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SEDE DE OCCIDENTE

**TRABAJO FINAL DE GRADUACIÓN PARA OPTAR POR EL GRADO DE
LICENCIATURA EN ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

*EFFECTS OF REMOTE LANGUAGE TEACHING STRATEGIES ON ORAL PERFORMANCE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: VOICES FROM THE WESTERN
BRANCH*

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Abstract

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Costa Rican higher educational institutions had to switch from face-to-face lessons to an emergency remote teaching modality. Teachers started researching new strategies and activities to apply in their classes because they, as well as many of their students, were not prepared for the new online teaching challenges. In Costa Rica, by mid-2021, no empirical studies were available about the effects of remote teaching strategies on students' oral performance. Thus, this research seeks to analyze the perceptions on the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa-Western Branch (UCR-WB). To develop this investigation, an explanatory sequential mixed method design was adopted, which involved a two-phase execution of the project. For the first, quantitative stage, a sample of 36 junior students from the *Oral Communication VI* course of the English Teaching Majors at UCR-WB participated by completing a questionnaire. For the second, qualitative stage, a semi-structured interview was administered to five of the participants from the first stage that were selected in order to explain some interrogatives derived from the quantitative phase. The findings show that the majority of informants expressed that remote teaching has positively affected their academic performance. Nevertheless, most participants agreed that face-to-face teaching holds more benefits than remote learning in terms of their oral proficiency development.

Keywords: remote learning, perceptions, oral performance, English teaching

Resumen

Debido a la pandemia por la COVID-19, las instituciones de educación superior costarricenses debieron migrar sus clases presenciales a la modalidad virtual. Los docentes buscaron nuevas estrategias y actividades para implementar en la nueva modalidad de enseñanza remota dado que, al igual que muchos de sus alumnos, no estaban preparados para los nuevos desafíos de esta nueva modalidad de enseñanza. En el caso de Costa Rica, hasta mediados de 2021 no se disponía de estudios empíricos sobre los efectos de las estrategias de enseñanza a distancia en el desempeño oral de los estudiantes realizados en Costa Rica. Por lo tanto, la presente investigación analiza las perspectivas de estudiantes de tercer año de la carrera de Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente (CEIn, UCR-SO) sobre los efectos de las estrategias de enseñanza remota del inglés en el desempeño oral del estudiantado. Se adoptó un diseño de método mixto secuencial explicativo que involucra dos fases. En una primera etapa cuantitativa, una muestra de 36 estudiantes de tercer año del curso de *Comunicación Oral VI* de las carreras de enseñanza de inglés de la UCR-SO completó un cuestionario. En una segunda etapa cualitativa, se aplicó una entrevista semiestructurada a cinco de los estudiantes de la primera etapa, a fin de explicar algunas interrogantes que surgieron durante la primera fase investigativa. Grosso modo, los hallazgos muestran que la mayoría de los informantes expresaron que la enseñanza remota ha incidido positivamente en su rendimiento académico. Sin embargo, la mayoría sostuvo que el aprendizaje presencial es mejor que el aprendizaje remoto para el desarrollo de las destrezas orales.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje a distancia, percepciones, desempeño oral, enseñanza de inglés.

PROYECTO DE GRADUACIÓN PARA OPTAR POR EL GRADO DE LICENCIATURA EN
ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Effects of Remote Language Teaching Strategies on Oral Performance at the University of Costa Rica During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Voices from the Western Branch

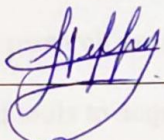
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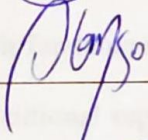
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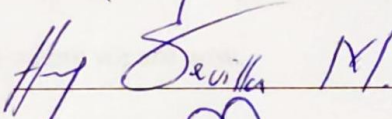
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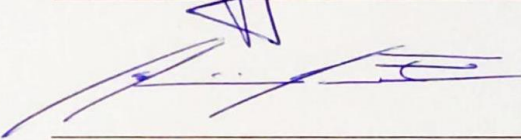
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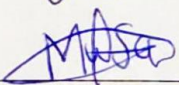
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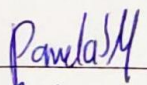
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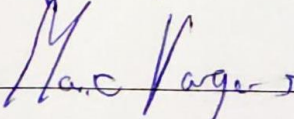
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Introduction

Empirical and Practical Antecedents

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-COV2 virus produced a worldwide lockdown, followed by restrictions on gatherings in public spaces and at public event venues. Most establishments, academic institutions, and recreational places were forced to close or to adapt their services according to the safety guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and local government authorities. In the Costa Rican educational context in particular (where the current study was conducted), universities were forced to change teaching modalities from face-to-face to emergency remote lessons; that is, changes had to be made overnight to continue offering study programs. As can be expected, many teachers had to start researching new strategies and activities to apply in this new context because they, as well as many of their students, were not prepared for the new online teaching challenges. Alongside these abrupt changes, remote education continued to gain unprecedented relevance in study programs worldwide—although this form of teaching delivery existed before the COVID-19 pandemic, as demonstrated by research around it.

To exemplify the relevance of previous research on remote learning, a brief survey is offered of the main empirical studies from several language teaching contexts around the world. Herrera (2017) studied the impact of implementing a virtual learning environment (VLE) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at a public university in Colombia. The author's findings showed that students feel enthusiastic and motivated towards the use of VLEs because, even though personal digital devices are ordinary, they can also be challenging for them. Similarly, Koskela, Kiltti, Vilpola, and Tervonen (2005) researched the suitability of a VLE for

higher education by comparing learning in a virtual environment and learning in a face-to-face lesson. Their study revealed that VLE can positively affect the students' way of learning since they can control the speed of studying. For example, in a VLE students can skip the area that is familiar to them, while in a face-to-face lesson this is not allowed. Nonetheless, the researchers point out that to get effective results using VLE, it is important to have well-designed teaching strategies.

Similarly, Berry (2019) explored the strategies that 13 instructors used to help students develop a sense of community in synchronous virtual classrooms. The author identified four main strategies: reaching out to students often, limiting time spent lecturing, using video and chat as modes to engage students, and allowing class time to be used for personal and professional updates. Likewise, Marinoni, Van't Land, and Jensen (2020), together with The International Association of Universities (IAU), surveyed the impact of COVID-19 on higher education. This investigation sought to capture a description of the impact of COVID-19 globally and on higher education in the broader sense. One of the main findings was how students and professors were affected by the challenge of changing from face-to-face to remote teaching and all the difficulties this may include.

Additionally, at Costa Rica's State Distance University (UNED) some studies have been published regarding remote learning due to COVID-19. For example, Chan, Galli, and Ramírez (2021) studied the profile of Argentine professors of higher education, as well as their opinions about the context, tools, and activities with which they worked in their lessons, and the emotions they experienced when carrying out their tasks remotely due to the suspension of face-to-face classes in the framework of the preventive and mandatory social isolation measures decreed by the COVID-19 virus. The results show a differentiated impact between teachers who have the

resources, means, and spaces necessary to teach their classes and teachers who must share their equipment and spaces with others who telework and study at the same time from their homes, with relatives who require their attention and also have poor connection quality.

In like manner, Umaña (2020) researched the main opportunities and challenges of the distance education model as one of the educational alternatives with the greatest potential for development in Latin America, given the consequences evidenced in this field, as a result of COVID-19. It was shown that one of the main opportunities of this research is the development of an educational model that does not require physical displacement. As for the opportunities discovered, one of the greatest challenges is the necessity to improve digital competencies for teachers and students as they are a key element of distance education.

In a related study, Álvarez (2021) sought to understand the students' experiences in their transition from face-to-face learning to remote learning and identify problematic areas within these experiences. Results showed that there were three main aspects that affected or were directly related to the students' experience with this transition. The first one was the existent uncertainty with remote learning and the lack of preparation from teachers; the second was related to the time each professor invested in each group's development, and the last one referred to the students' classmates and their interaction during the courses. In a similar study, Guíñez and Mansilla (2022) explored the main factors of university students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction in terms of emergency remote learning. Results indicated that seven main categories explained the reasons behind the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of students: "teaching-learning," "access to tangible resources," "teacher," social relationships, "support service," "access to online service," and "value for money" (p. 17).

In Costa Rica, a series of practical and theoretical antecedents can also be identified in this respect. At the theoretical level, several studies and academic initiatives have been developed to understand and theorize on the effects of the global pandemic on the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. For example, some professors from the University of Costa Rica have started researching students' areas related to technology in remote learning. More specifically, Rabb and Vargas (2020) have examined good practices and challenges in the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in three specific aspects of language learning: communication, engagement, and collaboration. They are also currently working on a practical guide that highlights different apps, and how they can be applied in teaching. Likewise, in early 2021 Gamboa was conducting a small study on how to integrate technology into education by following the Turn-Around Technology Integration Pedagogy Planning (TTIPP) model. We are aware that similar initiatives are also taking place in other higher education institutions in our country; however, as of June 2021, no published studies that deal with students' perceptions on the matter were identified. A fuller description of theoretical developments and previous studies on this subject will be provided later in this final graduation report.

Research Problem Statement and Rationale

The issue of a virtual learning environment represents important challenges at theoretical and practical levels in the English classroom due to the changes derived from the global pandemic. As previously mentioned, most Costa Rican higher educational institutions had to replace their face-to-face lessons for emergency remote teaching modalities. Even though some

teachers and students were prepared or instructed to handle a remote learning environment, most educational institutions were mainly focused on face-to-face modalities. Consequently, many Costa Rican teachers started training themselves and researching possible strategies and activities to employ online. At the University of Costa Rica, Western Branch, professors made rapid adjustments to the courses from the English teaching major department in a matter of weeks. Up to June 2021 (when the current study started), over one year had passed since Costa Rica had implemented the VLE in the public educational system. In the context of the present investigation, a question that needed to be considered was: Did the remote language teaching strategies used in Costa Rica, and in particular at the University of Costa Rica, Western Branch (UCR-WB), have similar effects to those studies by Herrera (2017), Koskela et al. (2005), and Berry (2019) discussed in the antecedents? As stated previously, by mid-2021, no empirical studies were available about the effects of remote teaching strategies on students' oral performance conducted in Costa Rica, which implies that an exploration about online instruction is necessary to start generating research-based data for higher educational purposes in Costa Rica. Thus, this research seeks to provide an initial empirical basis on how junior students at the UCR-WB perceive the use of remote teaching strategies in relation to their oral production.

On analyzing the above studies, there is a clear need to continue investigating the effects of language teaching strategies in a virtual environment (1) due to the lack of studies on this specific topic, (2) because the majority of them (as with any scientific publications) need to be updated, and (3) because, as already explained, so far only a few initiatives have been based on Costa Rica.

Research Questions¹

Because this study followed a QUAN-Qual mixed model, the following central question and subquestions will guide this inquiry (see *Purpose Statement* section for details).

Central Question

- What are the perceived effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB?

Sub-question

- What are junior students' perceptions of the effects of remote teaching and face-to-face classes on their own oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB?
- What possible explanations are there for the perceptions of a specific sample of students about the effects of remote teaching on oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB?

Purpose Statement

This study addressed the perceptions of the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English Teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western Branch. An explanatory sequential (QUAN-Qual) mixed methods design was used, and it involved collecting quantitative data during the first stage and then explaining the

¹ For the purposes of this proposal, we are using both objectives and research questions. Objectives will tell the board of assessors and readers the purpose of the study (what the study seeks to investigate), while the questions will serve as grounding for the discussion of the findings.

quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data in a follow-up stage. In the first (quantitative) phase of the study, close-ended question survey data were collected from thirty-six junior students from the UCR-WB to test the effects of remote teaching on junior students' oral performance. The second, qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results with a small sample of purposefully selected student informants. In this exploratory follow-up, the plan was to explore perceptions of the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance.

To carry out the study, the following general and specific objectives are proposed:

General Objective

- To analyze the perceptions on the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB.

Specific Objectives

- To examine students' perceptions about the effects of remote teaching on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB.
- To describe students' perceptions about the effects of remote teaching on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB.
- To identify possible explanations on causes of perceptions of a specific sample of students about the effects of remote teaching on oral performance in order to suggest best practices for the teaching of the *Oral Communication VI* course at the English teaching majors or the UCR-WB.

- To develop a teaching proposal based on the findings from this inquiry so that oral communication instructors at the English teaching majors of the UCR-WB have access to research-based insights for future pedagogical application.

Preliminary Operationalization of Concepts

Before delving into the theoretical framework, it is vital to operationalize key concepts such as effects, language teaching strategies, virtual learning environments, remote learning, and oral performance within the context of the study; this will help narrow down the constructs and thus achieve wider understanding of what is being investigated.

The first key concept to be defined is “effects.” Based on context, the effects are the changes produced by influences, actions, or causes of someone or something. For example, Strydom (2017) named his article “The Effect of Virtual Learning Environments in an ESL Classroom”, which conveys the meaning that the study is about the changes that happened in the ESL Classroom as a result of the influences of a virtual learning environment. The effects are always the results or changes coming from a previous action.

Another important definition is language teaching strategies, which encompasses the definition of language teaching strategies with language learning strategies. As claimed by Uztosun (2014), the meaning of both strategies lies in the different behaviors or actions used to make the language learning processes more successful and enjoyable for both the teacher and the students. The language teaching strategies focus on enhancing and facilitating the language learning processes, which makes them complementary to each other. Some of the most significant teaching strategies to review include the ones referring to classes, which usually cover the modality (synchronous or asynchronous), the different tools or platforms used for teaching

(Zoom, Google meet, Facebook live, YouTube, among others), and the different activities designed for each class. In addition, it is also important to review the different strategies referring to easing and improving the learning processes outside class time. Some of them are independent-work spaces using different platforms or websites, live discussions or forums, feedback delivering, input exposure, and a host of others.

Another relevant concept is that of the virtual learning environment. A virtual learning environment can be defined as an online space provided by a teacher or facilitator dedicated to learning and mastering any type of skill or content. According to Strydom (2017), the purpose of this space is to provide tools and resources such as information, questions, and assignments to people who access it. In addition, virtual learning opens spaces for learners to actively engage in the learning processes while developing social, emotional, and language skills.

It is also crucial to operationalize remote learning, also known as distance learning or distance education. According to Çil (2021), remote learning can be defined as learning processes occurring when both the students and professors converge over different physical environments. This author provides different points of view from different authors as to the implications of remote learning, which include aspects such as (1) the elimination of time and space barriers for learning processes, (2) the flexibility that is carried with remote learning, and (3) the increased use of technology for remote learning. In general terms, remote learning can be defined as the learning spaces or processes that go beyond the designation of specific physical spaces or times. It can be done at any moment and anywhere, and it allows more flexibility for both parties, the students and professors.

The last concept of interest is oral performance. As stated by Bocanegra and Ramirez (2018), oral performance is the ability to speak and listen proficiently. This ability can be

improved through practice and appropriate instruction of certain components. When dealing with oral performance, the concept is usually operationalized also in terms of its components, which typically includes elements such as fluency, accuracy, content, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. These components were addressed in more detail in the theoretical framework: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation (segmental, suprasegmental), grammar, and content. All of them are taken into consideration for instructional and practical purposes, which allow learners of the language to improve their ability to speak and listen proficiently or improve their oral performance.

All these operationalized concepts will be developed in further detail in the theoretical framework of this report.

Relevance of the study

Using research-based evidence, this study will help start addressing a problem that requires systematic and joint efforts with various educational actors at the UCR-WB. It will also enlarge the bulk of related studies in Costa Rica.

Since the current research seeks to generate empirical data on how junior students perceive the use of virtual didactic strategies in relation to their oral production at the UCR-WB, the study is relevant in more than one level. For researchers, the investigation will provide a new perspective from students about the implementation of language teaching strategies at the university level in Costa Rica in the area of remote instruction. For theory, findings can encourage teachers, department authorities, and stakeholders to reflect on teaching strategies that best adjust to their local contexts.

To position the study theoretically and conceptually, the following section discusses the theoretical grounding and surveys main empirical studies on the subject. Because this study is based on a QUAN-Qual model, the section comprises two main sub-sections: a literature review that will allow us to derive research questions in the quantitative stage, and a subsequent theoretical framework that will permit us to theorize on the findings we discover in the qualitative part.

Literature review

Background information

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed a great number of quotidian activities including learning and teaching processes, which need to switch from face-to-face classes to remote learning. Since the adjustment, there has been an increase in perspectives concerning this new teaching-learning procedure, exemplified by authors such as Marinoni, Land, and Jensen (2020), who researched the impact of COVID-19 on higher education institutions. The survey administered to 424 higher education institutions showed how this pandemic affected different education-related aspects, including the closure of institutions and classroom teaching replaced by remote learning. To provide an account of the previous studies giving way to our QUAN part of the study, below is a survey of empirical studies on the subject.

Studies on the Effects of Remote Teaching

Bachelor (2019) aimed to compare face-to-face, hybrid, remote, and flipped teaching in an L2 classroom to determine which delivery method best promotes target language use and spontaneity. These findings revealed that online learning results in a bad performance on final tests, and hybrid classes performed best in all evaluations.

Conversely, Huang et al. (2021), adopted a photo-production visual method and explored students' experiences with ESL learning speaking remote lessons from a university in southern Ontario, Canada. The results suggested that students gained confidence from all the speaking opportunities provided by the many interactive and collaborative discussion and presentation spaces online.

