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‘A comparative study on the methodology used in traditional and online Spanish Literature classes at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine’

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Abstract

Online learning is a prominent element in the educational sector today and is declared as an alternative technique to traditional learning. One of the key methodologies between these two modes is the interactive component. Consequently, the aim of this research is a comparison of the interactive component between online classes and traditional classes. The main focus of this project explores Year 3 Spanish Literature students' preference of interaction between online and traditional classes as well as investigates how the use of Zoom features such as the raise hand icon and break out rooms have contributed to their involvement in the online classes. It also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of traditional Spanish Literature classes versus the Zoom online platform and highlights strategies that can be used to improve the interaction in classes. Accordingly, electronic questionnaires are distributed to gather quantitative data. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that online learning is more favourable to students than traditional learning. However, despite online classes being more beneficial to students, practical solutions are also mentioned to improve and generate more interaction between students and teachers.

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Introduction

‘A comparative study on the methodology used in traditional and online Spanish Literature classes at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine’ examined the different methods while assessing which one is more favourable for students to participate. Education has become a prominent phenomenon at the university level. In some instances, it is deemed as a compulsory procedure to qualify for a job. Throughout the years, its method of delivery has significantly evolved. In the past, there was the traditional technique of face-to-face communication but it has now adopted a more radical approach. Also, the transmission mode of education has revolutionised through a heavy emphasis on information and communications technology (ICT) and educational software. It is said that “computers serve for more than doing computations, they are now one of the most used means of communication and interaction - the very basis of any educational system” (Feraru et al. 301). Thus, computers are multifunctional and one of its’ primary roles are in education. In this way, computers improve the quality of the teaching process so that education becomes more fundamental and effortless.

This technological advancement in education is known as online learning. Online learning can also be referred to as virtual learning, digital learning or simply eLearning. Traditional learning methods are fostered by writing materials such as books, pens, and paper in a classroom.

However, the use of modern technology “provides an excellent method of course delivery unbound by time or location allowing for accessibility to instruction from anywhere” (Stern 3).

In this respect, students and teachers are not required to be in a classroom for education to take place, instead, it can be done virtually with the aid of technology and is unlimited to space and time. Thus, given that there is easier accessibility to teaching and learning, the educational process has been transformed.

Similarly, technology has transformed how information is distributed to students. This technique is known as the method. It has also impacted the student and teacher dynamic in education. “The transfer of digital technology to education transforms not only the role of a student but also the position of a teacher is of interest” (Feraru et al. 301). Indeed, “there is a shift away from top-down lecturing and passive students to a more interactive, collaborative approach in which students and instructor co-create the learning process, hence the Instructor’s role is changing from the “sage on the stage” to “the guide on the side” (Stern 2). In this regard, technology alters the traditional roles of the student and the teacher. This is because it generates more interaction and engagement between them as the educational process transpires and students are no longer passive in classes. Student feedback and involvement are therefore deemed essential for online learning to be effective.

Given the occurrence of the recent pandemic of coronavirus, education has been redirected from physical universities to virtual modes of teaching. This means that all classes are online for every faculty. Spanish Literature was a traditional course. This refers to it being completely delivered and taught by the face-to-face method. However, it is now one hundred percent an online course. This raises the question of which aspects of online classes are different from traditional classes at the University of the West Indies. The interactive element is worthy of study because learning anything requires participation. It allows students to connect with the content as well as reinforce practical skills. “Learning is a process which occurs in a social context and involves interaction between students and lecturers. Effective learning process occurs when both lecturers and students interact and actively participate in the learning activities” (Abdullah et al. 61). On that account, the focal point of this study is the interactive component of traditional and online Spanish Literature classes at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Although there are

many methods, Zoom Video Conferencing is one of the most dominant software used for online classes at St. Augustine University.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to explore Year 3 Spanish Literature students' preference of interaction between online and traditional classes as well as investigate how the use of Zoom features such as the raise hand icon and break out rooms has contributed to their involvement in the online classes. This research aims to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of traditional Spanish Literature classes versus the Zoom online platform based on the interactive element.

Rationale

This study is necessary as it gains insight into the similarities and differences of traditional and online Spanish Literature classes based on the interactive aspect. This academic research allows one to assess which mode of delivery is more effective in the academic year of 2020 - 2021 and determine whether alternatives or more innovative methods should be utilised to benefit students, educators, and by extension, society.

Thesis statement

It can be argued that the interaction between students and teachers in online Spanish Literature classes has a more significant impact in the learning process than the interaction of students and teachers in traditional classes at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

Parameters

Year 3 Spanish Literature - the research focused on Year 3 students. This is so because Year 3 students would have more exposure and experience in both traditional and online classes and can better determine which class is more effective.

The interaction between students and teachers is presented as the methodology in this study. This dimension is chosen because there is a lack of research on the level of interaction between students and teachers in the Spanish Literature field and the importance of participation is generally overlooked.

Objectives

To assess whether students prefer traditional or online classes

To evaluate which class is more favourable to participate in

To highlight strategies that can be used to improve the interaction in classes

Methodology

Primary sources provide direct or first-hand evidence of a phenomenon. One source used in this study was questionnaires. This type of approach was chosen since there were many advantages to aid in the research. Firstly, questionnaires were practical since they were easy to construct and distribute. Pre-determined responses were also offered. To add, this primary source of data was employed since it required individuals to volunteer. In this way, individuals put more effort into the questionnaire and answered with courtesy. Questionnaires offered anonymity as well. This gave the convenience of confidentiality to the respondents making them more willing to do the

questionnaires honestly. The process was not time-consuming and analysing the questionnaire was considerably manageable. Questionnaires were an economical way of collecting information as well as they covered a large sample group simultaneously.

This questionnaire entailed both open-ended and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed the researcher to gain a depth of information given that the respondents had the opportunity to explain and elaborate on their responses. In this respect, the researcher understood the mind-set and perceptions of the respondents. However, although the analysis of data was manageable, it was lengthy to actively interpret each questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected through digital means of Google forms. It was then analysed to make deductions. The use of questionnaires facilitated respondents' answers into a quantitative format so that there can be a statistical approach to the analysis of the data. Also, the questions were all uniform given the standardized instructions to the respondent. In this respect, questionnaires are deemed as an easy instrument to gather data for this literary study.

Chapter Outline

This study consists of 3 chapters. The chapters in the following will represent an abundance of information. Firstly, chapter 1 illustrates the phenomenon efficiently by highlighting prior research. This research is crucial for making links and determining where there is any gap. It asserts a theoretical framework for the research as well.

