

## Challenges of Face-to-Face EFL Learning within a Digital Media Environment

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### Abstract

*Due to the contingency crisis in 2020, members of educational institutions with a long and effective tradition in face-to-face instruction have had to deal with a quick swing to a digital media environment. Therefore, the best way to know the effectiveness of “emergency remote teaching” seems to be relevant and necessary precisely by interviewing two groups of EFL learners who unexpectedly moved into a type of teaching that combines face-to-face-interaction with digital media resources. The intention of this Case Study within the Qualitative Paradigm was to identify students’ perceptions on the challenges they experienced when moving from a traditional classroom into a digital environment and the impact of this in their cognitive development. The results showed that despite the belief that students are highly qualified users of technological devices, they struggle to respond to face-to-face dynamics adapted to an online synchronic mode.*

**Key words:** Advantages (or Benefits), Drawbacks, Challenges, Preferences.

### Introduction

Conducting research into teaching and learning processes has been the focus of attention for decades in education for different reasons: to evaluate programs, to seek for ways to give our teaching practice variety or sometimes because the object of study attracts us a lot. This time it is different. This time, there is an overwhelming need to get to know the new teaching contexts better to be able to meet their needs in a professional way. It is necessary to identify the perceptions that students had about the emerging ways of working in their English classes, and from working at a distance when they were supposed to work in situ. The outcome of this study can contribute to gain knowledge about the challenges we face when shifting from working modes.

### Objectives

- To identify how learners perceive a shift between working in a face-to-face system to an online system.
- To recognize the challenges and suggestions that learners expressed, and the way teachers can approach remote working.

### Research questions

- What do learners think about moving from a face-to-face interaction to an online learning environment?
- In what ways can the shift between working in a face-to-face mode to an online mode affect the teaching and learning processes?

## **1. Literature Review**

This section has been divided into three subsections: Hybrid in-house and virtual environment; the second subsection encapsulates three main points: advantages, challenges and opportunities, interaction and support, and feedback and evaluation; the last subsection deals with the notion of commitment.

The intention is to provide a general view on different elements of the process of moving from a face-to-face learning context into a virtual environment. The six subsections give an insight into what the literature has discussed in terms of a hybrid system even long before the Covid 19 pandemic.

### **1.1 HYBRID IN-HOUSE AND VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT**

Due to the pandemic spread all over the world, educational systems have had to adapt their face-to-face programs into an online environment. This has been referred to as a hybrid system; however, this concept emerged long before the social lockdown. Carter (2013) defines a hybrid program as the one which counts on an online component. There is flexibility and accessibility of e-learning experiences. Nevertheless, Ranganathan et al (2007) underline the fact that despite having e-learning activities, the time devoted in the classroom cannot be reduced and students need clear guidance to start migrating to an online environment.

Nowadays, there is a new variable that needs to be considered which is that a hybrid program may demand students moving into three types of terms during their BA (Lampton and Hill, 2012):

- A. A term which is completely given in a face-to-face mode using some online learning materials.
- B. A term which is partially given in an online mode and requires adapted materials from a face-to-face course, or vice versa.
- C. A term which is completely given in an online mode using materials solely designed for online classes.

The point here is to know whether, under extreme circumstances and keeping most of the tasks designed for traditional classes, this new approach can be called hybrid by the sole fact of moving from a face-to-face setting into an online environment. Apparently, this could be doable for Ranganathan et al (2007) and McFarlin (2008) as they affirm that more research needs to be conducted to know the exact proportion of time devoted to each mode, and even the combination of online materials and materials designed for face-to-face environments used in online sessions, and vice versa. As in all changes, there are advantages and disadvantages in this unexpected educational environment.

