

The Influence of Emergency Remote Teaching on K-12 World Language Instruction

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Abstract

The abrupt shift to online instruction that occurred in spring 2020, often referred to as emergency remote teaching (ERT), caught many world language educators off guard. To prepare for future disruptions to face-to-face learning and illustrate promising online teaching practices that emerged during this extended period of time that could serve to expand and enhance world language instruction, it is important to understand how ERT influenced K-12 world language programs around the world. To help the world language teaching community better understand how ERT influenced world language instruction, a team of researchers collected interview data from world language teachers and students in the United States and Germany. Results confirmed that instruction was negatively impacted by the sudden shift to online formats, explained how and why instruction was influenced, and identified promising practices exhibited by teachers to mitigate the negative impact of ERT. World language teachers, stakeholders, and school leaders may wish to consider the results of this study to lessen the impact of future disruptions to on campus learning and to enhance the growing presence of online learning in schools.

Key words: online instruction, interaction, feedback, community-building

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Introduction

The impact of Covid-19 on education was felt across the globe. Over 144 countries suspended in-person education affecting approximately 1.2 billion students (UNESCO, 2020). In Germany, the education of over 9.5 million primary and secondary school learners was disrupted (Gaebel, 2020). In the United States (U.S.), over 124,000 schools shifted to remote instruction affecting over 55 million K-12 students (Moser et al., 2021, p.1).

While the integration of technology in classrooms is pervasive and often associated with many related benefits, including convenience, accessibility, and reduced anxiety (Jin et al., 2021a; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Lee, 2021), the abrupt shift to online instruction that occurred at the beginning of the pandemic, often referred to as emergency remote teaching (ERT), caught many off guard (Jin et al., 2021a; MacIntyre et al., 2020). Distinct from traditional online instruction, ERT is characterized by little opportunity to prepare, limited technical support, inadequate faculty training, and a focus on making content accessible to all, with less attention to quality (Hodges et al., 2020).

All content areas were negatively impacted by the shift to ERT in spring 2020, including world languages. World language instruction relies heavily on interaction in the target language to develop communicative competence (ACTFL, 2014). Research in second language acquisition has consistently emphasized the highly interactive and social process of language learning and the importance of face-to-face and meaningful interaction (Glisan & Donato, 2017, 2021; Long, 1996). Given these critical ingredients in the language learning process, it is troubling that research emerging from the pandemic has underscored that elements of ERT both impeded interaction and increased social isolation (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Lee, 2021).

Despite the potential impact of ERT on world language teaching and learning, a very small number of studies have investigated how world language teachers and students around the world experienced this dramatic shift (Jin et al., 2021b; Moser et al., 2021). While the worst of the pandemic may have ended, there may be valuable lessons that can be learned from it. Researchers can identify effective online teaching strategies that emerged when all teachers were forced to abruptly shift their instruction online, offer guidance on how to respond to future disruptions to face-to-face instruction that may occur, and serve to expand and enhance online instruction.

When considering the impact of ERT on world language learning, it must also be recognized that world language instruction takes place across the globe, and that countries responded differently to the pandemic. Recent research has suggested that some countries were less prepared to adopt ERT in language classrooms than others (Kissau et al., 2022). A study by the Pew Research Center found that while almost 60% of eighth graders in the United States rely on home internet access to complete homework, 15% of U.S. households with school-age children do not have a high-speed internet connection (Auxier & Anderson, 2020). In Mexico, only 44.9% of the population owns a computer and 52.9% have an internet connection (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021). On the other end of the spectrum, a study

by Harsch et al. (2021) found that almost two-thirds of English teachers in Germany had online teaching experience prior to the onset of the pandemic. Studies involving different countries may illustrate how world language teachers with access to varying degrees of technology-related infrastructure and experience responded to the abrupt shift to online instruction.

To inform future decision-making, it is important to understand how ERT influenced world language instruction and how language teaching programs in different countries responded to it. Tseligka (2023) stated that it is “imperative to record and analyze how [ERT] was implemented across different educational systems in order to fully comprehend its repercussions [and] prepare for future contingency plans” (p. 8). Responding to this need, a team of researchers investigated the ERT experiences of K-12 world language teachers and students in the U.S. and Germany during the global pandemic.

Literature Review

To guide and inform the study, the researchers conducted a review of literature focusing on best practices in online instruction and the impact of ERT on world language instruction.

Best Practices in Online Instruction

Research on effective online instruction has underscored the critical roles played by the classroom teacher in creating a community of inquiry, in which students and teachers work together to create an optimal learning environment (Garrison et al, 2001; Lee, 2021). According to Garrison et al. (2001), in effective online learning environments, teachers must have a cognitive, teaching, and social presence. The cognitive presence involves exposing students to new information, providing them opportunities to ask questions and reflect on the content, and apply what they have learned. The teaching presence pertains to the selection and design of teaching strategies, and the social presence relates to the teacher’s ability to create an engaging and supportive classroom community (Garrison et al., 2001).