Similarly, research developed by Strydom (2017) analyzed the impact of virtual learning environments (VLEs) in an ESL classroom, resulting in evidence of learners benefiting from it, primarily regarding their communication skills as they gained confidence in social interaction. Also, VLEs provide a sense of belonging, and interdependence, and overall allow students to have fun while learning. Similarly, Decena conducted a study in 2018 that indicates students believe that VLEs positively affect their EFL learning. Some of their reasons for such assumption are that they can enjoy collaboration and communication better, and learn at their own pace whereas instructors can easily encourage learners' autonomy, assist them, and eventually stimulate their love for learning. Nevertheless, there are also drawbacks in this adaptation such as the vast impediment represented by the connectivity and lack of equipment, which slow down a completely successful experience with remote learning (Herrera, 2017).

Maican, and Cocoradă (2021) worked on a project to analyze university students' behaviors, emotions, and perceptions associated with online foreign language learning during the pandemic. This research was conducted at a University in Romania. In the quantitative research, the sample comprised 207 participants from different study programs and with multiple levels in Foreign Language (FL). The findings involve (1) the coexistence of positive and negative emotions with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) stressors are triggered by online FL learning and, as a consequence, students develop coping behaviors to resolve their

stress and nervousness; (3) the negative association between self-perceived FL engagement and self-perceived FL proficiency, and (4) the high FL anxiety of students.

Additionally, Erarslan (2021) worked on the project: English language teaching and learning during Covid-19: A global perspective on the first year. The objective of this research was to study the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on English language learning and teaching on a global scale in terms of the implementation of emergency online teaching and learning. This was a descriptive study based on a qualitative approach that used a systematic integrative literature review. This review aimed to join data on the studied topic. Additionally, literature reviews and document analysis were the methods used to gather the data. The findings of this study showed research articles based on commonalities in their focus, participants, education segment and country, the impact of Covid-19 on English language teaching and learning from the global perspective, and the attitudes and motivations of teachers and students towards emergency online teaching. Moreover, the methodology was an integrative literature review study. The data collected helps the study to have more resources to access. In addition, the analysis of the data and the use of keywords to find the different studies give a better idea to the researchers in the aspect of having better ways to look for new documents.

Finally, Mahyoob (2020) worked on a project about identifying obstacles and challenges of e-learning during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as familiarizing students with methods, modes, strategies, platforms, and applications to enhance the processes of English learning. In terms of the methodology, an online survey-based questionnaire was applied to undergraduate English students from Taibah University, Saudi Arabia. The findings were divided into 4 main sections: The use of available activities and services in the Blackboard tool, the alternative tools used during online learning other than Blackboard, the challenges, and obstacles encountered during

online English learning classes, and EFL Learners' satisfaction with face-to-face virtual learning during COVID-19. The main findings of the study showed that there are a lot of challenges when working in a virtual environment, especially technical issues that can affect the development of the learning processes. This study is significant to the present research as it exposes data based on an actual situation, which can enrich the analysis of the data collected by serving as a point of comparison, and it gives recommendations to other researchers about the topic, which can help as a guide for this project as well.

Studies on Teachers and Students' Perceptions

Herrera's research demonstrates that with the experience gained through time, participants changed their mindset of VLEs as useless, confusing, and overwhelming. Instead, they stated that VLEs are beneficial and functional for several reasons, such as the instructor's possibility to proactively modify teaching methods, resources, and curricula to address students' needs and maximize their learning. Additionally, learners claimed to feel motivated and enthusiastic about remote learning since it encourages them in their tasks and allows them to gain confidence in their linguistic skills.

Moreover, Hamutoglu, Gemikonakli, Duman, Kirksekiz, and Kiyici (2019) evaluate different VLE feature applications' effectiveness. The study was carried out at Middlesex University by implementing remote learning in the academic programs of foundation year, undergraduate, and postgraduate studies. The findings were divided into two stages: (first) scale development and testing, and (second) assessment of students' perceptions, and determination of VLE features. The preferred remote learning features according to this research are: (1)

PowerPoint slides with videos, (2) short 5-10 minute videos with key concepts, (3) PowerPoint slides with audio-only, (4) videos, and (5) the use of social media to support learning.

Furthermore, Sutarto, Sari, and Fathurrochman (2020) presented different perspectives from scholars regarding their learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some say remote learning is fun, yet many miss the face-to-face experience of sharing with their friends and classmates and learning together. In addition, the same study explored strategies to increase learners' interest, to which they declare the importance of preparing short and simple educational materials, along with evaluating regularly and continuously students' learning.

Additionally, Serhan (2020), researched the students' attitudes and perceptions towards the use of Zoom in comparison to face-to-face learning. The study included a sample of 31 students at a major university in the USA. It revealed that learners were not fully satisfied with their learning experience during this transition. This happened mainly because instructors were not ready for this sudden change that required the design of activities, delivery methods, and the use of different platforms to provide a successful teaching-learning process.

Studies about Online Teaching Strategies

Göktürk (2016) examined if digital video recordings would contribute to EFL learners' oral fluency skills enhancement. The study implied this strategy helped the progress in overall speaking proficiency. However, it did not show a significant improvement in their fluency. Likewise, Göktürk analyzed learners' perceptions of the use of this method in their speaking class. Participants stated this strategy encouraged them to take more risks using the target language. Nevertheless, this strategy did not contribute to their actual oral performance because it was not the same as having the opportunity to record a video more than three times until there

were no mistakes than having a real-life conversation. Therefore, they did not consider their accuracy had improved by implementing the digital video recording strategy.

Ali (2020) analyzed how teaching and learning can continue during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis by implementing a study following a meta-analysis methodology. The findings contemplate the fact that higher education institutions are moving towards online learning and the use of ICTs. The author suggested professors use technology and technological gadgets to enhance students' confidence and motivation.

In addition, Charpentier (2020) aimed to understand students' impressions on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Learners claimed it contributes to developing listening and speaking skills. They also stated that technology, in general, promotes attention and interest.

Despite the relevant contributions of these investigations, few of them have been conducted to measure the positive or negative impacts of different teaching strategies on students' oral performance. In an attempt to fill this knowledge gap, the current study seeks to analyze the perceptions of the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western Campus. In the discussion of findings, our results will be contrasted with those reported in the previous studies above. Since a second, qualitative stage will follow the numerical results in this inquiry, a theoretical framework is provided to explain the findings discovered in such a stage.

Theoretical Framework

Because this research involved a follow-up stage from the QUAN part, it is essential to develop a theoretical framework. This section will help understand and discuss the qualitative results in light of various theoretical insights which inform our research. This subsection

responds to one of the strategies for theoretical frameworks described by Barrantes (2013), threading the theoretical lens from various conceptual insights when one unified theory does not fit the inquiry. To attain a coherent organization, we are providing an overview of the following aspects in this theoretical framework: (1) Remote Learning, (2) Perceived Effects, (3) Online Teaching Strategies, (4) Oral Performance, and (5) Criteria to Assess Oral Performance.

Remote Learning

In 2020, a pandemic due to COVID-19 produced a worldwide lockdown. Academic institutions were forced into closure and avoid face-to-face modality to emergency remote learning (ERL). This term is essential to our research because it involves the beginning of this adaptation process. Hodges, Lockee, Trust, and Bond (2020) define ERL as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery model due to crisis circumstances” (p. 7).

Çil (2021) enhances the concept of remote learning by defining it as a learning process occurring when both the students and professors are located in different physical environments. The author provides different points of view from different authors as to the implications of remote learning. These points of view include aspects such as (1) the elimination of time and space barriers for learning processes, (2) the flexibility that is carried with this learning method, and (3) the increased use of technology. In general terms, emergency remote learning can be defined as the alternative learning spaces and processes that go beyond the designation of specific physical spaces or times due to a crisis. It allows more flexibility for both parties, the students and professors. In Costa Rica, higher educational institutions welcomed remote learning as an alternative due to the pandemic crisis. As a result, remote learning forced professors to modify and adjust their programs and methodologies into flexible virtual learning environments.

Perceived Effects

When attempting to define the term *Perceived Effects*, it is important to construe two sub-variables that will give a better understanding of the concept which are “perceptions” and “effects”. First, the concept of perceptions will be developed using the perspective of a specific author, then the concept of effects will be developed the same way.

When referring to perspectives several authors have developed different viewpoints on this concept; however, it is important to expand one that adjusts better to the purpose of this study. Based on Qiong’s words (2017) the term perceptions is focused on how people become aware of situations, experiences, or the environment. The concept itself implies the use of senses, opinions, and the ability of understanding. All together these elements will permit someone to notice situations, experiences, or the environment.

The term *effects* is dependent on context and refers to the changes produced by influences, actions, or causes of someone or something. For example, Strydom (2017) carried out a study concerning the changes that happened in the ESL Classroom as a result of the influences of a virtual learning environment. The effects are always the results or changes coming from a previous action. The conceptualization of this term can also be directly associated with the term “impact” as the effects generate an impact over something or someone, and it is also produced by something or someone. Some variables come into play when determining the effects that will result from a study or research such as context, population, and method. These variables can impact the nature of the effects obtained. For example, applying a certain method to a specific population, which is one of these variables, can generate the attention of effects that impact the study either negatively or positively.

Finally, after defining both concepts, it is important to specify that the concept of perceived effects is a derivation of both concepts which creates for itself a definition. This definition is the way the effects obtained as a result of a specific action are sensed based on opinions, experiences, perspectives, and feelings, which will help perform a perspective or perception about it.

Online Teaching Strategies

Virtual education has been employed for the past three or four decades. This practice has been increasing over time in higher education as stated by Barrett (2010). A virtual learning environment can be defined as an online space provided by a teacher or facilitator which is dedicated to the fostering of any type of skill or content. According to Strydom (2017), the purpose of this space is to provide tools and resources such as information, questions, and assignments to people who access it. In addition, allowing the opportunity of corresponding with teachers and other members of the class by commenting, providing feedback, and making announcements. Opening these spaces, allow learners to actively engage in the learning processes while developing social, emotional, and language skills.

When referring to oral teaching strategies, there should be a distinction between asynchronous and synchronous practices. Asynchronous strategies refer to activities that do not need to be developed in class time. It allows students and professors to be connected in the time and place of their preference. Asynchronous communication does not happen in real time. Students can communicate asynchronously without needing to have common time available (Hill, 2009, p.17). In addition, students have time to research and reflect before providing an answer. In contrast, synchronous strategies emerge during class time. For example, teachers explain a topic

or assign readings, and based on them, students develop a short activity in order to motivate the participation of all students in the class. The benefits of including in-class activities are that they generate more communication, save after-class time, and promote a faster engagement of ideas.

There are some methods by which teaching strategies can be divided. On the one hand, didactic and model methods belong to direct teaching. Direct instruction is a teacher-centered method. It uses clear and straightforward teaching techniques, usually used to teach specific skills. The direct method involves verbal activities, and it is typically in the form of a lecture or presentation. Additionally, modeling includes visuals and typically in the form of demonstration and practice. On the other hand, indirect or interactive teaching has managerial and dialogic methods. Indirect instruction allows learners to learn by transforming or constructing. Moreover, the managerial method promotes facilitation, individualization, and group management. Furthermore, the dialogic implements the Socratic technique of dialogue, questions, and thought provocations. The Socratic technique allows students to explore their ideas in depth. In addition, it promotes independent and self-monitor thinking and learning. For the implementation of this technique, it is recommended to set a time limit, follow up the process as teachers, and ask probing questions (Petrina, 2007, p. 93).

Oral Performance

The last concept of interest to be explained in this framework is oral performance. As stated by Bocanegra and Ramirez (2018), oral performance is the ability to speak and listen proficiently. Such an ability can be improved through practice and appropriate instruction of certain components. As explained by Bocanegra and Ramírez (as cited in Bocanegra and Ramirez, 2014), “teachers who include oral activities into their classroom instruction will not

automatically make learners good speakers” (p. 67). The previous citation implies that there is more than just speaking activities when referring to the term oral performance. When dealing with this skill, the concept is usually operationalized also in terms of its components which typically include aspects such as fluency, accuracy, content, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. All of these components are taken into consideration for instructional and practical purposes, which allow learners of the language to improve their ability to speak and listen proficiently or improve their oral performance.

Criteria to Assess Oral Performance

Most language education programs devise their oral performance assessment criteria. Some authors, Namaziandost and Ahmadi (2019), and Dunbar, Brooks, and Kubicka-Miller (2006), for example, agree that communication becomes effective when a speaker conveys the message clearly and dynamically. In higher education institutions, professors evaluate students’ oral performance around *communicative skills*. A clear message, speech fluency, and communicative strategies are essential when assessing their speaking production abilities. Along the same lines, it is crucial to evaluate *pronunciation* because its goal is to provide an intelligible message to the listener. Pronunciation typically deals with the accurate use of intonation, stress, and the different articulations of consonant and vowel sounds. Additionally, to make the second language (L2) more fluent, it is suggested to include reductions, contractions, and blendings.

Moreover, when assessing students’ oral performance, an approach is also needed for *content*. The element of content is normally conceived as students’ ability to provide relevant information in their production. It requires students to develop and organize their ideas in response to questions and situations based on the information provided in class and further

research. In the same way, another practical term for this investigation is *vocabulary*. This criterion focuses on assessing the knowledge of vocabulary on a specific topic and evaluating whether it is efficient and effective. Lastly, students are evaluated to produce full sentences that follow subject-verb agreement (SVA), which is usually done through a criterion labeled as grammar structures (sometimes grammatical competence). In other words, students must be able to show accuracy on verb tenses and form, as well as sentence variety, word order, and L2 structure accuracy. The criteria previously mentioned is based on the assessment rubric designed by Prof. Mag. José Mauricio Montero to evaluate oral performance on the oral communication courses.

This is a working theoretical framework that we will use as a lens to analyze the qualitative results from the second stage of our QUAN-Qual design. Thus, it should be made clear that this is a flexible proposal that allows for adjustments once the numerical data are collected and analyzed.

Having outlined the review of previous empirical studies in the literature review and having discussed the theoretical framework needed to interpret and discuss the findings of our study. The following section offers an overview of the methodological framework to carry out the investigation.

Methodological Framework

This study investigated the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English Teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western Campus by analyzing the students' perceptions.

Type of Research

This study follows some principles of the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Sevilla (2021) describes the positivist paradigms and states that it “involves hypothesis testing to arrive at an ‘objective’ truth. Its purpose is to discover the truth, objectively, as conceived in most traditional views of the ‘hard’ sciences” (p. 4). Likewise, this paradigm is endorsed since data was collected from a natural setting and was open to interpretations. Moreover, since we are using a mixed-method approach, it also includes some principles of the interpretivist paradigm because our study tries to understand the subjective world of human experience or “get into the head of the subjects being studied” (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2007, p. 33), and emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. The results of the data collection will address the hypothesis of this research; however, it takes into account that the results cannot be generalized only to the population targeted.

Additionally, in regard to the epistemology, this research endorses the etic and emic approaches. According to Sevilla, the etic perspective refers to the type of knowledge where the researcher is an objective outsider; he or she does not get involved in the community they attempt to study (2021). For the quantitative stage, the population was used to get the required information, not for other purposes, which means not getting involved with their objectives or learning process. However, for the qualitative stage, researchers had a glance as insiders by sitting down with the participant and interviewing them. As stated by Williams (2008), “an emic perspective is fundamental to understanding how people perceive the world around them” (p. 249).

As this inquiry involves a positivist paradigm, it adheres to a realistic ontology, which according to Sevilla “views truth as objective and measurable. According to realists, reality exists

and is driven by natural laws. It is an ontological perspective informed —or supplemented— by the positivistic paradigm” (2021, p. 5). This study is based on a realist ontology, even though the research uses a mixed-method it is more focused on a quantitative approach. Furthermore, as the investigation entails an interpretivist paradigm as well, a relativist ontology sums up in order to describe the perspectives. As cited by Sevilla (2021), a relativist ontology “postulates that ‘truths’ are subjective, socially constructed, and open to interpretations. Within this standpoint, knowledge is context-bound, and perceptions of truth may change over time” (p. 5). This study was worked with a small sample, which means that the results obtained from the data collected cannot be generalized or taken as the only truth for all the contexts, populations, or times.

Classifications of the Study

By method

Regarding the research design, according to Creswell (2014), this study adopts an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method design which "involves a two-phase project in which the researcher collects quantitative data in the first phase, analyzes the results, and then uses the results to plan (or build on to) the second, qualitative phase" (p. 274). This design allowed the qualitative data to help explain in more detail the initial quantitative results. This design is adopted because both quantitative and qualitative data are necessary to have a stronger result from the participants' perspective.

The first stage of the research followed a quantitative recollection of data using instrumentation with close-ended questions. As such, the instruments for the second stage followed the collection of data through a qualitative tool, which was a semi-structured interview.

It is vital to highlight the flexible nature of this design since, as explained above, the second stage builds from the first, so objectives and questions might need to be adjusted depending on how much data remains to be explained through a qualitative inquiry (second stage).

By Depth

In terms of how deeply it delved into the research problem, the study can be described as exploratory research. Barrantes (2013, as cited by Sevilla, 2021) explains that exploratory research.

Seeks to unveil a preliminary understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It may use qualitative or quantitative designs, but the most important feature is that it is done to generate initial data which could help us continue to explore, describe or explain a phenomenon (p.14).

Based on the previous quote it is important to remark that this project intends to collect initial quantitative data which helps explore and analyze the topic using qualitative data.

By Time Frame

This research can be classified as cross-sectional research since it is planned to be done within a short period; in addition, it comprehended the participation of two groups in terms of population (students). This study can be considered cross-sectional research, as explained by Barrantes (2002, as cited in Sevilla, 2021).

