

# Language Teachers' Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Emergency Remote Teaching

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigates university-level German instructors' perceived advantages and disadvantages of synchronous emergency remote teaching during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic at five universities across the United States. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered by means of an electronic questionnaire from 16 instructors of beginning German regarding their experiences with live remote instruction in 2020. Survey questions centered on the five goal areas of the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and online instructional practices. Findings indicate that the language instructors from the sample perceived emergency remote instruction—switching to teaching live online—to be overall more detrimental than advantageous to their students' language learning over the course of the quarantine and subsequent two pandemic semesters. However, the emergency switch to online instruction also afforded these instructors the opportunity to recognize some advantages to online instruction. The emergency nature of the switch to remote teaching revealed principles of resilience and the need for online language pedagogy in professional development. This study has implications for language teachers, administrators, language program directors, and state and district supervisors.*

**Keywords:** *emergency remote teaching, language instruction, virtual language instruction, COVID-19 pandemic, World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, higher education, German, teacher resiliency*

## **Background**

Due to the immediate emergency move from in person to online teaching and learning at the onset of COVID-19 in the United States in March 2020, language teaching and learning have been significantly impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Egbert, 2020; Gacs et al., 2020; Lomicka, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020; Russell, 2020; Troyan et al., 2021). As the pandemic and quarantine necessitated, language instruction has been delivered remotely for at least a portion of the initial academic year at most schools, including the five higher education institutions included in this study. More than 4,200 post-secondary institutions un-

derwent major changes in teaching and learning (The Entangled Group, 2020), and many university-level language programs have taught exclusively remotely through live teleconference meetings (Guillén et al., 2020; Krohnke & Moorhouse, 2020). Before the pandemic, 31.6% of U.S. undergraduate students were enrolled in at least one remote delivery class, about half of which were taking exclusively remote courses (Seaman et al., 2018). However, those distance education enrollments were primarily concentrated at a relatively small number of institutions. In the spring semester of 2020, more than 1,300 colleges and universities cancelled in-person classes or shifted to online-instruction only (Smalley, 2021). Most higher education institutions (89%) employed emergency remote teaching (Johnson et al., 2021). Prior to 2020, many faculty members in higher education had a negative opinion about online teaching (Johnson et al., 2021). Yet, online instruction in the last couple decades has proven effective, with students taking online courses performing better on average than students taking those courses through face-to-face (FTF) instruction (Angiello, 2010). Before the pandemic, most online language instructors were at post-secondary institutions, with 63% of online language learning establishments at four-year public institutions (Murphy-Judy & Johnshoy, 2017). Most online language enrollments were in Spanish, followed by French, German, and Chinese.

Prior to the worldwide pandemic, ample research has explored online language instruction (Blake et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2016; Peterson, 2021; Rubio et al., 2018; Russell, 2020; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Multiple studies observe that language students learn just as well, if not better in online settings as in FTF settings (Aldrich & Money Penny, 2019; Blake et al., 2008; Peterson, 2021; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). Many online learners experience less language anxiety than their peers in FTF classrooms (Pichette, 2009; Russell, 2018). Lee (2016) found that students appreciate synchronous and asynchronous language instruction and perceive it as effective for their language learning. Additionally, Lee concluded that the social presence of synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated communication increased student engagement and motivation and promoted learner autonomy. Rubio et al., (2018) also reported that learners were more engaged with content in remote delivery than FTF. These factors result in positive outcomes as well. Students enrolled in exclusively online Spanish language classes are able to meet national oral proficiency benchmarks and can be held to the same standards of oral proficiency as students in FTF classrooms (Aldrich & Money Penny, 2019). Analyzing oral proficiency with measures of pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence formation, and fluency, Money Penny & Aldrich (2016) found no significant difference between proficiency of online and FTF Spanish students, with some data suggesting online students outperformed FTF students in their oral proficiency skills.

Considering emergency remote teaching (ERT) however, Hodges et al. (2020) noted that there is a difference between a forced emergency transfer to online and voluntarily electing to take an already prepared online course. So, while research has shown that FTF language instruction and intentional online delivery have similar outcomes, it is probable that there is a difference in the language learning and instruction experience in regular online courses and the “displacement” to ERT experienced by college and university programs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ross & DiSalvo, 2020, p. 374). This presents a gap in research, as most literature on online

language instruction examines cases where instructors and students elected online courses, rather than being forced to do so (Blake et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2016; Peterson, 2021; Rubio et al., 2018; Russell, 2020).

The sudden emergency transfer to online instruction also factors in a difference in teacher preparation. Many instructors who had to shift to remote teaching had little to no previous experience or training in online teaching. Bay View Analytics found that the number of faculty who taught their first online course between April and December 2020 exceeded the number who did within the decade prior (Johnson et al., 2021). Almost all higher education institutions (97%) had to call on faculty with no prior online teaching experience and a majority of faculty (56%) had to use teaching methods they had never before used. Some language instructors observed that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ability to address and assess communication and on students' ability to use the target language in class (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ramirez et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2021). Students have also experienced increased stress and anxiety, introducing negative affect in language learning contexts (Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020). Feelings of disconnectedness and social isolation during the pandemic should also be taken into consideration. Social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence are essential aspects of a successful educational community of inquiry (Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported several research findings on the experiences of higher education professors shifting to online teaching during the global pandemic. Troop (2021) reports that in a survey of readers of *The Chronicle's Daily Briefing* and *Academe Today* newsletters, participants reported that of all aspects of the life that the pandemic had changed; primarily they were most "sick of" online meetings, virtual events, screen fatigue, and any transition to virtual conferencing or platforms. Ellis (2021) discussed the extreme strain the pandemic has placed on workers and instructors in higher education, pushing some to even leave the profession. One interview with a professor of classical mythology at the University of Texas highlights specific struggles professors face in online instruction, such as limited engagement with students, the difficulty of facilitating meaningful interaction, and extensive work developing and finding online curriculum and resources (McMurtrie, 2021). This is somewhat contrary to findings from Bay View Analytics, which reported that despite pre-pandemic negative opinions of online teaching and initial uncertainty in spring of 2020, by the fall semester 2020 over 80% of faculty felt prepared to teach online (Johnson et al., 2021). By the end of the year, 51% of faculty reported they had more optimistic opinions about online instruction than before the pandemic. Similarly, 57% of the 1,708 faculty and administrators representing 1,204 different institutions reported they were more optimistic about using digital materials. Only 15% reported their opinions about online teaching had become more pessimistic. While not specifically focused on language instruction, these findings offer valuable data from instructor perspectives during the displacement to online teaching that can inform the present study.

