

Are we aware that the students' well-being and feelings are still kicking?

¿Somos conscientes de que el bienestar y los sentimientos de los alumnos siguen en juego?

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ABSTRACT

The majority of recent research studies show the emotional state of language learners at the onset of the Covid-19. Although the language students themselves identified issues limiting their learning, such as lack of interaction, lack of motivation and feedback, isolation, problems with the Internet, language teachers have admitted their concerns about students learning and confessed to being flexible, tolerant, and more humane. Today, there is a need to follow up on those student issues regarding their language learning beyond the Spring of 2020. This paper sheds light on the evolution of life, emotions, and wellbeing of the students, and their language learning beyond the rapid transition in Spring 2020 from forced unplanned teaching to the planned teaching during the pandemic of Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. This study explores the perceptions of 68 foreign language students in an American context through a survey. The results report on college language students' needs, their emotions and wellbeing, and their recommendations to administrators based on their needs and perceptions.

Keywords: self-efficacy, language anxiety, COVID-19, students' needs.

RESUMEN

La mayoría de los estudios recientes de investigación muestran el estado emocional de aprendientes de lengua al principio de la pandemia Covid-19. A pesar de que este grupo identificó problemas que limitaban su aprendizaje, como la falta de interacción, la falta de motivación y retroalimentación, aislamiento, problemas con el Internet, los docentes de lengua admitieron sus preocupaciones sobre el aprendizaje de sus estudiantes y confesaron ser más flexibles, tolerantes, y más humanos. Actualmente, es necesario saber sobre esos temas preocupantes sobre el aprendizaje que abarcan más allá de esa transición veloz, forzada y sin planear de la primavera del 2020 a una enseñanza planeada durante el otoño 2020 y la primavera 2021. Este estudio explora las percepciones de 68 aprendientes de lengua extranjera en un contexto americano mediante un cuestionario. Los resultados informan sobre las necesidades de estudiantes universitarios de lengua, sus emociones y bienestar y sus recomendaciones a los administradores basándose en sus necesidades y percepciones.

Palabras claves: autoeficacia, ansiedad lingüística, COVID-19, necesidades de los aprendientes

1. INTRODUCTION

During the COVID-19 era in 2020, students worldwide were forced to study remotely. As a result, many students felt isolated, suffered from stress and anxiety, and were generally frustrated with the remote learning environment (Sosulski, 2020; Russell, 2020). Oskoz and Smith (2020) reflected on how the pandemic had affected teachers and students, parents, and children due to the problems of online teaching and learning. Research in this area shows that students suffered from negative feelings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and different aspects of their personal lives, such as the loss of relatives or friends, lack of environmental resources, and self-regulatory strategies (Back et al., 2020).

Universities and community colleges have increased attention to the importance of students' well-being through multiple communication channels such as emails, newsletters, workshops, meetings, or general announcements, but they have failed to address the difficulty that students have in receiving mental support (Williams & Reetz, 2020). When students or faculty members sought counseling services near to or within their institutions, there were no available appointments for months, and the result was to be put on a waiting list (Skallerup Bessette, 2021).

Interestingly, the numbers to measure students' academic distress, depression, and anxiety disorder increased in 2020-2021 compared to previous years (Brown, 2021). High-level administrators have highlighted ways faculty and academic advisors can support students' mental health: academically, by referring students to resources to support their wellness, and by being aware of students experiencing a crisis. One must consider that college campus leaders faced students' mental-health challenges even before the pandemic when anxious, scared, or depressed students sought mental counseling (Williams & Reetz, 2020). Therefore, higher education's mental-health system has reached a crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Skallerup Bessette, 2021).

Up to now, the majority of the research studies about the rapid transition for teaching and learning during the onset of the pandemic have reported findings with data collected in spring 2020 or fall 2020, referring to the onset of the pandemic situation (Harsch et al., 2021; McIntyre et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021). However, there are few research studies about the impact that the pandemic caused after the forced transition. One example of these studies is the one from Hapsari (2021), who collected data on distance learning anxiety three months after the Corona outbreak and a year later. She found students' anxiety levels were higher at the beginning of the pandemic than after a year of experiencing the distance-learning environment. In the future, there is no doubt that we will see more studies about teaching and learning in a post-pandemic era.