Cross-sectional research is done within a shorter period, and can include –but is not restricted to– the participation of several groups for comparison purposes. While

longitudinal research examines one sample on several occasions over a given time frame, cross-sectional inquiry typically looks at several samples over a short period (p. 16).

As explained by Sevilla, this research can be classified as cross-sectional since it complies with the principles stated.

By Purpose

Finally, following Barrantes' (2013) standpoint, this investigation follows the structure of basic research as it is intended to provide input without a practical application of the results obtained. It also intends to find new knowledge and areas of investigation, as it is mainly focused on providing insights and creating theoretical knowledge of those specific areas of investigation. We, however, do not rule out future applications for decision-making, policy development, or classroom methodologies that colleagues or institutional authorities may wish to undertake.

The Setting and the Participants

The study was conducted at the University of Costa Rica, Western campus. The Western branch was created in 1969 and is located in San Ramón, Alajuela. The Western Campus holds an average population of 3000 students. It also offers a total of 22 undergraduate majors that meet professional demand with academic, research, and humanistic education. Some of the areas of study available at this Western branch are specific areas like social sciences, health, business, and engineering.

The participants comprise thirty-six junior students from the English teaching majors at the University of Costa Rica, Western campus. These junior students were enrolled in the course

Oral Communication VI (IO5450). This population was selected to identify the perceived effects of remote language teaching strategies based on their oral performance. First, for the quantitative phase of the research, all the students gathered answered a close-ended questionnaire. Afterward, for the qualitative phase, five of the participants were sampled to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Intended Sampling Techniques

For the quantitative phase of the study, thirty-six junior students from the English teaching majors participated in the first stage of this inquiry. The number was flexible because it depended on how many students are active in the courses by the time the study was conducted. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009, as cited by Sevilla, 2021), “For smaller populations, say, $N = 100$ or fewer, there is little point in sampling” (p. 89). Consequently, we surveyed thirty-six students.

For the qualitative stage, where the numerical results were explained in more depth, five of the participants were sampled. These were key participants whose answers in the previous stage needed further probing, explanations, or inquiry. The intended sampling method in this stage is the purposive sampling technique. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), for this sampling technique, researchers “hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought” (p. 156). Purposive sampling is based on researchers’ knowledge and judgment, which was helpful for this mixed-method research. The criteria to select the interviewees were:

- students who participated in the quantitative phase of the study;

- learners enrolled in the Oral Communication VI course in the second academic semester of 2021;
- informants who showed willingness to participate in further stages of the project;
- participants whose data constitute outliers or show patterns of positive/negative perceptions towards remote teaching strategies;
- informants whose data raise questions that merit further probing due to knowledge gaps left; and
- participants that deliver compelling answers and are willing to provide explanations for reasons or causes regarding their perceptions about the effects of remote teaching on oral performance.

Instrumentation

Since the study was mixed and based on a QUAN-Qual design, quantitative and qualitative instruments were used.

For the quantitative stage, the instrument was a questionnaire. “The questionnaire consists of standardized questions that operationalize the measurement constructs. The goal is to present a uniform stimulus to respondents so that their responses are comparable” (Martin, 2006, p. 3). This instrument was divided into two sections: Part I, including personal data, and part II including close-ended questions comprising the effects of remote teaching on junior students’ oral performance.

Once the numerical data were analyzed, in the qualitative stage a semi-structured interview was used to further explain the QUAN results. Restating Sevilla (2021), semi-structured interviews are based on questions that are prepared in advance. These questions can

sometimes be communicated to the interviewees beforehand, but the instrument is also open to additional questions that can come up while the interview is carried out. In this part, students explained more about the effects of the remote language teaching strategies implemented to them based on the qualitative instruments. This semi-structured interview, set up in succession, yielded explanations about phenomena that remained unexplained in the qualitative phase of the study.

Pilot testing

To validate the instrument, a pilot testing procedure was conducted. We selected a total of 21 participants: 11 junior students taking oral VI classes, 4 senior students, 4 postgraduate students, 1 professor at the University of Costa Rica in charge of oral VI, and 1 research expert. The pilot testing instrument consisted of 3 different parts. First, personal information. This section was created to have contact information about the participants. The second part included questions related to perceived effects on remote learning. Finally, a feedback section about the instrument was included. On this part, informants provided feedback, suggestions, and comments regarding the questionnaire previously taken.

Procedures

First, participants were contacted by email and explained the research objective. After that, we described ethics policies. Consequently, informants were asked to fill out a Likert scale of agreement. Once the quantitative data had been tabulated and analyzed, some of the participants were selected purposefully for a semi-structured interview. The questions used for the qualitative phase emerged after the numerical data had been analyzed.

The inclusion criteria comprised active students, students taking oral classes, and junior students. The exclusion criteria incorporated inactive, first, and second-year students.

The analysis of the data considers the quantitative and qualitative information collected through the questionnaire, and semi-structured interview. For the numerical data, verbal descriptions were provided with sample tables to exemplify the analysis. For the qualitative data, excerpts were used to illustrate the informants' perspectives about the effects that were left unanswered in the questionnaire.

Validity

To validate the inquiry, we used four validity measures: first, the data was collected from two different groups taking *Oral Communication VI*. Thirty-six students participated in the study. Second, triangulation was achieved by combining several instruments from the mixed-method approach (a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview). Another level of triangulation was accomplished by having four researchers contribute to the analysis and findings. Also, all collaborators were calibrating perspectives on both stages of the project. Lastly, a research expert from National University of Costa Rica and University of Costa Rica checked the congruence between the instruments and the research goal.

Reliability

To ensure reliability, we completed three steps: First, the instruments were pilot-tested before being administered to the target population. We selected a number of students from the English teaching major at Universidad of Costa Rica, Western Branch, and they filled out the pilot questionnaire. Second, rapport was built through constant communication between

interviewers and interviewees. Third, consistency of coding was ensured by labeling and organizing the data gathered in order to identify different patterns and the relationships among them.

Credibility, Transferability, and Confirmability

Since this project includes a qualitative stage, it is crucial to ensure credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

First, as stated by MacKey and Gass (2005), to guarantee credibility researchers have to “demonstrate that their findings are credible to their research population” (p. 180). To ensure credibility in this inquiry, some triangulation strategies at different levels were developed. The triangulation steps are stated in the validity section. Furthermore, to guarantee transferability there is a thorough description of the population’s context. This will help future investigations to compare, adopt, or transfer the findings to a similar context. Moreover, to denote confirmability researchers had the data based on the interpretations available.

Ethical Standards

In terms of ethics, this study assured participants’ privacy and anonymity by keeping their identities confidential. Moreover, sensible data is kept in a safe place preventing third parties from having access to it. Furthermore, a consent form where the objective, rights, terms, and conditions of participation was read to and signed by the participants. Lastly, an audit trail was left for easy verification of the qualitative analysis of data and its interpretation; to account for this, interview transcripts were included in the *Appendices* section.

Data Analysis

As stated earlier in this report, the goal of this research is to analyze the perceptions of the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western Campus. This section will be divided into two subsections to cover the analysis of the data for both quantitative and qualitative stages.

Quantitative Analysis

For this section, five aspects will be analyzed: (1) participants' social contexts, (2) online teaching strategies, (3) oral performance, (4) criteria to assess oral performance, and (5) participants' perceptions of remote teaching. In the analysis below, quantitative data was gathered from the thirty-six questionnaires administered to the students who had taken an Oral Communication course at UCR-WB during the second semester of 2021, when emergency remote teaching was in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis will be conducted based on a quantitative approach following descriptive statistics since the purpose is to characterize the participants' perceptions. Inferential statistics will not be used since the study does not aim for generalizations based on samples, but to describe a series of frequency-based responses on the subject of inquiry. At the end of the analysis, results from an open-ended question will be laid out using a qualitative approach.

For purposes of organization and traceability, we are presenting the data analysis according to aspects or subsections (not by questions) within instruments. We will also use verbal descriptions of the data presented in tables, all of which will be numbered and titled for easy identification. Additionally, we will offer a summary of the data analysis and will link it to the discussion of the findings.

Aspect 1: Participants' Social Contexts

In order to have a better understanding of the participants' social context, some of the questions sought to gather baseline data about gender, age, and the major in which the participants are enrolled. Broadly speaking, numbers suggest that most participants are young women between the ages of 21 and 25, and they are enrolled in the English Teaching major.

Thus, table 1 depicts the participants' gender. As can be observed, 75% of the students reported identifying as women, while the other 25% reported identifying as men.

Table 1.

Participants' Gender Identity

Genders	Percentages
Women	75%
Men	25%
Non-Binary	0%
Prefer not to say	0%
Other	0%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

To further contextualize the participants' demographic data, table 2 below shows the age ranges. As seen, 83% of those who completed the questionnaire indicated that they are between 21 and 25, while 6% indicated ages between 18 and 20. Another 11% claimed to be between 26 and 35, and none of the informants stated to be older than 35.

Table 2.

Participants' Ages

Age Ranges	Percentages
Between 18 and 20	6%
Between 21 and 25	83%
Between 26 and 35	11%
Older than 35	0%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

The next aspect of the questionnaire recorded participants' majors. As depicted in table 3, 57% asserted to major in *Enseñanza del Inglés*, while 30% indicated to belong to *Preescolar con Concentración en Inglés*, while only 14% reported to be enrolled in *Primaria con Concentración en Inglés*. Thus, the following table summarizes the numbers herein shown.

Table 3.

Participants' Enrolled Majors

Majors	Percentages
Preescolar con Concentración en Inglés	30%
Primaria con Concentración en Inglés	14%
Enseñanza de Inglés	57%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

As evidenced in these data, most of the respondents claimed to be enrolled in the *Enseñanza del Inglés* major.

In the analysis of the second aspect, informants' perceptions about online teaching strategies implemented by the professors in the *Oral Communication VI* course are presented.

Aspect 2: Online Teaching Strategies

In this section, informants were asked to provide a list of the online teaching strategies implemented in the *Oral Communication VI* course and their opinions on the extent to which such strategies have helped them boost their oral performance. On the whole, data suggest that the most used remote teaching techniques were synchronous and asynchronous sessions and oral presentations. Moreover, the numbers suggest that most participants think these teaching and evaluation techniques have helped them improve their general oral performance.

Informants were given a list where they could choose more than one option; therefore, the numbers are displayed according to the percentage of students who listed the strategies amongst the most implemented ones. 94% of subjects indicated that synchronous sessions and oral presentations were the most implemented online strategies. Following that, 83% agreed that asynchronous sessions are also implemented regularly (*quite a bit*), while 72% chose multimedia resources and the use of different online tools to practice oral performance as some of the most common ones. Additionally, 67% of informants declared that online course material was also usually implemented by the instructor, whereas 64% reported collaborative work techniques in the most implemented online strategies. In contrast, only 61% stated that forums are implemented regularly; at the same time, interactive virtual activities were listed by 58% of participants as the most implemented online teaching strategies. Additionally, 56% of the learners shared that discussions were applied during their classes. In line manner, 50% declared that lectures were one of the approaches administered. Furthermore, 39% affirmed that practice/feedback sessions

were one of the most executed strategies. Finally, none of those taking the course asserted that there were no other online strategies implemented. To sum up, table 4 shows the number and the percentages for the online teaching techniques implemented.

Table 4.

List of Most Implemented Online Teaching Strategies by the Professors

Online Teaching Strategy	Number of Participants	Percentages
Synchronous sessions	34	94%
Oral presentations	34	94%
Asynchronous sessions	30	83%
Use of different online tools to practice oral performance	26	72%
Multimedia resources	26	72%
Online course material	24	67%
Collaborative work	23	64%
Forums	22	61%
Interactive virtual activities	21	58%
Discussions	20	56%
Lectures	18	50%
Practice/feedback sessions	14	39%
Other	0	0%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

A salient feature in this table is that the most implemented online teaching strategies indicated by participants were synchronous sessions and oral presentations, followed by asynchronous sessions, multimedia resources, and the use of different online tools to practice oral performance. As shown in the top half of table 4, in terms of online teaching strategies employed by the professor in the *Oral Communication VI* course, most remote teaching strategies involve oral and communicative interaction. Once subjects chose their list of online strategies, they were asked about their perceptions of them.

Table 5 summarizes participants' opinions on the teaching techniques implemented by the professor and whether these helped learners improve their general oral performance. Table 5 shows that 75% of those who completed the questionnaire indicated that the techniques have indeed helped them boost their oral performance, while 25% stated to have seen no results from them.

Table 5.
Perception of the Teaching Techniques Implemented

Question	Answers:	
	Yes	No
In your opinion, did the techniques implemented in the Oral Communication VI course help you improve your general oral performance?	75%	25%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

As shown in the previous table, the majority of the informants reported that these teaching techniques helped them improve their general oral performance; however, some of them perceive that the strategies did not help them at all, which is concerning since this means that an average of 2 out of 9 pupils reported not to have experienced any progress on their general oral performance. Some questions that emerged while analyzing the data may include: Are the reasons linked to the techniques applied (which may not have been aligned with the students' ways of learning)? Are they correlated to the remote modality used, which may not have used the right tools for these students?

If in the previous question the participants answered "yes", they were asked to answer the following question: *On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means "very little" and 5 means "very much," to what extent did these techniques help you boost your general oral performance?* From the data shown in table 6 below, a fact that deserves attention is that around 44.4% of the respondents perceived that the techniques were helpful (rated in the survey as *much*) in boosting their oral performance, while approximately 29.6% answered that the online strategies have somewhat helped them improve their oral performance. Only 14.8% expressed that the online techniques have helped them sufficiently (rated in the survey as *very much*), and 11.1% of the informants stated a little help from the methods. Finally, 0% reported their performance was affected very little by the remote teaching approaches. Table 6 summarizes these percentages.

Table 6.

Impact of the Techniques on the General Oral Performance

Question	Answers:				
	1	2	3	4	5
On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means “very little” and 5 means “very much,” to what extent did these techniques help you boost your general oral performance?	0%	11.1%	29.6%	44.4%	14.8%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

As described in table 6, the majority of respondents (59.2%) agreed on having significant (*much and very much*) help from the remote techniques on their oral performance. However, many of those who are taking the course (40.7 %) expressed having little or somewhat help from those techniques. Lastly, no students claimed to have had very little help from the techniques on their general oral performance. As evidenced in the data, the majority of those who responded to the interrogation claimed having a neutral position towards the level of improvement. Since the nature of the instrument does not delve into the reasons for this neutrality, it is unclear whether the explanation for such neutrality is linked to indecisiveness towards the statement, unawareness about the level of self-improvement, or any other possibility.

The following table shows the participants’ points of view about the evaluation techniques implemented in the *Oral Communication VI* course and their impact on their oral performance in the English language. Eighty-one percent of the informants stated that evaluation techniques have helped them improve their oral performance, and 19% reported that these

evaluation techniques have not benefited them at all. Table 7 offers a visual summary of such answers.

Table 7.

Perception of the Evaluation Techniques Employed

Question	Answers:	
	Yes	No
Do you think the evaluation techniques employed in the Oral Communication VI course helped you improve your oral performance in the English language?	81%	19%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

As shown in Table 7, the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course have been as beneficial by most students, whereas only a few of them indicated that the evaluation techniques have not helped them boost their oral performance.

If in the previous question the participants answered “yes,” they were asked to answer the following question: *On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means “very little” and 5 means “very much,” to what extent have these evaluation techniques helped you boost your general oral performance?* The data were summarized in Table 8, which shows that 48.3% of the surveyed population perceived the evaluation techniques significantly helped them (*much*) with their oral performance. Approximately 37.9% stated that the online strategies have helped them improve their oral performance. An amount of 10.3% expressed that the online techniques have helped

them greatly (*very much*), and only 3.4% of the informants recognized little help from the methods. Finally, 0% reported their performance was affected very little by the remote teaching approaches. Table 8 depicts these percentages.

Table 8.

Impact of the Evaluation Techniques on Oral Performance

Question	Answers:				
	1	2	3	4	5
On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means “very little” and 5 means “very much,” to what extent have these evaluation techniques helped you boost your oral performance?	0%	3.4%	37.9%	48.3%	10.3%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

What is significant about the numbers in table 8 is the fact that overall evaluation techniques have had a good impact and have importantly helped them (*much*) on students' oral performance. What is concerning about these results is that a large percentage of the participants stated the evaluation techniques implemented had a neutral impact on their oral performance. From this evidence, it is not clear whether these perceptions originate from learners' not knowing about the possible differences between evaluation techniques, or whether these should be a warning sign for professors to rethink their evaluation techniques in regard to remote teaching.

Aspect 3: Oral Performance

This section provides data about the current academic performance of the participants, as well as their opinions about whether the techniques and the assessment applied in the course have impacted their learning outcomes. Generally, numbers suggest that students from the *Oral Communication VI* courses report having developed a good oral performance. In addition, remote learning has influenced this performance in a neutral manner.

The table below illustrates the main characteristics of participants' own assessment of their current overall academic performance. In response to this question, 47.2% reported a very good academic performance; 38.9% assessed their own academic performance as good; 11.1% evaluated it as excellent, and 2.8% agreed on a fair one. No participants ranked this aspect as poor. Table 9 summarizes these percentages.

Table 9.

Assessment of the Current Overall Academic Performance

Question	Assessment	Percentages
How would you self-assess your overall academic performance in the Oral Communication VI course?	Poor	0%
	Fair	2.8%
	Good	38.9%
	Very Good	47.2%
	Excellent	11.1%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

Table 9 indicates that a few of the respondents evaluate having achieved a fair academic performance. However, most of them assess their progress as overall good and very good, whereas some of them appraised it as excellent.