Emphasized in the existing literature is the teacher’s pedagogical role, or what Garrison et al. (2001) referred to as the teaching presence. Crews et al. (2015) emphasized that online teachers must use active teaching strategies to engage students in higher-order thinking, enhance learning performance, and increase student motivation. Also of critical importance is the strategic selection and design of technology-supported tasks that align well with online environments, since the task often determines the degree of student interaction, collaboration, and participation (Hampel, 2010; Lee, 2021).

Also stressed in the literature is the teacher’s role in establishing a positive social presence (Garrison et al, 2001; Harsch et al., 2021). In online settings, teachers need to promote a sense of community (Garrison et al, 2001). In other words, they need to foster a classroom environment in which students feel that they know and trust each other. This is especially important in language learning contexts, where students are encouraged to interact with peers and take risks with the language (Long, 1996).

Research suggests that instructor feedback is a key contributor in enhancing the online social presence (Garrison et al, 2001; Lee, 2021). Consistent feedback makes the instructor's presence more felt in the online classroom, supports student learning, and promotes learner autonomy (Lee, 2016). Effective feedback includes identifying student strengths, areas for improvement, and recommended strategies to help the student make those improvements. Identified as a high-leverage teaching practice that can improve student learning (Glisan & Donato, 2017), feedback should be immediate, continuous, and formative to best guide student learning (Coll et al., 2013).

Impact of ERT on World Language Instruction

An emerging body of research has shed light on the extent to which the above-mentioned best practices (e.g., active teaching strategies, positive social presence, feedback) in online instruction were exhibited during the pandemic. Related findings focus on interaction, feedback, and teacher and student training, and highlight the need for additional research.

Interaction

Multiple accounts indicate that during ERT, world language teachers focused on presenting content to students with little opportunity for interaction in the target language (Harsch et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2022; Tseligka, 2023). In a study describing the post-secondary experiences of 26 English language faculty members and 32 of their pre-service teachers during the pandemic in Mexico, both the teacher candidates and their professors reported that faculty provided content and assigned homework without giving students much opportunity to ask questions (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021). In a study involving 35 post-secondary world language teachers in Germany, the majority reported that their online courses during the pandemic were less interactive than the previous classes they taught face-to-face (Harsch et al., 2021). In a survey of K-12 world language teachers in the U.S. that examined how they perceived the impact of the pandemic, teachers reported that their ability to address the interpersonal mode of communication had “gone out the window” due to the absence of an online platform that allowed for synchronous communication and lenient pass/fail grading practices that allowed students to avoid speaking activities (Troyan et al., 2022, p. 30).

Even in cases in which opportunities to interact were present, reports suggest that a lack of community and social contact further impeded student interaction in online world language classes (Harsch et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2022). Students had little chance to get to know each other outside of class. This lack of social contact left them feeling inhibited in class and negatively affected their participation (Harsch et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2022).

There were, however, isolated reports of language instructors who succeeded in providing students with opportunities to build classroom community and interact during ERT (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Lee, 2021). These teachers tended to use online tools such as Flip.com (a web and mobile app that allows users to record, edit and share videos) to establish a sense of community (Yeh et al., 2022) and platforms including Zoom, for example, that allowed for interaction, feed-

back, and explanations synchronously. Such online tools allowed them to incorporate a variety of collaborative tasks (e.g., speaking partners, discussion boards) and online resources (e.g., games, Google My Maps) that promoted relationship building and interaction (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Lee, 2021). College students studying English in Korea reported that their instructor was able to promote a sense of community and increase student interaction by keeping online meeting spaces open before and after class (Lee, 2021).

Feedback

Multiple studies found that instructor feedback suffered in ERT (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Maican & Cocoradă, 2021; Tseligka, 2023). Students want and appreciate feedback in a variety of modes (i.e., spoken, written, synchronous, and asynchronous) and methods, such as email and discussion boards (Chong, 2020; Lee, 2021; Van Boekel et al., 2023). The lack of feedback during ERT was reported to leave students with questions and a sense of not having learned (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Tseligka, 2023). College students in the study by Harsch et al. (2021) recommended that teachers provide whole group feedback in synchronous video-conference sessions (e.g., Zoom), and individual feedback during online office hours or while visiting small groups of students in breakout rooms.

Need for training and support

Multiple studies have underscored the need for world language teachers to receive training on best practices in online language teaching (Jin et al., 2021b; Troyan et al., 2022). In their study involving both K-12 and post-secondary world language instructors, Moser et al. (2021) argued that “while general best practices in technology-enhanced teaching are useful, it is also vital that language educators have opportunities designed specifically for them” (p. 12). Research involving ERT in world language learning contexts has also consistently referenced the new roles played by both instructors and students, and the need for training to prepare them (Harsch et al. 2021; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Troyan et al., 2022). Teachers in ERT settings need to not only present content to students, but also act as motivators, counselors, and facilitators of student interaction (Alharbi, 2022; Harsch et al., 2021). Students, in turn, need to take greater responsibility for their learning in ERT settings. Huang et al. (2020) reported that the university students in their study lacked autonomy and displayed low self-management skills in ERT, and frequently relied on their instructors for guidance. In another study involving post-secondary language learners, Juárez-Díaz and Perales (2021) reported that a lack of student netiquette contributed to course challenges. Students frequently did not turn on their cameras, which impeded interaction and community building.