Chapter 2 highlights the data accumulated by utilizing facts and figures to represent the findings of the research. This is important because it generates results in an unambiguous format. This gives the researcher a baseline to work it and make inductive reasoning.

Chapter 3, on the other hand, gives an in-depth interpretation and analysis of the key findings. It compares and contrasts results and reveals new perceptions.

Chapter 1

Literature Review - Analysis and discussion on the treatment of interaction in online and face-to-face literature classes.

Online classes have been increasing more and more throughout the years and with the recent global pandemic, coronavirus, all classes at the university have been relocated to an online platform. This raises the question as to how effective is the methodology in terms of the interaction between students and teachers during online classes. Although there is a plethora of literature on the advantages and disadvantages of online classes and traditional classes, there is a lack of research on the comparative study which highlights the interactive element of traditional and online classes. Also, there is general information on online classes and specific platforms such as Zoom Video Conferencing. This platform, among others, entails fundamental features such as raise hand icons or break out rooms. Thus, this research seeks to study the interaction between students and teachers on online classes as opposed to traditional classes as well as investigate the fundamental features of zoom and its role in students' participation which previous research did not do.

Firstly, students incorporate technology in their lives for more than a degree. "They use the Internet to communicate with professors and classmates, to do research, and to access library materials" (Jones and Madden 3). In this respect, the internet is a viable source for more than a class, it is used to increase knowledge of the individual and communicate with teachers and other students. In fact, "college students seem generally positive about the Internet and its impact on their educational experience. The majority of college students (89%) have a positive attitude toward the Internet and its communication tools" (9). This means that the internet is an effective

tool in the lives of students given that a positive attitude stems from them when they use it. Accordingly, the internet produces a practical outcome and better grades.

Student success depends on the design of the online community and one of the common learning platforms is www.blackboard.com. Additionally, there must be a structured course development process including pre organisation, virtual office hours, emails, regular communication, transparency, and clarity to ensure the success of the course (Sharoff 3). “As in any classroom environment, the educators’ awareness of diverse types of learning styles is important and even more so with online learning” (2). The educator, in this respect, must acknowledge that every student learns uniquely. It is this understanding which would help to determine the best teaching method to cater to all students whether it is a traditional or online class. For example, varying the learning strategies each class session would highly contribute to the student experience.

“Facilitating an engaging online course requires educators to develop strategies that enhance student participation and build a sense of community” (Sharoff 1). Thus, it is the responsibility of the educator to provide a safe place in which students feel comfortable to interact and participate amongst each other during each session. Due to this, there will be a joint effort between the educator and the students which will facilitate more cooperation and understanding and, in so doing, more productivity. Indeed, “the use of online learning has helped to increase student enrolments, diversify the variety of student input and perspectives, as well as increase the exposure of instructors to bigger learning demands of the learners” (Barrett 18). Also, “an entire semester of content must be disseminated via e-learning that promotes critical thinking, reflection, and active participation, and that thoughtfully engages collaborative learning” (Sharoff 3).

“Learning is moving from a “command and control” structure to a “connect and collaborate” environment where the roles of students and teachers are changing dramatically” (Moskal et al. 27). Students, therefore, have the benefit to voice perspectives, co-edit, and have a space to share and cooperate to be more than a student but an educator as well. “Collaborating with students in discussions and encouraging peer-to-peer collaboration is an important feature to an engaging virtual learning dynamic” (Sharoff 2). Consequently, teamwork promotes engagement among students and evokes a feeling to be involved and actively participate. In this manner, the teacher also benefits since he/she has the assurance that the students apprehend the specific topic.

“One of the fascinating aspects of online teaching is the minimization of the quiet student who typically would not engage in a face-to-face classroom dynamic” (Sharoff 4). Now, e-learning has provided a venue for the quieter student to voice his/her opinion. Also, online discussions provide an excellent way to elicit contributions from learners who may be reluctant to participate in live seminar discussions (Smith and Zsohar 26). In this manner, there are alternatives to help and benefit each student.

“One criticism students and faculty acknowledge with online courses are that personal, face-to-face contact is missing. In a traditional classroom, participants observe one another as class proceeds” (Smith and Zsohar 25). Thus, the lack of contact in online classes signifies that students would not know their classmates and they miss out on that advantage. To challenge this, one way is to have video although it is not always guaranteed in classes although it does not do justice to what the traditional face-to-face class can. “Social interaction plays an important role in learning” (Okita 1). “Interacting with other people has proven to be quite effective in assisting the learner to organize their thoughts, reflect on their understanding, and find gaps in their reasoning and underneath the broad umbrella of social interactions and learning, variants can

range from peer learning” (1). Online learning, in a sense, can deprive students of this benefit. Additionally, “as the online environment expands, it presents formidable challenges to higher education in which universities must confront the demand for new pedagogies, organizational redefinition, authentic and contextual assessment techniques and practices” (Moskal et al. 27).

“The physical arrangement of the face-to-face classroom (e.g. placement of the desk, blackboard) plays an important role in the interaction between students and instructors. In comparison, with online delivery systems, the interface is limited to the computer monitor” (Wuensch et al. 524). Accordingly, the online method behaves as a hindrance and prevents full-on communication from occurring between the teacher and the student. As a result, this delays the capacity and efficiency of a productive and successful class. Furthermore, “face-to-face communication is faster and more efficient than online communication” (524). “In face-to-face education, the facial expressions and body language of students provide a feedback mechanism for instructors” (524). Hence, in a physical classroom, the teacher can see the students’ expressions and know if they are paying attention or if they are lost and can explain a topic once more. This would facilitate allowing more active communication. It is only possible in online classes if a video is available. For this reason, it can be perceived as a limitation.

Zoom, an online platform, has been functioning as a method of delivery for meetings and is most dominant in the educational and business field. “The company notes that daily use went up from 10 million users a day in December 2019, to over 200 million daily users in March 2020. On March 23, 2020 alone, the app was downloaded 2.13 million times globally.” (Omar 1). It is worth considering that the Zoom platform can take a flipped-classroom approach. This is a policy where the text materials must be shared before the class to the students and the students would attend the online class with their doubts (Roy et al. 1). In this respect, students have the

opportunity to access and complete work before class. Thus, they have more time to internalise and comprehend the material and the zoom platform is strictly to communicate. Through this, students have the opportunity to be independent thinkers.

