

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGES ONLINE

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 led to a worldwide shift towards remote online language teaching and learning. Despite limited resources and preparation, language teachers and learners showed resilience, perseverance, and creativity in adapting to the challenging conditions. This set of studies delves into the obstacles faced by language teachers and learners in online instruction, investigates how they dealt with these challenges, and extracts valuable insights to aid language educators in responding to emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This opening article presents an overview of this special collection on teaching and learning languages online, examines the growing body of research on online language education, and introduces the studies featured in the collection.

Keyword: Online language teaching Online language learning Language teachers Language learners COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on both our personal and professional lives. Educational institutions worldwide had to close, resulting in language teachers and learners having to teach and learn languages online. Although technology has been increasingly used in language education, many teachers and learners were not prepared for this sudden change and lacked sufficient support from their local infrastructure and resources. There is concern that this rapid shift to online learning has further widened the inequality in access to resources. Despite the challenges, the pandemic presented opportunities for language educators to experiment with online learning technologies and gain experience for future integration into language education. Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to document the valuable lessons learned during this unprecedented time. The System Journal has created a special issue to share these lessons through submissions exploring critical issues related to teaching and learning languages online.

The goal of this special collection is to record the obstacles encountered by language teachers and learners during online teaching and learning, investigate how they have dealt with these obstacles, and identify potential solutions that could assist language teachers and learners in overcoming current and future difficulties in

various educational, national, and socio-cultural situations. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled the instruction and learning of languages to shift online, resulting in many language teachers and learners relying on technology with minimal resources. Therefore, this special collection is particularly interested in research that addresses educational issues that are pertinent to a diverse audience, including those in underprivileged areas and those significantly impacted by the pandemic.

2. RESEARCH ON ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant amount of research being conducted on online language education. While a comprehensive review of this research is necessary, this article will only provide an overview of the research by referring to Martin et al.'s (2020) framework, which categorizes studies based on their focus on learners, educators, or educational institutions. Thus, the following sections will discuss selected studies on language learners and learning, language teachers and teaching, and institutional efforts to support online language education. Additionally, relevant studies on the development of technology for language learning and teaching will be highlighted when discussing institutional efforts, as technological resources often play a role in supporting online education.

Learners learning languages online

The studies in this group concentrate on the online learning experiences of language learners, looking at their emotions, perspectives, behavior, and readiness for online learning. It is important to note that emotions of language learners have become a commonly researched topic due to the shift from in-person to virtual learning.

Studies on the emotional experiences of language learners in emergency remote learning have identified a range of emotions associated with online learning, but boredom has received the most attention in both cross-sectional and longitudinal research. Researchers have investigated the sources of boredom and the coping strategies employed by language learners (Pawlak, Derakhshan, Mehdizadeh, & Kruk, in press) and tracked the impact of boredom on language learners over time (Yazdanmehr, Shirvan, & Saghafi, 2021). Pawlak et al.'s (in press) survey of Iranian university students and teachers found that both groups consider online classes more boring than offline classes, and that content-based courses are more likely to induce boredom than skills-based courses. Students reported having limited strategies to cope with boredom in online learning, with some resorting to unproductive strategies like skipping classes. Meanwhile, Yazdanmehr et al.'s (2021) study used a process-tracing approach to examine one L3 learner's semester-long experience and revealed that boredom levels changed throughout the semester, with the highest levels occurring at the beginning. The researchers suggest that the L3 learner's boredom may have been caused by under-stimulation, low perceived control over tasks, insufficient attention, and user-unfriendly technology. This study helps us understand what makes online language learning boring and prompts further exploration into how language learners can combat boredom.

Although online classes have the potential to be boring, they have been found to have a positive impact on learners' emotions by reducing negative emotions typically experienced in traditional classrooms, such as foreign language classroom anxiety. A study of 510 European language learners found that online classes led to greater language learning enjoyment and lower anxiety levels. Furthermore, individuals who enjoy language classes, regardless of the learning format, tend to possess higher levels of learner

autonomy and emotional intelligence. In addition to enjoyment and anxiety, another emotion examined in a study of Korean beginning learners was pride. The results showed higher levels of enjoyment and pride than anxiety in online language classes, and learners who experienced these positive emotions were more likely to achieve better academic outcomes. These emotions may be influenced by factors such as teacher friendliness and learners' previous language learning experiences.