Need for research

Analysis of the literature revealed a clear need for additional research. Many of the above-mentioned studies involved post-secondary language learners (Harsch et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2020; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Lee, 2021; Maican & Cocorada, 2021). As a result, their findings may not be applicable to K-12 world language instruction. Younger students may have shorter attention spans and different preferred learning styles.

Further, much of the research investigating online world language instruction has involved teachers who chose to teach online and had time to prepare. Moser et al. (2021) stated that “the abrupt shift from face-to-face contexts to remote [language] learning is fundamentally different from planned online learning” (p. 1). While future disruptions to education are likely, there is little research to guide ERT in world language contexts (Jin et al, 2021a; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021). Responding to this void, this study investigated the following research question: How did ERT influence K-12 world language teaching in the U.S. and Germany during the global pandemic?

Methodology

In order to investigate the above-mentioned research question, the researchers used a collective case study design (Stake, 2005). A case study is an empirical inquiry that examines real-life events and experiences through a participant’s perspectives (Yin, 2014). In their study investigating the perspectives of 377 K-12 and post-secondary world language educators in the U.S during the pandemic, Moser et al. (2021) recommended that follow-up studies “take advantage of qualitative methods of inquiry, including interviews with language educators [and] learners” (p. 13). Troyan et al. (2022) also called for further research using interviews to corroborate the findings of their study to investigate world language teacher perceptions of the pandemic’s impact on their instruction. Prior to data collection, the researchers obtained Internal Review Board (IRB) approval from their institutions and participating school districts.

Participants

Data sources included interviews and focus groups involving world language teachers and students in the U.S. and Germany. The selection of participants was facilitated by a long-standing research partnership between faculty at a college of education in the southeastern U.S. and a university that focuses on teacher preparation in Germany.

U.S. Sample

The recruitment of participants in the U.S. was facilitated by a grant from the Department of Public Instruction in the state where the study took place to investigate the impact of ERT on K-12 world language instruction. Grant funding allowed the researchers to incentivize participation and led to a robust sample of world language teachers and students in 10 school districts and in the state-legislated virtual public school, the second largest state virtual school in the nation, offering 100% online instruction in a variety of content areas, including world languages.

World language teachers. A purposive sample of three world language teachers in each district (including the virtual school) participated in an individual interview. To ensure a variety of perspectives were considered, supervisors recommended teachers representing different languages and levels of instruction. Of the total 33 teacher participants, 22 taught Spanish, five taught French, three taught Chinese, one taught Japanese, and two taught Latin. Sixteen teachers taught at the

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secondary school level (grades 9-12), nine taught middle school (grades 6-8), and eight were primary school teachers (Kindergarten through grade 5). Three of the teachers taught at the virtual school, and all but 4 were female.

World language students. The 33 teachers emailed students whom they taught during the pandemic and invited them to participate. A total of 59 provided the necessary parental consent and participated in a focus group interview. The students were studying Spanish (24), French (22), Chinese (10), and Japanese (3) at the primary (22), middle (15), and secondary school (22) levels. Thirty-four were female and 25 male.

German Sample

The German sample was distinct from the U.S. sample due to a lack of grant funding and contextual differences. The two German researchers reached out to five schools, all located in the state of Baden-Württemberg (southern Germany), where they frequently placed their English teacher candidates and invited their world language teachers and students to participate.

World language teachers. Eight English teachers at the five participating schools participated in an interview with the German researchers. Half taught at a primary school and half at a secondary school. Three were female and five were male.

World language students. A total of seven secondary school students studying English participated in an interview. Six of the seven were in fourth grade in spring 2020, and one was in eighth grade. Four were male and three were female.

Data Collection & Analytic Procedures

Data collection took place in two phases during the spring of 2022 and consisted of interviews and focus groups with world language teachers and students.

Phase 1

First, the researchers in each country interviewed world language teachers. The interviews were virtual, lasted approximately one hour, and were audio or video-recorded. The teachers were asked to describe (1) their experience teaching a world language during the pandemic, (2) the teaching strategies they used, (3) what prepared them to implement these strategies, (4) what strategies were most and least effective at engaging students and promoting language learning, and (5) what they would do differently should they have to return to ERT.

Phase 2

The second stage involved student focus groups in the U.S. context and individual interviews in the German context. In the U.S., the researchers conducted 11 focus group interviews, involving 59 students who were taught by the 33 participating teachers. Focus groups were used to create a less threatening environment for the K-12 student participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015), with the aims of enabling them to feel safe sharing information (Vaughn et al., 1996) and providing a space where interaction might yield critical insights (Morgan, 1988). All focus groups were virtual, lasted approximately half an hour, and were video-recorded.