### **1.2 ADVANTAGES**

It is a bit difficult to think that such negative circumstances like the ones the world have faced can bring positive effects to the lives of people in general. However, it is necessary to open the scope and consider what living in confinement provoked in the student and the communities they live in. There were some circumstances that helped the families save some money. For example, accommodation; many of the students enrolled in our university come from different parts of the state. Thus, due to their children had to go back to their hometowns parents did not have to pay for rent or boarding houses and other services like electricity, gas, telephone, food, transport within the city, launderette, among others. Families did not have to pay for any other materials, except for the internet service in their own houses.

Moreover, the fact that many students stayed in their hometowns might have given many families a sense of security. Many parents have expressed their concern about sending their children away to study. Besides, due to the reduction in the challenge that transport might represent, many parents may feel pleased because they could make sure their children were healthy by staying at home, especially when the home providers could do office work and received their salaries without problem.

Academically speaking several advantages can be identified. The fact that learners did not have a teacher nearby forced them to seek for information on their own beyond what the teachers gave them (Shirkhani & Fahim, 2015). Students had to become more critical of the sources they used to learn on their own. Nevertheless, according to Jones et al (2006), it is also possible that there is poor development of critical thinking skills as students might be more interested in covering the assessment requirements of the course.

### **Challenges and opportunities**

All participants of the teaching and learning process can be affected in different ways when shifting from a face to face to an online mode of working. Not only were teachers faced with what contents to include in the modified programs, but they also had to adapt their teaching to the confinement conditions and adopt different attitudes to encourage students to continue working. Wright (2017) stated that "how to teach may be equally as important as what to teach for online language lessons and an appropriate balance of media input is paramount". Thus, teachers and students eventually managed to share and apprehend knowledge through the media at hand.

Regarding communication, Wright (2017) states that one demotivating or negative factor could have been a poor internet connection. In many cases the connection or access to internet was nule, this resulted in drop out. Todd et

al (2016) add accessibility issues as a “challenging concern” (p. 88) today mainly when the institutions claim to be inclusive; however, constant training, guidance and mentoring to teachers and students is provided in order to overcome this matter. They also consider those students with visual disabilities.

### **Interaction and support**

Regarding human interaction, emotional, pedagogical and technological support, students seemed to lack a more evident way of showing human affection (Human touch) and encouragement. In this respect, Ranganathan et al (2007) highlight the difficulty students face to move from a traditional education setting into an online learning environment as there is lack of personal interactions. According to Heller et al (2016), the use of visuals in a series of pedagogical activities made evident the difficulty to recreate “a high-fidelity human interaction” with a conversational agent (p.155). The limitations in terms of interaction a chatbot may have, become more visible when emotional support is necessary. Finally, Hamza-Lup and White (2015) suggest the use of appropriate and adequately designed forums to encourage students’ interaction.

Consequently, regarding an online environment, virtual communities start being created between mentors and students, and among students. So, the human touch is inevitable in an educational setting even at a distance (Todd et al., 2016). Espinosa (2015) recognises the importance of a social network to support students’ academic development; however, she suggests that Facebook could enhance a virtual community among students but skips the importance of providing students with emotional support in a situation of emergency. In this respect, Gillett-Swan (2017) addresses the case of those students who feel or experience isolation and the importance the role of facilitator acquires as teachers need to find the way to create a sense of community among students.

The idea of providing support is something Carter (2013) does when highlighting the roles that teachers must play in an e-learning platform as that of an authoritarian instructor. This could be hardly continued in a virtual environment as teachers’ performance is publicly exposed. She, then, lists a series of roles such as that of a course designer, catalyst, coach and supporter among others. She does mention the role of evaluator which will be discussed in the following subsection.

### **Feedback and evaluation**

According to Lambert and Hill (2012), students from a hybrid system have had a better final grade compared to those from a traditional learning environment. In addition, these hybrid students have shown an increase in their knowledge level learning. Therefore, the passing rate has also improved. Campbell and Cameron (2016) add that “students’ achievement of learning outcomes was satisfactory” (p. 252) in this mode; obviously, scaffolding plays a crucial role to provide students with adequate guidance and motivation to facilitate interactions and collaborations between teacher-students and students-students, essential factors in any learning process.