“Managing class participation is easier when not in the same room, using Zoom's "Raise Hand" feature, you can either watch the Video Gallery to view who has a virtual hand up or check your Participant box to see participants” (Frost and Frost 2). In this way, the raise hand icon allows students to communicate with the teachers by simply clicking it. Also, it allows teachers to assess the order of students who raise their hands. This facilitates more interaction between the teacher and students similar to face-to-face classes. It also gives a sense of order since, in reality, the teacher may not always remember who wanted to ask the question but Zoom gives that likelihood to make the class well-ordered and effortless.

“Breakout Groups Zoom's breakout feature is terrific, fast, and flexible, with plenty of logistical advantages” (2). A breakout room is a virtual space that is separate from the main online tutorial room. A teacher has the opportunity to choose any amount of breakout rooms in the class (Chandler 1). This phenomenon is much more time-consuming in the physical classroom since it requires planning, space, and time. Zoom simply requires the teacher to click a button and enjoy the convenience. The teacher can select the group size and who to put in each group or allow the program to randomly perform this task thereby taking advantage of the flexibility offered. Within each breakout room, only those present can hear the discussion and read any text chat messages, creating a more private opportunity for students to talk together and facilitating independent work (1). This can be used to do exercises with students as well as extra activities. Small group work has benefits in terms of reducing the distance between tutor and students and enabling everyone in the group to learn from everyone else, rather than seeing the tutor as the expert (1).

To add, when students are in break-out rooms, it is only the teacher and them. There are no internal and external factors to affect students from communicating besides the connection to the internet. This is deemed as a difference when compared to traditional classes because it can cause chaos in the classroom when one group is being louder than the others. In this respect, less productivity occurs and the purpose of having the small group discussion in class is defeated.

Nonetheless, based on research on flipped zoom classes, approximately 80% of students were not in favour of continuing Zoom due to their bitter experience with a disturbed net connection, potential threats for security in Zoom that evoked fear (Roy et al. 1).

In conclusion, researchers acknowledge the existence of the internet and how it serves in the educational field. Undoubtedly, it is seen that there is a difference between traditional and online classes. Lecturers must plan and strategize before class as a means to maintain productivity in online classes in contrast to face-to-face classes. This must be done to ensure that the class occurs without any obstacles. Students, on the other hand, have to be cooperative and participate during classes so that they can grasp all the knowledge as well as leave the class with all that has been taught. Through online classes, in particular zoom, the students have the advantage to be less dependent on the teacher and think on their own, have critical conversations, and collaborate with the teacher and other students to increase efficiency. On the zoom platform, there are specific tools that promote these characteristics such as breakout rooms and the raise hand feature. Nonetheless, students who are enrolled in online classes experience limitations such as they do not have the opportunity to have a social relationship with their classmates, they take longer to communicate with the teacher and they cannot express themselves with emotions and body language through a screen. Therefore, factors that are deemed as obstacles to online classes are seen as advantages in traditional classes.

Many of these research did not profoundly analyse and compare traditional and online classes in terms of the interactive element since research is done mostly independently on both classes. Also, there is not a vast amount of information regarding the features of the zoom online platform which ultimately aids in communication. These features are necessary since they facilitate interaction between the students and the teacher. In light of what has been said, it can be noted that there exists a gap in the literature.

Chapter 2

Findings based on the interaction in online and face-to-face literature classes

The purpose of the study was to assess whether students prefer traditional or online classes, to evaluate which class is more favourable to participate in and to highlight strategies that can be used to improve the interaction in classes. In this chapter, the results of the electronically based questionnaire are presented. Questionnaires were sufficient in generating a wealth of information, were simple for participants to respond to, and offered anonymity so that participants are more willing to answer and do it with complete honesty. The findings of the questionnaire, which was distributed through online methods, are displayed using quantitative methods. Graphic illustrations represent the quantitative data such as the preference between traditional and online classes. The table format is used to depict qualitative data related to the objective of students determining strategies to improve classes. This qualitative response from the participants was revised to give clarity and eliminate ambiguity.

Descriptive Statistic

The research population was comprised of twenty-four (24) Year 3 Spanish students of 2020-2021 from the University of the West Indies. They were utilised in analysing the data for the study because they have the first-hand experience in traditional and online classes. In this way, they can better determine which class is more productive and logical. In the questionnaire, there were multiple-choice as well as open-ended questions so that participants have the opportunity to give a free and unique response.

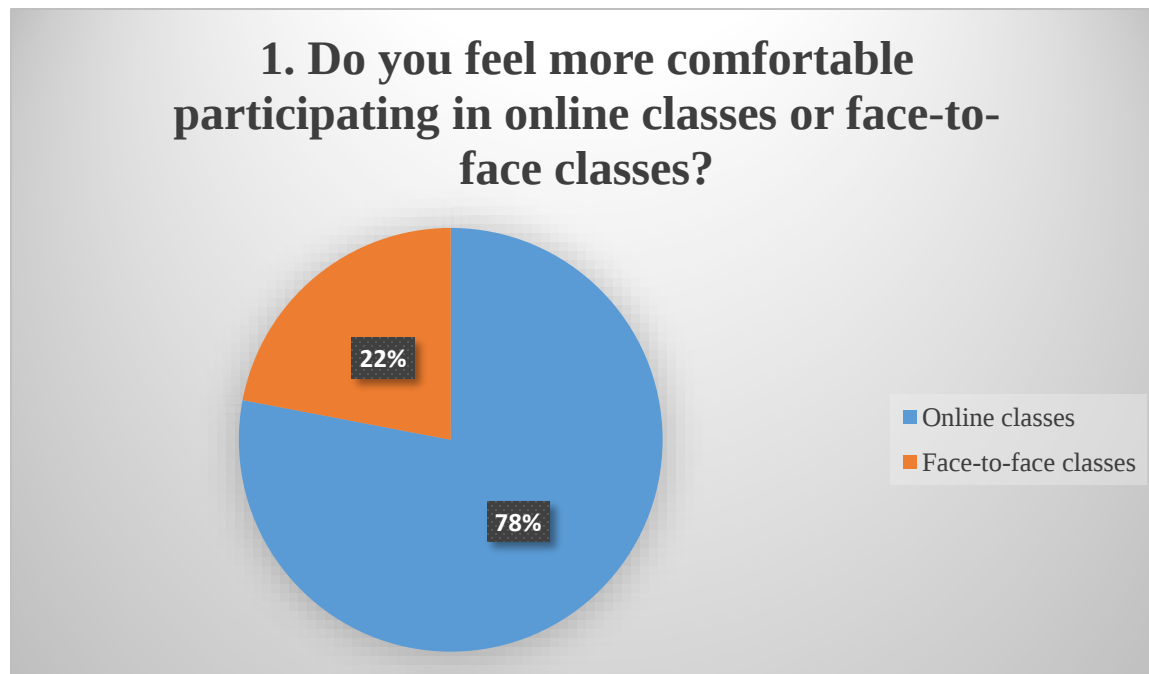


Fig. 1

According to Fig. 1, the majority of the respondents answered in the questionnaire that they feel more comfortable interacting through a virtual medium. Thus, it can be seen that 78% of the population prefer to participate in online classes. This can be due to the many advantages offered online such as having less anxiety through a screen. On the other hand, 22% of the population are more comfortable participating in face-to-face classes. This may be because students are more comfortable in a physical setting and prefer to maintain eye contact.

