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Title of Thesis:

The impact of the use of Technology on the teaching and learning of Spanish as a Foreign language in the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to March 2022.

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ABSTRACT

The use of technology has become an essential aspect in the lives of many people around the world and one cannot disregard its significance and impact on society. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this statement indisputable due to the fact that restrictions have been implemented from March 2020 to April 2022, which meant that physical learning was no longer an option and as such, educational institutions worldwide began emergency remote teaching. The focal point of the research paper is to examine the extent of technology and its use in education to ascertain whether or not it can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language. The participants for this research were selected from the university of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus which included students, lecturers and instructors. The hypothesis of this paper was to examine the impact of the use of technology on the teaching and learning of Spanish at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 - March 2022. The research was a qualitative one that was used to ascertain the points of views of the students and teachers on the impact of technology assisted learning. Students were given questionnaires to fill out and the lecturers and instructors were interviewed. The findings of this paper highlight the need for the use of technology in education because it shows that education can take place whether in a physical environment or not. This research paper has shown that the use of technology has in fact improved the quality of learning although there are disadvantages associated with its use.

Key words: technology, foreign language, teaching and learning, motivation, education, quality.

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Appendix D: A transcript of the responses from a member of the teaching staff.

INTRODUCTION

The motivation behind this research paper is justified because the COVID-19 pandemic has called into question the capabilities of students and teachers to adapt to emergency remote teaching. Hodges et al. describes emergency remote teaching as “an attempt not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis” (qtd. in Barbour et al.). This research paper focuses on Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. The Spanish programme can be found in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics which is also part of the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The entry requirements for the Spanish major undergraduate programme require students to have a minimum of five (5) Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) with passes in at least two 2-unit Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) subjects. The Spanish programme is a three (3) year programme and students also have the option to specialize with a minor. For example, a student can graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a Minor in Linguistics.

As a result of the pandemic, the response from the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus had to be prompt and changes in the pedagogy had to be implemented from March 2020 - March 2022. The researcher of this project experienced first-hand the transition from face-to-face to emergency remote teaching. Emergency remote learning was the only way that students were able to continue learning. The teaching staff at the university also made the transition to remote teaching. Teachers at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus did not have any platform in particular for teaching, as they used a combination of platforms such as Mylearning and Zoom. During the lectures, the teaching staff had their cameras on while they

were teaching but this was not mandatory for the students at the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. Office hours are for students who wish to clarify any doubts or uncertainties about a particular course, and these hours are apart from the teaching hours. The teaching staff uses the Zoom platform to host their office hours. This experience allowed the researcher to believe that technology offers young learners the ability to obtain language competency despite not being present in a physical classroom. Students from all levels in education have been impacted by the implementation of technology in education. What technology has done for students is to enhance the learning process by capitalizing on time and the manner in which learning takes place. It becomes more obvious that technology is important in education because it affords learners the opportunity to be motivated and to learn at their own time and pace. Another benefit is that if any difficulties arise or further clarification on a particular topic is needed, students can use technology and seek out the necessary information especially if the teacher is not available. Tablets, computers, or smartphones are essential tools that can provide an opportunity to enhance foreign language learning and teaching in order to improve the educational process. With regard to the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus, it can be said that technology has had a significant impact on both teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language during the COVID-19 lockdown from March 2020 to March 2022. The researcher arrived at the hypothesis that remote teaching was beneficial and based on that experience, the motivation behind this paper was to find out if other students had shared a similar experience. This is also relevant to Caribbean Studies because other universities in the Caribbean would have also experienced a similar outcome to that of the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus whereby emergency remote teaching would have been implemented. The educators throughout the Caribbean need to know how to design and prepare materials for foreign language teaching and learning.

This scope of this study mainly focused on Spanish as a foreign language in the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. The participants for this study were students and members of the teaching staff from the St. Augustine Campus. The pandemic has also been a major factor in limiting the range of ways the research was carried out, especially with the feedback from the participants. In other words, there was not any guarantee that all the students received the questionnaire. Also, the availability of the lecturers and instructors were not dependable. The possibility of achieving face-to-face interactions for interviews was not feasible and as such, obtaining information using web-based technology was most convenient.

This work will examine the ways in which the use of technology was used to improve the quality of teaching and learning of Spanish as well as the perspectives of both students and teachers. Another objective of this paper is to outline the major purposes for technology use within education at the tertiary level and to also assess the negative impacts associated with it. In addition, this paper will illuminate the role of technology as it relates to teachers and their teaching styles while examining the role technology plays in their lesson planning. The results of incorporating technology into education will prove to be beneficial to both teachers and students alike. This will help educators to be able to manage any problem that affects learners and find remedies to alleviate these issues. The integration of technology in the classroom may alter the ways in which both students and teachers approach or how they access and present information with respect to the education process. Moreover, technology can be considered as a mechanism for change, in order to enhance the learning and teaching experience.

Methodology:

The use of technology in education is justified because it provides different options to the education system such as preparing students for the future, connecting teachers with their students

and improving cooperation with students. This study focuses on investigating the extent to which technology has improved the quality of learning Spanish as a foreign language, and to understand the perceptions of teachers and students' support of technology-assisted learning and teaching (refer to chapter 2 for a detailed explanation).