Specific to the field of language learning, several recent studies provided insight and recommendations for online language instruction (Gacs et al., 2020; Moser et al., 2021; Russell, 2020; Swanson, 2021; Troyan et al., 2021). Specific recommendations for transitioning to online instruction include (1) directing language instructors to

establish clear communication lines, (2) developing an online learning community, (3) delivering quick and automated feedback to students, (4) developing time management strategies, and (5) being judicious with use of synchronous video conferencing to prevent fatigue (Gacs et al., 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020). However, many of these publications lack qualitative data collected from teachers who made the abrupt switch to ERT during the pandemic. Moser et al. (2021) investigated concrete shifts in practices and perceptions of teachers' instruction during the pandemic, but they did not focus on specific goals for language teaching and learning, and only 21% of their participants taught in post-secondary education. In a large-scale study (n=497) of K-20 language teachers, Swanson (2021) found that language teachers' sense of efficacy was adversely affected during the pandemic, and more than one in five of the language teacher participants considered leaving the language teaching profession due to the pandemic. Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) offered insightful data on the stress generated by the crisis and how different stress responses affect the difficulty and prioritization of language learning, and Morris (2021) found five themes related to teachers' challenges and successes in language teaching during the pandemic—engagement, community, comprehension, balance, and mental health—but none of the themes revealed advantages or disadvantages of remote teaching regarding the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015).

These studies mentioned above offer little data on what specific advantages and disadvantages were presented by ERT. Additionally, none of the studies conducted during the pandemic focused specifically on all five goal areas in ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015)—Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. However, three recent studies focused on two of the five goal areas—Communication and Cultures: (1) Troyan et al. (2021) focused on the three modes of communication (interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational) along with two other core practices for enacting language instruction—backward design and target language use (Glisan & Donato, 2017, 2021); (2) Baumgardt and Ikeda (2021) focused the Cultures goal area and explored ways language teachers can successfully teach culture asynchronously designing interpretive and presentation cultural tasks for students that emphasized products, practices, and perspectives; (3) Swanson (2021) also explored the Cultures goal by investigating teachers' confidence levels in teaching relationships between cultural products and practices and perspectives of the target culture. He found that teachers were about 30% less confident in teaching culture when teaching remotely during the emergency transition.

### Research Questions

The present study investigates the perceived advantages and disadvantages of synchronous emergency remote teaching (ERT) during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from 16 German language instructors from five universities evaluating their experiences with synchronous ERT in 2020. The universities are located in California, Utah, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Vermont. The questions of the distributed questionnaire were based on the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015).

The research presented in this article highlights the perceived advantages and disadvantages of online language instruction and can inform future post-secondary synchronous ERT by answering these questions:

1. Do higher-education instructors of beginning German perceive synchronous ERT to be more or less advantageous than FTF instruction before the pandemic?
2. What perceived advantages of synchronous ERT did higher-education instructors of beginning German find, note, and describe?
3. What perceived disadvantages of synchronous ERT did higher-education instructors of beginning German find, note, and describe?
4. What can be learned about effective language instruction and resiliency from the transition to live-remote instruction during the world-wide pandemic, and how can that knowledge be used to improve language instruction?

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

Sixteen higher-education German instructors participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 21-57 years old and, at the time of the study, all but one had been teaching two semesters or longer. Higher-education instructors from five universities across the United States participated. Instructors from one medium public research university in the Northeast, one large private research university in the Northeast, one large public research university in the Midwest, one large private research university in the West, and one large public research university in the West were invited to participate because they teach using the *Augenblicke* curriculum. *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts* is an in-class workbook that uses authentic materials, current trends in second-language acquisition theory and research, the *World-Readiness Standards*, and best practices in classroom language instruction to guide students through introductory and intermediate German.

Participants' teaching positions included TAs, adjunct professors, and tenured or tenure-track professors. Participants taught first semester through upper-level German courses. Canvas and Zoom were used for instructional delivery in all courses. Instructors met with their students three times each week for synchronous instruction. None of the participants had received training in instructional design or online language pedagogy.

### ***Data collection***

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed in February and March of 2021 to instructors of beginning German from five universities in various regions of the United States. Responses were only collected from instructors who have taught through synchronous ERT using *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts*.

Questionnaire items were based on the ACTFL *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (NSCB, 2015) and included ten Likert-scale items and four open ended items. Instructors were asked to evaluate on a five-point Likert-scale how their instruction has been affected by ERT regarding each of the five standards.

Participants were then asked via a free-response question to elaborate on their rating. For example, on the questionnaire one item read as follows: "How has teaching live remote instruction affected opportunities for interacting with the target culture (products, practices, perspectives) in class? (If possible, please share one way this has been enhanced or impaired in the box below.)" Additionally, participants were asked through questionnaire items and free response questions how live remote instruction has affected their ability to use curriculum resources and keep students engaged and motivated. Concluding questions asked participants to describe both an advantage and a disadvantage of live remote instruction.

Results from the Likert-scale responses to each of the five goal areas of the *World-Readiness Standards* (Table 1) and overall teacher effectiveness (Table 2) are presented by questionnaire item. Using grounded theory, free response answers were analyzed and coded for common themes related to aspects of ERT (Tables 3-12).