Previous research on online language learning has examined learners' attitudes and practices in the context of online pedagogical innovations such as task-based design or authentic language learning. Despite some learners perceiving online language classes as less effective, Lee (2021) suggests that purposefully designed online courses can enhance learner satisfaction by providing prompt feedback from instructors, peer interaction, and effective task design. Additionally, Lian, Chai, Zheng, and Liang (2021) find that authentic language learning opportunities in online classes can positively impact students' self-efficacy, especially through collaborative task design. Junn (in press) also reports that online spaces can enable language learners to demonstrate their L2 communicative competence, as evidenced by students who created and sustained a virtual communicative space during a group presentation and project. Chen (2021) notes that embedded scaffolding materials are effective in promoting L2 learner autonomy to develop language skills, but less effective in facilitating cultural learning, for which learners prefer teachers' presence and assistance. In all of these studies, learner satisfaction was a significant indicator of the effectiveness of online instruction. However, only one study (Jiang, Meng, & Zhou, in press) has investigated language learners' readiness for online learning and its relationship with motivation, engagement, learner attitude, and support. This study finds that language learners exhibit high levels of readiness for online learning, and the predictive power of learner readiness for motivation and engagement underscores the importance of language teachers promoting positive learning attitudes and providing appropriate environmental support to language learners in online settings.

Teachers teaching languages online

Although several studies have been conducted to improve students' online learning experiences, we

must recognize that language teachers pay a price for these improvements. Lee (2021) highlights how an experienced instructor who was well-versed in technology-mediated teaching had to invest three additional hours per day in online teaching to enhance student satisfaction. For language teachers who have limited knowledge of educational technology, the effort required to achieve the same level of improvement for learners would be even more significant. This could be the reason why many studies on language teachers primarily focus on their initial experiences of online teaching, their wellbeing (including emotions, identity, agency, and retention), and their pedagogical efforts to improve teaching effectiveness.

Since many language teachers are new to teaching online, researchers have looked into how they use technology during their first-time experiences. These studies typically begin with questions about teachers' opinions on the pros and cons of online teaching. Disadvantages that are often mentioned include low student engagement, uncertainty about student comprehension, technical issues, and inadequate technological skills. A case study by Cheung, focusing on a secondary ESL teacher in Hong Kong, demonstrates that language teachers' use of technology is influenced not only by their technical competence but also by their pedagogical beliefs, such as form-focused and exam-oriented teaching. In a recent large-scale survey of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) teachers in the United States, Xu, Jin, Deifell, and Angus found that self-confidence and perceived value of online teaching play important roles in language teachers' use of technology. Although teachers are primarily responsible for adapting to online instruction, external support is essential. Therefore, these studies argue for the necessity of providing hands-on and language-specific professional assistance through language teachers' professional communities.

Studies have investigated how language teachers adapt to online teaching in both synchronous and asynchronous settings. For example, Moorhouse and Beaumont (2020) describe how one elementary teacher in a metropolitan school successfully prepared and delivered live online lessons, demonstrating that with proper preparation, synchronous online teaching can be effective. In another study, Yi and Jang (2020) examined how two elementary teachers in a small

rural school used video-based asynchronous teaching methods. They found that remote teaching can provide opportunities for translanguaging practices and collaborative teaching, in addition to pedagogical benefits.

Studies have highlighted the significant impact of online teaching on language teachers' emotional experiences, identity, and pedagogical competence. For instance, Yuan and Liu (in press) found that when language teachers cannot embody their desired identity (such as an engaging, inspiring teacher) in the virtual space, they adopt a more practical identity focused on exams and course quality. Gao and Cui (in press) similarly argue that a teacher's pedagogical beliefs about their role (such as a coach, guide, or nurturing figure) can have a lasting impact on their ability to engage in online teaching activities, which can carry over into offline classes. While language teachers aim to foster student engagement and positive emotions by building connections, these connections may also require unwanted emotional labor and necessitate the negotiation of emotional rules with colleagues (Liu, Yuan, & Wang, in press). Despite collegial support, online class interaction is a demanding task that requires language teachers to improve their pedagogical competence in various areas, including technological skills, online environment management, and teacher-student interaction (Moorhouse, Li, & Walsh, 2021).