In terms of feedback, Hamza-Lup and White (2015) affirm that through questioning, challenging tasks, apart from the possible challenges of a virtual environment, investigating and even seeking for their own feedback on the net, students’ learning can be enhanced; nevertheless, early and progressive feedback must be awarded. Facilitators may even provide constructed personalized feedback. Zhu (2012) adds that that through constructive and precise feedback, students can elaborate their answers in a productive manner and feel more motivated while doing so. She continues saying that apart from technical expertise, teachers need to be committed to devote time and effort to assess and guide students learning process.

### **1.3 COMMITMENT**

Technological advances would not be of any benefit if teachers do not exercise strong commitment in assessing students’ ongoing learning (Zhu, 2012). For example, teachers must show commitment regarding the time they will have to devote and invest to adapt their in-house materials into a virtual environment. Wang & Torrisi-Steele (2015) certainly foresee some of the relevant adjustments, teachers must carry when adapting their materials into a virtual environment: “While an instructor in a traditionally taught course can easily drop new material into the syllabus or even an individual class, modifying an online course usually requires reshooting video, editing existing content, modifying software, and so on” (p. 143).

Young (2016) adds that adapting a traditional course to an online setting not only demands time and money investment but it must ensure the preservation of the academic veracity and quality of the content in the adapted programs. Moreover, materials adaptation must be permanent.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study is a piece of qualitative research based on a Case Study method. In qualitative research, data is obtained through open ended questions and observation that help to investigate individuals, groups, institutions or other social units in an integrated and detailed way (Stake, 1995). The intention of this inquiry was to identify students’ perceptions on the challenges they experienced when moving from a traditional classroom situation into a digital environment and the impact of this on their cognitive development as well as on the development of their social and psychological identity.

## 2.1 CASE STUDY

A Case Study within the Qualitative Paradigm was preferred as it allowed us to gather real-life information and can be adjusted to explore a particular phenomenon (Lopez, 2012; Stake, 2010); therefore, the best way to know the effectiveness of “emergency remote teaching”, which has become in vogue at present, seems to be relevant and necessary precisely by online interviewing two groups of EFL learners who unexpectedly moved into a type of teaching that combines face-to face-interaction with digital media resources. Nine students from two different classes were interviewed during the contingency (Hamilton & Bowers, 2015)). They fulfilled the requirement of appropriateness and adequacy (Morse & Field, 2002) as the participants were the best ones to inform the research questions.

## 2.2 CONTEXT & PARTICIPANTS

Nine students (4 females and 5 males, aged 19-24) from a BA in English Language were chosen as participants in this inquiry. They were invited to participate because they were available (Convenience sampling, Cohen et al., 2000). They belonged to two different intermediate courses and turned from a face-to-face interaction mode at the beginning of the term February-August 2020, to a completely online environment. In addition, they were asked to give us the interviews immediately after their courses ended in July through UV Zoom meetings. Fake names were used to protect their identity.

## 2.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT: ON-LINE INTERVIEWS & E-MAILS

We carried out the online interviews until we noticed we had collected sufficient data and had reached a saturation point – our categories were ‘saturated’ as the data stopped revealing new and relevant information (Kvale, 1996, p.102). We also kept emails students had sent us to describe anything else they wanted to add.

## 2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analysed through the comparison and contrast of the information provided by the different participants. This scrutiny-based technique helped us to identify quality data patterns (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). These patterns turned into the emergent categories of our study and were also compared with the information from the literature review, which helped to define the final version of the categories.

## 3. FINDINGS

Seven categories emerged from the data: “Online mixed interaction”, “Online mixed support”, “Rewarding experiences of online learning”, “Challenging online learning experiences”, “Advantages of mixed online courses”, “Disadvantages of mixed online courses”, and “Suggestions of mixed online courses”.