In the German context, the researchers conducted individual, audio-recorded, 30-minute interviews with each of the seven student participants. Student participants were asked to describe (1) their experience learning a world language during the pandemic, (2) how their teacher taught the language remotely, (3) what language skills were most/least emphasized during the pandemic, (4) what activities or teaching strategies they felt were most beneficial to their learning, and (5) what recommendations they had for their teacher related to teaching a language online.

Data Analysis

The research team analyzed the qualitative data collected to investigate how world language teachers and students in the U.S. and Germany experienced the transition to ERT during the pandemic. Once Author 5 transcribed the U.S. interviews, and Authors 3 and 4 transcribed and translated the German interviews, Author 1 uploaded all of the transcripts into NVivo—a qualitative data analysis software. He first classified transcripts into cases, with one case designated per country (U.S. or Germany) and included all accompanying data sources. Within each case, he created subcases for participating teachers and students. Within-case analyses were followed by cross-case analyses.

Garrison et al.'s concept of Community of Inquiry (2001), relating to best practices in online instruction, provided the theoretical framework that guided the data analysis. More specifically, the key components of Garrison's theory described earlier in the literature review (i.e., technology-supported tasks, community-building, interaction, and instructor feedback) were used as first level descriptive codes. Author 1 used this a priori set of parent codes to deductively code the data. In other words, when reading the qualitative data, excerpts were assigned to the predefined codes. Once the data were coded using the initial set of parent codes, the excerpts were reread and further coded (child codes) based on emerging sub-themes, such as training, interpersonal communication, and breakout rooms.

Findings

To understand how ERT influenced K-12 world language teaching in the U.S. and Germany during the pandemic, findings are presented for each critical component of online instruction (technology-supported tasks, classroom community, interaction, and feedback).

Technology-Supported Tasks

As a result of the transition to ERT, teachers in both the U.S. and Germany gradually began to incorporate more technology-supported tasks, albeit to varying extents. Technology integration also varied by level of instruction. For example, in the very early stages of the pandemic (spring 2020), many primary school teachers, whose students were less familiar with web-based tools, sent home paper-based packages (i.e., worksheets) that students completed at home and returned for correction. A primary school teacher in the U.S. explained, "On Fridays, I was allowed to come to school to gather materials, make copies and parents picked them up." A primary school student studying English confirmed that simi-

lar practices were common in Germany: “We always received things in an envelope in the mailbox. It had all the work we were to do.” On the other hand, older students, particularly in the U.S., were often already using a learning management system (LMS) in their world language classes, which allowed their teachers to capitalize on these platforms to share resources and communicate with students. The transition to technology-based resources and tasks was reported to be even more seamless by the three participating virtual school teachers in the U.S. One commented: “The wonderful thing about my program is it has a set curriculum. While teachers in traditional schools were scrambling to find resources and materials, mine were already in place. My job just continued. It didn’t get harder.”

As the pandemic progressed into summer and fall 2020, world language teachers and students in both countries reported access to more sophisticated technology-based resources. While many relied initially on pre-existing infrastructure that allowed for the completion of basic tasks, such as recording attendance, posting grades, and communicating with parents and students via email (e.g., Class Dojo, SeeSaw), by fall 2020, teachers in both countries reported using more advanced platforms that allowed for synchronous instruction (e.g., Zoom, Teams) and an LMS (e.g., Google Classroom, Canvas) that allowed them to house all instructional materials in one place and their students to access them at their convenience. A teacher in the U.S. explained the benefits of using Canvas in her Spanish classroom: “Having a good platform really helped, because you can find everything there. You can have your apps and links and everything.”

Learning management systems were also reported by teachers to provide access to online resources that were otherwise not permitted by their school district, and thus add variety to their instruction and engage students. A French teacher in the U.S. explained, “I wasn’t allowed to use Youtube, but Canvas let you [incorporate it into your Canvas platform]. So, the students aren’t watching a Youtube video [directly through Youtube.com]. They’re watching Youtube videos you incorporated into your Canvas page.” Supported by an LMS, teachers in the U.S. reported to use a wide variety of online resources like Kahoot to play instructional games, Quizlet to learn and review vocabulary, PearDeck to make Powerpoint presentations more interactive, and Flip.com to allow students to record themselves speaking in the target language. A middle school student studying Spanish in the U.S. confirmed the variety of web-based tools used by his teacher: “We would use Kahoot, Blooket, Gimkit, and Duolingo.” The use of online games and resources to supplement instruction was less emphasized by the students and teachers in Germany, with only Wizadora, Youtube, and the ANTON app mentioned by three German teachers and two students.

English teachers in Germany were less familiar with the many web-based resources used by the U.S. teachers and students, and they tried to a greater extent than their American counterparts to emulate traditional face-to-face instruction. For example, the most frequently cited instructional strategy used by teachers in Germany was to upload instructional videos and deliver live instruction using a web-based platform like Zoom. One secondary school teacher in Germany explained:

So I entered them in Teams in the calendar as a lesson. And then, it was actually the case that I imitated how we do our normal lessons. So, I really did it as if I were standing in front of the classroom, and I showed them the lesson, and they were just at home.