Chapter Outline:

This study consists of four chapters. Chapter One introduces the Literature Review by looking at the previous scholarly works done based on the topic - The impact of the use of Technology on the teaching and learning of Spanish as a Foreign language in the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to March 2022. Chapter Two is a detailed explanation of the Methodology used for this study. Chapter Three entails the findings and analysis of the data collected. Chapter Four will present the discussion which evaluates the impact of the use of technology in education

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review:

Researchers and educational experts have validated the potency and success of technology as it relates to its role in the foreign language teaching and learning. Language is more than just words; it's about observing non-verbal patterns also. "Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) suggests a more inclusive sense of technology interventions enabled by a wide variety of technology devices and software applications. Accordingly, TELL is utilized to broadly refer to technology use in varied forms in the application domain of foreign language (L2) education" (Chang and Hung 1). They have acknowledged the arrival of emerging technologies such as computers, laptops, tablets, along with the internet, which were able to transform the learning and teaching process. According to Carstens et.al, "Technology is an important part of students' lives. Incorporating technology into the classroom has proved to be beneficial yet also has some drawbacks. Technology has helped student willingness and engagement and allows for the enhancement of learning" (105). These innovative aspects have motivated and engaged learners in independent learning and forced a change within the different sectors of the world with education being one of them. The impact on the education system has been tremendous because technology has enhanced the level of teaching and learning process. This research paper aims to investigate the extent to which technology has improved the quality of teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language in the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus.

Mideros is the author that wrote about Myelearning which is a virtual learning programme that allows both teachers and students to interface with a particular course. Mideros further explains that "as a research instrument MyeLearning provides detailed information on each one of the participants in a course. This is how a tutor can view information such as the days and times when students have accessed the course, the specific sections of the course that students have

viewed (readings, videos, forums or tasks), and general statistical data of activity within the course” (36). Myelearning is seen as a tool that enhances the writing process of Spanish as a foreign language in the University of the West Indies. The work done by Mideros gave a remarkable insight into how technology can be implemented and its role in education. Mideros affirms that, “In the effort to integrate communicative skills in the Foreign Language (FL) Myelearning can serve as a powerful tool to overcome the challenges that classroom-based instruction presented. Depending on teachers’ creativity, Myelearning can allow the in-depth exploitation of reading, writing, speaking, and listening with its numerous possibilities” (32). The author further substantiated his claim that Myelearning was an effective way of improving the learning conditions for students by illuminating the advantages that this tool contributes to the learning process. This scholarly article was also chosen because it gave an insight into how students viewed the incorporation of technology-assisted learning. Mideros believed that “the students illustrated a better appreciation towards the learning process because of higher motivation levels” (38). Despite the fact that there were many advantages of using Myelearning as a tool for enhancing the teaching and learning process, the work by the author did not make sufficient use or mention of other virtual programmes into consideration. In addition, the author’s work was based on feedback from the level II Spanish students. As a result, this research paper will analyze other virtual platforms and their impact on the learning process.

Additionally, Mițariu’s article also demonstrates the benefits of utilizing technology in teaching and learning foreign languages. Mițariu believes that the use of technology enhances the potential of students and their capabilities. The author is of the view that the advantages of technology outweigh the number of the disadvantages. In her work she alludes to the fact that the majority of students in today’s world have access to some level of technological advancement to

aid them in learning. According to Mițariu, “the use of technology allows students the opportunity to shift from the ordinary routine which can be monotonous at times, and this helps with the learning process, so that it becomes more attractive and interactive. The student's focus will be concentrated on the content” (127). In this scholarly article, Mițariu uses the internet to illustrate the prowess of technology and its role in facilitating a better learning outcome for students. She affirms that “among the multimedia tools, the Internet is the most valuable tool, because via the Internet students and teachers are able to access websites, blogs, forums that mediate the exchange of information among them or between native learners and the speakers of a target language” (127). Essentially, what the internet has done is to diminish the time restraint and space limitations with regards to learning. The work by Mițariu in this article expertly demonstrated the value of technology as it relates to education, and also its importance in motivating students to acquire their knowledge, and it challenges teachers to incorporate technology as a new method in order to better their teaching style. Teachers are now expected to undertake new roles in order to create and enhance the learning atmosphere. Acknowledging the potential diversity that technology brings to education means that teachers stand a better chance of identifying potential problems that learners may have and find a solution to rectify it. The success of integrating technology and educating is dependent on the readiness of both teachers and students to accept and embrace the use of technology in the classroom. Technology is not always reliable and one of the arguments against it is that sometimes students are more focused on the technology rather than what is being taught. The arguments against technology as it relates to students and the education process has been examined by Kulesza et.al. The authors in this work firmly believe that technology is doing more harm than good for students and have stated the following:

“Contemporary e-learning and m-learning technologies do not guarantee a superior learning experience. Reliance on these technologies may actually result in decreased student interest and participation, increased distraction, decreased classroom participation, and increased complexity of knowledge dissemination. Although such technologies are undoubtedly appropriate in specific and specialized cases, the benefits are neither universal, nor as significant as their advocates might suggest” (5).

These claims made by the authors do cause concern. The findings of this research paper suggests that despite the aforementioned concerns about technology-assisted learning, the students from the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus are in support of technology as it has improved their quality of learning Spanish as a foreign language.

Chun et al., has also explored the argument against technology in their article. There are growing concerns among teachers on the impact of incorporating technology into the teaching styles and more so, how effective it is, thus according to the authors, “it is no surprise, then, that teachers often wonder whether they are making appropriate decisions about how to use technology in their classrooms. What is clear, however, is that it is not possible to ‘opt out’ of using technology” (65). However, despite the hesitancy or uncertainty about the role of technology, the authors still advocate for its use due to the possibilities and various options it renders to students. This article also considers using critical techniques or more innovative ways in order to get students to be more mindful about technology and how it should be used. Serostanova focuses on the role the internet plays as it relates to foreign language teaching and learning. In her article she advocates that the use of devices such as “video cameras and computer programs continue to be the most widely used by modern language teachers. Their application is justified psychologically, as these are the auditory and visual organs that let a person get the main information about the

surrounding world” (188). The use of the Internet not only enhances the quality of teaching and learning but has also become an essential tool for acquiring valuable information.