2. Is it difficult for you to navigate the Spanish Literature online forum?

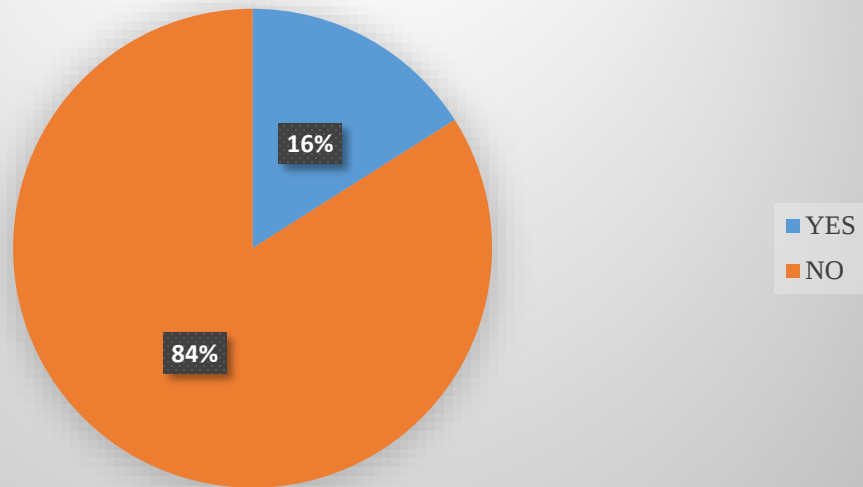


Fig. 2

The data on whether participants find it difficult to navigate the Spanish Literature online forum is presented in Fig. 2. 84% of the respondents indicate that they do not have any difficulty in utilising the Spanish Literature online forum. This notion can simply be justified as students who do not have any difficulty using online mediums already had the experience with the internet and e-learning. In this way, the online forum is easy to navigate. Contrary, 16% of the respondents stated that it is difficult to use the Spanish Literature online forum which may be possible because of their lack of exposure to the forum.

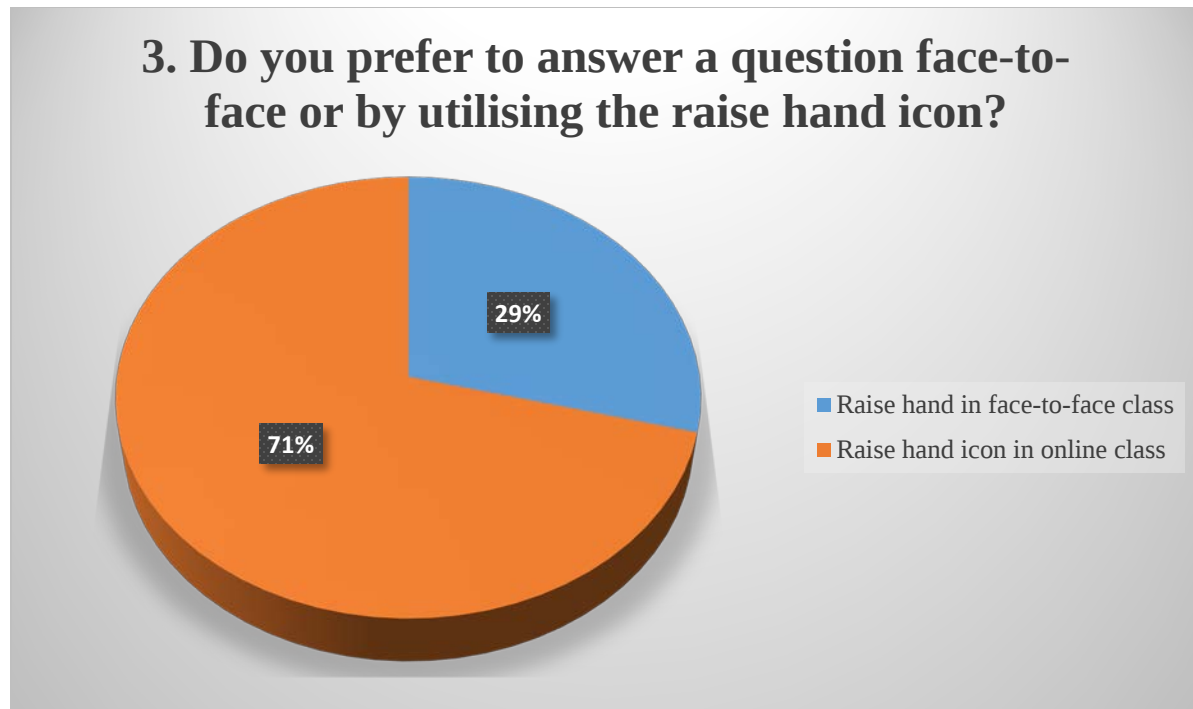


Fig. 3

According to the above graphic illustration, 71% of participants indicated that they utilise the raise hand icon during online classes whereas 29% of the participants indicated that they prefer to raise their hands during face-to-face classes. The majority of the students use this feature to communicate because they know how to use it and they have no fear of judgment from other students and the teacher when they respond.