Bryan Smith and Ana Oskoz, the editors of the academic journal CALICO, published a reflection a year after the onset of the pandemic. In their introduction to the volume, they stated, "there has been an opening up of the blinds to technology, and CALL is there for teachers and administrators as we reflect on what our technology-enhanced pedagogy should look like" (Smith & Oskoz, 2021, pii). This reflection doesn't solely

concern teachers and administrators; language students, too, had the opportunity to contemplate the impact of pedagogies on their learning during the COVID-19 era. Hence, this study aims to explore students' perceptions by investigating their emotions, needs, and well-being through a survey administered to college language students after the unplanned transition. The study will report on three categories:

1. Identifying language students enrolled at a United States institution so that language teachers can understand their needs.
2. Identifying emotions and well-being issues that may be affecting language learning and students' language success at their United States institutions.
3. Offering general recommendations to high-level administrators based on language students' perceptions to help L2 development in language programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching online within the COVID-19 pandemic

Scholars differentiated between remote learning and planned online instruction (Gacs et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021). Online education and remote teaching are often used interchangeably but have different implications. Online schooling is characterized by deliberate design and planning, whereas remote teaching is understood to mean an abrupt shift due to crises. Remote teaching may include online modes and take-home packets or workbooks for students with insufficient access to technology. Well-designed online courses can be as effective as face-to-face courses, especially in postsecondary settings, suggesting that the mode of instruction itself is not entirely predictive of learner outcomes (Moser et al., 2021). The literature suggests that online learners perform as well as in-person learners (Blake et al., 2008; Pardo-Ballester, 2018), but this fails to acknowledge that much of this had to do with the fact that those students had the choice and had self-selected to take an online language course (Moser et al., 2021).

2.2 Language anxiety surrounding COVID-19

Since the '80s, anxiety in foreign language classrooms has been studied (Russell, 2020). Still, less attention has been given to learning a language within an online learning environment and much less to the new unplanned online learning due to the pandemic. Russell (2020) stated that the pandemic situation caused stress. This situation draws attention to the existing anxiety experienced by language learners in traditional classroom settings. Consequently, learners transitioning to an online format might also encounter heightened anxiety due to the new learning environment. Russell (2020) referred to the research of Horwitz et al., (1986), who described foreign language classroom anxiety with three elements: communication apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety. She recommended language teachers use the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCA) at the beginning and end of the course to help learners reduce their anxiety levels.

Hapsari (2021) investigated the anxiety of 42 English learners within the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Results indicated that the lack of interaction caused a lot of isolation for students; students felt that their learning was monotonous and frustrating. In addition, distance learning demanded a high level of discipline from students, which caused more anxiety in students' readiness. Her recommendations were in line with those of Russell (2020) by using collaborative measures to overcome the confusion and difficulties that students may experience.

Liu and Yuan (2021) explored foreign language anxiety within the context of Chinese college students learning English during the pandemic. This study found that during online classes, the Chinese students experienced less anxiousness when learning English but experienced more anxiousness when practicing or trying to remember vocabulary and talk in English because the students were more focused on the accuracy and correctness of the language. While students suffered from increased anxiety and deepened depression, often due to isolation from society, administrators did their best to identify and assist those students in need. Still, anxiety and worry remained present and real for almost everyone (Sosulski, 2020).

2.3 Self-efficacy and self-concept beliefs in crisis learning

According to Bandura (1997), perceived self-efficacy indicates confidence in one's capabilities to get a task done, considering specific contexts. The construct of self-efficacy explains the feelings, acts, and thoughts about oneself, but it does not refer to the skills that the individual has. However, self-concept is a construct that describes how individuals perceive themselves to explain and predict their actions through their experiences with the environment. In the study by Bong and Shaalvik (2003), self-concept is defined as "one's general perceptions of the self in given domains of functioning, while self-efficacy represents individuals' expectations and convictions of what they can accomplish in given situations" (p. 5). Consequently, self-efficacy and self-concept can predict motivation, emotion, and performance (Frank, 2011).