Another important aspect regarding the use of technology in education is the level of access to resourceful information that is available. This can be one of the ways to encourage students to learn and develop different types of skills which can be beneficial to their learning process. The Interactive Whiteboard is another tool that is used by teachers to facilitate the teaching experience. Teachers implement different resources when possible because online learning requires a lot of student’s commitment and autonomy, so it is essential to select resources that promote it. Adapting to classes as much as possible is another critical aspect for teachers. In addition, making the instructional material that is given to students more relatable to their contexts and language needs is important to maintaining the level of engagement among students. The exposure of varying educational resources has influenced teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching styles. According to Bacon,” Interactive whiteboards are a modern multimedia device. It is like a regular white board but provides possibilities of commenting on-screen images which can then be printed or saved like any other document. It affects learning in several ways, including raising the level of student engagement in the classroom, motivating students and promoting enthusiasm for learning” (qtd. in Serostanova 190).

Nevertheless, disadvantages are not uncommon to technology but remain very much useful despite many challenges. Online learning has been an important factor largely due to the pandemic during the period from March 2020 to April 2022, which made the investigation into how the use of technology can improve the teaching and learning process relevant. According to Chapelle and Sauro, “For the many diverse learners, the use of computer technology for all facets of second language learning has dramatically increased as the reach of the internet continues to spread,

providing access to social media, reference materials, online instruction, and more (1). The views of these authors also demonstrate the fact that technology broadens the horizon for both teachers and students. Those that have an interest in language are not only able to access information about it but also the various cultures that are associated with that language. Chapelle and Sauro further elaborate that, "The current research literature on technology and language learning consists of a range of types of evaluations of technology used, for example, learning vocabulary, improving field-specific writing, or experimenting with telecollaboration with a combination of desktop and mobile devices" (8). The use of technology in education has a salient role with regard to the developmental process.

The benefits outweigh the risks associated with technology as it continues to be the way forward in enhancing the teaching and learning process. Teachers try to use different resources when possible because online learning requires a lot of student's commitment and autonomy, so it is essential to select resources that promote it. Adapting to classes as much as possible is another critical aspect for teachers. In addition, making the instructional material that is given to students more relatable to their contexts and language needs is important to maintaining the level of engagement among students. The exposure of varying educational resources has influenced teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching styles.

The pandemic not only forced remote synchronous teaching on a global scale but also contributed to the feelings of isolation. In other words, the lack of the human element or interaction is now sought after through the use of technology. There are many students who depend on the teacher's input or interaction as part of their learning process. Bates and Poole pointed out that "The knowledge, skills and attitudes of teaching staff are important to distance learning students. The instructor's involvement with students in an online environment is critical to students' success

and satisfaction” (qtd. in Owens et. al 56). Although the use of technology was said to be beneficial because it is known to provide alternate options for remote synchronous learning and also in terms of accessibility to students, the lack of human connection has shown that it can affect or have a negative impact for students that depend on human interaction. According to Alston, “A Significant factor underlying the attrition of distance students has been reported as a sense of isolation, influenced by physical isolation and a sense of not belonging to the learning institution” (qtd. in Owens et. al 57).

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of the use of technology on the teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to March 2022.

Design of the study

A mixed methods design was selected and utilized to answer the following research questions:

1. How beneficial, according to students and teaching staff, was the use of technology for learning and teaching Spanish as a foreign language during the COVID-19 lockdown?
2. Did the use of technology during this time empower students to obtain better control of asynchronous learning?

Using this mixed methods design meant that the research would offer an absolute picture of the issues relevant to the topic under study rather than the use of one method which would have limited the findings. Essentially, this research design was the best method for gathering the data on the extent to which the use of technology improved the quality of teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus since it allowed for the combining of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The main purpose of the qualitative method was to ensure that the research was effective and was reliant upon the participant's responses to the questions provided, so that a proper account of the research topic could be gleaned without restricting the response from the participants. However, since these responses were based on the individual's perception and subjective opinion, the outcome derived may not have been as satisfactory as possible. In terms of the quantitative

approach, this method was applied because it was more objective in nature. In other words, the data provided were indicated by using numerical values or soliciting statistical information to clarify any hypothesis.

For this study, a concurrent approach was applied because the student participants were required to answer both qualitative and quantitative questions. In addition, the collection and analysis of the data occurred simultaneously. The point of integration or the mixing of methods for this study transpired at the level of the questionnaire.

Data collection

The primary sources were the use of a questionnaire for students and questions in a questionnaire for the teaching staff. The participants of this study were students and staff members who were enrolled in the Spanish programme at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the academic year of September 2021 to August 2022 who were selected to participate in the sample questionnaire which consisted of 17 questions for the students (refer to appendix A).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the period March 2020 to April 2022, the questionnaire and interviews had to be carried out online because face-to-face interactions were not permitted. The students were allowed to complete the questionnaire anonymously and without any time constraints. This meant that they completed the questionnaire at their earliest convenience. The questionnaire took two weeks for the student-researcher to develop and was delivered to the students via online with the assistance from one of the members of the teaching staff. A description about the nature and purpose of the study was provided to the students of the Spanish program which consisted of 103 students during the academic year 2021-2022

The circulation of the questions were sent during the month of December 2021 and the responses were received in February 2022. A sample of 21 students responded which included 19 females and two males with ages ranging from 17 to 26. There were three question types ranging from multiple choice to open-ended questions which were created on Google Forms. The questionnaire for the students asked about the reasons why technology could be useful in language learning, whether or not they use the internet while studying, if online learning should be incorporated as one of the main methods used for teaching Spanish as a foreign language and whether the students felt more confident expressing themselves online than face-to-face. Table 1 lists the pseudonyms for the participants that responded to the questionnaire.