4. What do you think is a disadvantage to online Spanish Literature class?

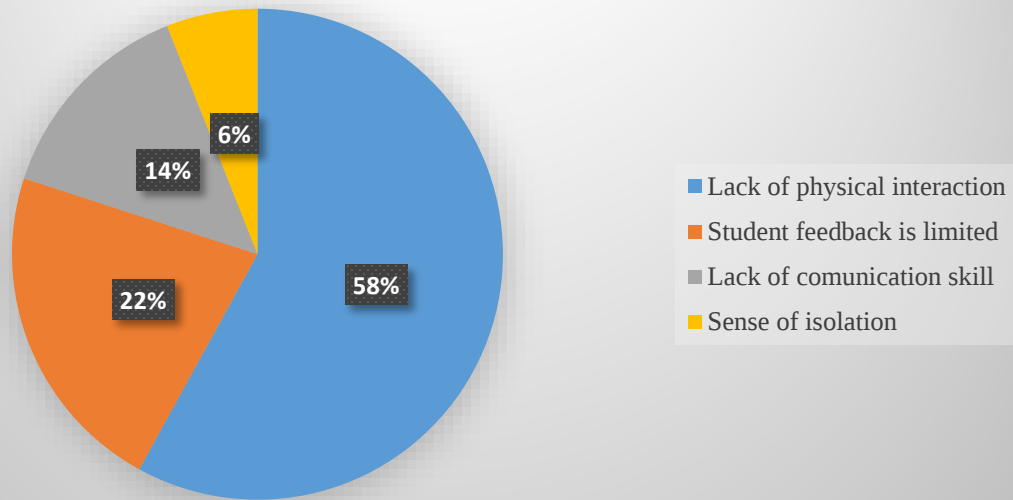


Fig. 4

The above chart represents the disadvantages encountered in an online Spanish Literature class. 58% of the participants stated that lack of physical interaction is the main disadvantage to online grammar class whereas 22% of participants indicated that student feedback is limited. Furthermore, 14% said that the disadvantage for them is lack of communication skills and 6% agreed that it creates a sense of isolation.

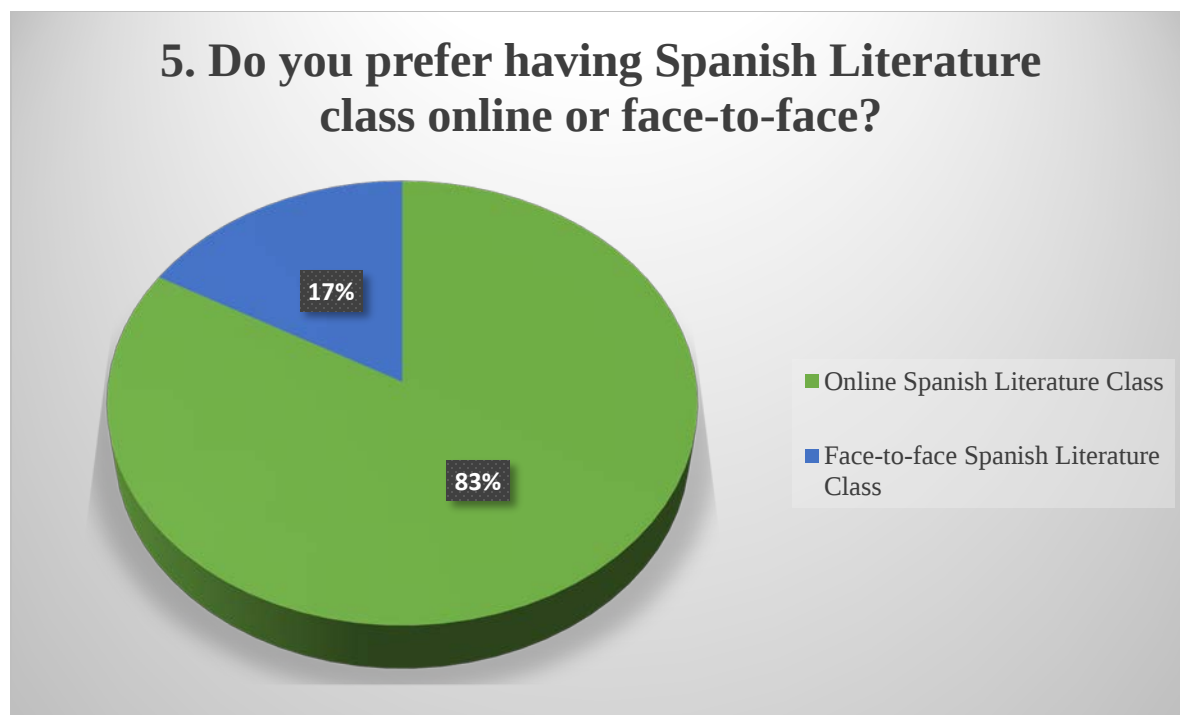


Fig. 5

A large number of participants, that is 83%, indicated that they prefer to have Spanish Literature class via the online platform. Contrary, a small number of participants, that is 17%, said that they prefer face-to-face classes.

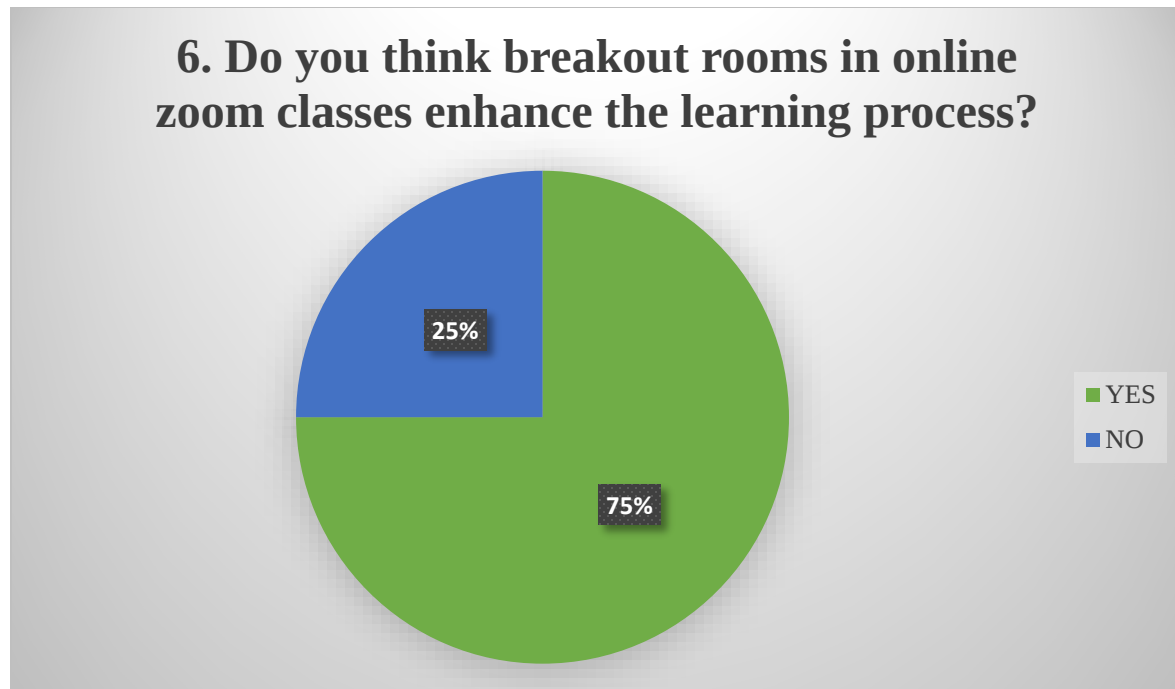


Fig. 6

The above chart represents whether participants think that breakout room in online zoom classes enhances the learning process. It can be seen that 75% of the respondents agreed that breakout rooms in online zoom classes enhance the learning process. A possible reason for this is because breakout rooms are smaller which allows students to feel less intimidated to respond. On the other hand, 25% of respondents stated that breakout rooms in online zoom classes do not enhance the learning process.