Learning a language within a new environment, dealing with personal circumstances, individual actions, and having different personalities might influence students' lives, emotions, and learning. The environmental resources or constraints can enable or prevent studying remotely effectively within the pandemic. In the research reported here, inefficient Internet, not having a place to study, or have other responsibilities such as the supervision of elders, adults, or children are stressors that could affect students' lives to succeed in learning a language. In addition to environmental factors, personal and behavioral factors were included in this research to account for students' life, emotions, and well-being.

3. METHODOLOGY

An exploratory mixed-method approach was adopted in this study (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.1 Participants

Eighty-nine students provided consent to participate in this anonymous research study; however, not all completed all questions or disclosed their identities. Data is reported on 68 students (12 male, 53 female, and three non-binary) who were enrolled in a language course at an American institution, comprising 63 undergraduate students, four graduate students, and one unidentified. In Fall 2020, 61 participants reported learning 7 foreign languages: 3 Arabic (4.91%), 1 Chinese (1.63%), 13 French (21.31%), 3 German (4.91%), 1 Japanese (1.63%), 4 Russian (6.55%), and 36 Spanish (59.01%). Of those participants, 23.08% were enrolled in a first-year language class, 23.08% were in a second-year language class, 36.92% were in a third-year language class, and 16.92% were enrolled in a fourth-year language class. In Spring 2021, 66 American students reported studying 8 foreign languages to fulfill their language requirement, with the breakdown as follows: 2 Arabic (3.03%), 2 Chinese (3.03%), 15 French (22.72%), 4 German (6.06%), 2 Italian (3.03%), 1 Japanese (1.51%), 3 Russian (4.54%), and 37 Spanish (56.06%). Of these participants, 15.63% were enrolled in a first-year language class, 25% in a second-year language class, 39.09% in a third-year language class, and 20.31% in a fourth-year language class.

3.2 Instrument and data collection

This researcher designed an anonymous online survey administered via Qualtrics between May 20 and June 16, 2021. The items were designed using published articles that inform about the importance of students' wellbeing in the learning process during the pandemic (Russell, 2020; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020; Kaiser & Chowdhury, 2020; Hapsari, 2021). The survey comprised three types of items: A) Multiple-choice items using either a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree or Strongly Ineffective to 5=Strongly Agree or Strongly Effective) or a 5-point Likert scale for frequency (0=Never to 5=Every day). Each multiple-choice item contained up to 12 sub-items. B) Binary format questions, requiring a 'Yes' or 'No' response. C) One open-ended question encouraging free-form responses.

Following IRB approval, the researcher reached out to language advisors across various public and private institutions. These advisors were requested to distribute an anonymous survey link via email, inviting language students to participate in the study.

The anonymous online survey consisted of 26 items distributed within four sections: background information, students' life, emotions and wellbeing, and online language classes:

1. Thirteen items were about demographic information, contextual information, and their perceptions of learning a language. This section reported gender, target language, language level, information about their institution, motivation, organization skills, self-efficacy, online communication abilities, and preference for completing a language course.

