise the online forum as being difficult to navigate. In the interest of avoiding navigational difficulties, a proposed solution is the implementation of introductory classes before students are introduced to this type of forum. These classes will allow students to gain insight as well as clarification thereby avoiding navigational issues.

Additionally, Brandl's research was conducted over a decade ago, one must also take into account that students are more technologically advanced and literate. Within the last decade, there has been a vast increase as it relates to the accessibility of computer technology which undeniably led to the creation of a more computer savvy generation.

Similarly, the current findings were in accordance with Castillo's and Bansleben's results, as approximately 66.7% of the participants indicated that their online activities were indeed too time-consuming and taxing. Thereby suggesting the need for a careful examination into the time limit of these activities as well as the number of activities posted.

Also, more than 70% of the respondents considered the online activities to be unrewarding. The fact that the students did not consider all the activities to be beneficial questions the appropriateness and effectiveness of the selection of activities. Therefore, challenging the suitability of the activities posted as their role in enhancing the students' learning process. To effectively improve the learning process students must be able to learn
and apply what they know which also hints that students are not able to learn nor apply their knowledge concerning some of the Spanish language reading comprehension online activities.

Taylor highlighted that the use of computer technology aids in the reduction of stress and anxiety amongst the students. The present study supports this premise as two-thirds of the respondents feel more at ease participating virtually as a large majority (60%) experience feelings such as nervousness and fear while posing a question in a traditional classroom setting. Consequently, these results infer that a virtual setting may facilitate shy students as it eases their learning process due to the fact that these students will no longer be hindered by their fears and the online learning will allow them to benefit equally as their more assertive counterparts would in the traditional setting. It also increases the possibility of greater teacher-student or peer interaction.

Furthermore, Bartolic-Zlomislic and Bates asserted that delays occur with regards to collaborative tasks. Likewise, more than half (55.5%) of the sample population indicated that with regards to the Spanish online activities, group members did not contribute in a timely manner. However, this research also accentuated other issues such as lack of participation from members and intergroup conflict. These findings emphasize the demand for a time limit for participation as well as some of the drawback of the virtual mode of instruction.

Hurd in his research specified that lack of instant feedback in addition to the lack of physical interaction amongst peers as some of the limitations of the online approach. Similarly, the majority (66.7%) of the students confirmed that the lack of prompt feedback was one of the greatest problems, followed by the lack of social interaction and the possibility of being easily distracted. The absence of an instantaneous response can negatively impact on their level of motivation, by reducing their enthusiasm pertaining to the completion of
activities. Additionally, the virtual approach to the Spanish reading comprehension deprives the students of physical social interaction. This lack of interaction neglects socially interactive learners, referring to students who learn through actively interacting with their peers.

In Carmen's investigation, the traditional classroom setting allows students to have higher levels of motivation as they are encouraged by a learning facilitator. However, more than half (53.3%) of the students indicated that they were more motivated completing tasks online as opposed to in a physical classroom. Thus, this highlights a difference in motivation amongst the participants as some may possess intrinsic motivation while others possess extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to a “person's internal drive for achievement. Intrinsic motivation may arise from pride, competitiveness, or other psychological factors” (The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide). Whilst, extrinsic motivation “comes from an external source. External motivation may be positive, such as reaping a reward (earning money, getting a good grade, making the football team), or negative (e.g., avoiding punishment, fear of breaking the rules)” (Encyclopedia of Emotion). Therefore, some students are self-motivated while others may require external sources of motivation such as teacher encouragement.

More than four-fifths of the respondents preferred the online method of instruction with regards to the Spanish reading comprehension component while two-thirds preferred the same component of the French language programme to be taught virtually. Students may have opted for the virtual approach due to today's technological society. Thereby, underlining the need to cater to the students wants and needs as well as the need to facilitate the technological advancements and developments within society. As society advances, so should the modes of instruction.
Additionally, more than 90% consider the French's language my e-learning page as a tool to enhance their learning. The students faulted the page's inactivity and its lack of activities to be its only flaw. They go on to suggest the posting of activities which demonstrates the desire of the students for more constant practice in order to effectively improve.

Just above half (53.3%) of the respondents consider the physical approach to be more beneficial and conducive to their learning as they are to receive instant clarification. Whilst, the remainder opt for the online approach as they are able to complete more tasks in an allotted time frame.

Whilst Kulik's research, indicated that students instructed virtually tested better their counterparts who were taught traditionally. However, various researchers (Brownstein and Gerlowski, Cahill and Catanzaro) noted that students taught by either medium produced identical work and test scores. Nevertheless, the current research proved that a larger number of students (78.6%) obtained higher test results after being instructed virtually. Thereby, suggesting that a virtual approach generates better students.

In accordance with Pedra's proposal of blending approach as a means to end the great debate between traditional versus virtual mode of instruction. Most of the students (73.3%) would prefer this approach as opposed to the restrictive methods of only face-to-face and online. This suggests that a mixture of the two polar modes of instruction as the solution to this present ongoing debate.
Conclusion

The present research, "A comparative study of the reading comprehension component of the French and Spanish language programme at the University of the West Indies, levels 1-3" intended to gain a profound understanding of the Spanish and French double major students' mindset and attitudes as it relates to the various modes of instruction, online and face-to-face. The study also sought to underline the strengths and weaknesses of each method, while simultaneously bringing awareness to the educators and recommending solutions. The research as able to respond to the posed research questions.

Firstly, the investigation revealed that the preferred mode of instruction is blended learning. Even though students preferred the current online approach as opposed to the traditional setting. The participants in the future would prefer a blended learning approach as it provides all the benefits that they prefer from the two main teaching methods; virtual and physical.

Secondly, the study also indicated whether or not the students considered virtual learning to be more rewarding. Although students felt more comfortable in the Spanish programme’s online setting and preferred it over the traditional classroom setting. They highlighted a plethora of faults such as the possibility of being easily distracted in addition to the lack of instant feedback and physical interaction. The participants indicated that the online activities posted online were not always beneficial. Additionally, more than half of the respondents considered the traditional setting to be more beneficial and productive due to the availability of instant feedback. Thereby, suggesting that virtual learning does not offer more advantages in comparison with face-to-face instruction.

Thirdly, the research implied that in order to effectively enhance the learning process, educators should employ blended learning. The facilitators of the Spanish reading
comprehension programme should revise the suitability and appropriateness of the activities. They should also take into consideration the number of activities necessary for completion within the given time frame. Furthermore, the educators of the French reading comprehension should take advantage of the course's my e-learning page by the posting of activities and notes, encouraging the students to practice and work outside the classroom.

For future research, it is imperative to investigate the plausibility of implementing a blended learning approach at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine for the reading comprehension component of both the French and Spanish degree programmes. However, some of the limitations of this research were the sample size, as such a small sample size increases the risk of assuming a false premise as true. It also makes it harder to accept the generalisations made throughout the research.
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