A few research studies have investigated the reasons why some language teachers have left or stayed in their profession since the advent of online teaching during the pandemic, given that it has created an additional workload for them. One study by Moser & Wei (which is yet to be published) has classified language teachers into three groups - stayers, leavers, and conditional stayers - based on their levels of human, social, structural, and psychological capital. During the pandemic, language teachers felt overwhelmed, undervalued, and inadequately trained in online teaching, which underscores the need for including online teaching pedagogy in language teacher education and building networks to support their professional growth. Another study by Gregersen, Mercer, & MacIntyre (2021) has identified several factors that contribute to language teachers' stress levels in online teaching during the pandemic, including health, freedom, work/life balance, job security, and uncertainty

about the future. The findings suggest that language teachers should prioritize not only their students' well-being, particularly their socio-emotional needs, but also their own well-being to remain resilient in online teaching. It is noteworthy that these studies have taken a comprehensive view of language teachers, looking beyond online teaching and focusing on their overall well-being.

In addition, we would like to recognize the research-based efforts aimed at providing a theoretical justification for the creation of online courses. These efforts primarily rely on the findings of research in second language acquisition, which inform the development of online teaching activities. This is achieved through practices such as utilizing models of language task engagement (Egbert, 2020), creating different digital spaces to facilitate technology-mediated remote learning of pragmatics (Taguchi, 2020), establishing virtual language communities (Lomicka, 2020), designing collaborative tasks that involve technology (González-Lloret, 2020), and organizing language production activities in a sequence (Payne, 2020). The results of these studies are significant for language educators, as they provide valuable insights to help them make informed decisions when designing and improving online instruction, ultimately resulting in better teaching practices and improved student learning.

Institutional and administrative issues (including software)

A third set of studies investigates the efforts made by institutions to facilitate online learning and teaching. It is important to note that effective online instruction can only be achieved with ongoing support from the community, universities and schools, and technology experts.

Regarding community-level support, Sayer and Braun (2020) have examined how the broader social context affects remote learning for English learners. They found that students who are learning English in K-12 schools in the United States experienced more difficulties transitioning to online education than their native-English-speaking peers. Despite the hard work of language educators in preparing students for online learning, the study reveals that building stronger connections between teachers and parents is crucial for supporting language learners. However, establishing such connections may

require additional resources, such as engaging family liaison professionals and community partners when working with families who speak minority languages.

Research has been conducted on the practices used by language programs at Michigan State University (Gacs, Goertler, & Spasova, 2020) and Harvard University (Ross & DiSalvo, 2020). The studies on frontline practitioners distinguish between planned and emergency online language teaching. Gacs et al. (2020) provide a roadmap for language educators to prepare, design, implement, and evaluate online education. It is important to note that each of these steps may take several years under planned online learning conditions. To mitigate the challenges caused by the sudden shift to online teaching, educational managers and policymakers should take action, such as providing release time and professional development for instructors, organizing joint curricular planning, and adapting teacher evaluation criteria. Ross and DiSalvo (2020) emphasize that language educators cannot manage the entire process required for a successful transition to online teaching. They suggest that institutions must mobilize all the resources at their disposal to support teachers and students. For example, to ensure high-quality online learning programs, the Language Center at Harvard University provided web-based resources for faculty and students, sought support from undergraduate and graduate student helpers, and offered students more opportunities to have one-to-one language exchanges with native speakers.

It is essential for institutions to design and implement professional development programs that are relevant to language teachers. According to Paesani (2020), the University of Minnesota has developed a research-informed professional development program for effective online teaching. This program aims to develop adaptive expertise among language teachers and not only helps them teach online but also helps them cultivate teacher identity, agency, and critical reflection. Similarly, Knight (2020) describes efforts to establish professional networks online for world language educators at the University of Oregon. The online community leaders played an important role in supporting meaningful communities. These studies emphasize the significance of collaboration as a key aspect of

language teachers' professional development in online instruction.

In addition to investing significant effort and resources, technology experts have been working hard to develop or update technical tools for online teaching during the pandemic. According to a forthcoming article by Bonner, Garvey, Miner, Godin, & Reinders, a new online application called Classmoto was piloted to collect real-time analytics of learners' social, affective, and cognitive engagement. While most teachers and students found the software helpful, some had mixed feelings about its functions and applications, with many feeling that it added an extra burden to language teachers and learners. Meanwhile, Kohnke's forthcoming article discusses the creation and implementation of a chatbot that can be trained to meet individual language learners' needs, allowing language teachers to provide differentiated instruction. Preliminary results show that this software can also support and motivate learners to learn language outside of class. Additionally, Kohnke and Moorhouse's forthcoming comprehensive review of Zoom, a widely-used videoconferencing application, argues that it enables language teachers to conduct interactive synchronous classes. These studies, whether they introduce new technology or evaluate existing software, provide valuable insights to help language teachers use technology effectively and improve the quality of online language classes.