2. Nine items were about students' life based on environmental factors such as having efficient Internet, locations to attend class, having a place to study, time spent at different locations, responsibilities such as the supervision of elders, adults, or children or perceptions about personal strategies (e.g., studying and separating from distractions) and environmental strategies (e.g., friends and family expecting to answer them right away).
3. Three items (2 with 7 to 10 statements indicating their level of agreement or disagreement) about their psychological and mental health within the pandemic and one open-ended item to provide any additional information about language students' strategies, emotions, and well-being.
4. One item with twelve statements for participants agreeing or disagreeing about what an online language course should offer according to their needs.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed both quantitative and qualitatively. Basic descriptive statistics were employed for the survey response items. Content analysis (Lune & Berg, 2017) was used to look for the existence and frequency of concepts, represented by utterances, in the participant students' answers to the open-ended question on the survey. These were coded and used to identify emergent themes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Category one examined language participants' perceptions of their motivation, organization skills, computer self-efficacy, online communication abilities, preferences, environmental factors, and individual strategies to complete a language course. Overall, 91.93 % (62 out of 67) reported being self-motivated to learn a language without considering the delivery format of the course, and 8.07% (5 out of 67) reported not being self-motivated. 78.12% (50 out of 64) reported having organization skills to complete a language course without considering the delivery format, and 21.87% (14 out of 64) reported not having those skills. 92.42% (61 out of 66) reported having computer self-efficacy and online communication abilities. 7.58 %, (5 out of 66) reported not having those abilities. One of those five participants commented on not being able to complete the course if it was completely asynchronous. Regarding their preferences to complete a language course, participants were asked to rate their general agreement or disagreement with different delivery formats on a 5- point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). Overall, participants reported a positive preference for a face-to-face course with technology involvement for instruction and for assignments to complete at home (95.38% agree or strongly agree, $M=4.35$, $SD=.53$). They also reported a negative preference for an online course with asynchronous assignments and without synchronous meetings with the instructor and peers (73.85% disagree or strongly disagree, $M=1.98$, $SD=1.06$; see Table 1). These results support teachers' perceptions about their teaching preferences (Pardo-Ballester, 2021, 2022), on a 5-point Likert scale. For more insights into Spanish language teachers' perceptions regarding teaching preferences or student learning,

refer to the author's article from 2021, p. 343. Additionally, for a comprehensive understanding of language teachers' health, emotions, teaching practices, and strategies, see Pardo-Ballester's work from 2022, pp. 275-281.

Statements of preference	M	SD	Variance
1. Only F2F without technology involvement	3.18	1.16	1.35
2. F2F with technology involvement (videos, PPT) & for assignments to complete at home	4.35	0.57	0.32
3. Online with asynchronous assignments & synchronous meetings with instructor and peers	3.29	1.05	1.10
4. Online with asynchronous assignments without synchronous meetings with instructor and peers	1.98	1.06	1.12
5. Online with asynchronous assignments & synchronous meetings with a coach and 3 or 4 peers at the time I decide	3.12	1.05	1.09

Table 1. Participants' preferences to complete a language course (N=65)

As for environmental factors, 90.91% (60 out of 66) reported having efficient Internet to complete their language course, but six of these students reported that the Internet is always tricky to predict, and on-campus or in a different location the Internet connection could crash. 9.09% (6 out of 66) reported not having efficient Internet. 79.03% (49 out of 62) reported having a home office or a quiet space to study and 20.97% (13 out of 62) reported not having a quiet space to study. Participants were asked to rate their current location work arrangement on a 5- point Likert scale (1= extremely ineffective and 5= strongly effective) to perform their studies effectively. From this data, we learned that 20.96% (13 out of 62) of students reported extremely ineffective or ineffective locations to work in their classes, while 62.90% (39 out of 62) of students rated their new locations effective or extremely effective. A 16.13% of students reported neither ineffective nor effective (10 out of 62). An interesting difference between the pandemic and a regular semester is the percentage of time spent at different locations. During the pandemic (spring 2021) participants reported attending classes 67.21% (41 out of 61) from their homes or dorms and the rest of the students 32.79% (20 out of 61) reported attending classes from campus, from a coffee shop or in their friends' homes. During a typical semester 29.85%, (20 out of 67) reported attending classes from their homes or dorms and 68.65% (46 out of 67) reported spending class time on campus or at a coffee shop. One participant commented on being a new student and therefore did not have a normal semester yet. A small percentage of students 4.84% (3 out of 62) reported being responsible for managing care for or supervision of children. One of these three reported taking care of three children and two of them of six or more children. In addition, 96.77% (60 out of 62) were not responsible for managing care for or supervision of elders or adults. Only 3.23% (2 out of 62) reported having this responsibility.

To understand individual strategies employed to complete the language course, participants were asked to rate their agreement on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) across ten statements. Four of these statements focused on influencing self-efficacy beliefs (refer to items 3, 4, 8, and 9 in Table 2), while the

remaining six encompassed self-concept beliefs, including aspects of self-knowledge and self-evaluative feelings (Bandura & Jourden, 1991; Frank, 2011).