8. Are online classes or face-to-face classes more beneficial to your learning process?

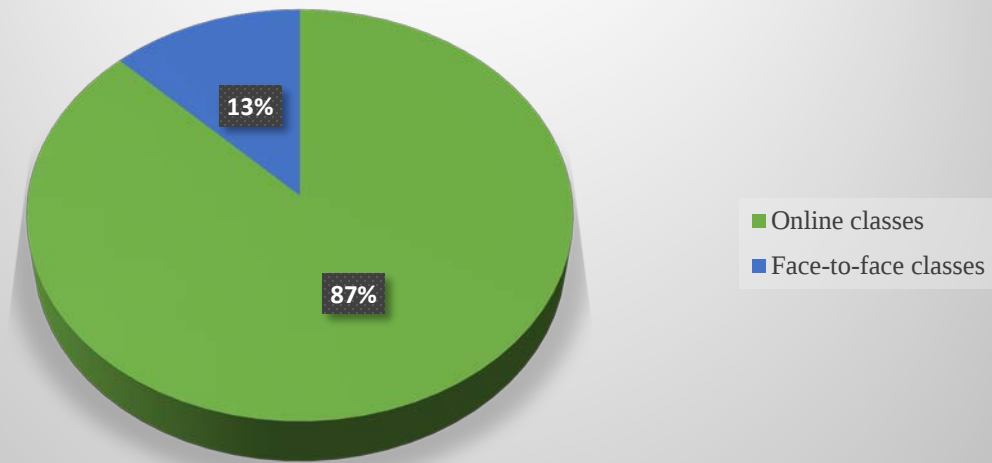


Fig. 7

According to Fig. 7, 87% of respondents indicated that online classes are more beneficial to their learning process while 13% of respondents found that face-to-face classes are more beneficial to their learning process.

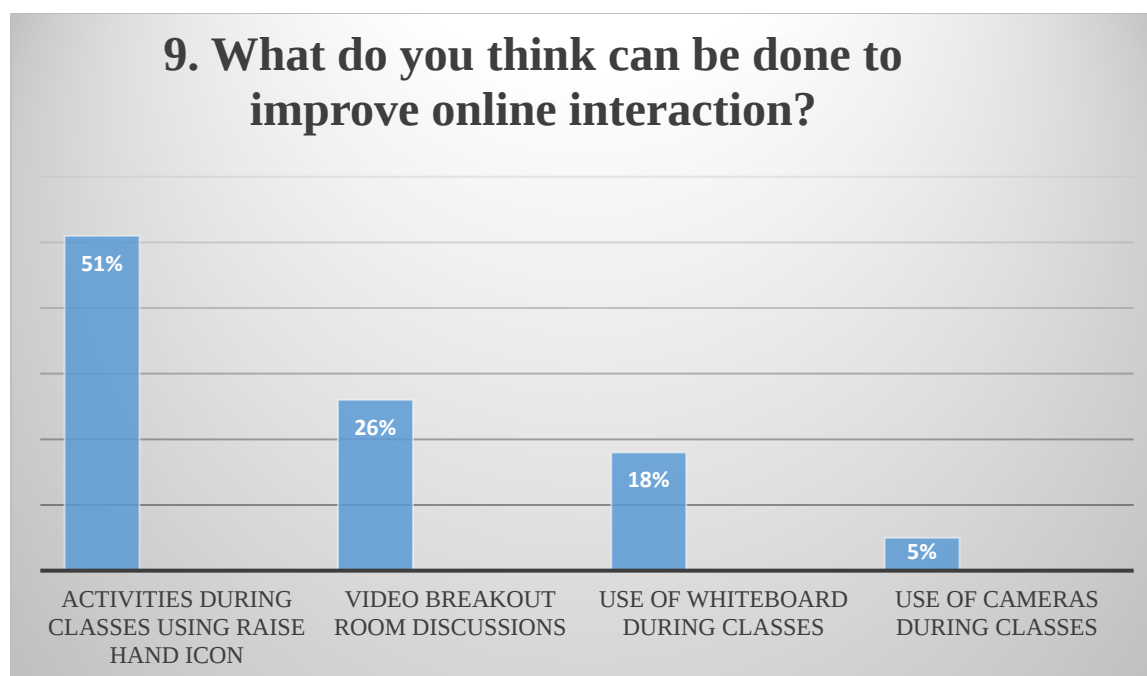


Fig. 8

The above graph displays participants' thoughts on ways of improving online interaction. It can be seen that 51% of the respondents suggested that activities during online classes using the raise hand icon will facilitate an improvement in interaction. Furthermore, 26% of respondents stated that video breakout room discussions help accommodate interaction and 18% of respondents agreed that the use of a whiteboard during classes is useful. However, only 5% of the respondents indicate that the use of cameras during classes would improve online interaction.

In conclusion, this chapter presented the quantitative findings related to the interaction between online and face-to-face classes. These results were based on twenty-four (24) respondents of the Year 3 Spanish Literature class in 2020-2021. Although the sample size was small, analysis and generalisations were still deduced. Thus, the following chapter includes an interpretation of the study.

Chapter 3

Discussion of Findings based on the interaction in online and face-to-face literature classes

This chapter aims to discuss the findings which were previously stated, relate and contradict them to the cited literature as well acknowledge and verify the objectives mentioned in the introduction. In order to provide data to compare the methodologies used in traditional and online classes, the research focused on Year 3 Spanish Literature students which consisted of twenty-four (24) of them. This is so because Year 3 students would have had more exposure and experience in the two types of classes and can better determine which class is more effective.