3. THE SPECIAL COLLECTION

As mentioned earlier, we invited contributors to address issues related to the learning and teaching of languages online globally, including (but not limited to):

1. Enhancing and sustaining language learners' online learning
2. Motivating language learners for effective learning
3. Designing effective and engaging online learning activities
4. Developing online communities for language learners and teachers
5. Assessing language learners' progress
6. Preparing language teachers for teaching online
7. Language teachers' experiences of teaching online

Previously, we requested contributors to discuss topics related to the global online learning and teaching of languages. These topics include, but are not limited to:

Improving and maintaining the online learning experience for language learners

Encouraging language learners to effectively learn

Creating online activities that are effective and interesting

Establishing online communities for language learners and teachers

Evaluating the progress of language learners

Training language teachers to teach online

Sharing the experiences of language teachers who teach online.

The responses we received from our colleagues were overwhelming. While articles published in this special collection largely address the topics we initially planned to include, they also echo the broader themes discussed in our above review of the emergency switch to online teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to use Martin et al.'s (2020) classification in introducing the special collection of articles.

1) Language teachers and emergency-prompted online teaching (12 articles)

We received an overwhelming response from our colleagues, and the articles published in this special collection mostly cover the topics we had initially planned, but they also touch on broader themes related to the sudden shift to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic that we discussed earlier. We continue to use Martin et al.'s (2020) categorization to introduce the collection of articles.

Out of the 26 articles, 12 focus on how language teachers responded to the emergency switch to remote teaching. These articles explore various topics such as changes in teachers' perceptions and practices, their digital and pedagogical competencies, and their intentions to use digital tools. Three articles examine teacher agency or emotion to understand their first experiences with online teaching.

Two articles investigate the impact of the change in teaching context on language teachers. In particular, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Sercher (2020) surveyed 600 language teachers to understand their stress levels and coping strategies. The respondents reported high levels of stress and a variety of approaches to coping, which the authors divided into approach coping and avoidance coping. The survey results suggest that language teachers who employed approach coping had positive psychological outcomes, such as well-being, while those who used avoidance coping had negative psychological outcomes, such as increased stress. The authors suggest that educating language teachers about healthier coping strategies is necessary as relying on avoidance coping could lead to more stress.

Since the relevant scholarship has attached greater importance to the development of online pedagogy, the special collection also includes two articles on pre-service language teachers' perceptions and practices in the process of learning to teach digitally. Taghizadeh and Amirkhani (2022) developed two instruments to explore pre-service EFL teachers' online class management, including their classroom management skills and approaches to managing challenging online situations. The results reveal that the most popular strategies for online classroom management include time management, course organization, positive reinforcement, and building a positive atmosphere. In response to the challenges of online classes, teachers emphasized the use of collaborative tasks and learner-centred strategies in facilitating student engagement, as well as the creation of online learning communities to boost students' sense of belonging. Using co-constructed autoethnographic narratives, another article presents a detailed portrait of five student teachers teaching world languages during the sudden transition to remote teaching (Back et al., 2021). The student teachers reported an overall feeling of disconnection from classroom practices and district communication, as well as lowered expectations of student learning, particularly in the subject of world languages. The transition to online learning also reduced the role student teachers played in classes, limiting their opportunities to learn. Based on these accounts, the authors present implications for student teaching in the digital age.

Online language teaching is challenging for both pre-service teachers and experienced teachers. Yan and Wang (2022), following three experienced EFL teachers, conceptualize remote teaching as a boundary-crossing practice to understand teachers' learning mechanisms and the factors affecting their transition to teaching online. They divide the transition process into three stages, namely preparing, adapting, and stabilizing, in which four learning mechanisms (i.e., identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation) occur with varying levels of prominence. These teachers also found that their emergency online teaching was influenced by the synergetic effects of dispositional traits and external support, which helped them overcome various challenges in the boundary-crossing process.

The special collection includes two articles that focus on pre-service language teachers' perceptions and practices in learning to teach online. Taghizadeh and Amirkhani (2022) developed two tools to investigate pre-service EFL teachers' online class management, revealing that effective online classroom management strategies include time management, course organization, positive reinforcement, and creating a positive atmosphere. Teachers emphasized the use of collaborative tasks, learner-centred strategies, and online learning communities to engage students and overcome the challenges of online classes. In another article, Back et al. (2021) present co-constructed autoethnographic narratives of five student teachers teaching world languages during the sudden transition to remote teaching, reporting disconnection from classroom practices and district communication, lowered expectations of student learning, and limited opportunities to learn. Yan and Wang (2022), following three experienced EFL teachers, explore the learning mechanisms and factors affecting their transition to teaching online, dividing the process into three stages: preparing, adapting, and stabilizing. The teachers found that their emergency online teaching was influenced by dispositional traits and external support, which helped them overcome various challenges in the boundary-crossing process.