Statements of self-efficacy and self-concept beliefs	M	SD	Variance
1. I check my computer/phone/tablet as soon as I see or hear that a new message has arrived.	3.85	1.16	1.34
2. I keep my camera off during synchronous online meetings.	2.95	1.17	1.36
3. My family members expect me to respond to electronic communication immediately during class time.	2.25	1.15	1.33
4. My friends expect me to respond to their messages right away even if I am in class.	1.90	0.82	0.68
5. I respond to personal communication during class time.	3.02	1.15	1.33
6. I don't like to have to think about family issues when I am in class.	4.13	0.80	0.64
7. If I study from home/dorm, I separate myself from any distractions.	3.08	1.16	1.35
8. Friends see me as highly focused on my classes.	3.92	0.91	0.83
9. Friends see me as highly focused on my family.	3.18	1.03	1.07
10. I change my class schedule as needed for my family or personal life.	2.93	1.23	1.50

Table 2. Self-efficacy and self-concept beliefs (N=61)

Results from statements 3 and 4 revealed that participants know that their families and friends want them to succeed academically and these results of disagreements ($M=2.25$, $SD=1.15$, and $M=1.90$, $SD=.82$) support Bandura's (1997) opportunities for social feedback to influence self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn contribute to academic performance over and above actual ability (Bandura, 1997). Statement 8 ('Friends see me as highly focused on my classes' with $M=3.92$, $SD=.91$) depicted a mildly positive perception, emphasizing the notable influence of social and evaluative feedback on self-efficacy beliefs. Conversely, responses to statement 9 ('Friends see me as highly focused on my family' with $M=3.18$, $SD=1.03$) indicated a more neutral stance, suggesting that familial influences might not significantly impede students' academic progress. In terms of self-concept, the findings from statement 1 ('I check my computer...a message has arrived' with $M=3.85$, $SD=1.16$) indicate that contemporary individuals are more susceptible to distractions, likely influenced by factors such as the digital era and the ongoing pandemic. Similarly, results from statement 2 ('I keep my camera off during synchronous online meetings' with $M=2.95$, $SD=1.17$) align with the challenges associated with online learning. These challenges may encompass issues like poor Internet connectivity (Hapsari, 2021) and the absence of a compulsion to present oneself physically (Kaisar & Chowdhury, 2020). Participants expressed agreement with statement 6 ("I don't like to have to think about family issues when I am in class" with $M=4.13$, $SD=.80$), a sentiment crucial in evaluating one's achievements, especially when influenced by significant others (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Frank, 2011). The findings from statement 5 ('I respond to personal communication during class time' with $M=3.02$, $SD=1.15$) and statement 7 ("If I study... I separate myself from any distractions" with $M=3.08$, $SD=1.16$) underscore students' inclination for social

connectedness (Lomicka, 2020) and their consideration of self-perception in alignment with others' viewpoints (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Frank, 2011). Participants reported neutral results for statement 10 ('I change my class schedule as needed for my family or personal life' with $M=2.93$, $SD=1.23$), suggesting that students' achievements or setbacks may be influenced by causal attributions (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Frank, 2011). For category two, participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement on seven statements about their emotions and needs within the pandemic on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). In Table 3, we learned that participants agreed with the need to have time for themselves in order to be happy ($M=4.62$, $SD=0.55$). We also learned that overall language students do not think about quitting their language classes ($M=1.85$, $SD=.99$) which we could interpret as language teachers do an excellent job motivating students to learn a language. Participants reported being very satisfied with the language they chose ($M=4.54$, $SD=.56$). This satisfaction could be related to the effort teachers put to motivate their students before and during the pandemic (Pardo-Ballester, 2022). However, participants recognized not doing much of an effort to attend events related to improving their language ($M=2.41$, $SD=1.11$). The reasons could be a few such as lack of time for extracurricular activities, responsibilities with family or work, or lack of motivation. Furthermore, students perceived that they improved their language ($M=2.59$, $SD=1.14$). These results were not in line with those that Hapsari (2021) found with students in Indonesia that were studying English Education in the spring of 2020. 70% of Hapsari's students feared that they would not make sufficient language progress. Kaiser and Howdhury (2020) discovered that 108 Bangladeshi college students, who were learning English, experienced anxiety and concurred that virtual classrooms yielded lower language achievement. Results from feeling more connected with their teachers as they used to be before the pandemic ($M=2.41$, $SD=1.14$) were not positive. These results are similar to those reported by Hapsari (2021) and Kaiser and Howdhury (2020), who found that learners felt isolated due to the lack of interaction. Our results also showed a light agreement with being able to balance the demands of the language classes and family or personal lives ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.05$). This finding supports learners' perceptions that students' workload levels were higher at the beginning of the pandemic than after a year of dealing with the pandemic and online teaching (Hapsari, 2021).