By assigning a point value to Likert-scale responses (Significantly Impaired = -2; Moderately Impaired = -1; Neither Enhanced nor Impaired = 0; Moderately Enhanced = 1; Significantly Enhanced = 2) and adding these assigned values together, individual participant responses are also evaluated. Through this system, data revealed that only two participants gave more positive responses than negative (one participant with a cumulative score of 1, one participant with a cumulative score of 10), two participants gave more neutral responses overall (with scores of 0), four participants gave moderately more negative responses (scores between -1 and -3), and eight participants gave significantly more negative responses (scores between -4 and -8) ( $M = -2.86$ ).

## Findings

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Overall, the majority of the 16 teacher participants reported that ERT neither enhanced nor impaired their language teaching in the *World-Readiness Standards'* goal areas of Connections (87.5%) and Comparisons (68.75%) (see Table 1). This result is reassuring considering the statistics that most higher education instructors had a negative view of online teaching prior to ERT (Johnson, 2020). The goal areas that were reported to be most impaired by ERT, with attention to the three modes of Communication, were: (1) Communities and Interpersonal Communication, followed by (2) Interpretive Communication and Cultures, and lastly (3) Presentational Communication.



**Table 1*****Instructor Perceptions of Opportunities to Meet the Standards with ERT***

n=16	Significantly enhanced	Moderately enhanced	No change	Moderately impaired	Significantly impaired
Communication: Interpersonal	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	3 (18.75%)	7 (43.75%)	2 (12.5%)
Communication: Interpretive	0 (0%)	3 (18.75%)	8 (50%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0%)
Communication: Presentational	1 (6.25%)	4 (25%)	5 (31.25%)	4 (25%)	2 (12.5%)
Cultures	0 (0%)	4 (25%)	6 (37.5%)	5 (31.25%)	1 (6.25%)
Connections	0 (0%)	1 (6.25%)	14 (87.5%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Comparisons	0 (0%)	2 (12.5%)	11 (68.75%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)
Communities	0 (0%)	3 (18.75%)	5 (31.25%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (6.25%)

The most affected goal area was Interpersonal Communication—56.25% reported that ERT impaired interpersonal communication, 18.75% reported no effect, and 25% reported that ERT moderately enhanced interpersonal communication in class. These statistics are not surprising. In in-person language classes, much of the time is spent speaking in dyads. On Zoom, teachers had to learn how to put students into breakout rooms and how to make use of the chat function for interpersonal communication. Four teachers commented that they had difficulty facilitating interpersonal communication in ERT, eleven considered ERT a disadvantage for having fewer or less effective opportunities for collaboration or group work, but six found engaging students by changing the mode of delivery often to be advantageous for encouraging interpersonal communication among their students.

For the goal area of Communities, 50% of participants agreed that ERT at least somewhat impaired opportunities for students to engage in the target language community. This is not consistent, however, with nearly 20% of the teachers' perceptions regarding the advantages and ease of communicating with native speakers virtually during the quarantine, which makes sense because of the rich opportunities available to virtually connect with target language speakers.

In the Cultures goal area, 25% of participants agreed that ERT moderately enhanced opportunities for interacting with the target culture, yet 37.5% agreed that ERT impaired opportunities, and 37.5% reported no effect. This result is consistent with Swanson's 2021 study that found that teachers were 30% less confident in teaching culture remotely during ERT. Three teachers commented that teaching about cultural products during ERT was difficult, one commented that there were fewer opportunities to discuss culture, yet one commented that teaching about cultural products and practices was better during the quarantine semester.

For Interpretive Communication, 50% reported no effect, 31.25% reported that moderate impairment, and 18.75% reported moderate enhancement. Four teachers commented that teaching listening was more difficult during ERT. Using the *Augen-*

blিকে curriculum, listening and reading are integrated into class activities and homework, so it makes sense that most teachers reported no effect or moderate enhancement.

Presentational Communication was the least impaired standard where 31.25% of respondents reported that ERT enhanced presentational communication, 25% reported no effect, yet 37.25 reported impaired ability to meet this standard. To explain no effect and enhanced presentational communication, one teacher commented that they were able to find ways to accommodate presentations through Zoom and pre-recorded videos, two perceived that students felt more comfortable presenting virtually, two perceived that students were able to be more creative with online presentations and another two perceived saving time on student presentations.

Teacher's Perceptions of their overall teaching effectiveness during ERT revealed some concerns. The ability to keeping students engaged during ERT was reported to be impaired by 77% or participants. Keeping students motivated was reported to be impaired by 62.5% of participants, whereas using department resources seemed to be slightly enhanced (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Instructor Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness with ERT*

n=16	Significantly enhanced	Moderately enhanced	No change	Moderately impaired	Significantly impaired
Using department resources	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)
Keeping students engaged	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0%)	9 (56.25%)	3 (18.75%)
Keeping students motivated	1 (6.25%)	1 (6.25%)	4 (25%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (6.25%)

*Thematic Analysis*

Using grounded theory, the researchers discovered common themes from the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study. Themes emerged through the reading and grouping all of the survey responses. First, data were coded initially for general categories in language teaching. Second, categories were identified more specifically in relation to the topic of the study: live remote vs. traditional beginning language classes. Ten categories were created from the initial coding: (1) assessment, (2) attendance, (3) learning about the target culture, (4) feedback and teacher-student relationship, (5) material presentation, (6) preparation and planning, (7) presentation quality, (8) student engagement and participation, (9) technological difficulties or limitations, and (10) time management. In the second round of coding the responses, sub-categories for major categories were identified (see Tables 3-12) for results of all ten themes). Each coded response was further classified as either a perceived advantage or perceived disadvantage of live-remote instruction.