Participant (By Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Year Enrolled
Sasha	22	F	2
Maria	25	F	3
Abigail	24	F	2
Jenny	22	F	3
Violet	21	F	2
Cherry	23	F	3
Thomas	26	M	3
Tasha	21	F	2
Nicole	17	F	1
Anna	25	F	3
Vicky	23	F	3
Amanda	18	F	1
Skylar	17	F	1
John	18	M	1

Hannah	24	F	3
Maya	26	F	3
Samantha	22	F	2
Jordana	25	F	3
Wendy	17	F	1
Shantal	17	F	1
Kimberly	24	F	3
Janice	19	F	1

Table 1 gives a description of the participants (students) for the study.

Seven open-ended questions (refer to appendix B) were created and delivered online through email to the teaching staff that teach Spanish at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus in order to obtain a deeper understanding whether or not technology-assisted learning had any impact or improved the quality of teaching. The lecturers were notified that the responses provided would be quoted for the sole purpose of this study, and that their names would remain anonymous. A reminder had to be given to them because there were no responses after the first submission of the questions in a questionnaire. Three of the five selected participants responded and each one was of a different nationality: a Colombian, a Venezuelan and a Trinidadian. Questions designed for teaching staff sought to garner their opinions on whether technology assisted with teaching; the difficulties they encountered in using it to deliver their classes and their perspectives on the benefits and drawbacks of technology. The teaching staff was also asked how they raised the levels of engagement among students for online learning.

Table 2 highlights the pseudonyms for the teaching staff at the university.

Teacher (By Pseudonym)	No. of years teaching	Gender	Subject Taught	Level Taught
Vasquez	8	F	Spanish	University
Lopez	15	M	Spanish	University
Edwards	16	F	Spanish	University

Table 2 - Pseudonyms for the teaching staff at the university of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus.

The secondary sources utilized in this research paper were the use of books, journal articles and websites which supported the argument that the use of technology-assisted learning has had a significant impact. The approach for the utilization of this data is one that is hypothetical in nature. In other words, it was driven or guided by a hypothesis which stated that technology has had a significant impact on teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in order to establish the objectives of this research paper.

Data reduction

The quantitative data was put in graphs and tables generated by the programme on Google Forms. The qualitative data was taken from the open-ended questions from the questionnaire together with the questions in a questionnaire that were emailed to the teaching staff to better ascertain the perspectives of both teachers and students. The qualitative data gathered from the questions in a questionnaire were examined through a thematic scheme for the purpose of analyzing the impact on the use of technology for teaching and learning Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus.

CHAPTER THREE

Findings/Analysis

One of the central themes stemming from the results was influenced by the preference or the selection of a platform for teaching and learning Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. Myelearning is a virtual learning platform that was created for the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. BlackBoard Collaborate (BBC), is a web conferencing tool that was made available through Myelearning. At the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus, Myelearning, BBC and Zoom were the platforms used for teaching and learning during the pandemic.

Figure 1 shows the preference of platforms or forums used by students based on their responses.

Which platform do you prefer for online learning?
21 responses

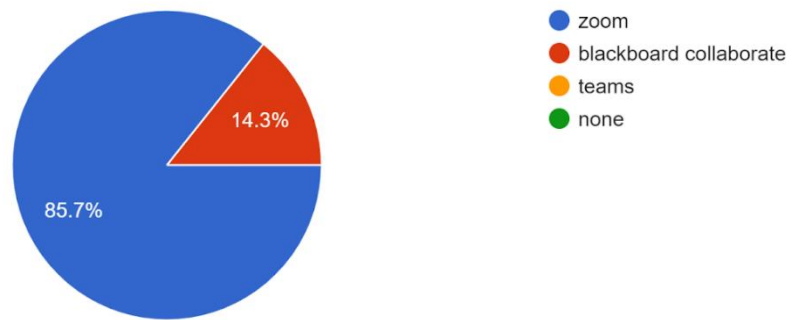


Figure 2 - Preference for online learning

Based on the data, the majority (86 percent) of students chose Zoom as their preferred social platform for online learning and 14 percent preferred to use blackboard collaborate. The students were asked to briefly explain the ways in which these platforms were useful or not useful for language learning and the feedback given highlighted the fact that the platforms had contributed

immensely because the research was being conducted at a time when face-to-face classes were not optional. Sasha believed that “Zoom is the most useful because of the level of interactivity with the host's presentations and other participants, for example the surveys/quizzes, break out rooms and annotations. BlackBoard Collaborate is the least useful because it does not have all these options and the options it has, there are a lot of technical difficulties with them” and Vicky stated that “One of the most important elements in learning a language is being able to converse in real time which is possible with apps like Zoom and BBC”.

The consensus is that the use of the platforms really bridged the gap between the student and the teacher due to the fact that face-to-face interactions were no longer possible, and it provided an alternative to learning in a physical classroom. Despite the fact that the platform Zoom has been the main forum for accessing and sharing information about the course, it was evident that some students preferred to access their information from the Zoom platform. One of the reasons for this could be that they were already familiar with the Zoom platform which could lead to a possible bias being formed, or they were not aware of the features that BlackBoard Collaborate offered. It is possible that BBC could have been a new platform for them given that based on student responses, they seemed to be unaware that the same chat and annotation options were available on the BBC platform.

The themes of comfort and isolation also stood out in the analysis of this research paper. It can be said that students preferred the Zoom platform because they were able to relate to it since they may have been comfortable using this forum. Zoom gives a bit of anonymity to students so they feel more comfortable behind their screens to practice the language with less feelings of judgement”. Since it is not mandatory for students to show their faces on camera, it might be less challenging for them to ease into university life. Here, the theme of isolation plays a crucial role

as students who do not want to feel as though they are being scrutinized will easily withdraw if they feel as though they do not fit in or belong. The level of comfort plays an important role for emergency remote teaching. One of the reasons for this is that living during the pandemic was very frustrating because people's movements were restricted. People all over the world lost friends and family to COVID-19.