Statements of needs and emotional reactions	M	SD	Variance
1. I need to have time for myself for my own happiness.	4.62	0.55	0.30
2. I am very satisfied with the language/s I chose.	4.54	0.56	0.31
3. I frequently think of quitting my language studies.	1.85	0.99	0.98
4. I am able to balance the demands of my language classes and the demands of my family/personal life.	3.77	1.05	1.09
5. I attended student events related to languages to learn the language better.	2.41	1.11	1.23
6. During the pandemic, I feel my language performance is the same as before the pandemic.	2.59	1.14	1.29
7. During the pandemic, I feel more connected to my language teachers than before the pandemic.	2.41	1.14	1.29

Table 3. Students' perceptions of their feelings and needs (N=61)

Table 4 presents the ratings provided by participants on a frequency scale for ten statements. These statements, all beginning with 'During the pandemic...', prompted participants to express their feelings, rating the frequency on a scale of 1. Never, 2. Once a month, 3. A few times, 4. Once a week, 5. A few times per week, and 6. Every day. The expectations were that after the onset of the pandemic, students did not feel overwhelmed with language courses because previous studies reported that language teachers were flexible, had compassion, and were patient with their students (Pardo-Ballester, 2022). Results from the participant students' frequency of exhaustion indicate that learners did not feel as exhausted in their language classes ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.52$) when compared with the exhausting feelings they felt at work ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.76$) and in other classes ($M=4.66$, $SD=1.38$). In addition, once a week participants reported feeling satisfied when meeting their teachers and peers for their online meeting ($M=3.98$, $SD=1.48$). These findings disagree with Maican and Cocorada's research study (2021), which found that some students in the humanities had higher negative emotions and anxiety levels due to a lack of interaction with teachers and peers when compared to STEM students who are not so used to collaboration and interaction. Our participants felt exhausted to keep up with their language assignments ($M=3.21$, $SD=1.65$), but their language assignments were not always the cause for feeling fatigued in the morning ($M=2.82$, $SD=1.51$). Participants were also satisfied with the flexibility, self-paced learning ($M=3.61$, $SD=1.45$), and engagement ($M=3.74$, $SD=1.49$). These results agree with Hapsari (2021) reporting students' satisfaction with their language classes one year after the onset of the pandemic.

Statements of emotions and well-being	M	SD	Variance
1. I feel emotionally exhausted from my language classes.	3.36	3.36	2.30
2. I feel emotionally exhausted from my other classes.	4.66	4.66	1.90
3. I feel emotionally exhausted from my work.	3.93	3.93	3.10
4. being with peers and a language teacher is stressful for me.	2.59	2.59	2.77
5. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and think about my language classes.	2.82	1.51	2.28
6. I feel satisfied when I meet my language teacher and peers during virtual language classes.	3.98	1.48	2.18
7. my language teacher informed me that I needed to be better prepared for my virtual meetings.	1.28	0.73	0.53
8. I feel emotionally exhausted when staying on top of my language assignments.	3.21	1.65	2.73
9. I feel satisfied with the flexibility of online language assignments for self-paced learning.	3.61	1.45	2.11
10. I feel satisfied with my level of engagement in the second language.	3.74	1.49	2.23

Table 4. Frequency of students' emotions and wellbeing (N=61)

The participant students provided additional information on language strategies, emotions, and well-being. Their comments led to the emergence of three themes that, according to Bandura (1997), individuals use to judge their efficacy beliefs: 1) Physiological and emotional states, 2) social persuasion, and 3) affective processes.