### 3.1 ONLINE MIXED INTERACTION

This first category deals with the interaction between teacher-students, and students-students in a hybrid atmosphere. The interaction of the participants of this study is considered mixed as the teachers of the students interviewed used three means to teach and establish communication with students, namely: email, UVZOOM and WhatsApp. Thus, participants manifested a general feeling of comfort, security and support basically from the part of their English teacher. This latter statement can be observed through the concepts used to refer to the interaction with their professor such as fun, positive or fantastic.

Participants also gave information about other important aspects such as the adaptability to the new online mode they had to use; for example, June described that the teacher had adapted the classes very well to the virtual modality. For this participant adapting a face-to-face class to an online mode was an adequate move as the goal was not to miss classes and to be up to date. Another participant explained that the feedback they had received was done permanently through the different means of communication they had established with the teacher. This was confirmed by Sandy who found the interaction with the teacher positive because he had been very nice and asked if students had any question; they could also send him an email or a message through WhatsApp and he would always answer.

For this same individual working online was perceived as a bit threatening at the beginning. Eventually, this turned out better than in the classroom classes. Nevertheless, April also perceived working online in a negative way; she found the classes tedious and confusing at some point. This could be since she did not participate during the sessions. Thus, this lack of interaction might have made her feel bored or confused. The subjective conception of some students that make a connection between learning and memorising contents might place responsibility of their learning on teachers (Šteh et al, 2014). This subjective conception can be very strong and therefore prevent learners from taking a more active role in class and their learning.

Regarding participation with their own peers, participants explained that this had been more reduced than with their teacher. On the one hand, August accepted not talking to his classmates because they sometimes did not reply. On the other hand, Sandy, explained that interaction solely with peers was not frequent because they did activities on

their own. However, this participant added that they had talked to each other during lessons. So, it can be observed that different people have different perceptions depending on their preferences and expectations. Overall, the most salient patterns of interaction in the two groups of learners interviewed were teacher-student, which took place during the presentation and explanation of lesson contents, and student- teacher, which took place when students asked the teacher either during the virtual sessions or through their WhatsApp group. One key element that emerged from the interaction among these actors was online support.

### 3.2 ONLINE MIXED SUPPORT

The online support that the participants of this study perceived had different characteristics. Some students said they felt the support was positive, but they also identified some areas that needed more work in the online course like pronunciation or correction of vocabulary use.

It is important to notice that some aspects of the teaching and learning process, especially in language courses, are more difficult to enhance because of lack of time provided in the platforms. Moreover, the shift teachers and students had to make from working face to face to working online was very abrupt. Most learners acknowledged the support from their teacher and mentioned other aspects that resulted from that support. For example, Lindsay mentioned confidence and a sense of comradery in her class as when she expressed in her words that s/he had to admit that the teacher was the only one with whom she had felt very confident during classes. Sandy also felt very motivated and supported because the teacher was a caring person.

Then, motivation and gratitude emerged as a key factor when perceiving support. In this respect, participants also expressed the support they got from their classmates. They reminded each other some datelines and helped with some assignments as expressed: “We all supported each other if we had any questions or doubts” [Sandy]. Some coincided in terms of the support received regarding homework and the help to get information about the class activities.

It would appear to be that the support teacher gave, and the support students gave each other triggered a sense of confidence among the classes. Important affective factors such as confidence and motivation were also identified during the delivery of the courses. The nature of the experiences of moving from a face-to-face mode to an online mode of learning was also varied among the participants of this study.

### 3.3 REWARDING EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE LEARNING

While conducting the interviews, we noticed that participants were eager to share the process they went through during the course. They were asked to recall how they felt during these difficult times the world is living. Some of them said the use of technologic devices and tools was not as easy as one would expect, considering we are all surrounded by technological gadgets. However, even for them, young people it took a bit of time to get used to using these tools. April mentioned two that if had been confusing at the beginning to experiment with tools from an online course such as the board or video, but they had eventually learnt, and it had become accessible. As they had talked a lot all the time in the virtual classroom.