On the question of whether remote learning had affected their performance, 30.6% expressed a major positive impact; 30.6% reported a minor positive influence; 19.4% claimed a neutral effect, and the other 13.9% recorded a minor negative effect. A low 5.6 % stated a major negative effect on their academic performance. These percentages are fully displayed in table 9 below.

Table 10.

Academic Performance Affected by Remote Learning

Question	Impact	Percentages
What kind of impact did remote learning have on your academic performance in the Oral Communication course?	Major negative affect	5.6%
	Minor negative	13.9%
	Neutral	19.4%
	Major positive	30.6%
	Minor positive	30.6%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

Taken together, the data portray a majority of participants indicating that remote learning has had a minor positive impact on their academic performance. This evidence allows us to

comprehend that even though academic performance has not been affected negatively by remote learning, some students still prefer face-to-face classes.

The next aspect of the questionnaire inquired about students' opinions on the evaluation techniques implemented in order to assess communicative skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, and knowledge acquisition, as seen below.

Aspect 4: Criteria to Assess Oral Performance

With the purpose of understanding the participants' opinions around their level of agreement towards the evaluation techniques employed to assess oral performance, the surveyed population was presented with a series of statements about the different evaluation techniques and criteria to assess oral performance. On the whole, numbers suggest that most informants somewhat agree that the evaluation techniques used in the oral courses have helped them improve their communicative skills, pronunciation, or knowledge of topics; however, most of them showed a moderate level of agreement that the evaluation techniques have helped them improve when it comes to content mastery of a wide range of topics.

Table 11 shows data about the extent to which evaluation techniques helped informants improve their communicative skills. The majority (50%) somewhat agreed with the statement; 25% of them neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 11.1% strongly disagreed that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course helped them improve their communicative skills; 8.3% somewhat disagreed, and 5.6% strongly agreed. These numbers are fully outlined in the following table.

Table 11.

Improvement of Communicative Skills (Speech Clarity and Fluency)

Question	Answers:				
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
In your opinion, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you improve your communicative skills (speech clarity and fluency), in the English language?	11.1%	8.3%	25%	50%	5.6%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

As evidenced in table 11, most of the informants have a moderate level of agreement (somewhat agree) about the effectiveness of evaluation techniques in improving participants' communicative skills; nonetheless, an important number of participants are neutral in relation to the statement (neither agree nor disagree). Because the numerical nature of the instrument did not explore the reasons for this apparent neutrality, it is uncertain to determine whether they are linked to indecisiveness towards the statement, doubts about self-improvement, lack of interest, or none of them.

Within this section, the informants' level of agreement in terms of evaluation techniques and pronunciation were also investigated. Most of the participants (30.6%) reported a moderate level of agreement (somewhat agree) that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course helped them improve their pronunciation of the English language, whereas 27.8% showed a high

level of agreement and 22.2% had no level of agreement (neither agree nor disagree) towards the statement. Only 16.7% and 2.8% of participants somewhat disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively about the statement. The raw numbers regarding this analysis are displayed in table 12.

Table 12.
Evaluation Techniques and Pronunciation Improvement

Question	Answers:				
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
In your opinion, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you improve your pronunciation, in the English language?	2.8%	16.7%	22.2%	30.6%	27.8%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

An aspect to consider in this table is that only a small percentage of participants (2.8%) have a high level of disagreement about the evaluation techniques helping them improve their pronunciation. However, more than half (58.4%) of the participants have a positive opinion as they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with what was stated in the question.

In terms of evaluation techniques and knowledge acquisition, the majority of students (52.8%) stated to somewhat agree, while 25% of the participants strongly agreed. Only 13.9% did not agree or disagree with the statement. Accordingly, only 8.3% somewhat disagreed, and no

participants strongly disagreed with the assertion that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course have helped them increase their knowledge of a wide range of topics in the English language. Table 13 shows these numbers.

Table 13.
Evaluation Techniques and Knowledge Acquisition

Question	Answers:				
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
In your opinion, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you increase your knowledge of a wide range of topics in the English language?	0%	8.3%	13.9%	52.8%	25%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

A salient feature in these results is that no participants considered that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course were unhelpful to increase their knowledge regarding a wide range of topics. Meanwhile, a great majority somewhat agreed that the techniques helped them in this matter. This suggests that teachers' effort to improve participants' knowledge in a wide range of topics was reflected in the evaluation techniques employed in the Oral Communication VI course.

Closely related to evaluation and pronunciation, the instrument also gathered data about the perceived link between evaluation and the development of vocabulary. On this, 41.7% of the

informants reported a moderate level of agreement (somewhat agreed), 27.8% strongly agreed, 22.2% did not agree nor disagree, and 8.3% somewhat disagreed with the statement that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course have helped them improve their vocabulary in the English language, as table 14 shows.

Table 14.
Evaluation Techniques and Vocabulary Improvement

Question	Answers:				
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Do you feel the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course helped you improve your vocabulary in the English language?	0%	8.3%	22.2%	41.7%	27.8%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

The first noticeable aspect in these percentages is that no participants strongly disagreed about the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course being helpful to improve their vocabulary. Meanwhile, a large majority somewhat agreed that the techniques have helped them in this subject. What these numbers do not reveal is whether the significant percentage of participants who neither agree nor disagree are indecisive about the effectiveness of the evaluation techniques in relation to the statement, or they just intended to avoid answering in a positive or negative way. Follow-up research on this part of the investigation should delve into

these aspects. With that mentioned, the analysis of aspect 5 depicts informants' perceptions towards remote teaching in the *Oral Communication VI* course.

Aspect 5: Participants' Perceptions Towards Remote Learning

In this subsection, data will be presented with questions on how students reported perceiving remote learning. In general, data indicate a positive change in perceptions towards remote learning according to most of the participants; nevertheless, most of them still consider face-to-face classes to be better for oral performance improvement than remote lessons.

Table 15 below displays the percentages concerning the way the perspective towards remote learning has changed. As observed, 37% claimed to have held a negative perspective initially which then became positive; 33% asserted it was positive and remains positive. In contrast, 22% indicated that their perspective was negative and stayed the same throughout the course, while 8% declared that their perspective went from positive to negative.

Table 15.
How Perspectives Have Changed

Question	Answers:			
	It was positive and now it is negative	It was positive and remained positive	It was negative and now it is positive	It was negative and remained negative
How has your perspective towards remote learning changed?	8%	33%	37%	22%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

In sum, the majority of the informants agreed on having gone from a negative to a positive perspective towards remote learning. The reasons for such a switch are so far unknown, but they certainly need to be investigated to shed light on the comprehension of such positivity towards remote learning.

Regarding how students assessed their own oral performance based on their experience taking classes remotely compared to face-to-face classes, table 16 shows that according to the majority (61%), face-to-face learning was better for oral performance, while 25% stated that remote learning is better for oral performance, and only 14% affirmed that the modalities do not make any difference. Table 16 summarizes these percentages.

Table 16.

Oral Performance in Remote Learning Compared to Face-to-Face Classes

Question	Answers:		
	Face-to-face learning is better for oral performance	Remote learning is better for oral performance	None of the modalities make a difference
Based on your experience taking classes remotely, how would you assess your oral performance as compared to face-to-face classes?	61%	25%	14%

Source: raw data from the questionnaire

One of the most evident insights from the data is that most of the informants agreed that face-to-face learning was better for their oral performance than remote learning, while only a few

of them perceived that none of the modalities make a difference on their learning outcomes. Once more, a further inquiry needs to probe into the reasons why 14% of the students do not seem to have a fixed preference over any of the modalities. This opens space for an interrogant on whether it is because they hold high levels of autonomy and would do well on any of them, or because they are clueless about the possible differences the modalities could render. To account for scientific accuracy, it is important for researchers to wonder whether the participants understood the question correctly.

As an initial triangulation tool, at the end of the instrument, an open-ended question was included for participants to provide deeper insights into their perceptions regarding teaching strategies used and the promotion of oral performance. As a response to the question, “In general terms, what is your perspective/perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?” A large number of participants agreed that remote classes allow the use of a wide range of tools and resources, which is favorable for the teaching-learning process. Nonetheless, a preference for face-to-face classes was reported based on three main reasons; first, there was considerably limited time to practice oral skills in each session. Second, due to the lack of time, no room for feedback was opened, which is a helpful means to improve students’ speaking skills. Third, the humdrum of every remote class was cited as a defining factor. According to the data, the course consisted of student-prepared oral presentations each lesson; therefore, students would render their presentations and the rest of the classmates listened to them, which did not encourage much speaking practice for the audience.

Table 17 below exhibits a wider picture of some of the informants’ opinions on the topic:

Table 17.

Participants' comments about their perceptions regarding teaching strategies used and oral performance.

Question	Comment	Participant
In general terms, what is your perspective/perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?	“Some of the techniques were good, but the others not too much. For example, in oral communication VI, there were many oral presentations, so when it was not my turn to present, I was only listening to my classmates. Of course, we had to give opinions about those topics' presentations, but those were just little comments and not all of the classmates had the opportunity to participate. I think a very important part of the oral course is having a lot of speaking practices with our classmates, but because of the number of oral presentations and the reduced time, the chance we were given to do so was too limited.” (sic)	P3
	“In my opinion, these were not good enough. I think it was necessary to receive more feedback and do more practice, especially in the oral part.”	P32
	“Techniques applied are usually good but internet issues can affect the experience. The overall experience it's better face-to-face due to the fact that the most important mistakes can be spotted and corrected immediately.” (sic)	P6
	“The teaching techniques implemented in remote	P10

learning brought good benefits to language proficiency. For example, teachers implemented videos, apps, and websites to involve us and created spaces for conversations. It was difficult in face-to-face classes because sometimes the classroom did not have the resources.”

What is more striking about these answers is that the majority of students agree that in order to improve their oral performance skills it is necessary to change teaching techniques.

So far, the quantitative phase of the current study deals with the data about participants’ social contexts, online teaching and evaluation strategies implemented by professors, and respondents’ perceptions towards their oral performance and remote learning in general following basic descriptive statistics. To offer a deeper exploration of the interrogatives presented elsewhere in this section, a semi-structured interview was designed to get a better understanding of the phenomenon. As indicated earlier, this qualitative phase will help explain the numerical findings which merited further investigation, and it will add another triangulation layer to the study, as reported in the following subsection.

Qualitative Analysis

Citation Nomenclature Used in the Analysis: one of the most important ethical standards in qualitative research is to protect participants’ identities and physical integrities. To account for that principle and keep the analysis organized, the following abbreviations will be used to quote the participants’ own words.

Instrument	Participants	Citation Nomenclature
Semi-structured interview	Junior students' oral performance at the English teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus	SSI-P 01-05

Source: researchers' own design

Since all the data in this section comes from five junior students' perceptions regarding their own oral performance at the English teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus, who participated in a semi-structured interview, whenever a participant's words are cited directly, they will be attributed to the participants anonymously as SSI-001, SSI-002, and so on.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data will be analyzed using verbal descriptions to accompany the participants' exact words regarding the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the coding process. We are following Freeman's (1998) model for data analysis, which is summarized by Sevilla and Gamboa (2017) as follows:

In the first stage, emerging patterns from the data were named (or labeled) in isolation. In the second, these patterns were categorized according to logical relations between and among themselves. The categories were not selected a priori from the outside, but grounded on the data collected. In the third stage, the researchers studied relationships

across categories and further identified additional categories that had not been pinned down during stage 1. In the last stage, general connections were made between the categories and subcategories and then with the research inquiry. (p. 241)

Once data from the interview were coded and grouped into categories of analysis, three broad themes emerged: student-related factors, teacher-related, and context-bound factors influencing why students perceived their oral performance in the way that they did. Hence, below are verbal descriptions of the different themes, categories, and codes.

Theme 1: Student-Related Factors

Two major student-related categories surfaced from the inductive coding surrounding this theme: Preferences regarding face-to-face vs. remote teaching and additional factors contributing to oral performance.

Category 1: Preferences Regarding Face-to-Face or Remote Teaching.

- ***Self-Motivation.***

Self-motivation was another element that helps explain the way these students conceived their oral performance. In the words of participant SSI-P02, “I tried to put all my effort to do everything and better.” Similarly, student SSI-P05 explained that “I was aware that it was my last English course. So, I needed to study a lot, and I needed to learn as much as I could”. And yet informant SSI-P03 made the point that the factors that influenced their learning process were “the techniques applied and [their] motivation to participate... Well, being in class, because if you don't want to learn, you're not gonna learn anything.”

- ***Impersonal Communication.***

Most of the informants expressed that talking to a screen felt very impersonal for them, and this was one of the reasons why they reported leaning towards face-to-face learning. For example, interviewee SSI-P 05 stated that: “[they] didn't want to turn on [their] cameras. That's like something so simple, [they] don't want to do that. And speaking, like, throughout this microphone is like something very impersonal” (SSI-P 05, sic). In the same way, SSI-P 04 expressed that:

I like to talk to people, and sometimes I felt that I didn't knew my classmates. I didn't know what they liked or if they were following me, because we didn't turn off the camera, so it was just a blank screen, black. (SSI-P 04, sic)

- ***Physiologically Tiring and Psychologically Draining.***

Another crucial factor that the participants brought up during the interview was that they perceived how tiring virtual classes are; therefore, this was one of the reasons that explained their preferences regarding face-to-face or remote teaching. Subject SSI-P 05 claimed that “virtual classes are more tiring than face-to-face classes,” and that “spending a lot of time, like, more than two hours in front of my computer is completely tiring.” Similarly, respondent SSI-P 01 declared that remote lessons “would be too tiring because sometimes [the professor] extended the class because there were many oral presentations, so the time was not enough. So, [they] were there like three hours” (SSI-P 01, sic). And yet this same informant highlighted that “face-to-face is different because you can move, you can go to the bathroom, so it's easier” (SSI-P 01, sic).

- ***Previous Negative Experiences.***

Lastly, having previous negative experiences was another perceived effect of why students were not feeling positive towards the remote teaching modality. One of the interviewees stressed that their initial perception “was negative because of the previous experiences that [they] had with other virtual courses” (SSI-P 01). This same respondent goes on to add that: “[they] remember[s] that the other courses were similar. [They] didn't have so much time to participate or to interact with other classmates. So, [they] was like, maybe, it is going to be the same” (SSI-P 01). Correspondingly, subject SSI-P 05 compared their previous experiences to the *Oral Communication VI* course and stated that “the same thing happened. I mean, the professor was the only person talking in the meetings, so it was awkward and kind of weird.”

Category 2: Additional Factors Contributing to Oral Performance.

- ***Social Interaction.***

Based on the data coded, there seems to exist a consensus regarding the role of social interaction as a factor influencing participants' overall performance in the course. Most students agreed that their speaking skills were boosted by the kind of interaction set up during the remote classes. As participant SSI-P 04 has stated, classes should not be “only about learning English or anything, but it's also to know people” (SSI- P 04, sic). Similarly, informant SSI-P 04 confers a lot of importance to this aspect because they come to class “to give comments, opinions, and also to give feedback... So [they] think that mostly the interactions [they] ha[d] were really good [...]” (SSI-P 04). As the last example, interviewee SSI-P 05 has shed light on the importance of interaction with students from other campuses: “We were given spaces in which we could

interact with other people, not just my classmates, but other people from another campus. I don't remember the campus to be honest, but we have like this interaction outside our own campus. And I believe this interaction was very helpful for us” (SSI-P 05, sic).

- ***Extrinsic Motivation.***

Besides social interaction and self-motivation, perceptions of oral skills were also influenced by motivational factors coming from the outside, such as the need to complete an assignment to get a grade or the motivation generated by the classroom environment. The words of participant 04 illustrate extrinsic motivation coming from assessments in the following lines:

Well, about the evaluation technique. I think that we were really good. I really liked it, because sometimes it's not I don't know if sometimes difficult to talk if we are not evaluated, or sometimes you don't feel like you like to talk, or you don't feel like in the mood to talk right but when you have to do it because it's part of the course. So, you are like forced. So, I think that the evaluation that the professor made were good for evaluating and also for us to participate. (SSI-P 04, sic)

Conversely, informant 01 explains how the classroom environment provided extrinsic motivation: “it was a space in which I could share my opinions or ideas with the topics or units that we were seeing through the course” (SSI-P 01, sic).

- ***Lack of Self-confidence.***

Lastly, a lack of self-confidence reportedly influenced the informants’ oral performance. Participant SSI-P 01 expressed a lack of self-confidence when some of the students wanted to participate: “I remember that maybe they didn't participate because they were shy, or they didn't

feel comfortable and things like that (SSI-P 01, sic). In the same way, SSI-P 04 informed that another factor is the pressure of having people listening to them while they performed in class: “when you have like when 20 people listening to you, or maybe 30 you feel overwhelmed that all people are listening to you” (SSI-P 04, sic).

Theme 2: Teacher-Related Factors

After reviewing the information from the semi-structured interview, three teacher-related categories emerged from the inductive coding surrounding this theme: methodology as a bridge for oral skills' consolidation, the connection between teaching techniques and language proficiency, and the influence of assessment on oral performance.

Category 1: Methodology as a Bridge for Oral Skills Consolidation.