Multiple primary school teachers in Germany also tried to maintain traditional storytelling as an instructional strategy but acknowledged its limitations. One elaborated, “So, I would read them a story, but it was very difficult to do that in online lessons. When I held the book up to the camera, you could only see it to a limited extent.” Efforts to maintain the characteristics of traditional, on-campus instruction among teachers in Germany were confirmed by three of their students. When asked to describe how his teacher taught English during the pandemic, one commented, “So actually, it was the same as he would have done in class, but on-line.”

Even when technology-based resources were used, data collected from both teachers and students, particularly in the U.S., suggested that inconsistency in how they were implemented negatively impacted students. A teacher in the U.S. acknowledged this limitation:

My son has 8 teachers, and he missed 2 days last week. Every single teacher sent him a Canvas message with where he was supposed to get the work. But everyone was different. Some said to click on the day. Some said, “click on the announcements”, and some said click on “Day One.”

Community

In the transition to ERT, world language teachers struggled to develop a sense of community in the online environment but identified some effective strategies. The most frequently mentioned by teachers in both countries, and confirmed by their students, was taking time at the beginning of each class to touch base with their students, ask them questions, and provide them with the opportunity to share a little bit about themselves. Multiple references were made of students and teachers showing their pets, siblings, and even meals during live classroom sessions to build community. It was also noted by teachers that while these “wellness checks” took up time during already abbreviated classroom instruction and were frequently conducted in the students’ native language, they were critical. A Spanish teacher in the U.S. explained, “Sometimes, we would not even get to teach the whole lesson, because it was more about what they were going through and trying to find a space to connect.”

Other community building strategies mentioned by teachers and students in both countries included (1) offering office hours, where students could drop in to chat with their teachers and fellow classmates outside of regular class time, (2) break-out sessions during live instruction, so that students could interact with their peers in small groups, and (3) leaving Zoom or Team meetings open after class ended to provide students with additional time to interact. A teacher in Germany found this last strategy particularly effective: “They would just talk a bit more, and in some cases, we were still there for half an hour to three quarters of an hour just talking. That was of the greatest benefit.” The benefit of playing online games to build com-

munity was also repeated multiple times, but only by teachers and students in the U.S.

A final, unanticipated strategy that appeared effective in building classroom community was the integration of culture into instruction. More specifically, during live instruction, teachers reported to share both tangible (e.g., cultural artifacts, literature) and intangible (e.g., Samba dance, make crepes, and sing songs) cultural products with their students. Data collected from students suggested that the integration of such cultural products helped them connect.

Despite these efforts, students in both the U.S. and Germany frequently reported feeling isolated and disconnected from their peers during the pandemic. A common factor that was reported to undermine efforts to build classroom community was that students often did not turn on their cameras during live sessions. A U.S. student studying Spanish commented, “Everyone had their cameras off. Everyone was muted. We never worked together. We never talked. It was just individual work ... so it really wasn’t a great learning experience.” Teachers and students in both countries frequently reported that it was difficult to make connections and build community when they could not see faces. Despite this common sentiment, none of the total 40 teachers interviewed reported having received training on how to build classroom community online.

Interaction

Another result of the abrupt transition to ERT was a decrease in target language interaction. Teachers and students in both countries underscored the challenge of addressing interpersonal, oral communication that involved a spontaneous exchange of information in the target language. Breakout rooms were commonly used in large class instruction, but this strategy was reported to be largely ineffective, particularly when the instructor was not present with the students. A secondary school student in the U.S. explained, “In my experience, breakout rooms never really worked. Usually, when you get pulled in, there’d be only one person there who is actually willing to talk, and the others just saw it as an opportunity to opt out.” Teachers added that it was challenging and time-consuming to visit multiple breakout rooms in a short period of time, and that often upon entry into a breakout room, they were greeted by silence. Multiple reports suggested that students were reluctant to communicate in breakout rooms in front of peers who they often did not know, and that this lack of community was exacerbated by students not turning on their cameras. A teacher from Germany elaborated, “The interactive speaking was problematic, since the students were even more exposed in breakout rooms. Due to the total silence in the meeting, every speech contribution was highlighted, and this was paralyzing for many.”

While some teachers reported completely abandoning the use of breakout rooms and attention to interpersonal, oral communication, others reported using a variety of strategies to mitigate the above-mentioned challenges. Multiple U.S. teachers reported giving participation grades in breakout sessions to encourage participation. Others reported assigning student roles in breakout rooms. A Spanish teacher explained, “I often would have jobs per group. So, you know, this person has the role

to get students talking.” The most common, and reportedly most effective strategy, employed by teachers in both countries, involved teachers scheduling individual, or small group sessions with students to practice language skills under their supervision. A secondary school teacher in the U.S. explained this strategy:

So each week I'd give a different little group of kids an office hour time to come. And during that time, it was like a mini breakout room. But I would do something with just like 3 or 4 kids to work on communication. Just to lower that affective filter. They weren't in front of everybody on a screen, and that worked.

A student in Germany confirmed that this was also a common strategy in her school: “Every student got an individual appointment. But that took too long. And then we were always together in groups of four or five. That's what he did. I also thought that was the best solution.”