**Assessment****Table 3*****Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction Pertaining to Communication***

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Attendance	Student being able to attend from anywhere	-	4
	Teachers being more available to hold class	-	1
	Difficult to motivate students to come	2	-
Total		2	5

**Advantages.** Only one response regarding assessment was coded as a perceived advantage. The participant discussed faster and easier access to students' writing using digital whiteboards and collaborative presentations. It is pertinent to note that two other responses mentioned it is easier to have the students write in the chat than on the whiteboard but did not explicitly mention assessment. All instructors used chat, whiteboard, and Canvas.

**Disadvantages.** Four comments were coded as perceived disadvantages in assessment. These consist of two sub-categories: being unable to listen to as many groups and difficulty checking assignments and understanding. The primary challenge mentioned is the inability to listen into multiple groups simultaneously in breakout rooms. The online format in general also presented challenges. One instructor experienced "Impaired ability to discern if students really understand the material or are even paying attention."

**Attendance****Table 4*****Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Attendance***

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Attendance	Student being able to attend from anywhere	-	4
	Teachers being more available to hold class	-	1
	Difficult to motivate students to come	2	-
Total		2	5

**Advantages.** Five instances of perceived advantages pertaining to attendance were identified. Respondents commented on students, and even instructors, being able to attend class from anywhere. This included students away on vacation or stu-

dents and instructors too sick to attend campus, but well enough to join through live-remote delivery. An example is found in the following quote: "I was still able to hold class even when I was sick and could not find a sub (even conducting one class where I only communicated with students through chat and PowerPoint slides because I could not talk!)."

**Disadvantages.** Two comments of perceived disadvantages relating to attendance were identified. Both referenced difficulties motivating student to attend class. One participant commented, "Some students were very motivated and had good relationships with other classmates, but some students would not come to class for weeks on end. That sometimes also happens in person, but it seemed more extreme or more common online." Another instructor remarked that watching recorded classes after an absence can never replace the real-time interaction essential to a language learning classroom.

**Cultural Engagement**

**Table 5**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Cultural Engagement**

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Cultural Engagement	Easily share cultural products and practices	-	2
	Native speakers & guest speakers more accessible	-	4
	Not able to hold club activities	2	-
	Less opportunities to discuss culture	1	-
	Difficulty sharing cultural products	3	-
	Total	6	6

**Advantages.** Analysis revealed six cases of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction for cultural engagement in the comments. Four of these cases discussed native and guest speakers in class. "Because we aren't able to visit with German speakers in the community, we have begun connecting with them via Skype or Zoom or email." In two other instances, instructors explained live-remote delivery allowed them to easily share cultural products and practices by displaying them digitally.

**Disadvantages.** There were also six instances of disadvantages of live-remote instruction for cultural engagement. Two mentioned the inability to hold club activities, due to the pandemic. "We used to do so many hands-on activities for culture, Oktoberfest, Christmas activities, food in general, and that is all but gone." This was more a consequence of the pandemic in general than live-remote instruction itself, but another instance also indicated that there are fewer opportunities to discuss culture on the online setting because students were asking less questions. In contrast to

the previously mentioned cases on the ease of sharing cultural products online, three comments expressed difficulty sharing cultural products outside of a FTF context.

### *Feedback and Student-Teacher Relationships*

**Table 6**

#### *Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Teacher-Student Feedback & Relationship*

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Teacher-Student Feedback & Relationship	Difficulty having interpersonal communication	4	-
	Difficulty learning listening or learning pronunciation	4	-
	Difficulty connecting and building relationships	4	-
	Difficulty delivering feedback	3	-
	Less flexibility during instruction	1	-
	Total	16	0

**Disadvantages.** Participants only shared perceived disadvantages regarding feedback and relationships between students and the instructor. Sub-category coding uncovered sixteen total occurrences of perceived disadvantages. Four specifically mentioned difficulty connecting and building a relationship with students. One instructor wrote, “The students do feel further away and additionally mediated, which has made it moderately more difficult to connect.” Four indicated challenges with interpersonal communication between instructors and students. Another four commented on students’ difficulty hearing and learning pronunciation from the instructor. Impaired feedback delivery was also a notable sub-category, with three mentions of students’ difficulty receiving or understanding feedback. One comment indicated how one instructor perceived their classroom interaction with students were impaired through less flexibility to “go off quick tangents” due to the structured nature of online presentation with PowerPoint presentations.

Along these lines, it is up to instructors to build teaching, social, and cognitive presence in their online courses. When there is presence, students can be actively engaged in a community of language practice through student-student, student-teacher, and student-content interaction (Russell, 2020). Presence also helps hinder students’ perceptions of social isolation and disconnectedness. But without knowledge of online pedagogy, the teacher participants in this study did not know how to build those three types of presence in their courses.

*Preparation and Curriculum Resources*

**Table 7**

*Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Preparation & Curriculum Resources*

Category	Sub-category	# Dis	# Adv
Preparation & Curriculum Resources	Collaborating with other teachers for curriculum	-	1
	Emphasis on technology encouraging using more resources	-	1
	Forcing instructors to be more thorough in preparation	-	2
	Having frustrations with course management system	1	-
	Total	1	4

**Advantages.** Four comments were coded as perceived advantages for preparation and resources. The pandemic and sudden shift to live-remote delivery worked positive effects on instructors planning. Two comments demonstrate how instructors were forced to be more thorough in their preparation. “I had to adapt some of my activities to breakout rooms, but sometimes that meant making my instructions simpler and clearer.” “It made me more organized and plan my lessons very carefully with back-up plans for technology glitches.” Emphasis on technology and collaboration also encouraged discovering and using more resources. One instructor wrote, “I feel like teaching virtually has allowed all of us teaching the same course to work more closely together to use the curriculum better. We’ve found many helpful resources to use.”

**Disadvantages.** Only one response demonstrated a perceived disadvantage of live-remote instruction regarding preparation and curriculum resources. In this case the instructor expressed frustrations with the course management system (Canvas).