- ***Varied teaching techniques.***

Varied teaching techniques were a factor that influenced how methodology acted as a bridge for oral skills. Interviewee SSI-P 04 stated that they had several techniques implemented in the class:

Besides the normal exams, we had to make an oral presentation, we had to present a resource that could be like a video, an image, a document, or anything. And we had to present. We had to talk. We had to give our opinions, comments about everything. (SSI-P 04, sic)

- ***Oral Presentations as Input to Build Knowledge.***

Participants also agreed that oral presentations worked as an input to develop knowledge. The words of interviewee SSI-P 04 support this assertion: “So with the oral presentations. I had a lot of input, so with that input, I was able to build my knowledge.” Accordingly, informant SSI-P 03 provided a detailed description of how they were not only having this input from the oral presentations, but also they were able to hear feedback from the rest of the class: “We were like participating right. So we have to give our opinions throughout the course, through other presentations of my classmates” (sic).

- ***Poor Class Management (on the part of the Professor).***

Besides varied teaching techniques and oral presentations as input to build knowledge, poor class management influenced the students’ perspective regarding the methodology implemented in the class. As participant SSI-P 02 stated, in the class “the experience was not good because the professor didn't know how to manage the environment.” Similarly, interviewee SSI-P 01 claimed not having enough time to participate in the class due to the long interventions of the professor:

I remember once another professor most of the time used to be the one who was speaking, and maybe he put a lot of emphasis on the vocabulary, and we did just the practice of the book, and we didn't have the chance to speak, so I think it could be a balance between a lit bit of the professor talking and then us trying to put that into practice and at the end of the class it could be like a closure where the professor could give us feedback or go into each

group and try to listen to what we are saying and give us feedback, but in general, I think that it is necessary to have a balance. (sic)

Similarly, informant SSI-P 05 supports the same idea of lacking space to participate: “The professor, was the only person talking in the meetings, so it was like awkward and kind of weird” (sic).

Category 2: The Connection Between Teaching Techniques and Language Proficiency.

- ***Participation.***

Regarding teaching techniques, interviewees agreed that their participation in these was a leading factor in the improvement of their language proficiency. The words of informant SSI-P 01 depict how their participation in class allowed such advancement: “I use to participate as much as I could because that is the way we improve” (SSI-P 01, sic). Similarly, in the words of interviewee SSI-P 04: “I feel that it really helped me with my fluency, and also with my confidence because we had to speak a lot.” (SSI-P 04)

In like manner, participant SSI-P 05 made the point that:

We were given spaces in which we could interact with other people, not just my classmates, but other people from other campuses. I don't remember the campus to be honest, but we had, like, this interaction outside our own campus, and I believe this interaction was very helpful for us (SSI-P 05).

- ***Need for Engaging and Interactive Classes.***

Besides the participation in classes, the need for engaging and interactive classes was

another factor influencing their improvement in terms of language proficiency. On this matter, participant SSI-P 02 explained how the repetitive teaching techniques negatively influenced their eagerness to learn and improve:

All the course was based on our presentations and [...] [the professor] was there just to give us some feedback later, and I think that that was a little bit boring because nobody participated in the class, and we don't or in my case, I didn't feel like obligated to participate (SSI-P02).

Additionally, interviewee SSI-P 04 stated how some techniques could change to improve their learning experience and speaking skills' development:

I would say that having games is really funny, you know, like a warm-up, or maybe to break the ice. I would say also that having small room talks because when you have like 20 people listening to you, or maybe 30 you feel overwhelmed that all people are listening to you. But when you are talking in, maybe in breakout rooms with 2 or 3 people is easier to express yourself. (SSI-P 04).

Category 3: Influence of Assessment on Oral Performance.

- ***Individual and Group Assessment.***

Another aspect highlighted during the semi-structured interviews was the influence of individual and group assessment as a way to improve oral performance. Participants agreed that the use of group assessment techniques helped them improve several aspects of their oral performance. This was pointed out by participant SSI-P05 by stressing that “[they] remember that [they] were evaluated as a group in this project that [they] had, like, this interaction between

students from another campus...This group evaluation [was] very important because [they] are pushed to give [their] best” (SSI-P05, sic).

- ***Evaluation Techniques.***

Opinions seem to be split among participants concerning evaluation techniques and their influence on oral performance. Meanwhile, some participants agree that the different evaluation techniques helped them boost their oral performance, while others believe otherwise. For example, on the one hand, participant SSI-P02 indicated that a major factor that influenced their opinion towards the evaluation techniques having no effect on their oral performance was that:

all the course was based on [their] presentations. And [they] think this is a traditional evaluation for an oral communication course... the professor could do like a round table or something like that, and he just did our presentations. (SSI-P02, sic)

On the other hand, informant SSI-P04 believes that the evaluation techniques employed in the course helped them improve their oral performance, as seen below.

[...] because each class [they] had to listen to 3 or 4 presentations. Also, it helped [them] with [their] vocabulary because [they] knew a lot of new words... [they] had to give feedback. [They] had to give [their] opinion to express [them]self. (SSI-P04, sic)

Theme 3: Context-Related Factors

In relation to the context-related factors, the main category that arose from the data was a shift of notions regarding remote teaching in comparison with face-to-face teaching in terms of oral performance.

Category 1: A Shift in Notions Regarding Remote Teaching.

- ***Availability of Time to Study.***

One major aspect highlighted during the data collection is related to the availability of time to study and practice during the remote teaching period. Participants seem to agree that time availability was a favorable factor of remote teaching when compared to face-to-face teaching. Participant SSI-P 04 indicated that [they] “could review a lot of topics at home, and [they] could also rehearse before [their] team presentations, so [they] was more relaxed” (SSI-P04, sic). Similarly, participant SSI-P 01 agreed that this specific factor of time availability contributed to improving oral performance as [they] “did the readings the professor told [them] to do before class. Also, [they] tried to learn the vocabulary [they] used during presentations to practice with another friend out of class” (SSI-P01, sic).

- ***Lack of Self-Motivation.***

Data also revealed that self-motivation is one major factor lacking in students. Participants agreed that the dynamics of remote teaching contributed to their lack of self-motivation, and thus, this influenced their view by remote teaching. As stated by Participant SSI-P 02, “the class was in charge of the students, and the professor was just there to give [them] some feedback later, and [they] think that was a little bit boring because nobody participated in the class, and [they] didn't feel obligated to participate” (SSI-P02, sic). Additionally, participant SSI-P04 indicated that “sometimes is difficult to talk if [they] are not evaluated, or sometimes [they] don't feel like [they] like to talk or [they] don't feel like in the mood to talk” (SSI-P04, sic).

To offer a summarized picture of the current analysis below is a table with the codes, categories, and themes gathered via the semi-structured interview.

	Categories	Themes
Self-motivation	A matter of preference, face-to-face or virtual teaching	Student-related factors
Impersonal communication		
Physiologically tiring and psychologically draining		
Previous negative experiences		
Social interaction	Additional factors contributing to oral performance	
Lack of self-confidence		
Extrinsic motivation		
Varied teaching techniques	Methodology as a bridge for oral skills consolidation	Teacher-related factors
Oral presentations as input to build knowledge		
Poor management of the class (from the prof)		
Participation		
Need for engaging classes		

Need for interactive classes	The connection between teaching techniques and language proficiency	
Individual and Group Assessment	Influence of assessment on oral performance	
Evaluation techniques		
Availability of time to study	A shift in notions regarding remote teaching	Context-related factors
Lack of self-motivation		

Having conducted the data analysis of three major themes that describe the reasons behind how participants perceived their oral performance and remote learning in general, the next section offers an overview of the discussion of the findings of this inquiry.

Discussion of Findings

Having presented the data analysis, this section provides a theoretical discussion of the main results gathered via the data analysis. This discussion is given based on the two stages that comprised the explanatory sequential mixed method design used; however, these findings are meant to build up for an integrated outlook in the conclusion. The findings will be discussed first in light of the research questions from the two stages (QUAN and Qual), followed by a theoretical analysis where results are compared with those from the research reviewed in this report.

On the numerical side of the discussion (QUAN stage), regarding question one, *What are the perceived effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance*

at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus?, participants' perceptions of the strategies implemented in the remote learning classes demonstrate the majority of informants (61.2%) expressed that remote teaching has positively affected their academic performance but to a different degree (minor positive effect or major positive effect). A significant number (19.5%) also indicated that remote learning had affected their academic performance negatively in two aspects as well (minor positive effect or major positive effect). Finally, a similar number of respondents (19.4%) claimed that the remote modality has neutrally (neither positively nor negatively) affected their performance.

Nevertheless, the results also showed that most participants perceived that the strategies used in the remote learning environments (especially synchronous and asynchronous sessions, oral presentations, multimedia resources, and the use of different online tools to practice oral performance) have been effective in improving their oral performance. This seems to indicate, that even though for many of them remote learning has affected their academic performance neutrally or negatively, the approaches implemented are effective as they help improve most of the participants' oral performance. As for the evaluation techniques, most informants have agreed that the techniques employed in the oral course have helped them improve vocabulary and knowledge acquisition of a wide range of topics. However, most of them also reported a neutral opinion about these techniques helping them improve in terms of communicative skills (speech clarity and fluency) and pronunciation.

In relation to question two of the QUAN part, *What are junior students' perceptions of the effects of remote teaching and face-to-face classes on their own oral performance at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus?*, most participants agreed that face-to-face learning is better than remote learning for their oral performance. This

preference is due to the time available in classes to practice and receive feedback and the reported monotony of virtual classes. However, the results also indicate that most of the participants' perceptions have positively changed towards remote learning since the beginning of 2020. There is consensus that there has been an update on the different tools and resources implemented in the classes.

Concerning the relation between findings from previous studies and the ones obtained in the current investigation, an analysis is necessary to study the extent to which our findings contradict or reinforce such previous research. Taken together, the results reinforce the claim by Göktürk (2016) that virtual teaching strategies have not been of significant help in terms of fluency development. On the contrary, a considerable number of participants from the present study somewhat agree on having improved their speech clarity and fluency thanks to the techniques employed in remote oral lessons; however, a still significant number answered neutrally in this respect, and only a few reported disagreeing that these techniques had helped them to fortify their communicative skills.

The findings also seem to support those by Herrera (2017) who showed that students changed their mindset toward online learning over time. At the beginning, they considered that virtual learning was useless, confusing, and overwhelming, and later they started seeing it as beneficial and functional. This is so since the majority of the participants in the current study expressed to have changed their perspectives towards remote learning in a positive manner.

Consistency has also been identified with the findings from Decena's (2018) study, according to which students from a University in Oman believe virtual lessons have positively affected their EFL learning. Even though participants expressed to prefer face-to-face lessons to remote classes, they agreed that both the teaching and evaluation of remote techniques had helped

them to improve their overall oral performance. Similarly, in this study, no students declared that their academic performance had been impacted as a consequence of the change from face-to-face lessons to virtuality.

As can be expected, in a numerical analysis of this kind, findings from previous studies will help better understand the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire. In order to analyze this information, we took into consideration five different aspects: remote teaching, perceived effects, online teaching strategies, oral performance, and criteria to assess oral performance.

The first section of the questionnaire deals with online teaching strategies. There is an explanation of the different methods teachers can use when assisting their students, and how these spaces can provide new tools and resources for learning. According to the findings, the participants agreed that their professors developed their classes either synchronously or asynchronously and that they also valued group work, presentations, and discussion in the class. Then, the second factor involved respondents' oral performance. This section evaluated the current academic performance and how the remote educational process has influenced it. In most cases, the findings show how participants achieve good academic performance, and how online learning has been neutral and does not influence significantly their oral skills.

Additionally, the last sections of the instrument show aspects such as perceived effects on communicative skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, knowledge of certain topics, and remote learning in general. These findings reinforce the premises of Göktürk (2016), Herrera (2017), and Decena (2018), who suggest that participants have found the tools implemented in virtual learning helpful at least to some degree and that there has been a positive change in informants'

perceptions towards remote learning. However, most of the respondents still consider that face-to-face classes are better for oral performance improvement than remote lessons.

Considering the qualitative stage of the study, which was based on the research question... *What possible explanations are there for the perceptions of a specific sample of students about the effects of remote teaching on oral performance?*, the results indicate, broadly, that there are several factors influencing the participants' perceptions about the effects of remote teaching. To go further on this discussion, the answers to this question were analyzed considering three derived themes from the data obtained: Student-related factors, Teacher-related factors, and Context-related factors.

This section of the discussion will be done by: (1) summarizing the main findings from the themes that emerged and (2) discussing them in the light of the theoretical framework used in this report. The reason a theoretical framework (and not previous empirical studies) will be used is that the focus here is on explaining what was discovered in this stage, not on contrasting previous findings.

With regard to student-related factors, the participants indicated a preference for face-to-face, and some additional factors also arose that contributed to the influence of this modality on their oral performance. In terms of their preference regarding one modality over the other, it could be interpreted as the participants becoming aware of different factors that influenced their perception of either modality, such as time and space flexibility or the use of technological resources in a remote environment as stated by Cil (2021), or the benefit of the social interaction in the face-to-face teaching. This could be sensed by how some of the participants became perceptive toward factors that were affecting their oral performance. Some of the additional

factors that surfaced were related to how extrinsic motivation and the lack of self-confidence helped affect their oral performance.

The interviewees indicated that the main teacher-related factors affecting oral performance were related to the methodology as a bridge for oral skills' consolidation, the connection between teaching techniques and language proficiency, and the influence of assessment on oral performance. One important aspect was how oral presentations worked as input to develop knowledge, which lines up with what authors such as Namaziandost and Ahmadi (2019), and Dunbar, Brooks, and Kubicka-Miller (2006) refer to as content. This can be described by these authors as one criterion to assess oral performance that evaluates students' ability to provide relevant information in their speech. In a similar way, another teacher-related factor influencing the improvement of language proficiency is the need for engaging and interactive classes, which according to Strydom (2017) provides an opportunity for everyone involved in the class to participate and actively engage in the learning process. Other factors that influence participants' oral proficiency, according to their opinions, are class participation, the evaluation techniques implemented, the individual and/or group assessments, and how the professor manages the class.

In reference to the context-related factors, generally, the participants agreed that there was a shift in notions regarding remote teaching after having experienced both face-to-face and remote classes. This shift could be either positive or negative according to participants' opinions due to time availability in a remote teaching modality, and the lack of self-motivation that the participants experienced during this same modality. The reasons behind this shift of notions could align with one of the implications of the remote teaching model mentioned by Çil (2021), for whom this model can be affected by eliminating time and space barriers to learning processes. In

the context of the present study, removing such barriers could mean, as mentioned by the participants, the availability of more opportunities for students to study and better prepare for the different assessments, and the execution of more varied assessment techniques.

Broadly, evidence emerging from these three themes showed divided opinions regarding how the students explained the factors that contributed (or not) to their oral performance during emergency remote teaching. This can have different explanations. One can respond to a need for the creation of a teaching modality where participants can have the interactions and benefits missed from face-to-face teaching and the flexibility and advantages of remote teaching. The other one is that both modalities have their advantages and disadvantages; there is no better or worse modality; therefore, it will depend on a student's learning style which modality will help them improve their oral skills better.

With the above in mind, the following part will present the conclusions along with the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

This investigation set out to inquire about the perceptions of the effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching major of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus. On the whole, findings from both the QUAN and the Qual phases have yielded three major conclusions.

In the first place, regarding the perceived effects of remote language teaching strategies on junior students' oral performance at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus, the majority of students expressed that remote teaching has positively affected their academic performance. Similarly, the participants perceived that the strategies used

in the remote environment were effective in improving their oral performance. Furthermore, the evaluation techniques helped students improve mainly their vocabulary and knowledge of a wide range of topics. However, there was a neutral opinion on how these evaluation techniques helped the improvement of their communicative skills (speech clarity and fluency) and pronunciation.

Secondly, concerning the students' perceptions of the effects of remote teaching and face-to-face on their own oral performance at the English teaching majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western campus, most participants preferred face-to-face learning due to the time available in classes to practice and receive feedback, as well as the reported methodological monotony perceived in virtual classes. However, most participants' perceptions positively changed towards remote teaching since the beginning of 2020. In addition, opinions seem to diverge on whether the techniques employed helped participants improve their speech clarity and fluency.

Lastly, regarding possible explanations for the perceptions of a specific sample of students (Qual stage) about the effects of remote teaching on oral performance, the findings point towards three main factors that influenced learners' perceptions about remote teaching. These factors that affected positively and negatively the student's oral performance were categorized into three themes of analysis through a process of data coding: student-related, teacher-related, and context-related factors. These themes deepened some of the perspectives as to the effects that emerged after the emergency remote learning modality. First, student-related factors displayed a series of internal reasons such as self-motivation, previous negative experiences, and being physically and psychologically tired of remote teaching. In addition, teacher-related factors, a variety of teaching techniques, or the need for engaging and interactive classes comprehended how the elements and techniques that the professor implemented were perceived by the informants. Finally, the context-related factors including availability of time to study and lack of

self-motivation influenced the shift in notions regarding remote teaching and the causes of how they felt before and during the course.

On the one hand, there is a need for integrating the benefits that they missed from face-to-face teaching and the flexibility and advantages of remote teaching. On the other hand, there could be a possibility that both modalities have their advantages and disadvantages, which makes each of these methods functional depending on the student's learning style and preference. Therefore, after having analyzed this, we can conclude that remote teaching may need to incorporate classroom strategies to make up for the reported aspects that in the students' views were beneficial from face-to-face classes; for example, social interaction and active participation. On the contrary, teachers do not need to take these opinions as definitive sources for decision-making. There is the possibility that both teaching modalities share advantages and disadvantages that need to be pondered, and the reported gaps may well not be specific to remote teaching.