Due to the reported challenges associated with interpersonal speaking, teachers and students provided compelling evidence that other language skills were given greater attention during ERT. More specifically, many teachers opted to focus on interpersonal and presentational writing via online chat (e.g., Jamboard), Google Docs, and Google Slides or presentational speaking using recorded videos (e.g., Flip.com). Echoing the sentiments of multiple teachers, a Spanish teacher in the U.S. acknowledged, “Trying to get that interpersonal communication online was very difficult. So, I said, well, I'm just gonna have to focus on presentational speaking. That's just the way it's gonna be. And I'm not going to fight it.” Students confirmed that they were provided little opportunity to interact orally in the target language. A U.S. student said, “I think being able to hear was really pressed on, and being able to write. But not so much speaking, because we didn't really practice speaking much.” It was interesting to note that the challenge of addressing interpersonal speaking had less impact on some language teachers. For example, while many Latin teachers may include speaking as an important component of their instruction, the two who participated in the study felt that due to the focus on reading skills in the teaching of Latin, their instruction was less impacted by the transition to ERT. A Latin teacher explained, “I would say my students rarely speak to each other in Latin. They might do simple things like my name is, or I like. It's just that the whole discipline is so focused on reading fluency.”

The data suggested that the reported lack of interpersonal speaking practice did not come without consequence. Teachers and students from both countries felt that students' oral communication skills suffered during ERT. A U.S. Spanish teacher lamented, “I have to recognize that during this time a lot of my students lose [sic] a big chunk of their language skills.” A student in Germany added, “I think if the online classes had gone on longer, I wouldn't have learned to speak English half, not even half as well as I can now.”

Feedback

Teachers in both countries reported that it was difficult during ERT to provide individual feedback to students. While technology allowed teachers to provide suggestions and comments to students on their submitted assignments, without live

contact, they often found it difficult to understand how students arrived at certain answers, which limited their ability to provide beneficial feedback. A teacher in the U.S. explained, “They would just send me the assignment, and some answers would be empty, and I would provide feedback, but I didn’t really know why the question was empty, or how they came to that answer.” A teacher in Germany added: “At the end of the week you got all the students’ assignments ... but it was actually more difficult to give good feedback when something really wasn’t quite right.”

Providing feedback was further complicated by the fact that teachers were often unsure whether submitted assignments were true indicators of ability. Teachers often suspected that technology (e.g., Google Translate) and parents assisted in assignment completion. A Mandarin teacher in the U.S. commented, “We are not sure if we’re checking the work that the children did themselves, or you know, [if] Google did it.”

Another common concern raised in the interviews related to the timeliness of feedback. During live instruction, students reported that instructors were unable to respond to all individual questions due to the large number of students, and if they sent follow-up email inquiries, it often took days to get a response. As a result, they often felt they had little support. The data suggested that providing feedback on assignments took even longer, and as a result, was less effective at improving student learning. A teacher in Germany explained that while he could provide immediate feedback to students in a face-to-face setting, his more traditional means of providing feedback online took a long time: “The methods of correction were very complicated...I downloaded the images into GIMP, used a red pen, corrected them, exported them again, and sent them back.” He acknowledged that this delay in providing feedback diminished its impact: “They’d rather have seen it right now than weeks later, because you don’t know whether they’ll actually look at it again when it’s corrected.”

To address the above-mentioned limitations, several teachers in both countries recommended the use of synchronous, individual, or small group meetings in which they could get an accurate sense of student ability and provide immediate and individual feedback. A teacher in the U.S. explained, “If I could have more time for small groups, not breakout rooms, where I’m jumping between groups, but a time when I can address individual needs...Maybe we won’t cover as much, but it’s going to be well learned.” Students concurred. Multiple U.S. students suggested making weekly Zoom sessions with individual students mandatory, and two of the seven German students recommended teachers schedule live meetings with small groups of students to provide feedback and answer questions.

Discussion

The experiences of the teachers and students described in this study offer multiple contributions to the existing literature. The study confirmed previous research speaking to the critical role played by the classroom teacher in online instruction. Supporting the work of Garrison et al. (2002), the study’s findings made it clear that teachers should establish a community of inquiry in their online classrooms where teachers and students interact to create an optimal learning

environment. Students in the study craved interaction with their teachers and peers and reported a lack of teacher support (e.g., little personalized feedback). In further support of Garrison et al. (2001), the study's findings emphasized the important role of the teacher in promoting a sense of community. Students were often reluctant to participate in classroom activities due to a lack of established trust and camaraderie among their peers. Consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of the strategic selection of technology-based tools and resources that align well with online environments (Crews et al., 2015; Hampel, 2010; Lee, 2021), students in the study reported to be motivated and engaged by a variety of online games and resources that generated competition and encouraged them to communicate. Building upon prior research, the study suggested that students also play an important role in effective online instruction. For example, in online settings, students can build classroom community and promote interaction by turning on their cameras. Further, they can enhance their learning by managing their own classroom behaviors and taking greater responsibility (e.g., actively participating in breakout rooms).