The resulting experience that made April feel satisfied was precisely the fact that she learnt both to use the tools and to practice the speaking skill. Other participants, like June, referred to the platform items used by the professor. She even found the use of this mode of working less face-threatening to ask questions, which would probably turn the monitor off (Krashen, 2009) and ease the process as he felt more comfortable when s/he asked something to the teacher in the online session and did not feel the pressure or felt intimidated when s/he asked something in front of his classmates in the face-to-face classes. Moreover, participants mentioned that the use of sources like webpages and videos made the class more attractive, enjoyable and rewarding.

Sandy gave credit to the use of different kinds of input in order to foster learning as she thought that experimenting with different tools such as an online board, sharing webpages or videos made the topic more attractive and it had been easier to pay attention. For example, she liked the activity about an art review, because she enjoyed the online gallery, so it was easier to write about something that she liked.

Nevertheless, even though August pointed out that the use of different sources of input was positive and he had learnt a lot, he still seemed to believe that for a learning experience to be rewarding s/he needed to be faced to face with others to share knowledge. He thought he would have learnt more in a face-to-face mode and considered a rewarding experience when there is practice with someone else.

As can be observed in the answers participants gave, they share a feeling of satisfaction and pride; they described how confused they felt when they started attending classes remotely and eventually managed to cope with the constraints all this implied. It seems that the level of anxiety they felt reduced over time and found enjoyment in the lessons thanks to the different digital tools and resources their teachers used. The use of technology in classes, then,

represented both a positive source of input and a challenge. Other challenges participants identified are described in the following section.

### 3.4 CHALLENGING ONLINE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The first aspect many people working at a distance complained about all over the world was the internet connection. Poor communication connections usually cause frustration among people under customary circumstances; this was perceived even worse during the pandemic period because it was the only link people had with the outside world. Apparently, when some of the participants had a connection problem they immediately thought that working remotely was not good enough and they would not be able to recover what they had lost from the missed session. In this respect, Ariel and June expressed that the only frustrating learning experiences they had had was when they had not had a good internet connection and had lost some important information about the class session and Ariel sometimes had missed certain parts of some explanations that the teacher had given at a specific time.

Learners need to be assured that they can have access to the materials used in class for later revision and study. Hence, they are more likely to see this problem with tranquility, especially because the confinement we are living in right now might take longer than we expect. Another challenging experience occurred when students felt they needed more contact to fully understand a topic. Lindsay said: “ A challenging or frustrating learning experience could be the one when you study a topic repeatedly, and you cannot remember it.” Obviously, as in any sort of learning, practice of the language contents is essential. Students also need to develop their study strategies and go beyond what teachers present in class (Lopez & Buenfil, 2018).

Another salient difficulty participants mentioned linked with the factor of practice was the development of the writing texts. Sandy affirmed that writing an essay had been a challenging learning experience, because s/he had never written with so much formality before; therefore, s/he had written a lot of versions and had to search for some expressions. She added that writing longer and more formal texts required for the language course he was taking was a real challenge. This can be understandable as the course s/he was taking was more advanced and obviously more demanding. Moreover, the development of writing skills require training from the part of teachers, but it also requires students to construct and produce their own thoughts (DeWaelche,2015). The writing skill was especially important for students as their teachers took several pieces of writing during the course into consideration to award them a final note.

Furthermore, based on the answers and comments participants gave in the interviews and emails, it was possible to identify more challenges as well as some ways to face them as shown in the following chart.