The above conclusions also bear implications for theory and praxis. For theory, the current study helps to enlarge the volume of empirical studies on the subject; as remote teaching is a new field to explore, evidence from this investigation increases the number of studies regarding remote teaching of oral courses in university environments and provides a new perspective based on the findings. Additionally, it helps devise possible methodologies that can be replicated or adapted to study similar phenomena in the future. For example, researchers could use questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to expand on the explanations gathered via both stages of the research. Finally, it produces evidence that can be further studied to seek generalizability through inferential statistics, allowing researchers to make inferences from the data provided and extrapolate it into remote teaching from an oral course at a university or elsewhere.

In relation to its contributions to praxis, this research allows educators to engage in pedagogical reflection on the good practices and aspects of both modalities, which can be reinforced for future experiences to enrich and improve the techniques employed in each teaching modality. In addition, the study opens room for enhancement of the aspects that need reinforcement, or that are lacking in both modalities, which will improve the experience for future learners. Finally, it may motivate professors and decision-makers from the English Teaching Major at UCR-WB to reflect on the assessment strategies and methodologies being employed, by evaluating and aligning them with the general aims of the major and, if necessary, re-thinking the essentials of what needs to be improved according to the suggestions given by the participants. This last aspect is fundamental both in the context of regular program evaluation and in the light of the accreditation processes the major is currently involved in.

To account for scientific fairness, the study faced limitations that need to be discussed and acknowledged. First, the availability of participants caused difficulties in collecting the data, especially in the first (QUAN) stage. They were given a considerable amount of time; however, it was difficult to reach out to them for the quantitative phase of the research. They were contacted via email on several occasions to speed up the response rate, and we even joined them in class to apply the instrument with the help of the teacher, but some of them did not reply. Second, even though the teaching strategies were taken into account for data collection, professors were not considered in the sample, which left out important voices that in the future could help provide a fuller picture of the phenomenon. Finally, although the purpose was not generalizability from the onset, the sample size does not allow for the generalizability of findings into larger populations.

Based on these limitations, there are recommendations to be rendered for future research, and several aspects should be addressed if more conclusive results are to be reached. In the first

place, the sample of participants must be increased. More informants would help to achieve the generalizability of the findings and therefore the proposition of more conclusive results. Secondly, professors' perspectives should be included to complete the range of opinions regarding the topic of study, which is vital to build a better notion of all possible sides of the subject. Thirdly, the instruments need to be sent with more anticipation to collect data from more participants and ensure a rigorous data-gathering process. Lastly, other methodologies could be incorporated to search more deeply into the phenomenon under investigation. Classroom ethnographies, case studies, experimental studies, and other designs would no doubt help attain a better grasp of the complex topic under investigation.

Since remote learning was and may still be uncertain ground for most higher educational institutions, it is crucial to explore and analyze the perceptions of as many educational actors as involved. So far, the current study aimed to systematize the voices of students in the *Oral Communication VI* course regarding their perceptions of remote language teaching strategies; as preliminary as the findings may appear, their perceptions should be considered as an initial exploration of a subject that will continue to be new to many in the language education enterprise. If voices like the ones herein studied are ignored altogether, implications concerning students' outcomes and performance may become apparent. To strike a balanced approach between methodological application and the ways in which such methodology is perceived within a sensitive context such as emergency remote instruction, it is essential to explore insights from those who are directly involved in the learning process.

Having presented the major conclusions reached, the next chapter will describe a required teaching proposal derived from our investigation, which can be used as preliminary insights for future remote teaching modalities.

Teaching Proposal Derived from Findings

This section must begin with a disclaimer. The series of recommendations about to be laid out should be understood within the context of the current study and never taken as definitive recipes for best practices, and much less as solutions to be transferred uncritically to other contexts. The reason the latter is vital to clarify is that the current study took place during emergency remote teaching which resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, where teachers, students, stakeholders, and institutional authorities had to make swift decisions to attend to a global issue for which many in the educational enterprise had no training. It would be unwise, thus, to import these suggestions without a careful analysis of the teaching context where these are to be applied. That disclaimer aside, the following are some recommendations for possible application in L2 classrooms dealing with emergency remote teaching. The recommendations focus on three significant aspects:

Recommendations for Instructors

Recommendations Based on Contextual Factors

An essential element highlighted throughout the interviews was the lack of self-motivation due to the little dynamicity during the lessons. For future courses, professors may consider planning lessons with a variety of activities that make the students feel engaged throughout the class. An important part of the evaluation of such courses takes place through oral presentations of different topics. Professors should, therefore, consider assigning or allowing different presentation formats (e.g., seminars, panels discussions, forums, debates, and the like) or activities for the students to present the topics in a more dynamic way (problem-solving cases,

U-shape discussions, double-U-shape discussions, concentric-circle discussions, and the like). In addition, professors could include role-play presentations, round tables, and other types of activities that make the students reflect on the topic but that also allow instructors to evaluate the content and oral performance according to the proposed goals.

Recommendations Based on Student Factors

A second aspect highlighted by the students was that they felt classroom communication was impersonal, and that at times they even felt detached from the classroom dynamics. For future remote instruction (planned or emergency), it is ideal that professors look for strategies to encourage student involvement by turning on their cameras. In addition, being in front of a computer for a long period of time is physiologically exhausting and psychologically draining, informants stated. Therefore, techniques should be employed to keep the classes within recommended time spans to maximize learning, but these lessons should use tactics to make sessions entertaining and straightforward at the same time so that learners take advantage of them as much as possible.

Based on the findings, a need for social interaction became apparent. Students highlighted that they spent most of the class time listening to classmates' presentations, which is not ideal. Having a space for them to interact is crucial because they not only listen to their classmates, but they produce and have conversations.

Recommendations Based on Teacher Factors

An additional element stressed by students influencing their oral proficiency was not having enough time to participate in class due to the long interventions by the professors. For

future remote classes, an initial recommendation is that instructors define and announce the objectives for each class, as well as to remain focused on the target throughout the lessons. In addition, they should work on recognizing when to let students take center stage in a discussion and when to regain control to, for example, provide feedback, offer explanations on complex subjects, and the like.

In view of the results, educators may also consider implementing more group assessment techniques, considering that participants agreed it helps them with several aspects of their oral performance.

Assessment Recommendations

Self-Assessment Strategies

One recurrent factor affecting student English proficiency, as reported in the interviews, was the lack of participation in assessment processes. To tackle this issue, one assessment recommendation is to include one self-evaluation strategy, either as triangulation for summative assessments or as formative feedback on student oral proficiency. The purpose would be to help students self-reflect on their responsibility to contribute to class development and learn to provide opinions, criticize, and suggest ways to improve teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Decision Makers (for example, coordinators, institutional authorities, and stakeholders)

An aspect that merits consideration is what to include and what not to include in guidelines to help teachers with remote instruction. Based on the current study, authorities may

wish to include concrete teaching ideas to keep the interaction going and specific references to self-assessment strategies. The latter can be coupled with a balanced curriculum (one which is rigorous but also adaptive) that permits educators to meet students' individual needs by supporting them, thus facilitating their learning and development of their oral skills. Rigid guidelines on how to conduct teaching in these contexts should be avoided as this would jeopardize academic freedom. Preconceived guidelines for assessment activities and pre-established plans or class activities should be used with caution (or not encouraged at all) because, once more, these belong to the domain of teacher decision making, which instructors tackle as they develop their classes and educational needs emerge.

The last recommendation is to create contingency plans for students to deal with connectivity issues. For institutional authorities, it is almost impossible to foresee whether students will have a stable internet connection or not, but ideas need to be put into paper so that the complexities of the problem can be visualized, and tentative solutions are foreseen. Contingency issues are beyond the scope of the current study since the focus was on student perceptions of various methodological aspects of remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic; nevertheless, as much as contingency plans are budget-dependent, an important part of institutional decision-making is to anticipate student obstacles so that future remote teaching experiences can be fine-tuned to address these difficulties.

All things considered, it is our hope that a preliminary exploration of emergency remote language teaching in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic will inspire future research, will open spaces of reflection, and will assist in decision making which will continue to serve the democratic purpose of inclusive education for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Instrument for the Quantitative Phase

Universidad de Costa Rica - Sede de Occidente

San Ramón, Costa Rica

Study Title: Effects of Remote Language Teaching Strategies on Junior Students' Oral Performance at the English Teaching Majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western Campus.

Student-Researchers: Hazel Brenes, Melissa Brenes, Pamela Solano and José Vargas

Objective: This instrument collects data to analyze the effects of the strategies implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency for junior students at the English Teaching Majors of the University of Costa Rica, Western Campus.

General instructions:

- Read the following questions.
- Make sure you are a student from the Oral Communication VI
- Click on the answer that best represents your opinion about the question.
- Please devote 15 minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire.

The information you provide will be used only for research purposes and your identity will be kept confidential. Your honesty will contribute to the validity of the information collected.

Please contact us to clarify doubts or answer questions regarding the items via the following emails:

Hazel Brenes: hbrenes97@hotmail.com

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Jose Vargas: jdvm.99.JV@gmail.com

Part I: Personal Information

In this part of the questionnaire, you will be asked about personal data which will be useful to run statistical analyses based on several aspects if needed.

1. What is your name?

2. What is your student's ID?

3. What is your email address or phone number?

4. What gender do you identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to say

5. How old are you?

6. What major are you enrolled in?

- Preescolar con Concentración en Inglés
- Primaria con Concentración en Inglés
- Enseñanza del Inglés

7. Were you enrolled in the Oral Communication VI course last semester?

- Yes
- No

Part II. Perceived Effects of Remote Teaching

This section examines students' perspectives about the effects of remote teaching strategies on oral performance.

Online Teaching Strategies

*Remote teaching can be defined as teaching processes occurring when both the students and professors are located in different physical environments.

8. From the list below, which new teaching strategies have professors implemented since the remote teaching started in 2020? You can choose more than one if you want to.

Synchronous sessions

Asynchronous sessions

Practice/feedback sessions

Online course material

Lectures

Discussions

Forums

Collaborative work

Oral presentations

Interactive virtual activities

Multimedia resources

Use of different online tools to practice oral performance (zoom, popplet, etc...)

Others: _____

9. In your opinion, did the techniques implemented in the Oral Communication VI course help you improve your general oral performance?

Yes

No

10. On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means “very little” and 5 means “very much,” to what extent did these techniques help you boost your general oral performance?

- Very little
- Little
- Neutral
- Much
- Very much

11. Do you think the evaluation techniques employed in the Oral Communication VI course helped you improve your oral performance in the English language?

- Yes
- No

12. On a 1-5 scale, where 1 means “very little” and 5 means “very much,” to what extent did these evaluation techniques help you boost your oral performance?

- Very little
- Little
- Neutral
- Much
- Very Much

Perceived Effects of Remote Teaching

This section examines students' perspectives about the effects of remote teaching strategies on oral performance.

Oral Performance

13. How would you self-assess your overall academic performance in the Oral

Communication VI course?

Poor

Fair

Good

Very good

Excellent

14. What kind of impact did remote learning have on your academic performance in the Oral

Communication course?

Major negative affect

Minor negative affect

Neutral

Minor positive affect

Major positive affect

Perceived Effect of Remote Teaching

This section examines students' perspectives about the effects of remote teaching strategies on oral performance.

Graded Assessments and Oral Performance

15. In your opinion, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you improve your *communicative skills* (speech clarity and fluency), in the English language?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

16. From your viewpoint, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you improve your *pronunciation* in the English language?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

17. In your opinion, did the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course help you increase your *knowledge* of a wide range of topics in the English language?

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

18. Do you feel the evaluation techniques employed in the oral course helped you improve your *vocabulary* in the English language?

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree or disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

Perceived Effects of Remote Teaching

This section examines students' perspectives about the effects of remote teaching strategies on oral performance.

Perceptions

19. How has your perspective towards remote learning changed?

It was positive and now it is negative

It was positive and remains positive

It was negative and now it is positive

It was negative and remains negative

20. Based on your experience taking classes remotely, how would you assess your oral performance as compared to face-to-face classes?

Face-to-face learning is better for oral performance

Remote teaching is better for oral performance

None of the modalities are effective

21. In general terms, what is your perspective/perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

Appendix 2: Instrument for the Qualitative Phase

Instrument (Semi-Structured Interview)

Universidad de Costa Rica - Sede de Occidente

San Ramón, Costa Rica

Researchers: Hazel Brenes, Melissa Brenes, Pamela Solano, and José Vargas

Background: This semi-structured interview has been designed as part of the *Qual* phase of the study. Participants were selected on the bases of the following selection criteria:

- *participated in the quantitative phase of the study;*
- *was enrolled in the Oral Communication VI course in the second academic semester of 2021;*
- *provided answers which merited further investigation; and*
- *showed willingness to participate in further stages of the project.*

Interview on “Effects of Remote Language Teaching Strategies on Oral Performance”

1. In the questionnaire, you reported that the Oral Communication VI course had helped you improve your general oral performance. In what way did the course help you do so?
(questions 10)

2. You also mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course helped you improve your general oral performance. Could you tell us how? (questions 12)
3. Can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall oral performance in the course? (question 14)
4. When you completed the questionnaire, you said that remote learning negatively/neutrally impacted your academic performance? Could you tell us about the reasons why you feel this way? (question 15)
5. Closely connected to the previous question, what factors do you think influenced your opinion (being neutral, strongly agreeing, strongly disagreeing) regarding the evaluation techniques employed in the oral communication course affecting your communication skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, x, y...? (questions 16–19)
6. In question 20, you described your perspective towards remote learning in the course as _____ (it was positive and now it is negative, it was positive and remains positive, it was negative and now it is positive, it was negative and remains negative); so, which factors do you think have influenced your perspective towards remote learning changing? (question 20)
7. In question 21, you described your experience taking classes remotely as _____(face-to-face learning is better for oral performance, remote teaching is better for oral performance, and none of the modalities are effective); so, which factors do you think have influenced your perspective towards remote or face-to-face learning? (Question 21)
8. In general terms, what is your perspective/perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

Appendix 3: Consent forms

1. Format for Consent Letter

30 de noviembre de 2021

SOLICITUD DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Sr./Sra.

Coordinador/a de _____

Estimada/o señor/a:

El suscrito, docente de inglés de la Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés de la Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de Occidente, tiene el agrado de saludarlo/a e informarle por este medio que Hazel Brenes Barrantes (B51183), Melissa Brenes Barrantes (B71257), Pamela Solano Murillo (B77435) y José David Vargas Madrigal (B78061), estudiantes activos del referido programa de licenciatura, se encuentran realizando los preparativos para inscribir el proyecto de graduación titulado: «Effects of Remote Language Teaching Strategies on Oral Performance at the University of Costa Rica during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Voices from the West Branch» [*La incidencia de las estrategias de enseñanza en línea en la comunicación oral en la Universidad de Costa Rica en tiempos de pandemia por COVID-19: percepciones de la sede de Occidente*], bajo mi dirección y supervisión.

Por lo anterior, solicito muy respetuosamente su autorización para que el estudiantado a cargo de dicho proyecto pueda recolectar datos para dicha investigación con la población estudiantil de tercer año de la carrera de Bachillerato en _____ de la Sede de _____.

Objetivo general de la investigación: estudiar las percepciones de la población estudiantil de tercer año de la Carrera de Enseñanza del Inglés sobre el uso de estrategias didácticas en relación con su producción oral en la UCR-SO.

Diseño de investigación: se empleará un diseño de investigación mixto; concretamente, se pretende adoptar el modelo explicativo secuencial mixto (CUAN-Cual) descrito por Creswell (2014), en el cual se inicia la recolección de datos con una fase cuantitativa basada en una muestra no probabilística; seguidamente se tabulan los datos utilizando estadística descriptiva, y posteriormente se realiza una fase cualitativa, con una muestra más pequeña que busque explicar los hallazgos numéricos de la primera fase.

Descripción general de la participación del estudiantado en este proceso:

Tomando en cuenta el diseño planteado, la población estudiantil participará en dos etapas del estudio.

1. Para la primera fase (cuantitativa), se solicitará completar una encuesta que busca recabar información relacionada con el objetivo de la investigación. La participación no involucra el uso del tiempo de clase, por lo que no habrá interrupciones con el desarrollo de los objetivos programáticos. Sin embargo, la colaboración del personal docente a cargo del curso Comunicación Oral VI podría ser necesaria a fin de lograr una mayor tasa de respuesta de los participantes.

2. En la segunda fase (cualitativa), se seleccionará a un número menor de informantes clave para indagar sus percepciones en mayor profundidad. En esta etapa se aplicarán instrumentos cualitativos como entrevistas semiestructuradas o grupos focales.

Importancia de la investigación:

1. Permitirá recabar las percepciones de la población estudiantil de tercer año de carrera sobre los efectos de las estrategias docentes en relación con el desarrollo de sus competencias de comunicación oral.
2. Permitirá ampliar el volumen de investigación empírica sobre el tema.
3. Generará oportunidades para investigaciones futuras.
4. Proporcionará datos que se podrán considerar para diversas gestiones académicas dentro de las carreras estudiadas.

Riesgos y beneficios:

El estudio no conlleva ningún riesgo. Los beneficios consisten en que se recabarán datos que podrán servir de base para toma de decisiones curriculares, metodológicas o de formación profesional, así como inspirar estudios futuros sobre el tema y ampliar la evidencia científica disponible sobre el tema estudiado.

Confidencialidad:

El proceso será estrictamente confidencial y manejado con los más altos principios de ética investigativa. Se protegerá la identidad de los estudiantes durante todo el proceso de investigación. Asimismo, los estudiantes a cargo del proyecto garantizan salvaguardar los datos y utilizarlos para propósitos académicos únicamente.