*Presentation of Material*

Table 8

*Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Presentation of Material*

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Presentation of Material	Easily share cultural products and practices	-	1
	Easily display materials	-	3
	Difficulty with film streaming	3	-
	Displaying and saving annotations	-	2
	Students able to better see and hear materials.	-	1
	Difficulty or limitations w/ whiteboard, project PPTs, etc.	2	-
Total		5	7

**Advantages.** Seven occurrences of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction regarding presentation of material were identified. One mentioned how it relatively easy it can be “to share quick [cultural] bits,” and another claimed that students could sometimes hear and see audiovisual material better with their laptops. Three instructors pointed out the ease of displaying other materials and documents, and two described the advantage of displaying and saving live annotations.

**Disadvantages.** Five coded cases described perceived disadvantages in presentation of material with live-remote instruction. Two expressed difficulty or limitations with displaying materials, especially switching back and forth from one PowerPoint to whiteboard to displaying the student workbook.

**Student Engagement and Participation**

**Table 9**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Student Engagement & Participation**

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Student Engagement & Participation	Difficulty monitoring students	8	-
	Students forced to be engaged working on their own, tasks	-	2
	Less distracted by side-talking	-	2
	Engaging students by changing modes of delivery, break out rooms, chats	-	6
	Engaging students with shared media in small classes	-	1
	Students more distracted at home (videogames, roommates)	7	-
	Watching all students in small classes	-	1
	Students participating less in class	8	-
	Students rely too heavily on resources	1	-
	Having fewer/less effective opportunities for collaboration & group work	11	-
	Experiencing "Zoom fatigue"	3	-
	Not observing "Zoom fatigue"	-	1
	Total		38

**Advantages.** A total of thirteen instances of perceived advantages of live-remote delivery in student engagement and participation were identified. The sub-category including the most comments (six) was engaging students by using various modes of delivery, including break-out rooms and the chat function. One instructor explained, "I'm much more likely to change things up more frequently when teaching virtually. In our department, we try to change the mode of delivery teaching



using Zoom every few minutes to keep students engaged. We've learned to engage students by requiring them to participate more frequently in the chat or in breakout rooms with clearer assignments."

Similarly, two other comments highlighted the idea that student engagement was improved as students were compelled to be engaged as they were busy with tasks and had to work more on their own. "I think the fact that it is online, and it is harder for students to ask each other for help in the middle of activities sometimes forces them to figure it out themselves." Keeping students busy also helped keep them on task. "I'm sure students were sometimes off-task when online, but they almost always had to be doing something with their computer or talking to others, which I think made it more difficult to do non-class tasks." Additionally, two comments from participants pointed out that the live-remote delivery format eliminated distractions of "side-talking" with other peers.

Two different sub-categories included the aspect of small classes in their coded comments. One instructor wrote, "we seem to be able to keep everyone engaged in the lesson easier than in FTF classes. When my classes are small enough, it's really quite easy to see what everyone is doing all the time! I kind of really like this." Another observed that students are more likely to pay attention to shared media than in FTF classes.

**Disadvantages.** There were 38 total occurrences of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction in regarding student engagement and participation. Seven comments indicated that students are more distracted at home, for example by video games or roommates. On a related note, eight samples expressed difficulty monitoring students. "It is nigh-on impossible to make sure students are engaged all the time. Whereas in a class students would never be able to check their phones, in a virtual classroom, even with their screens on, you never know if they have multiple tabs or windows open." Instructors had difficulty determining if students were paying attention or really understanding the material.

Eight occurrences explained students participate less in class in live-remote delivery. "Some students are less likely to share thoughts online vs in class." Instructors also perceived live-remote delivery to be disadvantageous for communication between students. Eleven occurrences discussed having fewer or less effective opportunities for collaboration and group work. "Because students cannot interact with each other directly and immediately as in in-person settings, interpersonal communication was largely impaired. Even with breakout rooms on Zoom, one group cannot directly interact with another group." This additionally affected the community building in the classroom. "Again, better this semester, but I've done more community building work, and we still feel further from one another. Usually, I find community building incredibly easy in language classes!!" And while one instructor pointed out that greater isolation encouraged greater individual engagement, another comment claimed that with "less negotiation, students seem to have less trust in their own ability to internalize a word, more reliance on online translation services and dictionaries."

Three instances were identified noting "Zoom fatigue" as a challenge in live-remote delivery. However, one participant indicated they did not notice any "Zoom fatigue."

**Student Presentations**

**Table 10**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Student Presentations**

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Student Presentations	Students feeling more comfortable presenting	-	2
	Having more agency to be creative with online presentations	-	2
	Presenters unable to connect with audience	1	-
Total		1	4

**Advantages.** Four total cases of perceived advantages of live-remote delivery regarding student presentations were identified. Two indicated that students feel more comfortable presenting in the online format. Another two discussed how live-remote delivery provides more agency for students to be creative with online presentations.

**Disadvantages.** Only one case of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction was identified. The comment indicated that in the online format, student presenters, like instructors, have difficulty connecting with the audience.

**Technological Difficulties and Limitations**

**Table 11**

**Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Technological Difficulties and Limitations**

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Technological Difficulties and Limitations	Internet stability issues	3	-
	Struggling with technology	1	-
Total		4	0

**Advantages.** Four total instances of technological difficulties and limitations as perceived disadvantages were identified. Three comments discussed internet stability issues as an impairment. One comment expressed an instructor's frustration from struggling with using the technology.

## Time Management

Table 12

### *Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Live-Remote Language Instruction pertaining to Time Management*

Theme	Key Words	# Dis	# Adv
Time Management	Saving time w/ break out rooms	-	2
	Saving time on presentations	-	2
	Saving time on transitions	-	1
	Saving time with the chat	-	1
	Losing time on transitions and break out rooms	5	-
	Total	5	6

**Advantages.** Six total cases of perceived advantages of live-remote instruction were identified. Most comments of perceived advantages involved saving class time. Two comments attributed saved time to break-out rooms, two to presentations, one to transitions. One instructor described their class student presentations as follows. “Students present projects by recording themselves and uploading the video to Canvas. Students watch other students’ videos and comment on them. This way, we don’t need to take two or three full class periods to allow each student to present!” An additional comment expressed preference to using the chat over a physical whiteboard in FTF.