Two academic articles examine the online teaching practices of language teachers by using teacher agency as a theoretical framework. Chen (2022) views L2 online teaching as an ecology and

investigates the connection between teacher agency and digital affordances. The study shows how teacher agency was utilized with the help of digital tools in line with teacher beliefs and social contexts. Ashton (2022) tracks the progress of four language teachers over six months to examine teacher agency in relation to digital affordances and constraints. The research highlights that social structural factors play a significant role in teacher agency, and that teacher agency has a practical-evaluative dimension that should be addressed in teacher education. In the last article, Song (2022) explores teacher emotion in online settings by using autoethnography. The author reflects on her own emotional experiences during the sudden transition to remote teaching and emphasizes the importance of emotional reflexivity in facilitating personal and professional growth.

Language learners learning online (13 articles)

The special collection includes 13 articles on language learners learning online. The most commonly addressed topic within this group is L2 learner emotion and student interaction. Researchers also explored the impact of online learning tasks on L2 development and student satisfaction.

Four articles examine language learner emotions in online classes. Two of these focus on learner emotion to measure the effectiveness of specific language learning activities. Zhang, Liu, and Lee (2021) explore language learners' enjoyment and emotion regulation during self-organized collaborative tasks conducted via a social media app. While language learners' level of enjoyment fluctuated at the individual and group levels, they generally experienced an enjoyable atmosphere. They adopted multiple types of regulation (including self-, co-, and socially shared regulation) to achieve group-level enjoyment; that is, they mostly engaged in shared regulation processes, and also realized emotional regulation through the combined use of emojis and words. This study supports the integration of collaborative activities in online instruction. Payant and Zuniga (2022) explore language learners' experience of flow in an individual peer revision task followed by a shared feedback session in a Zoom-based French writing course. The study reveals that the two types of peer revision activity were both flow-generating, but learners experienced a significantly higher level of

flow in the exchange of feedback or when having greater familiarity with the task and technology. These findings shed light on peer review design in an online environment.

Another two studies focus on the L2 learners' emotional trajectories and also the potential factors behind emotions like boredom or stress in online learning. Derakhshan et al.'s (2021) survey of 208 undergraduate English majors focused on experiences of boredom in online classes, including antecedents of and solutions to boredom. The learners reported experiencing boredom throughout the semester, and the level of boredom reached a peak toward the end of the course. The survey data also reveals that boredom was mainly caused by excessive teacher talk, limited student involvement, technical problems, and repetitive or overloaded tasks. These findings may inform teachers and teacher educators on how to reduce boredom so as to improve learners' online learning experience. Similarly tracking learner experiences longitudinally, Ruiz-Alonso-Bartol, Querrien, Dykstra, FernándeZ-Mira, and S'anchez-Gutiérrez (2022) focused on stress levels among Spanish learners in online classes. They found that learners' stress decreased from the beginning to the end of the semester, although there was variation between individuals. The learners' high levels of stress may be attributed to reduced peer-to-peer connection, a lack of familiarity with online learning, and the belief that online settings produce less learning than face-to-face settings. In contrast, the teachers believed that online classes enable more student talk as well as improved relationships between teachers and students.

Ji, Park, and Shin (2022) investigate L2 learners' satisfaction in a synchronous online learning environment, which was found to be associated with different factors at the beginning and end of the semester. Based on two waves of data collection, the study reveals that greater satisfaction among language learners was predicted by higher readiness early on, but more associated with learner engagement at the end of the academic term. Moreover, the L2 learners reported using multiple learning strategies, including notetaking, recording, and searching for additional materials, which contributed to their engagement as well as its predictive relationship with satisfaction. Three articles tested the effectiveness of specific online learning tasks on

learners' acquisition of the target language. Loewen, Buttiler, Kessler, and Trego (2022) measured the impact of synchronous video computer-mediated communication (SVCMC) activities, in which L2 Spanish students were required to transcribe and reflect upon their own conversations. Using a cognitive-interactionist approach, the study found that the task prompted the L2 learners to focus on form, particularly through either self-correction or

recasting, and to target vocabulary the most. The activity also provided chances for L2 learners to communicate in the target language, which helped them to develop fluency. He and Loewen (2022) explored how goal-setting with feedback improved language learners' engagement and motivation in the context of app-based vocabulary self-study. They identified that goal-setting-and-checking activities and the use of feedback tools motivated learners to be more engaged in vocabulary learning. Salomonsson (2020) examine the impact of modified output on L2 acquisition in an online German language class. The analysis of peer-to-peer conversations reveals the prevalence of learners modifying their output. The learners' modified output mostly results from self-initiated self-repairs, rarely from other-initiated self-repairs, and never from self-initiated other-repairs. Moreover, the modified output mostly targets syntax or morphology rather than lexis. These studies generates critical insights on how online classes or activities can be designed to facilitate L2 learning.