Additionally, year-one students during the academic year September 2020 to August 2021 may have preferred another platform over BlackBoard Collaborate because of unfamiliarity. In addition, one should not assume that young people always know how to operate technology on the simple basis that they were born in the era of technology. This assumption could also lead to students opting not to focus or even stay away from remote learning because they may feel as though they are intelligent enough, which can affect their confidence level.

Furthermore, the use of technology could have hindered language development as students may not have always been actively engaged in class. Samantha believed that "these platforms are useful because they provide a forum that allows students to access online learning. However, the chat option associated with these platforms can hinder language development as students may not be actively engaged but may use it for other purposes such as chatting with friends". Jordana commented in agreement to this by stating that "It provides a learning platform, but distractions are just as easy to access".

Moreover, when asked if they (students) used the internet while studying and to specify for what purposes, the responses varied among the students. It can be argued that technology contributed to the pace at which learning took place and provided many resourceful tools and techniques. Table 3 depicts what materials were applicable to the students.

Indicate which materials are applicable to you for language learning:

21 responses

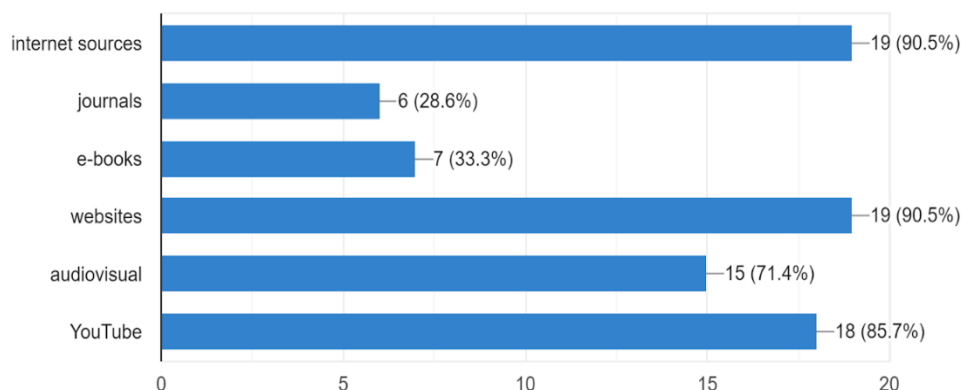


Table 3 - Types of materials applicable to students

The internet and websites which assisted with their learning process were the overwhelming types of materials that were applicable to students as 90% of them have indicated or expressed their use of the internet and websites with regard to enhancing the level of education. This was followed by YouTube which 86% of the students used for learning. Journals and e-books are used the least among these students. The use of these materials were not just for the purpose of language learning or provided further explanations on a particular topic. Ten of the participants were third-year students and the use of journal articles was more prevalent among them because they had to do their final-year projects, and this allowed them to do extensive research. Accessibility to these types of materials were also very important because going to the physical library for information was not an option due to the pandemic, and also because it was the only way to obtain necessary information that could have been accessed by these materials, more so for final-year students that had projects.

The use of technology during this time has enabled students to have better control of asynchronous learning. Based on the results, 19 of the 21 students reported that they used the

internet to strengthen what they learn in class. According to Hannah, “the internet was used to look up word translations and to research for information about topics that are related to Spanish Literature. The use of explanations, examples and practice exercises assisted with learning Spanish”.

Figure 2 shows whether these materials were easily accessible or not.

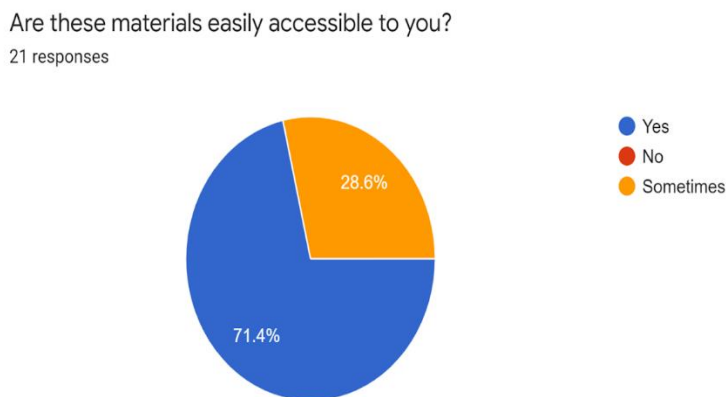


Figure 2 - Accessibility of materials

The use of technology helped with oral fluency and pronunciation for the students at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. It also increased vocabulary levels due to the plethora of resources available. In addition, the internet provided a variety of information from different sources which was very useful. Violet explained that because of “the access to Spanish media, particularly through YouTube and Netflix, has increased the quality of vocabulary by being exposed to new vocabulary and getting accustomed to how natives actually used the language”. Maya also commented that “technological platforms had improved pronunciation and fluency because of social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. There were tips and tricks on how to create strings of words together without making mistakes. Cultural awareness of the

language was also amplified through technology because there were movies and clips that revealed the sacred nature of Hispanic Culture and Traditions”.

The theme of convenience was also expressed in the data. For example, the use of technology in education was definitely important as it allowed students the benefit of watching recorded lectures. This was a good alternative especially for students that may have been unable to attend physical classes and as a result, it made the process of accessing information easier through online learning. For example, Tasha wrote that “a Spanish student may not be able to travel to different Spanish speaking countries in order to interact with other Spanish speakers and listen to different accents and dialects, but this can be made possible through YouTube videos or movies which in turn gives rise to cultural awareness”. For some students, emergency remote teaching came as a relief because it meant that they did not have the task of waking up early or getting stuck in traffic.

Figure 3 demonstrates the online learning experience of the students. The use of technology also created an interesting and exciting way of learning which kept students more engaged and comfortable.