**Disadvantages.** Five cases of perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction were identified. All described losing class time to transitions and break-out rooms.

## Discussion

This study investigated advantages and disadvantages language instructors in post-secondary perceived in their experience with live-remote instruction during the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. Participants completed a questionnaire answering to what degree the pandemic affected the integration of each of the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning* (NSCB, 2015) in their language classes. Quantitative data showed that on the whole, instructors perceived more impairments than disadvantages; however, given the limited number of participants, this finding should be interpreted with caution. Qualitative data from written responses by participants revealed detailed aspects of live-remote delivery, which were perceived as harmful or helpful.

Studies have found teacher perceptions of impairment in the areas of student engagement, interaction, and focus during the pandemic (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Troyan et al., 2021). Instructors also perceived student struggles, namely, decreased personal connection, desire to attend class, and diminished ability to understand feedback. As mentioned in literature review, this may be more a result of lack of presence than from ERT itself (Bolliger & Inan, 2012; Garrison & Akyol, 2013).

Some data confirm the conclusion from Troyan et al. (2021) that instructors' ability to assess student learning was negatively impacted during the pandemic. However, another comment extracted from qualitative data aligns closer with the conclusion from Castillo et al. (2016), that educators can monitor students' progress easier online: "Using digital whiteboards and collaborative PowerPoint presentations, I have had faster and easier access to students' writing." And while some existing literature and responses in this study provide evidence of less student engagement and participation, there is also evidence that students are more engaged with content in remote instruction (Rubio et al., 2018). In the context of smaller classes, one participant observed that "the students are more likely to pay attention to media shared as part of a lecture. In live classes they often will get on their phone, but here they pay better attention." Thus, research literature and evidence on student engagement in live-remote language instruction during the pandemic is mixed, indicating that more research on student engagement in online learning contexts is needed.

Russell (2020) noted that student anxiety may be a primary factor in the absence of student engagement, and she offers suggestions instructors can employ to help reduce student anxiety. Instructors can encourage students to express their fears, engage students in relaxation techniques, post frequent messages of motivation, create student support groups on conversational discussion boards, and establish online tutoring and virtual office hours (Russell, 2020). Two instructors in the present study observed that students were even more comfortable when presenting online versus FTE, and some instructors adapted the format of student presentations to pre-recorded videos that they post for classmates to view. Given the perceived comfort of students posting and watching classmates' videos online by two teachers in this study, it is important to keep in mind that Russell (2020) explained that student anxiety can be just as high when making posted videos as when giving live presentations.

Another relevant factor of ERT is Zoom fatigue. There is evidence that Zoom fatigue during live-remote instruction can impair student engagement. Instructors need to be judicious with their use of synchronous videoconferencing to prevent fatigue (Krohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Ross & DiSalvo, 2020) and encourage engagement. By switching types of activities every few minutes and talking with students about their levels of different types of fatigue (emotional, motivational, visual, social, and general) (Fauville et al, 2021), teachers can help students identify and navigate potential types of fatigue. Regarding Zoom fatigue, one instructor in this study commented:

As a teacher, it's important to lead by example and admitting that Zoom fatigue is real and being open about attempts to combat it are a way of leading by example. I think breakout rooms helped a lot, and when I taught during Spring term, I made sure that, roughly 50-60 minutes into class, students would take a break, walk around, and be active so as to reduce Zoom fatigue.

Guillén et al. (2020) offer ideas for real interactive communication and reduction of Zoom fatigue, such as relying less on computers and more on cellphones for tutorial, content, creation, and communication. Despite Zoom fatigue, interacting synchro-

nously does help increase student motivation and thus is preferable to on-demand delivery (Gunes, 2019).

Written comments from participants also clearly demonstrated an impairment in the relationship and connection between the instructor and student. This is concerning, especially considering the importance of the role of the teacher in language learning classes (Rubio et al., 2018). Instructors employing effective strategies such as teacher modeling, scaffolding, and implicit and explicit corrective feedback are essential for boosting learner autonomy in a meaningful and effective way in online instruction (Lee, 2016). Lomicka (2020) suggests that language instructors can generate better connectivity by being present, being authentic, and interacting with their language learners. Additionally, in the live-remote instruction format, it is important for the instructor to be visible, establish clear communication lines, organize an online learning community, take advantage of quick and automated feedback, and teach students successful online learning strategies (Gacs et al., 2020).

Though live-remote instruction presents challenges, instructors can be successful as they adapt to the situation, modify their role, and develop time-management strategies (Castillo et al., 2016; Gacs et al., 2020). Educators need to gain the necessary technological skills, and institutions need to provide that technology training (Castillo et al., 2016; Chambless et al., 2021; Hartshorn & McMurry, 2020; Ramirez et al., 2021). Most of all, to be successful, instructors must shift their thinking and not just try to replicate FTF design in a virtual format (Carr, 2014; Ramirez et al., 2021; Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2020). With the sudden emergency shift to online instruction in March of 2020, teachers were not prepared for the online teaching environment, and many had no knowledge of or professional development in instructional design and online language pedagogy (Chambless et al., 2021; Ramirez et al., 2021). Gacs et al. (2020) and Russell (2020) point out that there was not sufficient time, training, or resources to prepare instructors and students to have a successful, low anxiety learning experiences. This lack of training likely impacted their experiences and effectiveness in the online environment.