Bandura (1997) stated that individuals' beliefs concerning their efficacy can be developed by the influence of physiological and emotional states. For example, we can interpret these students' comments about stress, anxiety, and negative emotions as altering efficacy beliefs. According to Redmond (2010), individuals experiencing reduced anxiety or agitation tend to possess higher self-efficacy beliefs. Although physiological and emotional states exert relatively minimal influence on self-efficacy assessment, their consideration remains significant. For instance, one of the participant students experienced a pervasive lack of motivation, struggles with focus, resulting in mental health challenges, and a feeling of inadequate preparation due to the online format of classes:

- (1) It was not specifically with language classes, but I felt in general overall lack of motivation to complete online lectures or assignments. I found it extremely hard to focus, even in a quiet study environment. I also felt like my workload increased, and that in combination with my inability to focus makes tasks even more difficult and I still don't feel like I learned anything. We faced intense burnout, mental health problems, harder classes, no social interaction, and a lack of deeper-level learning that would actually prepare us. (Student 36).

The comments for social or verbal persuasion showed both sides, teachers who strengthen individuals' beliefs by verbal persuasion and motivate them to succeed, and teachers who undermine learners' motivation by telling them they are not good enough and they end up giving up. We can appreciate the diverse personal experiences and perceptions shared by two students regarding their interactions with language teachers and their feelings towards their courses:

- (2) I actually dropped French because it was too much...I felt discouraged by where I was at compared to other students and decided to quit...But I just felt ashamed and not supported. My professor... put us down saying, "you guys just aren't where you should be," "practice more," "...it's just going to keep getting harder as we go on, so if you don't know these things now, then you're going to be drowning after. (Student 15).
- (3) ... she really cared for her students by being flexible and understanding of the pandemic while learning Spanish. (Student 10).

The participant students commented on the quantity of homework and the teaching mode of their classes. Both stressors represent difficult situations especially when students feel they have no control of their situations. Students' beliefs in their own coping capabilities can seriously affect their level of motivation (Bandura, 1997). As one of the students explained:

- (4) I think lowering the number of assignments would be very helpful. Both for Arabic and Spanish, the quantity of homework was exhausting, absolutely exhausting on comparison to my other classes. It makes an enjoyable activity quite daunting at times. (Student 46).

Category three investigated participants' agreement and disagreement about what an online language course should include, with the idea of addressing the specific needs of

our students. Students rated the proposed statements on a 5- point Likert scale. The statements relate to teaching models, individual behaviors, and social persuasion (see Table 5).

Statements of what an online language course should have	M	SD	Variance
1. Synchronous peer-to-peer oral interaction with the entire class & my teacher	4.43	0.77	0.59
2. Synchronous peer-to-peer oral interaction with the small groups & my teacher or a coach	4.57	0.62	0.38
3. Peer preparedness for synchronous meetings	4.41	0.67	0.45
4. Teacher's dedication and positive attitude	4.81	0.39	0.15
5. Weekly reminders from my teacher about assignments I need to complete	4.22	0.85	0.73
6. Low level of engagement with the course	1.55	0.70	0.49
7. High level of engagement with the course	4.41	0.70	0.48
8. Flexibility with online tasks & assignments for self-paced learning	4.14	0.88	0.77
9. Feedback from my teacher when needed	4.76	0.43	0.18
10. Asynchronous activities	3.86	0.90	0.81
11. Staying on top of my assignments	4.52	0.68	0.46
12. Weekly reflections on my learning	3.17	1.18	1.38

Table 5. Participants' needs for success when studying online (N=58)