Education online shifts the role from being top-down lecturing and having passive students' association to a more interactive and collaborative approach among the students (Stern 2). This is so because students feel more comfortable participating in a virtual medium and find it easier to express themselves. In this regard, they have fewer negative emotions such as nervousness or anxiety. In fact, digitalized education transforms the role of the students and the teacher (Feraru et al.301). The teacher is deemed as "the guide to the side" on the internet (Stern 2). This means the teacher's purpose has altered to simply talk less in the class whereas the students adopt a new attitude of interacting and participating more than they once did. In this respect, the literature coincides with the claim (see Fig.1) that students who use the online platform feel more comfortable participating in class rather than through the traditional face-to-face medium. Students are more involved through a virtual medium. Fig. 1 asserts this in that 78% of the population prefer to participate and interact in online classes. Hence, online classes facilitate more engagement from the students. Participating in online classes develops their ability in the topic that they actively participate in and it also helps them to better succeed. It is proven that an

effective learning process occurs when both lecturers and students interact and actively participate in the learning activities (Abdullah et al. 61).

However, 22% of the respondents indicated that they feel more comfortable participating in traditional face-to-face classes and this can be because they feel the need to maintain physical contact when responding or prefer the physical setting such as whiteboard, desks, and chairs.

Consequently, in Fig. 2, 84% of the respondents indicate that they do not have any difficulty in utilising the Spanish Literature online forum whereas only 16% find it difficult. This signifies that majority of the students are not only comfortable to participate in online classes but feel comfortable utilizing the tools on the online platform for their classes as well. In this manner, the statistics support the affirmation that college students (89%) have a positive attitude towards the Internet and its communication tools (Jones and Madden 9). One reason for this can be that this generation is so saturated by the internet and digital technology in their social lives that navigating educational tools on the internet comes easy. They are deeply connected to the internet and as a result, the forum is simply an extension of it to them. Most students are no longer interested in the traditional book, pen, and paper but they are, instead, inclined to engage in anything with a screen. This would explain the positive attitude of technology that the students express and reflect. It can be assumed that being aware and connecting with the internet is useful when applying it to education. Students use the Internet to communicate with professors and classmates, to do research, and to access library materials (Jones and Madden 3).

On the other hand, 16% of students find that the Spanish Literature online forum is difficult to navigate. This is due to their lack of experience and insufficient knowledge of technological capabilities. The limited use of technology or inexperience is what negatively affects the students' attitudes towards navigating the eLearning forum. One possible way to eliminate this

issue is to have a brief introductory class to guide the students and make them aware of the tools. This concept would change their perceptions into a positive one and they will feel more willing to attend and participate in classes. Students will also experience a better outcome from their classes.

Concerning educational forums, such as Zoom, various features that aid in students communicating with the teacher or lecturer. One of the most common features is the raised hand icon. According to the graphic illustration (Fig. 3), 71% of participants indicated that they utilize the raise hand icon during online classes as opposed to face-to-face class to answer a question. This is so because there no one to turn to the student to intimidate or infer judgment. These findings can be interconnected with the literature that online teaching minimizes the number of quiet students who typically would not engage in a face-to-face classroom (Sharoff 4). The student may also feel less embarrassed if he/she answers a question wrong because there is no one looking directly at him/her. Thus, e-learning has provided a venue for the quieter student to not only answer a question but to voice his/her opinion. This notion helps the student to develop new ideas and ultimately build rapport. When the individual is granted the autonomy to voice himself/herself through the raise hand icon, he/she will have more to say. To add, it is worth considering that with the Zoom's raise hand feature, one can either watch the Video Gallery to view who has a virtual hand up or check your Participant box to see participants (Frost and Frost 2). In this respect, a teacher has multiple ways to assess a student.

Contrary, 29% of the participants in the research indicated that they prefer to raise their hands during face-to-face classes instead of online classes. One reason for this is because raising hands in a physical environment provokes interest in that it increases higher productivity and generates confidence in the individual. Therefore, a higher level of interaction is maintained in traditional

classes. A possible solution to encourage students to give feedback is the option to turn on their video when responding to the teacher. The teacher can be an example as well by answering the question first and then asking the students their thoughts. This would work because it generates critical thinking in the students.

Another feature of Zoom is the breakout room feature. It can be seen in Fig. 6 that 75% of the respondents agreed that breakout rooms in online zoom classes enhance the learning process. This is reflected in the literature as the zoom feature is described as terrific, fast, and flexible, with plenty of logistical advantages (Frost and Frost 2). The breakout out room accommodates small discussion groups which are easy to follow and acts as a medium for students to open up. When compared to a larger group, such as a webinar, the smaller group offers and encourages more topics and discussions. These online discussions provide an excellent way to elicit contributions from learners who may be reluctant to participate in live seminar discussions (Smith and Zsohar 26). Thus, the breakout room increases student participation as it builds on excitement and gives the 'shy' students the time and the opportunity to think, raise their hands, share their perspectives, and formulate their questions as the class proceeds. Students will feel more inclined to join breakout rooms and be more willing to engage in the debate. It also has its benefits in terms of reducing the distance between the teacher and students as well as it enables students in the group to learn from everyone else, rather than seeing the teacher as the expert (Chandler 1). In this respect, breakout rooms contribute to the learning process of the students since they learn from the teacher and other students as well.

Despite the positive that stems from the breakout room, 25% of respondents stated that breakout rooms in online zoom classes do not enhance the learning process. It is the role of the teacher to

instil in students how important breakout rooms are and how participating helps him/her to ensure that the students understand what information is distributed in the class.

Nonetheless, limitations to online classes exist. The physical arrangement of the face-to-face classroom (e.g. placement of the desk, blackboard) plays an important role in the interaction between students and instructors. In comparison, with online delivery systems, the students are limited to the computer monitor (Wuensch et al. 524). With online courses, personal, face-to-face contact is missing. The literature mentioned can be noted in Fig. 4 in which 58% of the participants asserted that lack of physical interaction is the main disadvantage in their online Spanish Literature class. As a result, this delays the capacity of having a productive class. In a traditional classroom, participants have the opportunity to observe one another as the class proceeds (Smith and Zsohar 25). However, the online method can behave as an impediment in which it prevents full-on communication from occurring between the teacher and the student. Similarly, the lack of contact with online classes means that students do not know their classmates socially and they miss out on having the advantage to socialize.

According to Fig. 7, 87% of respondents indicated that online classes are more beneficial to their learning process. This means that online learning has a positive effect on their education.