The distinguishing feature of this study is that all the data gathered are perceptions of the instructors themselves, prompted by questions structured by the *World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning*. These instructors were forced to teach online and were teaching students who had not anticipated taking the course online. Thus, not having opted to teach online in this case, the participants in this study may offer unique perspectives and may be more candid about the challenges of online instruction. Most of all, this study provides insight into perceptions of online instruction. Prior to the pandemic, few teachers had positive perspectives of online language instruction (Moser et al., 2021). Educators tend to have “deep-seated doubts” about the efficacy of online instruction (Blake et al., 2008, p. 114). There is a stigma of online learning being inferior (Hodges et al., 2020) and it is possible that personal bias could influence teachers to use live-remote delivery as a “scapegoat” to explain lower student motivation or not meeting objectives (Moser et al., 2021).

The importance of perception is evident in the study by Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practitioners:

This study also suggests that what some participants perceived as stressors triggering a crisis, others viewed as beneficial. This observation seems applicable for the pandemic in general as well as for some specific issues that became concerns due to the pandemic. While many students and teachers were scared, frustrated, and challenged by the pandemic and all its repercussions, others felt less stress as they enjoyed a more relaxed and less-structured approach to study, work, and family life. (p. 152)

Beyond interpretation of stressors, appraisal of experiences with live-remote instruction could influence perception of outcomes. It is important to note that although most teacher participants perceived live-remote instruction during the pandemic to be more disadvantageous than beneficial for language instruction, assessments from before the pandemic and during the pandemic at one of the included universities indicate no difference in student proficiency levels at the end of first-semester German and second-semester German courses before, during, and after remote learning during the pandemic. If the perceived disadvantages of live-remote instruction shared by instructors in this study are valid, then either instructors were somehow able to overcome challenges, or these instructors were able to learn some practices with live-remote instruction that were equally or more beneficial and able to compensate for perceived challenges. The adaptability and resiliency of the instructors in such a crisis make a difference.

Comments in qualitative analysis indicate potential resilient and non-resilient mind-sets from instructors. For example, comments coded as perceived advantages for preparation and curriculum resources demonstrate how the crisis at first challenged instructors, but then encouraged them to find new resources and be more thorough in their planning. In this way, instructors resiliently used a challenge as an opportunity to improve the quality of their instruction. The extracted sample quoted above detailing solutions for Zoom fatigue also show a resilient mind-set, where the instructor found solutions rather than only seeing challenges. One instructor exemplified a resilient mind-set with this general perspective on live-remote instruction: "I feel that achieving the same standards through live remote instruction as in-person instruction is harder, but attainable. It requires the right mindset and motivation from both the student and the teacher." Another instructor, with the same prompt, answered with simply, "Just ready for it to end!" demonstrating a more rigid and less resilient perspective. When instructors approached the challenge of live-remote with a resilient mindset, they were able to find resources that may have already been available before, but which were only discovered or utilized in response to the crisis. "In some ways virtual instruction allowed me to involve the target language community more (having native speakers join the class for an activity for example) but it could be argued that those opportunities already existed when teaching in-person, I just didn't utilize them." This demonstrates how instructors are able to learn, grow, and adapt in the face of—or by virtue of—a crisis or necessitated adjustments. The flexibility that instructors developed will likely be instrumental in improving the quality of post-pandemic education (Johnson et al., 2021).

To emerge out of the worldwide pandemic resiliently, it is critical that we carefully examine what we have learned, and consider what advantages live-remote



instruction during the pandemic has offered, and how those can be implemented in the future to improve language instruction. By focusing on the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, this study offers unique insight on culture and presentational communication. Instructor comments in this study highlight the importance of cultural engagement at club events and reveal the potential for sharing cultural products through incorporating online resources and inviting native guest speakers through videoconferencing. However, one advantage is that the *Augenblicke* German workbook, like many other instructional materials, is apparently very adaptable to online settings as explained by one participant: “The materials in *Augenblicke* are fabulous in [respect to interacting with the target culture in class], and we integrate additional projects and online work into the courses. This remains the case, and has transitioned quite well to online instruction, better I imagine than other textbooks I’ve used.” Further, live-remote or electronically posted student presentations have the potential to save invaluable class time, reduce presentation anxiety, and offer students greater autonomy to exercise their creativity.

Evidence of reduced student engagement and impaired interpersonal communication calls attention to the importance of sharing physical space for immediate and active interaction in the language learning classroom. This reflects the importance of presence in an educational community as emphasized by Garrison and Akyol (2013). However, FTF is not the only or definitively most advantageous method for language learning. For example, online resources can be used to monitor student learning. Especially in live-remote instruction formats, it is crucial that instructors find new ways to interact more frequently with students. Multiple comments hinted that smaller class sizes experience less impairment in live-remote delivery. Further research could be conducted to determine the ideal size for live-remote instruction classrooms.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future Research and Teaching**

The main limitations of this study include a small number of participants, the focus on only instructors of beginning German, and the focus on only instructors teaching beginning German using a certain curriculum. Even though this study was limited to German-teaching instructors and has few participants, it highlights important principles in language instruction in general and presents a framework for training language instructors to be prepared for online instruction.

Additional research exploring the extent to which instructors in post-secondary education incorporate the Connections goal by bringing other disciplines in instruction and class content would be of interest to the language teaching profession. The ambivalence of responses regarding drawing connections to other disciplines in class could indicate insufficient attention given to that standard. Perhaps instructors did not perceive any impairment or advantage to connection to other disciplines in live-remote instruction because it is seldom practiced anyways. One of only two comments regarding connections on the questionnaire address this possibility: “I have never been good with [drawing connections to other disciplines] in general unless you could use authentic texts.” This comment corroborates research on the Connections goal area. Miller (2019) also observed that students do not incorporate connections into their language goals, which again points to the possibility of language instructors placing insufficient emphasis on the standard. Though collegiate students

tend to be excited about drawing connections to other disciplines in language learning (Crane, 2016), Connections and Communities goal areas of the standards have received less attention in research and professional dialogue (Trojan, 2012; Bell, 2014). One way for language teachers to draw connections to other disciplines is to study Wagner et al.'s (2019) interdisciplinary approach to guiding language students to become intercultural citizens. The following quote from a participant illustrates that even though she lacked training in online teaching, she imagined ways online teaching could be effective for students joining class FTF or remotely:

I would love to see the idea of a blended classroom develop and be researched, i.e., a classroom where some students are physically in the classroom, whilst others are attending via Zoom. I imagine a teacher providing the instruction and catering for the physically present class, with a TA monitoring the Zoom call to ensure that questions posed by students in the Zoom classroom are not missed, and that the tech is running smoothly. Something like that would make learning more accessible for more students.