How would you describe your experience attending online classes?
21 responses

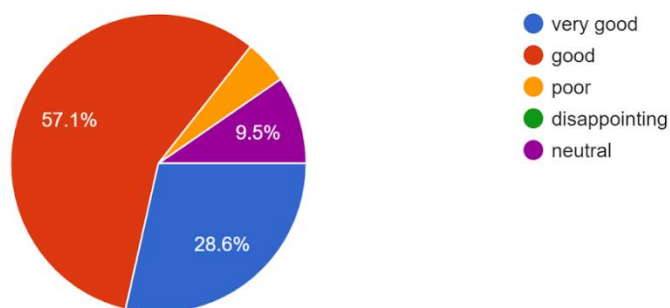


Figure 3 - Experience attending online classes

Twenty-nine percent of the participants reported that they had a very good experience attending online classes while 57 percent had a good experience. This meant that the majority of the participants had a satisfactory experience interfacing with technology. Based on the feedback from the participants, it can be said that technology has the ability to generate a conducive learning environment once it is managed efficiently and effectively. One of the questions asked the students to explain whether they felt more confident about expressing themselves online than face-to-face. Based on the responses provided, it can be said that most of the students felt more confident about expressing themselves online than face-to-face. Janice reported that she felt more comfortable because, “there was less pressure and judgement of multiple people”. John also indicated that “Expressing oneself online gives a bit of anonymity to students so they feel more comfortable behind their screens to practice the language with less feelings of judgement”. On the other hand, there were those students who did not know or did not have any experience in the university classroom setting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus during the COVID-19 pandemic between March 2020 to March 2022 reported through the questionnaire the types of devices that were available and facilitated the teaching and learning process (see Table 4). These devices were the ones that the students had for their personal use. If a student did not have a device for learning or the one, they had suddenly stopped working, the university had a policy where they would lend students a device on loan.

What device do you use for online classes?

21 responses

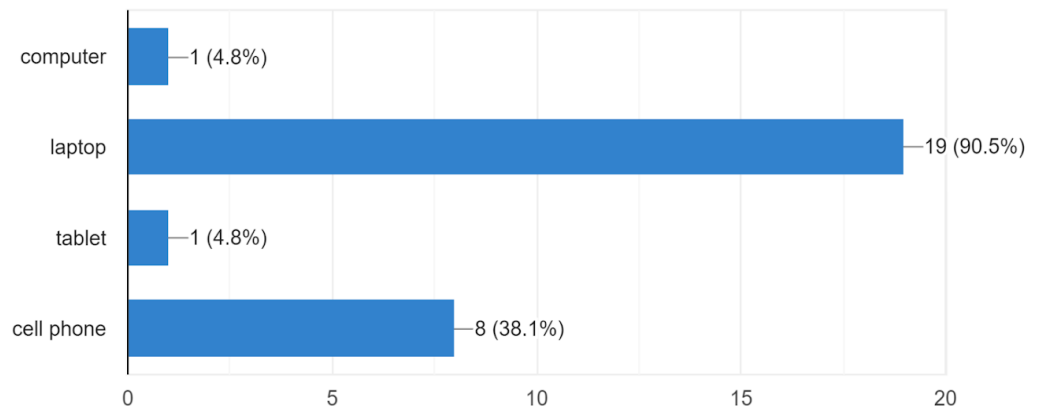


Table 4 - Types of devices used by students at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus for emergency remote learning.

The participants were asked whether they believe that online learning should be incorporated as one of the main methods used in teaching and learning of foreign languages. Six of the participants were against the idea that online learning should be incorporated as one of the main methods used in teaching and learning of foreign languages because they felt as though there was not enough practice through a virtual screen to adapt to the language. Thomas was of the view that “it is simply more convenient and cost-effective, but also because the main form of education is mainly designed for extroverted personalities. Language is more than just words; it’s about observing non-verbal patterns also”.

One of the questions in a questionnaire that was emailed to the teaching staff asked to explain some of the difficulties with technology and language teaching that they had experienced. Based on the response from the teaching staff at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus, it is believed that access to resources for many teachers was the main obstacle that teachers had to overcome. Vasquez, one of the instructors at the University of the West Indies St.

Augustine Campus was of the view that “some of the resources used in the past were not mobile-friendly, and most of the students accessed those resources from their phones. After the COVID-19 pandemic, most of these resources were adapted and a lot more resources became available for teachers, which meant that the same challenges nowadays do not need to be confronted. The biggest challenge at present is that some of those resources or their functions are not available for free, so the access to them is limited and teachers had to use resources that were at their disposal”. The use of technology enabled teachers to find different ways of engaging students. Lopez, a lecturer, was of the view that “there are more advantages in both teaching and learning. Technology is a tool that may enable teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies. It is a natural way of getting learners more engaged in the class as they are digital native learners. It contributes to learning and assisting which makes the language classroom more interactive, allowing learners to be more autonomous or take charge of their own learning. The latter makes learning more fun and meaningful for learners” (refer to Appendix D).

Teachers have an invaluable role in the education process especially with the advancement of technology in the world today. In other words, language teachers in particular, are the ones to initiate and motivate students towards understanding technology and its use in education. Aside from teaching, teachers also have the task of ensuring that students are engaged while they teach. This led to one of the questions that asked teachers to describe the ways in which they raised the level of engagement in online learning of students. Students can be easily distracted by technology. It is important that teachers ensure that the adequate learning material is provided to students. Lopez wrote that, “by making the instructional material that is given to students more relatable to their contexts and language needs”.