Students' success depends on the design of the online platform and its zoom interactive features which adds to this phenomenon. It is also due to the flexibility which is offered to them as well such as having the opportunity to review classes anywhere at any time. In fact, students have the option to work while studying because of technology. In so doing, it reflects and contributes positively to their lives. Additionally, the structured course development process including pre organisation, virtual office hours, emails, regular communication, transparency, and clarity ensures the success of the course (Sharoff 3). In the same way, this concept is reflected when a

large number of participants, that is 83% (refer to Fig. 5), indicated that they prefer to have Spanish Literature class via the online platform. They are comfortable using technology, the design of the online class is fundamental to navigate and they are actively involved during class times.

Despite all that is being said, it is understood that students prefer online learning as opposed to traditional face-to-face learning. However, there are still changes that can be made to make online learning more effective through the interactive factor. It can be seen in Fig. 8 that 51% of the respondents suggested that activities during online classes using the raise hand icon will facilitate an improvement in interaction. This means that teachers or lecturers should incorporate more activities during classes that require students to be eager to volunteer. This concept that be magnified in the literature since facilitating an engaging online course requires educators to develop strategies that enhance student participation and build a sense of community” (Sharoff 1). For there to be an order in the class, students will have to utilise the raise hand icon to participate. These activities can include games relating to the topic being discussed, brainstorming sessions, and having questions and answers based on the previous class. The teacher can also ask students how to enhance the class as a means to cater to each student individually. This can be established in the literature in that any classroom environment, the educators’ awareness of diverse types of learning styles is important and even more so with online learning” (Sharoff 2). Furthermore, 26% of respondents stated that video breakout room discussions help accommodate interaction. Thus, collaborating with students in discussions and encouraging peer-to-peer collaboration is an important feature of an engaged virtual learning dynamic (Sharoff 2). A key improvement that can be considered is having more and varying features on the zoom platform to facilitate participation for students. This means expanding the

tools from basic raise hand feature and break out rooms to more innovative elements that interest the students and are suitable to their needs.

Conclusion

‘A comparative study on the methodology used in traditional and online Spanish Literature classes at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine’ examined the different delivery methods while assessing which one is more favourable for students to participate. The focal point of this study is the interactive component of traditional and online Spanish Literature classes at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. Hence, this research explored Year 3 Spanish Literature students’ preference of interaction between online and traditional classes as well as it investigated how the use of Zoom features such as the raise hand icon and break out rooms has contributed to their involvement in the online classes. This research aimed to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of traditional Spanish Literature classes versus the Zoom online platform based on the interactive element.

Firstly, the study’s main focus was on the Spanish Literature Students who shifted from courses being fully traditional to one hundred percent online courses. To gain a better understanding of which class is preferred by students, the use of quantitative research was incorporated.

Questionnaires were therefore employed in this project. Despite the small sample size, a depth of information was collected and analysis could have been made as to why students prefer to participate in the setting they are most comfortable in and how it benefits them.

In this respect, online classes presented themselves as more popular and favourable than face-to-face classes to students. Accordingly, the majority of students prefer to participate on the online platform versus the traditional method. They also revealed that they prefer to use the raise hand icon on zoom than to raise their hands in person because there is less judgment from the teacher and other students.

Thus, the online platform reduces students' negative feelings such as anxiety and nervousness and instead reflects positively upon them, active participation helps them to remember topics and to succeed, the raise hand icon gives them the opportunity to participate without feelings of embarrassment and the breakout room feature eliminates shy students and reduces the distance between the teacher and student.

Finally, students noted that there are ways in which interaction in classes can be improved. One common suggestion is that the teacher should facilitate more engaging activities online that build on students' excitement to participate and use the tools available on the platform such as the raise hand icon. Furthermore, more breakout room discussions using video are deemed beneficial because it is a channel that provides more engagement and collaboration between students and teachers.

Nonetheless, one limitation that arose out of this research was that the initial research was simply based on comparing online classes and traditional classes. However, in terms of research, the topic would have been too broad to complete an in-depth research because having a lack of a specific target group in the study can refer to anyone at the university, in any faculty, at any time. This meant that the research would be never-ending and the entire thesis would have been confusing. As a result, the objectives and questionnaires were specifically targeted towards Spanish literature students to gain a more precise outcome.

In light of all that has been said, the researcher hopes that both teachers and students understand that online classes are here to stay. From here on, it is only going to be more prominent in an individual life whereas traditional classes are being more phased out and distanced. For this reason, the online platform needs to be a safe space for students to learn and participate, for it is participation in classes that is the catalyst for further development. It improves critical and

higher-level thinking skills. Therefore, it should never be taken lightly. The researcher also hopes that more research is done in this field to fully exploit online classes. One suggestion of the research is having more and varying features on the zoom platform to facilitate participation for students.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Dear Year 3 Spanish Literature student,
I am a final year student currently pursuing the HUMN3099 Caribbean Studies Project. I am interested in your perspective regarding your interaction in online and traditional Spanish Literature Classes. Please note this is not a test and there is no right or wrong answer. This questionnaire is completely confidential. Please answer honestly by ticking the appropriate boxes and answering where the spaces are provided. Thank you.

A. Please state your gender.

☐ Male

☐ Female

B. Do you enjoy Spanish Literature?

☐ YES

☐ NO

1. Do you feel more comfortable participating in online classes or face-to-face classes?

☐ Online Classes

☐ Face-to-face class

2. Is it difficult for you to navigate the Spanish literature online forum?

☐ YES

☐ NO

3. Do you prefer to answer a question face-to-face or by utilising the raise hand icon?

☐ Raise hand in face-to-face

☐ Raise hand icon in an online class

Please state why

4. What do you think is a disadvantage to online Spanish Literature class?

☐ Lack of physical interaction

- ☐ Student feedback is limited
- ☐ Lack of communication skill
- ☐ Sense of isolation

5. Do you prefer having Spanish Literature class online or face-to-face?

- ☐ Online Spanish Literature Class
- ☐ Face-to-face Spanish Literature Class

6. Do you think breakout rooms in online zoom classes enhance the learning process?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

If you answered yes above, please state why

7. Do you prefer group work through face-to-face classes or breakout rooms?

- ☐ Group work in face-to-face class
- ☐ Group work on breakout rooms

8. Are online classes or face-to-face classes more beneficial to your learning process?

- ☐ Online Classes
- ☐ Face-to-face Classes

9. What do you think can be done to improve online interaction?

End Of Questionnaire.
Thank You for Your Participation.