This participant understands that making language learning more accessible to students is the ultimate goal. What she did know already know is that this very model she described already exists and has been and is still being used by many K-12 schools and universities before and throughout the pandemic—it is called HyFlex, and there are already research studies that investigate the effectiveness of HyFlex in teaching languages (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2021; Taylor, 2021; Tolosa-Casadont, 2021). HyFlex is a combination of hybrid (a combination of both online and FTF teaching and learning activities) and flexible (a choice for students to attend FTF or online) that allows learners to choose how they participate in classes (Beatty, 2014).

Just as flexibility will become a hallmark of post-pandemic language instruction and learning (Johnson et al., 2021), a continued focus on the training for hybrid instruction is recommended as more of higher education shifts to remote teaching. The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a stress test, particularly in the field of education, and this study highlights how perceptions can influence resiliency in the face of a crisis. Even when not facing an actual crisis, the ever developing and changing nature of technology, language learners, and novel research on best pedagogical practices will require instructors to demonstrate resilience and ability to adapt and develop their own skills and practices.

As demonstrated by responses of teacher participants in this study, there is a great need for professional development for in-service WL teachers and the incorporation of instructional design and online language teaching pedagogy into the WL teacher education curriculum (Chambless et al., 2021; Ramirez et al., Russell & Murphy-Judy, 2021). Chambless et al. (2021) state that even though nationally recognized pre-service WL education programs require teacher candidates to “use technology and adapt and create instructional materials for use in communication” (ACTFL, 2015) and to use technology to connect students with native speakers and to integrate authentic text, the overall inference is that technology will be used to “supplement rather than supplant instruction” (p. 221). In order to prepare language teachers to succeed, the cursory focus on technology must be revised. In light of re-

cent experiences with ERT, Chambless et al. (2021) suggest six critical considerations along with practical action steps to make modifying existing teacher preparations program manageable. These considerations are: (1) beliefs about online language learning, (2) principles of effective online courses, (3) applying principles of design to online WL classes, (4) theory-to-practice connections, (5) learner affect, and (6) conditions for learning (Chambless et al., 2021).

In addition to the consideration offered by Chambless et al. (2021), Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) and Ramirez et al. (2021) have written entire books to assist language teachers in becoming effective online language teachers. Russell and Murphy-Judy (2020) present a comprehensive and practical approach to creating, developing, and teaching online, flipped, or blended language classes. In addition to providing a multitude of information and resources, the authors explain results and implications of sound research studies to help online language instructors “create more meaningful, effective, and enjoyable learning experiences for their students and themselves” (p. 256). In addition, Ramirez et al. (2021) address all aspects of online teaching and learning and include information on moving courses online, training teachers, developing core competencies and skills, assessing and self-evaluating, setting goals, and normalizing online teaching practices. They include several checklists for training and assessment, evaluation of online instruction training and assessment, and performance rubrics.

Finally, even though almost all the focus of providing online teacher training is for in-service WL teachers and preservice teachers candidates, professors and TAs in language, literature, and linguistics departments should also be incentivized to participate in similar professional development.

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## Appendix A.

### Questionnaire.

Responses will be collected anonymously and will have no effect on your employment or standing with your college. Expected duration: 10-15 minutes

Q1 What German course(s) do you teach? Mark all that apply.

- German 101/German I
- German 102/German II
- German 201/German III
- German 202/German IV
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q2 Do you currently teach a German course online? If so, which?

- No
- Yes (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3 Have you taught a German course online in the past? If so, which? When did you teach this course online?

- No
- Yes. (Please specify which course and when taught.) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 How much language teaching experience do you have?

- Less than 1 semester
- 1-2 semesters
- More than 2 complete semesters

Q7 Have you taught in-person before?

- Yes
- No

Q8 If you have taught in-person, did you teach the same course?

- Yes. (Please specify which course(s)): \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Q9 Do you use the *Augenblicke: German through Film, Media, and Texts* curriculum for beginning German courses?

- Yes
- No

Q10 For which courses do you use *Augenblicke*? Mark all that apply.

- First semester
- First quarter
- Second semester
- Second quarter
- Third semester
- Third quarter
- Fourth semester
- Fourth quarter
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q11 How has ERT affected opportunities for... (If possible, please share one way each has been enhanced or impaired in the box below.)

Significantly enhanced / Moderately enhanced / No change /  
Moderately enhanced / Significantly enhanced

- Interpersonal communication in class?
- Interpretive communication in class?
- Presentational communication in class?
- Interacting with the target culture (products, practices, perspectives) in class?
- Comparing the native and target languages?
- Drawing connections to other disciplines?
- Student engagement in the target language community?
- Using the resources and curriculum provided by your department?
- Keeping students engaged? (i.e., discouraging multi-tasking during class?)
- Keeping students motivated (i.e., combatting negative affect or “Zoom fatigue”)?

Q12 List and explain helpful resources you have discovered or utilized more ***in live remote instruction*** (i.e., Kahoot, Zoom tricks, media resources etc.).

Q13 Describe at least ***one challenge of live remote instruction*** in your experience. (Please be specific.)

Q14 Describe at least ***one advantage of live remote instruction*** in your experience. (Please be specific.)

Q15 Any other thoughts, insights, or ideas relevant to live remote instruction?