The final interview question for the teaching staff was geared towards whether they believed that online learning could be one of the main methods for teaching and learning a foreign language. The use of online learning was perceived as an alternative for both students and teachers, and autonomous learning was not suited for everyone. Vasquez was of the view that “it is a great advantage for language teaching and learning, and that online teaching and learning is not for everyone. Online learning should be an option for both teachers and learners. There are teachers who prefer face-to-face contact, there are learners who do not have the commitment and the autonomy to succeed in online learning. So, it should be an option for those who prefer to work with this methodology”. Online learning was one of the ways that teachers were able to teach but cannot replace physical classes. Lopez said that “it was one of the ways in which teachers can teach language, however, face-to-face cannot be replaced by this modality of teaching. The online modality is just another modality that should be used when the context requires it. Face-to-face interactions can enhance the use of online learning and new technologies (social networks, learning management systems). Moreover, technology has its own role in language learning and teaching. It generated multiple resources together with the internet which was beneficial to students”.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

By using a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study examined the impact of the use of technology on the teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 - March 2022 through the insights of teachers and students at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. The findings and analysis showed that the impact on the use of technology on teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language was beneficial because students reported through the questionnaire that they preferred Zoom as the platform for learning as opposed to BBC. This is because the students may have been familiar with the platform previously or simply just a received bias towards the Zoom platform.

The theme of isolation stood out in the analysis of the data. This theme was not expected but was very much relevant due to the pandemic because everyday people have to deal with illness and death, so it is important to note that the use of technology is not the only issue. In addition, students who feel as though they are not intelligent may find themselves withdrawn or easily distracted from learning. Knapper explains that “students that learn synchronously were more likely to have more insecurities about learning than students from the traditional setting. First time students are particularly vulnerable, and can find it difficult to establish study habits, or to maintain motivation” (qtd. in Owens 57). Based on the findings of this research paper, students reported that it was much easier to hide behind their cameras or use the chat option. Nicole said that “there is more confidence when expressing myself online than in person because there is less pressure to be right or less pressure when mistakes are made. It feels more comfortable online than interacting in my physical space”.

Apart from this, the theme of convenience was also established in the data provided. This theme highlights the ways in which technology can assist with remote teaching and learning a foreign language. The use of technology has facilitated asynchronous learning immensely. For example, students no longer have to leave their country to learn or experience content from another country. This can be done by viewing videoconferences, blogs and even collaborating with other students in other universities. Essentially, students no longer need to panic when they are absent for a lesson because technology has proven to be a reliable tool for distributing and disseminating information. Blake states that, “It is misleading to talk about technology as if one were dealing with just a single, homogeneous tool; different technologically based tools render different advantages for second language (L2) learning. For instance, the Internet is an ideal tool for allowing students to gain access to authentic L2 materials; it might be the next best alternative to actually going abroad” (4). Based on the data provided, 10 of the 21 participants used other materials for research purposes as they were final-year students, while 11 of the 21 utilized it to help with their homework.

The themes of comfort and preference in relation to the promotion of students’ asynchronous learning abilities were also prevalent in the analysis of the findings where Maria wrote that “because classes are recorded, it allows students to review lectures at a time that works for them. Also, it is easy to join a class even though one is not yet at home through the use of a cell phone”. The results from these themes were expected because the students and teachers want to know that whatever platform is used for learning and teaching, is comfortable. So, the search for comfort could also be associated with a preference for a specific platform. For example, the Myelearning forum allows teachers the option to observe how often students attend classes or even access the platform. The possibility exists that some students may get distracted by the use of

applications that do not pertain to the subject matter. So, while the argument for and against the implementation of technology in education is justified, it can be argued that the benefits do outweigh the disadvantages. According to Widman, “technology is not slowing down anytime soon. Asking if technology is the best or worst thing for education is the wrong question to ask. Educators have the responsibility to do what is best for their students because students have access to devices that are infinitely valuable and infinitely dangerous.

The findings of this research paper have shown that the use of technology has had a significant impact on the teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language at the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus. These findings are important because they contribute to the overall picture that justifies the use of technology in education. The use of technology is important but understanding how to operate technology is evidently just as important. Perhaps the policy makers are able to use this research to consider or reconsider how to apply or adjust the thinking behind implementing technology-assisted learning. It is indispensable to incorporate technology in the classroom and not just at the university level, but also at the primary and secondary school levels.

The gap this paper intends to fill is to elaborate on the ways the use of technology can be used to empower students to become better at asynchronous learning.

CONCLUSION

This research paper has examined both the teachers and students' perspective on the impact of the use of technology on teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language. Through the use of a mixed methods design, this study was able to demonstrate an important and significant impact of the use of technology on foreign language learning and teaching. Technology is able to provide students with a plethora of diverse resources that help students with the learning a foreign language. In addition, this paper has shown that educators have a pivotal role by providing the necessary support to students which can assist in their development of becoming more efficient at becoming better asynchronous learners. While it is considerable to mention the negative aspects associated with the use of technology, the benefits do exceed the risks. This research paper will hopefully encourage policy makers to use this research to implement more technological advancements in education.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for students

- Age
 - Gender
 - Academic year
 - Spanish as a major, minor or double major
1. What device do you use for online classes? Computer? Tablet? Cell phone? laptop?
 2. What social platforms do you use for online learning? Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate (BBC), Teams?
 3. Which platform do you prefer for online learning? Zoom? teams? BBC? Or None?
 4. Did you ever use any of the above platforms before the start of online university classes?
 5. Briefly explain the ways in which these platforms are useful or not useful for language learning.
 6. List a few reasons why the following could be useful in language learning: Games, quizzes, breakout-rooms, online activities etc.
 7. Do you use the internet while studying? If yes, please specify for what purpose/s.
 8. Indicate which materials are applicable to you for language learning: internet sources, e-books, journals, websites, audiovisual, youtube.
 9. Are these materials easily accessible to you? Yes, No, somewhat, neutral.
 10. Which component of Spanish is best suited for the use of technology? Explain why
Reading
Grammar
Conversation

11. To what extent has the use of technology improved the quality of the following:

1. Oral fluency
2. Pronunciation and vocabulary
3. The ability to create strings of words together
4. Cultural awareness of the language

12. Do you feel more confident about expressing yourself online than fact-to-face? Briefly explain.

13. For what specific reason would you recommend the use of these platforms in the future?

14. How would you describe your experience attending online classes? Disappointing, Poor, Neutral, Good, Very good.

15. Describe what language competence is.

16. Do you think competency in Spanish can be achieved by learning online? Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat, Agree, strongly agree.