The study's findings also contribute to the emerging body of knowledge indicating that ERT negatively impacted the components of effective online teaching. Teachers scrambled to identify and become familiar with online resources, and often focused on presenting content, especially in the early stages of the pandemic, in a manner that emulated face-to-face instruction (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021). They struggled to build classroom community (Harsch et al., 2021; Troyan et al., 2022), provide students with individual feedback (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Maican & Cocoradă, 2021), and address interpersonal oral language skills (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Troyan et al., 2022). The data suggested that ERT's negative influence may have been exacerbated by the diminished status of world language instruction in comparison with other content areas. Teachers reported receiving less training, having fewer resources and fewer face-to-face instructional opportunities than teachers of more prioritized subjects (e.g., math).

While the data provided compelling evidence that instruction was negatively influenced by ERT, they also suggested that not all languages and language teachers were impacted to the same extent, or at least in the same ways. Primary school teachers often had to teach their young students how to use online resources, more so than their middle or secondary school peers. Teachers of less commonly taught languages (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Latin) reported access to fewer instructional resources in the target language. Teachers of logographic languages (e.g., Japanese and Chinese) struggled to show their students how to write the unique language characters in an online setting, and teachers of modern languages (e.g., English, French, Spanish) struggled to address oral communication skills, more so than teachers of Latin, a language that generally places less attention on speaking. The three participating virtual language teachers were least impacted by the shift to ERT.

Complementing the existing research that illustrated the negative influence of ERT on critical elements of world language instruction, the study shed light on how and why these elements were impacted. The adoption of technology-based tools among teachers, particularly in Germany, was hurt by a lack of training and

inconsistent district policies and practices with respect to how to use them (e.g., Canvas). Community building was impacted by students not turning on cameras and failing to participate in interactive activities (e.g., breakout rooms). Feedback was hampered by questions related to who actually completed the work (i.e., parents, siblings, Google Translate), time delays, and the number of students in classrooms, and interpersonal oral communication was challenging due to student anxiety and time constraints. While many of these challenges (e.g., student anxiety, cheating, and delayed feedback) existed prior to the pandemic, the dramatic shift to 100% online instruction appeared to make them even more prevalent in ERT.

While the study showed how ERT negatively influenced world language teachers, it also illustrated their flexibility and resilience. Perhaps the study's greatest contribution is that it shared multiple strategies employed by teachers to overcome, or at least mitigate these challenges. Teachers, particularly those in the U.S., showed how a variety of web-based tools and resources can be used to address language skills. They reported incorporating online games (e.g., Kahoot, Gimkit) to learn and review vocabulary and grammatical structures, digital tools to practice reading and interpersonal and presentational writing skills (e.g., discussion forums, shared Google docs and Google slides, Jamboard), online videos (e.g., Youtube) to enhance listening skills, and web-based resources like Flip.com, Padlet.com, and Nearpod.com to hone presentational speaking skills. How to effectively use breakout rooms in language instruction to counteract some of the limitations of ERT was another key takeaway from the study. To provide individual feedback and address oral interpersonal skills several teachers scheduled live, individual, or small group sessions with students. Teachers who reported the benefits of breakout rooms emphasized that they should be small (no more than 4 students), attended by the instructor (to provide individual feedback and encourage interaction), and involve the use of cameras (to promote community building). To further build community in ERT, teachers offered online office hours, kept their "live" classrooms open after scheduled class sessions, and incorporated "wellness checks". Another interesting finding was that the integration of the world language culture, a topic often neglected or misunderstood in world language classrooms (Yang & Chen, 2016), appeared to be an effective online strategy for teachers to build community. While these findings may serve to mitigate the negative impact of future disruptions to on campus learning, it is important to note that online instruction (at all levels) continues to expand due to administrative mandates and/or the realities of a changing student clientele. Sharing how teachers navigated many of the challenges associated with teaching a world language online, therefore, provides the opportunity to guide and inform online instruction in all contexts, not just in response to a global pandemic.

Implications and Applications

World language teachers, stakeholders, and school leaders should consider the results of this study to lessen the impact of future disruptions to on campus learning and to enhance the growing presence of online learning in schools. To support the adoption and effective implementation of online instruction, districts

should invest in the necessary resources and offer training to support teachers in their implementation. Given that many teachers reported continued use of technology after the pandemic, it was discouraging to hear reports from teacher participants that districts were eliminating the funding of various technology-based tools that they had become accustomed to using. When offering training to world language teachers, particular attention should be paid to training them how to address the interpersonal mode of communication, and in particular oral communication. The study's findings suggested that breakout rooms may be an effective strategy to develop oral language skills, but world language teachers need training on how to effectively use them. They need guidance on how to logistically schedule multiple, small group breakout sessions in short class sessions, and the optimal number of individual sessions necessary to provide oral communication practice and individual feedback. Supporting the recommendation of Troyan et al. (2022), world language teachers need models and support on how to engage students in oral, interpersonal activities online.