Participación voluntaria:

La participación es estrictamente voluntaria, y la población participante tendrá derecho a realizar las preguntas que estime oportunas antes, durante y después del proceso de investigación.

Por todo lo anterior, agradezco su autorización para que los estudiantes indicados puedan realizar su estudio en la carrera que usted coordina, así como permitirles solicitar la información de contacto a los docentes a cargo para contactar a la población estudiantil que requiere el estudio.

Con las mayores muestras de agradecimiento y consideración se suscribe, atentamente,

M.A. Henry Sevilla Morales | Cédula. 5-351-318

Profesor Sección de Lenguas Modernas y director del proyecto

Telf. 8376-6845 | Oficina #12 | Extensión: 2511-7067

Correo electrónico: henry.sevillamoraes@ucr.ac.cr / henrysevilla@gmail.com

AUTORIZACIÓN DE PARTE DE LA COORDINACIÓN

En fe de lo anteriormente explicado, yo, _____, coordinador/a de _____, he leído toda la información descrita en esta fórmula, antes de firmarla. Por lo tanto, por este medio autorizo su participación en el proceso investigativo descrito anteriormente.

Firma

Coordinador/a de _____

Universidad de Costa Rica, Sede de _____

2. Likert Scale of agreement

Before you complete the questionnaire, please answer this Likert scale of agreement in order to provide your consent to this study.

Statement	Yes	No
Do you agree on participating in this study?		
Do you give your consent on the use of the information provided for research purposes?		
If required, are you willing to participate in a semi-structured interview and a focus group after this questionnaire is completed?		

(This Likert scale of agreement will be embedded on the questionnaire before participants answer the questions)

Appendix 4: Interviews Transcriptions

Interview #1

Interviewer: In the questionnaire, you reported that the oral communication VI course had helped you improve your general oral performance. In what way did the course help you to do so?

SSI-P01: So, well in a certain way it helped me because it was a space in which I could share my opinions or ideas with the topics or units that we were seeing through the course, right? So, maybe that's the space that we had when the professor asked us questions or when he was presenting the topic and asked us about our opinions.

So, that was like a space in which I could use my speaking skills. So, in that way, I could improve it. That was like the general thing, you know? Because I think there was like, well it was a lack of time or I think it was not enough the time that he gave us to practice speaking.

Interviewer: Do you think the professor provided enough spaces and different ways to express or practice your speaking skills?

SSI-P01: Well, I remember that most of the time there were like many oral presentations from the other classmates and he used to speak a lot, maybe more than us. So, sometimes he asked questions but not all of us participated. So, in my case, I used to participate as much as I could because that is the way we improve, but there were many classmates that maybe didn't participate because there wasn't enough time to do so.

Interviewer: you also mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course didn't help you improve your general oral performance. Do you still think that way? And could you tell us why you think that way?

SSI-P01: I remember that the evaluation was like quizzes. Well, there were quizzes, midterms, oral presentations, and I don't remember what else, but in general, because it was virtual, there were two hours of the course and in those two hours, I think it was not enough to cover all the other presentations and to have more time to practice altogether because the presentations were like, we were just listening to others and they asked questions and I used to participate but it was not enough because in face to face, it is four hours of the course, so maybe they present in one class or two classes and then the rest of the class we can participate more. But I think because of the presentations, we didn't have like enough time to interact with each other maybe with other classmates. I think it would have been better if he had created, like, break-up rooms all the time so we can talk to different people, but I think it was not the case.

Interviewer: You said that, if we were face to face, the course would take four hours, but in remote learning, it took only about two hours. Do you think that you could take a course of four hours in a remote environment?

SSI-P01: No, it would be too tiring because sometimes he extended the class because of the same thing, there were many oral presentations, so the time was not enough. So, we were there like three hours and I was like, oh my God, I can't take it anymore. But face-to-face is different because you can move, you can go to the bathroom or, I don't know, it's easier.

Interviewer: Can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall oral performance in the course?

SSI-P01: I think it was, well, it depends on every student. In my case, I used to participate, as I said before, I did the readings the professor told us to do before class. Also, I tried to learn the vocabulary, I used to practice with another friend out of class. So, I think those factors made me improve.

Interviewer: When you completed the questionnaire, you said that remote learning neutrally impacted your academic performance, so it didn't impact it. Could you tell us about the reasons why you feel this way? Do you still feel this way? I want to let you know that if today you feel a different way, you can just let us know, that's not a problem.

SSI-P01: No, yes, I think I feel the same way because I think, well, as I said before, it depends on us. And I think what made me improve the most was that I used to practice with a friend out of class maybe once or twice a week. We used to do video WhatsApp and have casual conversations. So, yes, I think that was what made me improve.

Interviewer: Closely connected to what Pame just asked you about remote learning impacting your academic performance, what factors do you think influenced your opinion regarding the evaluation techniques employed in your communication course affecting your communication skills, your vocabulary, your pronunciation, and your knowledge of different topics?

SSI-P01: Well, I think the course has a variety of topics or units that we could practice. So in that way, maybe I could improve my vocabulary. And about the pronunciation, I remember the professor used to write in the chat the words that we were mispronouncing or certain vocabulary that could be useful for us. That was something that I really liked about the professor, that he did that because sometimes we made mistakes in some other courses and they didn't correct us. So, I think it was something useful that he used to take the time to write in the chat the words that we needed to learn and yes, the fact that I like to participate, maybe, and give my opinions. So I think that's it.

Interviewer: Do you think the fact that you improve was more because of your efforts and not the techniques that were employed in the course?

SSI-P01: Yes. Well, the techniques also helped me because sometimes if I had an oral presentation, of course, I had to prepare myself, like doing research or learning the vocabulary. But most of the improvement could be because of my effort, because I remember sometimes I was talking with other classmates and they were like, I don't know, having trouble, giving their opinions. And I remember that maybe they didn't participate because they were shy or they didn't feel comfortable and things like that. So I guess it was, like, the effort that every student put in.

Interviewer: Also, in one of the questions, you described your perspective towards remote learning in the course as being negative and still remaining negative. So, which factors do you think influenced your perspective toward remote learning?

SSI-P01: Well, at the beginning it was negative because of the previous experiences that I had with other virtual courses. I remember that the other courses were similar. We didn't have so much time to participate or to interact with other classmates. So, I was like, maybe it is going to be the same. And then it remains negative because it was similar. I think for me, it would have been better if we had break-up rooms in which we could share our opinions with others and not only listen to the professor.

Interviewer: Do you think more spaces would be needed for you to practice more?

SSI-P01: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok. In question 21, you described your experience taking classes remotely as “face-to-face learning being better for oral performance than remote learning” Which factors do you think influence your perspective toward remote learning or face-to-face learning? In this case, face-to-face learning?

SSI-P01: Yes, I said that face-to-face is better because I think that our body language and many other skills are part of oral communication. And with remote learning, we didn't have the

opportunity. Well, we had the chance but we didn't turn on the camera. But even if we did that, it was not the same. I think I felt different when I was face to face with another classmate, sometimes I felt intimidated by their level, or sometimes I felt comfortable and I think that those are the skills that we need to learn to know how to handle our emotions maybe, when we had to give oral presentations in front of our classmates it was different than having to do that in front of a computer, in a certain way when I started the virtual courses I gained more confidence because sometimes I felt intimidated as I said before, but I think it is also necessary to feel that way, so, you know how to or you learn how to handle that and also we in face to face had more time to participate and to speak with others. I remember that I had many classmates that I never talked to and if we were normal it would have been different.

Interviewer: In general terms, what are your perceptions about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

SSI-P01: I think, there was a lack of interaction between students and I believe it is better if there was a balance between what the professor says or teaches and the time in which we share our opinions with other classmates. I remember once another professor most of the time used to be the one who was speaking and maybe he put a lot of emphasis on the vocabulary and we did just the practice of the book, and we didn't have the chance to speak. So, I think it could be a balance between a lit bit of the professor talking and then us trying to put that into practice and at the end of the class it could be like a closure where the professor could give us feedback or go into each group and try to listen to what we are saying and give us feedback, but in general, I think that it is necessary to have a balance.

Interview #2

Interviewer: in the questionnaire you reported that the oral communication 6 course has helped you improve your general oral performance. So in what way did you think the course helped you to do so?

SSI-P02: Well, mainly because in the course we had our presentations. So when we did our presentations and or in my case, maybe my communicative skills were better because, well, the professor was taking into account all those aspects, and so we well, in my case I were like more aware of it. And what else? Maybe adjusting that in that aspect because I think I had a bad experience with the professor. So I couldn't get the best of the course.

Interviewer: Also you mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course helped you to improve your general oral performance. So could you please tell us more about it?

SSI-P02: well in this case maybe again, because most of the course was more about oral presentations, and tests and so on. Maybe it helped me get better performance in my oral skills or oral performance again, because I was aware of the professor or I was a little bit worried about it. So maybe because of that, I tried to put all my effort to do everything and better.

Interviewer: Can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall performance in the course.

SSI-P02: Again the evaluation, and the professor. in the case of the professor because I had a problem with him, so I was trying to show him that I could do it better, maybe because of that I did a good performance. And the evaluation in this case well, the evaluation was oral presentations, and also a case, I think with another branch, I think that was Turrialba. And so in

that case all the evaluations in the course were oral presentations, and we had to prepare to do an excellent or a good performance for the professor.

Interviewer: Okay, when you completed you said that remote learning neutrally impacted your academic performance, would you tell us why you feel this way.

SSI-P02: Well, mainly because I think, a virtual course like oral communication could be developed better if it was a face to face course. So I think I could do better if it was a face to face course, because I would feel obligated to participate. I mean, I couldn't say any excuse just not to participate in the class, and so on.

Interviewer: Well, closely connected to the previous question. What factors do you think influenced your opinion about being neutral regarding the evaluation techniques employed in the oral communication course, and that affected your communicative skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the knowledge of a wide range of topics?

SSI-P02: Maybe because all the course was based on oral presentations. And I think this is a traditional evaluation for an oral communication course. I mean the professor could do like a round table or something like that, and he just did oral presentations. And in this case the class was in charge of the students, and he just was there just to give us some feedback later, and I think that that was a little bit boring because nobody participated in the class, and we don't or in my case I didn't feel like (again) like obligated to participate.

Interviewer: So you would have liked more if you had other types of evaluation techniques outside oral representations and oral tests?

SSI-P02: Yes, maybe the oral tests are okay. But I would say that in pairs, because when we do oral tests in pairs, we have the opinion of another person, and we can exchange information and opinions. However, if I am the only one in the test, I don't know. Sometimes the

ideas cannot be connected in a good way. I think it's easier in pairs, and also the communication, that is the main point of the course, is better if we do it in pairs. And with the oral presentations, it is because we are just like presenting a topic, and just that, and we are not communicating or talking with our classmates. However, if we or in the contrary, we do a round table. we are like exchanging opinions and ideas and so on. So it's like more participative evaluation.

Interviewer: Okay, Thank you. In question 20 from the questionnaire you described your perspective towards remote learning in the course as negative, and that it remained negative. So, which factors do you think have influenced your perspective towards remote learning changing?

SSI-P02: Again, because I think if the course had been like face to face it would have been better for me, because I have had the professor face to face, and he could just told me: “What do you think” and I again I don't have excuses just to say I cannot participate professor, because my microphone is not working, or something like that. So, yes, maybe because of that. And also because when we are in a course that is face to face the interaction is better.

Interviewer: I have a follow up question. So this question you said that it was negative. So I want to know if you had previous experiences. So why do you think before this course that your perspective was negative, that you had a negative impression about it? About remote learning.

SSI-P02: I was in another institution in 2018, and we had to use mediacion virtual, and my experience was not good because the professor didn't know how to manage the environment. So at the end what's that disaster and I think in my case I couldn't learn a lot of the course because it had been face to face.

Interviewer: How do you feel now that we are 2 years into the virtual type of learning?

SSI-P02: I have to be honest, now I feel like comfortable. But i'm thinking about the next semester that is going to be face to face and im worried, and we are going back to the classrooms and i don't know how i am going to react and what my English level will be.

Interviewer: Okay, in question 21 you described your experience taking classes remotely as face to face learning being better for oral performance, right? So which factors do you think influenced, or have influenced, your perspective towards remote or face to face learning?

SSI-P02: I would say that the professor could have more control of the class and could make all the students participate. So I mean, it's and also well, as the professor has more control of the class, we cannot use the phone, we can just pay attention to the professor, and we are like aware of that the professor is like watching us, or something like that. And so it would be better, because we are just focusing on the professor and of his or her explanation, and we are not doing not other things.

Interviewer: Lastly, in general terms, what is your perspective or perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

SSI-P02: I would say that these techniques are good, maybe, but the problem is the students. In this case, my own experience, because sometimes we are not honest with ourselves, and sometimes we are like doing the tests with other classmates, and the test it's supposed to be individual, so we are not being honest as students. Maybe those techniques are good. However, again, you know, and in the course or communication the techniques for me were like traditional techniques, I think there are better techniques to implement in the course.

Interview #3

Interviewer: In the questionnaire, you reported that the Oral Communication 6 course had helped you improve your general oral performance. In what way did the course help you do so?

SSI-P03: Well, first of all, I was like reviewing a lot of information, right? I learned also a lot of vocabulary while taking this course, which was very good, and there was vocabulary about body language, golden years... So I think that practicing well learning vocabulary was like the main factors that help me.

Interviewer: You also mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course help you as well improve your general or performance. Can you tell us why?

SSI-P03: Yeah, It was mainly because we were like participating, right? So we have to give our opinions throughout the course, through other presentations of my classmates. So I kind of think that was a very good idea to put those techniques on the class, right?

Interviewer: I have a follow-up question if you don't mind. You said you were motivated to participate during the classes and that's what helped you in terms of the evaluation techniques implemented in the course. Would you say the motivation to participate was on your own, like you had to feel motivated to participate, or was it more the teacher asking different students to participate during the classes?

SSI-P03: Well, kind of both because I love English I want to be an English professor, so kind of you know, that takes part. But also the professor was like, giving his opinion, and also he was like engaging the students to participate. So it was kind of both together.

Interviewer: You would say a balance between the professor instating you to participate, and you, feeling motivated to participate.

SSI-P03: You gotta be a, yeah. It gotta be a balance between both the students and the professors.

Interviewer: And can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall oral performance in the course?

SSI-P03: The factors maybe were like to see my classmates to present, because sometimes we get like nervous while being in class and presenting, and also well, seeing them or watching them through present, or performance their presentations it kind of motivated, I mean motivated me to participate. And because I had to present also, as well as my classmates. So it kind of give me the courage, right, to improve my language in this case.

Interviewer: Any other factor?

SSI-P03: Maybe, as I mentioned before, maybe the professor was kind of one of the factors because he was like very nice, you know? he kinda gave us these cases to participate and all after the presentations. So we gave our opinions and all of the other presentations, and that was okay.

Interviewer: When you completed the questionnaire, you said that remote learning neutrally impacted your academic performance. Do you still feel that way? and can you tell us about the reasons why you feel that way?

SSI-P03: I think that there was kind of a personal response, because I wanted to learn English, so no matter the circumstances I just wanted to learn, right. So even for face to face learning or remote learning I think that it doesn't matter right. It's not kind of affecting my learning process because I'm motivated to learn everything. The vocabulary and the techniques that I have to use as a teacher.

Interviewer: I have a follow up question before we continue. Would you say that you felt neutral about this? Saying that remote learning neutrally impacted your academic performance. Would you say that you felt this way because you didn't want to answer positively or negatively to the question at the moment of answering, or that's just how you remain to feel?

SSI-P03: No, not on it. It kind of was because I feel like that. I have been using technology and everything since I was just a kid. So I'm used to use the computer a lot so I don't care if I'm on virtuality or remote learning, or face to face. So I think that there was like no neutral sorry to me. So I have no negative impact, or maybe a positive way, because I like to be in my house right? So I think that remote learning is also important because some people don't want to get up, get out of their homes or houses, or whatever.

Interviewer: Closely connected to the question I just asked, What factors do you think influenced your opinion by somewhat agreeing or strongly agreeing regarding the evaluation techniques employed in the communication course are affecting your communication skills, your vocabulary, your acquisition of knowledge... ?

SSI-P03: Sorry I don't understand that question.

Interviewer: I can repeat that for you. No worries. So you said that you strongly agreed that the evaluation techniques employed in the oral communication course helped you improve your communication skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. What factors would you say affected your opinion on saying that this helped you improve in those areas?

SSI-P03: Factors, right, that influenced my perspective. Maybe the way I participated in the course because I don't know. I don't really know. Well, I think that I improved my English. So that's one of the factors. I think that the evaluation techniques were very good. So I just strongly agree with the techniques applied.

Interviewer: So would you say, that it was more like a personal factor of you contributing to your own growth, or it was more like the teacher's effort to do evaluation techniques that were special for remote learning that helped you improve both?

SSI-P03: I think, because I put in a lot of effort as well as the professor. So I think that they were like the techniques applied and my motivation to participate. Well, being in class, because if you don't want to learn, you're not gonna learn anything.

Interviewer: In one of the questions you described your perspective towards remote learning, and because in the course as being negative, but now, being positive like it changed through the time which factors, do you think influence your perspective towards remote learning changing?

SSI-P03: Okay, I think that at the beginning I didn't have a lot of perspective, or I mean ideas of what remotely was like. So I was like being negative, because at the beginning everybody was kind of negative, expecting something good. But then I realized that it wasn't that bad and it's actually a very good strategy or technique. And yeah, it changed because like I said I like to be in my house, and learn remotely.