Five articles address the issue of interaction, which is key to language learning, in the remote-learning context. Cheung's (2021) study of an online primary class examines the multi-modal exchanges between a veteran EFL teacher and his students. The 80 recordings of online sessions reveal many verbal and non-verbal responses from students in whole-class sessions, and show that non-verbal responses often stimulate follow-up verbal elaborations. When participating in small-group sessions, more able learners demonstrated remarkable interactional competence using prompting and repairs. The study provides evidence for multimodal exchange in the online environment, which may redefine classroom interactional competence. Similarly highlighting the phenomenon of multimodal interaction, Chen, Zhang, and Huang (2022) take a translanguaging perspective and explore the

association between translanguaging and learner agency in a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) course. Their analysis of a social media chat log between teachers and students indicates that trans-semiotizing between linguistic and non-linguistic resources is associated with fluctuations in learner agency. In particular, learner agency becomes more achievable when learners trans-semiotize between texts and pictures to explore learning opportunities. Learner agency also becomes more visible through the practices of trans-semiotizing to emojis. Hence, the study argues that language teachers should enhance their trans-semiotic competence to understand students' trans-semiotic practices and to deploy multi-semiotic resources to interact with students.

The other two articles draw on the community of inquiry framework to understand student interaction through the concept of social presence. Carbajal-Carrera (2021) analyses five episodes of activism interactional practices to illustrate the application of hand signals, emotional attunement check-ins, pass-the-ball, digital collages, and spectrum lines in video-conferencing-based L2 learning. They found that these practices facilitate the teaching, social, and cognitive dimensions of presence. The study not only calls for a multidimensional approach to presence but also generates practical strategies to enhance presence in online settings. Alger and

Eyckmans (2022) complement the concept of social presence (SP) with a qualitative interpersonal pragmatics approach to examine L2 learners' interpersonal interactions and relationships. Among all SP indicators, teacher acknowledgement was recorded as the most commonly used, followed by paralanguage, student acknowledgement, and self-disclosure. They all potentially boosted affective and cohesive effects. The study further reveals that students appreciate in-class opportunities to express their frustration and teacher-initiated off-task talk, which promote relationship building and feelings of belongingness.

The last article in this category addresses interaction from a combined perspective of teachers and students (Harsch, Müller-Karabil, & Buchminskaia, 2021). This study takes a mixed method approach, involving 35 teachers and 898 students from over 200 language courses in 14 languages. The data analysis reveals that creating

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learner-conducive interaction is a major problem in online language classes, which may be attributed to the unclear roles of teachers and students, an insufficient social presence, and improper communication channels. Based on this, the study argues that teachers and students should make a joint effort and create the interactional space cooperatively.

3) Institutions or others in online language education (1 article)

The special collection of articles does not contain any research on institutional policy efforts, possibly because the journal focuses on publishing articles that have significant implications for teaching. Apart from research on language teachers and learners, there was one article that examined the role of parents in supporting language learning. The study interviewed 30 parents of students in grades 1-5 at a Chinese primary school and found that monitoring of learning was the most common form of support provided by parents, followed by affective, academic, and technology support. These forms of support were influenced by the students' grade level and the parents' socioeconomic status. The study also found that parents played an important role in facilitating communication between teachers and students to address academic problems and increase learning motivation. As a result, the study suggests a model of parental support that involves interaction between parents, young learners, and teachers to support online L2 learning.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This collection of articles documents the worldwide adoption of online teaching and learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, representing a variety of settings, educational levels, and digital and socioeconomic contexts. While technical difficulties have been common, the articles also emphasize the significant cognitive and emotional aspects of language learning and teaching online. The studies show that building online communities among language learners, teachers, and even parents is crucial for overcoming challenges. As online teaching may continue in the post-pandemic era, the findings have important implications for language teachers, educators, and administrators to optimize digital resources and improve language education in future online settings.

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