Further, districts should consider adopting consistent policies and practices for how these online resources are used, so that students, teachers, and parents receive consistent messaging. Access to a vetted online curriculum that mirrors the standard curriculum taught in a traditional on campus setting might be another investment that districts consider to prepare for future disruptions to face-to-face instruction. The ERT experience of the three participating virtual world language teachers appeared to be far less stressful, in large part due to their pre-existing online curriculum.

Districts and schools should also consider offering training to students and their parents. The study's findings support previous research indicating that students have a new role to play in online instruction (Harsch et al. 2021; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Troyan et al., 2022). These roles and responsibilities need to be clearly explained to them. They should, for example, be taught self-management strategies to help them monitor their own participation and progress, and best practices in online learning behavior (e.g., turning on cameras). Parents too, have a role to play, and should be taught how to use online tools and resources to support their children, particularly in primary school.

To help build classroom community and support teachers in promoting the well-being of their students, schools should consider institutionalizing time for teachers to touch base with students to ask questions and see how they are feeling. Multiple teachers in the study spoke about online wellness checks (e.g., Wellness Wednesdays) during the pandemic, and how they often missed this time to touch base, or continued to build this time into their schedule post-pandemic. Given the attention in world language instruction to the use of language for meaningful purposes (Glisan & Donato, 2017, Long, 1996) and the teaching profession's growing awareness of the importance of social and emotional learning, teaching students the necessary vocabulary and structures to express how they are feeling, and offering regular time to practice this skill still seems like a very relevant and effective use of instructional time (post-pandemic). The continued integration of web-based tools and resources like online discussion forums (e.g., Canvas) and videos

(e.g., Flip.com) could also allow language teachers to continue daily wellness checks outside of instructional time (e.g., as a homework assignment or enrichment activity). The integration of the target language culture into world language instruction as a means of building classroom community was another interesting finding in the study that merits further attention. The multiple examples provided by teachers of how they integrated culture into their online instruction to build community reflects a traditional approach that emphasized cultural products (e.g., songs, food, artifacts, and dances). World language teachers could also benefit from models of how to integrate culture into online instruction that reflects the more current approach (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015) that also addresses cultural practices (i.e., patterns of social interactions and behaviors) and perspectives (i.e., attitudes and beliefs that underlie the cultural practices and products of a society).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the study's results are interesting and worthy of consideration, there are limitations to consider when interpreting them. Although multiple teachers and students participated in the study, they represent only two regions in two countries. Given that research has shown that countries were affected by and responded to the pandemic differently (Kissau et al., 2022), the study's results cannot be generalized to all K-12 world language teaching contexts. Further research should involve additional countries, especially those that may be less developed than the U.S. and Germany.

It should also be acknowledged that for many teachers and students, their ERT experience is a distant memory. Teacher and student participants often struggled to recall their experiences from spring 2020. To combat this limitation, the researchers shared interview questions in advance, so that participants had time to reflect, but it is possible that some memories may have faded. The time that has passed since the pandemic also placed limitations on who participated. Since most secondary school students in advanced levels of language instruction during the pandemic had already graduated by the time of data collection, the secondary school participants were all studying at introductory levels during the pandemic. It might be interesting to investigate what impact ERT had on more advanced language instruction where perhaps students were more self-motivated and exhibited greater autonomy.

When interpreting the findings and how they might influence current online instruction, it is also important to consider that technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace. This is particularly true with respect to artificial intelligence (AI). Recent advancements in AI could help to lessen some of the negative impacts of ERT reported in this study, such as the lack of individualized feedback. Brisk Teaching, Language Tool, and ChatGPT, for example, are free AI tools that teachers can use to quickly generate student feedback (see briskteaching.com). Future research should investigate how AI tools can be utilized to further enhance online world language instruction.

Finally, while the study provided evidence related to how ERT negatively influenced world language instruction during the pandemic, it did not investigate the influence of ERT on student language skills or world language enrollment. What consequences are world language teachers and students currently facing due to their experience during the pandemic? Has the oral language skill development of students who studied a world language during the pandemic suffered due to the challenges reported in this study related to opportunities for interpersonal oral communication? Has enrollment in upper level language courses been impacted by negative student experiences in lower level language courses during the pandemic? These are all interesting questions for further investigation.

While the focus on related research has been on the negative influence of ERT, future research might also explore its benefits and what may have been lost as we transition back to on campus learning. Will districts maintain attention to student mental health via daily check-ins? Will they continue to invest in some of the technology-based tools that were reported to be effective? If not, what may be the consequences?

Conclusion

Responding to calls for research involving the perspectives of K-12 world language students and teachers (Jin et al., 2021b; Moser et al., 2021), the researchers investigated the influence of ERT on K-12 world language instruction in the U.S. and Germany. Results confirmed previous research indicating that the shift to ERT negatively influenced critical components of effective online teaching, helped to explain how and why these components were influenced, and illustrated effective online teaching strategies that emerged to mitigate the negative impact. These effective online teaching practices can serve to guide and inform online instruction in all contexts, not just in response to a global pandemic. Teachers and school leaders should consider the results when preparing for future disruptions to on campus learning and to support the expansion and enhancement of online world language instruction.

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