Interviewer: So would you just say, or did you have any negative experience before that caused your opinion being negative that Now, with the oral communication course helped you change this perspective, or it was just you didn't know what to expect?

SSI-P03: Maybe taking the classes was like those experiences that I needed to change my mind. See that remote learning was a good idea. Were the experiences or the activities that influenced.

Interviewer: Thank you. Another question, you described your experience taking class remotely in comparison to face to face being better for oral performance, which factor would you say influenced this opinion towards remote learning in comparison to face to face learning.

SSI-P03: I was going to say that we have to see the person to interact with them face to face, and we would probably learn more, than remotely alright. Questions and body language and everything.

Interviewer: Which factor do you think influenced your opinion towards face to face learning? So you would say it's mostly the interactions

SSI-P03: Yeah, the interactions, the body language. to see how people react, and I need to socialize.

Interviewer: Alright, Thank you. One last question, in general terms, what's your perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning, in terms of language proficiency?

SSI-P03: Well, I think that, I mean, my perception is that they need improvement, all the techniques. Because they are not perfect. The teachers are not perfect. We are not perfect as students either. So. I think they can be better by practicing them and using them more, maybe. So, I think that it would be a good idea to practice them and put them into practice, and to use different techniques to see how students react and everything.

Interviewer: Do you think, well I don't remember if you have mentioned any other activities other than oral presentations. Did the teacher employ any other activities, or was it just oral presentations? And was that good enough? Would you rather have different activities?

SSI-P03: Yeah, he implemented like presentations. Also those spaces where we can give our opinions like free spaces. right? I don't know how to call that. He could like also gave us, or

he could give us sorry maybe spaces where students interact with each other yeah with each other. So maybe we can share our opinions with our classmates about the presentations or the topic, or the chapters. So, that we were like analyzing and everything alright.

Interviewer: Alright. Thank you very much for the help you provided.

Interview #4

Interviewer: In the questionnaire, you reported that the *Oral Communication VI* course had helped you improve your general oral performance. In what way did the course help you to do so?

SSI-P04: Well, in that course I feel that it really helped me with my fluency, and also with my confidence because we had to speak a lot. We had to make a lot of oral presentations, too. I think that my confidence improved a lot and also my fluency.

Interviewer: You also mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course helped you to improve your general oral performance. Would you please tell us how?

SSI-P04: We had several techniques or different evaluations. So, besides the normal exams we had to make an oral presentation, we had to present a resource that it could be like a video, an image, a document, or anything. We had to present. We had to talk. We had to give our opinions, comments about everything. So I think that, that really helped me to improve my listening skills, because each class we had to listen like 3 or 4 presentations. Also, it helped me with my vocabulary because I knew a lot of new words and also with my speaking skills, because I had to give feedback. I had to give my opinion to express myself. So I think that because of those aspects my, I don't know my speaking skills improved.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you! Can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall oral performance in the course?

SSI-P04: Hmm. Well, I would say, mostly the interactions that my classmates and I had, because, as I said before, we had to give comments, opinions, and also to give feedback that sometimes we are not used to give feedback or to receive feedback from the classmates. So I think that mostly the interactions that we had were really good for me.

Interviewer Okay, I would like to ask a follow-up question here, like more than the presentations. Do you think you had the enough time to have like a conversation with your classmates? Maybe in breakout rooms or other types of activities.

SSI-P04: Yeah, we had. Well, mostly like oral presentations, but also we had breakout rooms, so we could talk like you know face to face, even though we were the virtuality and something that I forgot to say it's that I would say that my determination with the course really helped me because I was always attending classes. I was always participating, and I was always, you know, trying to learn a lot. So, with the oral presentations I had a lot of input So with that input I was able to build my knowledge, right?

Interviewer: Okay, When you completed the questionnaire, you say that remote learning, major positive impacted your academic performance. Would you tell us about the reasons why you feel this way?

SSI-P04: Well, yes, of course. I would say that remote teaching is good because you don't have to commute, or you don't have to commute alone at night, and when I took that course the time that we had to take it was at night. For me it was really good to have it at home. Besides, I think it's easier to speak because you don't feel like everyone watching you. So it's better or for me, it's easier to do it like that. And also I would say that you have maybe more time to rehearse

at home, to relax better before presenting. So for those reasons, I think that it's good to have it you know, like remote learning.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you so much. We have another question closely connected to this previous one. What factors do you think influenced your opinion regarding the evaluation techniques employed on the *Oral Communication VI* course, and how they affected your communicative skills, your vocabulary, your pronunciation, and your knowledge of topics?

SSI-P04: Well, about the evaluation techniques. I think that we were really good. I really liked it, because sometimes I don't know, sometimes difficult to talk if you are not evaluated, or sometimes you don't feel like you like to talk, or you don't feel like in the mood to talk, right? But when you have to do it because it's part of the course, so you are like forced, So I think that the evaluations that the professor made were good for evaluating and also for us to participate.

Interviewer: Okay! Another question is that you described your perspective towards remote learning in the course that at the beginning it was positive, and it remained positive. Right? So which factors do you think influenced your perspective towards remote learning?

SSI-P04: I would say that when I took that that course. All the courses that I was taking during the semester were virtually. So it was really easy to connect to a class and then to another class, and all at home, right? So for me was really good because I didn't have to commute as I said before, or I was at home. So it was really easy to be in classes, right? And I would say that, that It was also good because I could review the classes. I could review a lot of topics at home, and I could rehearse before my presentations, and I was more relaxed. So, for me was good, but I was going to say that and nowadays, I think that it's good. The virtuality mode, and the virtuality teaching, but also face to face for me really good, and I would say that I prefer face to face, because well, as you notice, I talk a lot. So for me is not problem to talk with a computer, with a

plan, with a tree, with whatever. But some classmates they didn't feel comfortable talking with you through zoom, right? So I think that if I had to choose now, I would say that I prefer those courses. You know, the *Oral Communication VI* or whatever number to have it like face-to-face.

Interviewer: Okay! So yes, we have here that you described your experience taking classes remotely as better like for oral performance. Remote teaching is better for oral performance. So, did you change your perspective?

SSI-P04: Yes, I completely change it, because, as I said before last semester, I had all the courses virtually, so it was really easy to have one class virtually, and the other one have it at the same way, right? But now that I had some courses in a face to face way, I feel you know how the dynamic changed, and how it's better for me to learn in a face to face environment. Also, because it's not only about learning English or anything, but it's also to know people because well, I don't know, but I like to talk to people, and sometimes I felt that I didn't knew my classmates. I didn't knew what they liked or if they were following me because we didn't. We didn't turn on the camera, so it was just a blank screen, black. Sorry about the black screen and talking with the computer, you know. Now we are seeing each other. Even though we are through zoom, but at least you can see me, and I can see you. But at that time we didn't have that because we were not forced to turn on the cameras.

Interviewer: Okay, based on your experience, I have a follow-up question based on your experience in your positive experience towards remote learning, as we see, would you add something to those classes, or would you suggest something to be added?

SSI-P04: Well, I would like to say that I would implement that all people turn on their cameras. But sometimes that's not possible and sometimes people don't want to do it. So you cannot force people. But I would say that having games it's really funny, you know, like a warm-

up, or maybe to break the ice. I would say also that, having like small room talks, because when you have like when 20 people listening to you, or maybe 30 you feel overwhelmed that all people are listening to you. But when you are talking in, maybe in breakout rooms with 2 or 3 people is easier to express yourself to know if the people is understanding you, so for me would be good.

Interviewer And lastly, we have one last question, what is your perspective or perception about the teaching Techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

SSI-P04: Hmm! I think that the evaluation techniques that the professor implemented were really good. And also were original because we didn't we didn't. Well, of course, that we had, like the normal exams, and the professor had to ask you our question, and we had to answer the related to the oral presentations. They were like different because we were at like a group of 4 people, and even though we were a group, each person had to talk about an specific topic. So we were developing an entire unit, but we like with subtopics.

So it was really funny, because we had the chance to choose what we wanna talk about. So, for example, I think that my unit was something about stress or something like that about mental health, and that was the unit. But then I choose what I wanted to talk about, and my classmate did the same thing. So it was a way that we could talk about anything, and it was not only, you know, so focused on the unit, It was about what you want to talk about, and I talked about the ways we can relax, I think, or in the ways that we can do to improve our mental health, and that's something that I really like. So I did that, and my classmate. I remember that she talked about how your body feels the stress, or how the body I don't know how the stomach and the mental health is connected, and when you are so stressed, your bodies sick, and you feel overwhelmed, and everything and that was super interesting because a lot of people didn't know

that. So I think that implementing that kind of activity or that evaluation was good for us to be more active while researching and also presenting.

And another thing that I have not mentioned before or at all, is that we have to solve a case. It was something about I don't remember but in the Professor gave us like a case, and we had to find a solution. We have to give, like 3 ideas to implement this at high school. So that was something different, and I hadn't done it well, in that moment, right? But it was something new for me, and also for my classmates. So it was a different thing for an oral communication course, and also because we had to talk with other people from Turrialba's University. So, it was funny to talk with other people, to know other people and to know the insights that they had, according to the topic. I think that the techniques were good and what we're innovating, because sometimes we only had like exams, and that's it. But with those activities you have the possibility to talk more, and not only for 3 min exam, right? I don't know if I mentioned that on the form, but the test that we had I don't know if I can say this. No but they were like exams they weren't like I don't know how to say it. I'm going to explain the dynamic that the professor did, because, for each unit the professor gave us like 2 or 3 readings and a lot of questions. And then, during the exam, the professor chose like 2 questions, and we had to answer it well to answer them exactly from the reading. So it was not to evaluate our performance, because we were repeating exactly what we had, what we had read. I don't know if you're following me. It didn't matter if I understood the unit, or my opinion, or my insights, nothing because I have to answer exactly as from the reading. I would say that I would change that because I would say that it's better to hear your opinion to hear if you understood the unit or not, or just I don't know maybe to give like a question that is to generate a conversation. Not to see if you memorized a lot of questions, and answers and everything because what I did is that I had like the reading also some days before the

test. But I had the reading and the questions, and then I had to answer each question and memorize it because they were no, they were not like what do you think about this passage? No, the question was, tell me, or describe the 2 aspects that they were mentioned in the reading. So it was a lot of memorizing things and I didn't like it, and I was super nervous because of that, because I don't know if I'm going to forget something or something like that. Right? So I would change that.

Interview #5

Interviewer: Okay, the first question. It says that in the questionnaire, you reported that the *Oral Communication VI* course has helped you improve your general oral performance. In what way did the course help you to do so?

SSI-P05: Well, I believe that as it was my final oral course, I was like aware of that, so I tried to learn as much as I could. So I believe that's why I learned a lot from that course, and also because we were given spaces in which we could interact with other people, not just my classmates, but other people from other campus. I don't remember the campus to be honest, but we have like this interaction outside our own campus, and I believe this interaction was very helpful for us, well to me. Also, the motivation that our professor gave us. He was trying all the time to make us learn more academic vocabulary. I felt, like, challenged because of that, so I believe that's another thing that helped me to improve in these cards.

Interviewer: Thank you. You also mentioned that the evaluation techniques implemented in the course help you improve your general oral performance. Could you tell us how?

SSI-P05: Well, I remember that we were evaluated as a group in this project that we had, like, this interaction between students from other campus. I believe this group evaluation is very

important because we are pushed to give our best, since we are going to affect other people's grade, so this technique was important to me. The other technique that was important is individual evaluation, because, of course, we are going to be motivated to study and to practice into analyze and to investigate even because we have we always have like these individual evaluations, and the tests, in which we were asked to speak from 4 to 8 min, and we were pushed to be fluent and to involve academic vocabulary. I believe this course was like very challenging for us and the evaluation as well. So that is why I believe it helped me.

Interviewer: Can you expand on the factors that you believe influenced your overall performance in the course?

SSI-P05: Well, certainly and definitely, one of them is the interaction we had with this project that we had to do with other people from other campus. This interaction was, like, what I liked the most and what I believe helped me the most. And another factor is that I was aware that it was my last English course, so I needed to study a lot, and I needed to learn as much as I could. That's another factor that helped me to learn. And, I believe that our professor, he was also aware that it was like our last course, so we had to improve, we had to so give our best. He always tried to motivate us to comment, to participate, to speak, I mean, with each other, and that's it good.

Interviewer: Another question is that when you completed the questionnaire, you said that remote learning impacted negatively your academic performance. Could you tell us about the reasons why you feel this way, or felt this way?

SSI-P05: Well, to be honest, I believe that, in these remote learning, affected my oral performance because of the connectivity issues we had all the time. I mean, if we didn't have internet or a computer or a cell phone, we weren't able to be in the class, to participate, or to do

whatever we had to do. So that was a huge problem for us. And, also our confidence, I believe that we lack confidence, from my point of view because of these virtual classes. I mean, it was a different world, we weren't used to that, so we were like kind of shy in classes. We weren't able to express what we wanted to express because of our insecurity. And, I don't know why, but I believe that virtual classes are more tiring than face-to-face classes. I mean, spending a lot of time, like more than 2 hours, in front of a computer is completely tiring, and that was another factor I believe it impacted me in a negative way.

Interviewer: So closely connected with the previous question, What factors do you think influenced your opinion (somewhat agreeing and strongly agreeing) regarding the evaluation techniques employed in the oral communication course affecting your communication skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, and knowledge on certain topics?

SSI-P05: Well, I believe that my answers on those questions were based on the decisions taken by the professor because I tend to believe that I work better by myself. So if I had to complete a project with some people, I knew that my grade was going to be affected by other people. I think those factors, I mean, the decisions taken by the professor were the ones that based my answers on.

Interviewer: Okay. You described in your perspective towards remote learning as in the course as it was negative, it remains negative. So, which factors do you think have influenced your business perspective towards remote learning?

SSI-P05: I still believe that it is negative, especially for this oral course because I certainly believe that we speak in command and participate way much than we do in virtual classes. I mean, we feel like more secure in confident when we are talking with another person face to face, because in virtual classes we didn't want to turn on our cameras. I mean, that's like

something so simple, we don't want to do that, and speaking like throughout this microphone is like something very impersonal. So, I believe that's like the main factor, the lack of confidence, and also because of the connectivity issues as I said before. We if we didn't have internet, we weren't able to do anything and that's a huge problem.

Interviewer: I have a follow-up question, and my question is, why did you have, at first, a negative perception, or perspective? Did you have any negative previous situations or experiences before you came to this course?

SSI-P05: Yes, the last oral course, I believe it was virtual as well, so the same thing happened. I mean, the professor was the only person talking in the meetings, so it was like awkward and kind of weird. And also the connectivity issues. We always had this problem.

Interviewer: So let's continue with the next question it says you describe your experience taking classes remotely, as face-to-face learning is better for oral performance. Which factors do you think have influenced this perspective?

SSI-P05: Well, I believe that the same factors because face-to-face classes, I believe that I will always think that are better. I don't think that we are prepared to virtual classes because some people don't even have internet or a computer. And also because in face-to-face classes, we can interact with people in a personal way. I believe that's a factor that motivate us to speak. I mean, if I am in front of somebody, I have to speak because I have to. I mean, I can't avoid that person, so it pushes us to participate and to learn a lot. If we are together, I believe that we can hear other people's opinions, and it will be helpful for us, and that's something that may not happen as much in virtual classes.

Interviewer: Okay, I have a follow-up question about that. So, based on your experience regarding the *Oral Communication VI* course, do you think that your classmates were

participating by themselves, or they were pushed to participate by the professors?

SSI-P05: Well, to be honest, I believe that most of the time we were pushed to participate.

Some people, they have like this extrovert personality, so they just talk and talk and talk. But some other people were always pushed to participate. As I said before, sometimes the professor was the only person talking in the meeting. So that's why I think we were pushed, most of the time.

Interviewer: In general terms, what is your perspective or perception about the teaching techniques implemented in remote learning in terms of language proficiency?

SSI-P05: Well, I think that the techniques implemented were accurate, they helped us. As I said before, this project that we had to interact with other people, I really loved it. I believe it was completely helpful, and also the individual tasks that we were asked to do, they helped us a lot. And I believe that professors completed their role in a good way, so the techniques were accurate.

Interviewer: I have a follow-up question for that. Do you think the professor could have used more different techniques? Because you already mentioned that you worked with the campus, and you like that technique in specific. But besides from that technique, were there other different techniques well-used? Or was it always oral presentations? What do you think could have been better, like most of the different techniques? Or what do you think about that?

SSI-P05: Yeah, now that you put it that way, I believe that the project with another campus, it was like very nice, because it was different. Because the other techniques used by the professor were the ones that we had to present by sharing a PowerPoint presentation, so it was, like, the same we did in face-to-face classes.



6 de enero de 2023

M.Ed. Maynor Badilla Vargas
Director de la Sede de Occidente
Universidad de Costa Rica

Estimado señor director:

Por medio de la presente, y en calidad de director del trabajo final de seminario de graduación titulado «**Effects of Remote Language Teaching Strategies on Oral Performance at the University of Costa Rica During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Voices from the West Branch**», hago constar que los estudiantes responsables de dicho TFG han incorporado todas las observaciones proporcionadas por el tribunal examinador. La autoría del trabajo corresponde a los siguientes estudiantes:

- Hazel Brenes Barrantes, carné B51183
- Melissa Brenes Barrantes, carné B71257
- Pamela Solano Murillo, carné B77435
- José David Vargas Madrigal, carné B78061

De usted, con las mayores muestras de respeto,

M.A./ Mág. Henry Sevilla Morales

Director del TFG

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C.

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