Participants rated statements 1 and 2 in relation to oral interaction as very high (M=4.43, SD=.77 and M=4.57, SD=.62). These findings corroborate research showing that learners perceive that involvement in real-time conversational activities is overall beneficial to language acquisition (Petterson, 2021). Statements 3, 6, 7, and 11 relate to self-efficacy and motivated learning behavior. Participants agreed or strongly agreed on the importance of strategic planning (M=4.41, SD=.67), and setting challenging goals such as being highly involved with the course (M=4.41, SD=.70) or staying on top of their assignments (M=4.52, SD=.68). On the same token, participants recognized their strong disagreement (M=1.55, SD=.70) with being very little involved with the course. Results indicated a strong relevance of participants' perceptions of being proactive to be successful. These results lend support to other research findings on important students' willingness to assume personal responsibility for their learning and success (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2013; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Participants also reported a very positive effect on students' success when teachers have a positive attitude and are dedicated to their students (M=4.81, SD=.39). The same positive effect on their students' learning was perceived when teachers provide feedback to learners (M=4.76, SD=.43), when flexibility is offered to complete assignments (M=4.14, SD=.88), and when teachers motivate their students to complete assignments by sending reminders (M=4.22, SD=.85). These students' perceptions are in line with the findings on teachers' perceptions about their teaching practices and strategies (Pardo-Ballester, 2022). In addition, these findings are related to social persuasion, which is important because it suggests a way to strengthen efficacy. When an educator gives positive feedback and persuades his students about their capabilities to perform specific

tasks well, they will be motivated and work hard to succeed. Similarly, if students receive negative feedback and do not receive the teacher's support, their learning and motivation to succeed will be affected (Bandura, 1997; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Regarding the statement about having weekly reflections on one's learning, results indicated that students were impartial about including them in a course ($M=3.17$, $SD=1.18$). This finding was expected because even though reflective assignments are very effective for language learning, it is time-consuming for the teacher (Pardo-Ballester, 2022). In order to help learners' effectiveness with their learning, teachers should make an effort to include self-reflections as assignments. Research has shown that behavioral strategies such as self-evaluation, self-reflection, planning, and monitoring are self-regulated learning strategies that have a positive effect on learners' performance (Zimmerman, 2013). Students were moderately positive ($M=3.86$; $SD=.90$) about the inclusion of asynchronous activities within an online course which was not surprising due to the technological demands brought with the emergency remote teaching.

5. CONCLUSIONS

While the present study revealed learners' positive perceptions of learning post-pandemic, it comes with acknowledged limitations. Results are based on self-reported data, and the online survey had a limited duration, necessitating further extensive research to delve into students' evolving perceptions in the aftermath of the pandemic's onset.

COVID-19 made us all reevaluate the way we have been living. Many of us have been resilient and have changed our views on the world. Students faced challenges during the 2020 lockdown, including deficits in social skills, motivation, and attention spans (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). The quarantine and aftermath exacerbated mental health issues, evident in increased anxiety and depression cases, amplified consultations with mental health professionals (Williams & Reetz, 2020), heightened isolation, loneliness, and exacerbated family conflicts. According to Field (2021), many students tend to use medications, highlighting the importance of using strategies like managing time effectively. Our study revealed that students feel the need to stay connected socially and often get distracted by their devices when they receive notifications. This distraction affects their focus on work, as indicated by their neutral responses regarding separating themselves from distractions or responding to emails.

In alignment with prior studies (Moser et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021), our research underscores a preference for face-to-face supplemented by technology in language learning. The pandemic, despite its fears and uncertainties, became a learning ground for both students and educators. Notably, we found that social and evaluative feedback significantly influences self-efficacy beliefs. Our participants perceived crucial support for their learning and education from family and friends, which plays a pivotal role in achieving success. Moreover, it is not just family and friends who influence participants'

self-efficacy beliefs; teachers also emerged as influential figures. Participants highlighted teachers' flexibility and motivational support as catalysts for their success. While institutions face substantial losses, this study reveals that students remain committed to language studies. One year following the pandemic's onset, students reported an improvement in their language skills, now adept at managing the demands of language classes alongside their personal lives. Essential strategies for success encompass diverse instructional models (online, hybrid, face-to-face), accompanied by requisite technological support and preparation (Jin et al., 2021; Pardo-Ballester, 2022).

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