17. Do you think online learning should be incorporated as one of the methods used in teaching and learning of foreign languages? Why or why n

APPENDIX B

Questions in a questionnaire for lecturers:

Name?

Number of years as a lecturer?

Part-time or full-time lecturer?

1. Has the use of technology improved your ability to teach Spanish as a foreign language?
Explain.
2. What are some of the difficulties with technology and language teaching that have you experienced?
3. Did you overcome any of these difficulties? If so, how?
4. What do you do to raise the levels of engagement in online learning of students?
5. Can the use of online learning environments improve the cultural diversity of students? If so, how?
6. Are there more advantages than disadvantages to technology with respect to language teaching and learning? Explain.
7. In your opinion, do you see online learning as one of the main methods for teaching and learning a foreign language? Why or why not?

Appendix C

Transcript of response to questions

Name: Vasquez

Number of years as a lecturer: 8

Part-time or full-time lecturer: full time

1. **Q.** Has the use of technology improved your ability to teach Spanish as a foreign language?

Explain.

A. Yes, I like using technology in my classes, I think it makes them more interactive and it helps my students to be more autonomous.

2) **Q.** What are some of the difficulties with technology and language teaching that have you experienced?

A. Some of the resources that I used in the past were not mobile friendly, and most of my students accessed those resources from their phones. After the COVID-19 break-out, most of these resources were adapted and a lot more resources became available for teachers, so I do not face the same challenges nowadays. At the moment my biggest challenge is that some of those resources or their functions are not available for free, so the access to them is limited.

3) **Q.** Did you overcome any of these difficulties? If so, how?

A. See my previous answer

4) **Q.** What do you do to raise the levels of engagement in online learning of students?

A. I try to use different resources, when possible, I believe that online learning requires a lot of student's commitment and autonomy, I select resources that promote autonomy, I adapt my classes as much as I can, I speak to my students and encourage them to engage, but I have noted that most of them choose to be passive and expect the teacher to do all the work. I can't do their part, I do mine to the best of my ability.

5) **Q.** Can the use of online learning environments improve the cultural diversity of students? If so, how?

A. I do not know what you mean by "cultural diversity". I think the access to online resources gives the learner access to different aspects of the language, especially access to the culture of the language that they are learning. There are plenty of resources such as social media, news, magazines, cultural programmes, music, tourist information, etc. through which the learner has access to the culture of the foreign language. The teacher is not even needed anymore, all the student has to do is to have initiative and use all those resources available to them in order to improve their knowledge of the language and the culture that they are learning.

6) **Q.** Are there more advantages than disadvantages to technology with respect to language teaching and learning? Explain.

A. I think that all resources have advantages and disadvantages, I believe that both, the teacher and the learner, have to choose the resources that best work for them according to the purpose and the specific context.

7) **Q.** In your opinion, do you see online learning as one of the main methods for teaching and learning a foreign language? Why or why not?

A. I do believe that it is a great advantage for language teaching and learning, I also believe that online teaching and learning is not for everyone. Online learning should be an option for both teachers and learners. There are teachers who prefer face-to-face contact, there are learners who do not have the commitment and the autonomy to succeed in online learning. So, I think that it should be an option for those who prefer to work with this methodology.

Appendix D

Transcript of response to questions

Name: Lopez

Number of years as a lecturer: more than 15

Part-time or full-time lecturer: Full-time

1) **Q.** Has the use of technology improved your ability to teach Spanish as a foreign language?

Explain.

A. Yes, especially to teach listening comprehension as it encourages students to practice on their own and encourages them to be more autonomous learners.

2) **Q.** What are some of the difficulties with technology and language teaching that have you experienced?

A. I think that one difficulty is that students and teachers have access to it, for instance, getting a good internet connection, having proper devices, and of course that they possess an adequate technology or computer literacy level to be able to use it effectively.

3) **Q.** Did you overcome any of these difficulties? If so, how?

A. It is difficult to overcome some of these difficulties, for instance a good internet connection or the lack of internet or a proper device.

4) **Q.** What do you do to raise the levels of engagement in online learning of students?

A. Making the instructional material that is given to students more relatable to their contexts and language needs.

5) **Q.** Can the use of online learning environments improve the cultural diversity of students? If so, how?

A. Yes, by exposing students to a variety of cultural and artistic expressions using online resources such as videos. I believe that teachers need to raise students' intercultural awareness by engaging them in language activities that involve a variety of ways in which they can discuss, interact or express their viewpoints.

6) **Q.** Are there more advantages than disadvantages to technology with respect to language teaching and learning? Explain.

A. In my view, there are more advantages in both teaching and learning as I see technology as a tool that may enable teachers to use a variety of teaching strategies. I see it as a natural way of getting learners more engaged in the class as they are digital native learners. It can contribute to learning and assist and make the language classroom more interactive and allow learners to be more autonomous or take charge of their own learning. The latter makes learning more fun and meaningful for learners.

7) **Q.** In your opinion, do you see online learning as one of the main methods for teaching and learning a foreign language? Why or why not?

A. It is one of the ways in which teachers can teach language, however, face-to-face cannot be replaced by this modality of teaching. I consider the online modality as another modality that should be used when the context requires it. I also think that the face-to-face can be enhanced

with the use of online learning and new technologies (social networks, learning management systems, etc).