Chart 1 Summary of Challenges

<p><b>Poor internet connection</b>  <b>Shyness before an intimidating scenario</b>  <b>Tedious dynamics</b>  <b>Perplexing environment</b>  <b>Insufficient and frustrating interaction with peers</b>  <b>Unsatisfying experience</b>  <b>Difficulties to understand a topic.</b>  <b>Security</b>  <b>More practice on writing</b>  <b>All sort of distractors</b></p>	<p><b>Overcame with</b></p>	<p><b>Enough comfort, support and satisfaction</b>  <b>More practice</b>  <b>More attractive materials</b>  <b>Enhance vocabulary searching for writing.</b>  <b>Less expenses</b>  <b>More input on writing</b></p>
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### 3.5 ADVANTAGES OF MIXED ONLINE COURSES

This category describes the positive aspects participants identified in the online classes they had to attend due to the contingency caused by the covid-19 virus. One big advantage mentioned had to do with economic factors (Lanza & White, 2015). As the university receives students from all over the state, even from other states, parents need to support their children. Thus, students stayed in their hometowns and saved that money. April also mentioned that parents felt safer to have their children with them. Adrian agreed with that and added that working online let them do other activities in their spare time. Finally, August also thought parents felt safer and said that working online gives students the freedom to have flexible study timetables.

Nonetheless, August accepted that he would not be able to get used to studying in this mode as it was more uncomfortable. Lindsay agreed with August in not getting accustomed to working online, but she also mentioned important factors that contribute to the adaptation and construction of new knowledge ((Diaz-Maggioli, 2016). What is important to note here is that participants identified that having to work online enabled the professional

growth of both actors: learners and teachers. Another advantage most participants perceived positively from working online was the way their teachers evaluated them. Sandy made the connection between the feedback she got from their teacher at a distance and the good note s/he had obtained.

It is important to point out that teachers had to consider all the written tasks students did along the term to award them a final note. Thus, they awarded higher grades to written tasks. Not everyone felt this was fair, they argued that strongly relying on one skill to give a global note might discriminate learners with different skills and preferences. In these cases, it is of paramount importance to establish the evaluation parameters teachers will use from the very beginning of the course. In this way, both teachers and students know what is expected from each. June thought their teacher acted according to the agreements taken, but still feels their working remotely did not suit her leaning style.

It is important to notice that regardless of how positive or negative students felt about working online, all of them identified advantages of working this way. The advantages they identified related to personal or affective factors, as well as academic growth and development of new working strategies. They also felt that the evaluation teachers did was appropriate. In fact, experts in the field of hybrid education explain that to conduct evaluation: “the manually graded assessment components have a greater weighting in the overall final grades and includes personalized detailed feedback” (Lanza & White, 2015), which is what participants received from their English teachers. All in all, learners seemed to understand that teachers did what they could with the resources and evidence they had to award them final notes. Nonetheless, participants also identified disadvantages of working online.

### **3.6 DISADVANTAGES OF MIXED ONLINE COURSES**

Besides the fact that many people had to cope with communication problems in Mexico, especially because of the saturation in platforms and sites or simply because they had poor internet connection, participants also described other problems that occurred during that term. Alex found her/himself very unfocused on the academic tasks; he explained a disadvantage was that he got distracted a lot and his internet connection also failed a lot. He had to get data for his phone, and nothing replaced the face-to-face learning.

In addition, some other students showed certain intolerance towards their classmates, as August expressed that his classmates took too much time to respond. This was also mentioned by other students. They said they felt a bit impatient to see that some other classmates had difficulty logging in, getting used to attending virtual classes or participating. However, it is the teachers' duty to give everyone the opportunity to access and participate, as in any other sort of class. Especially when shifting from a face-to-face mode to working online, teachers must be tolerant and promote a positive classroom environment to motivate all learners to continue working (Mendez, 2012).

It is positive to see that learners feel for their peers and help each other by sharing contents and materials, by telling each other what homework was assigned and so on. In general, participants showed to have a sense of partnership and collaboration. However, they also observed that some people were not very committed with their courses. Lindsay explained that some people did not reply as they should in the virtual lessons, thus showing little or not enough commitment with their own learning.

It was interesting to see how critical participants were of the learning context that online studying produced. They emphasized the disadvantages that provoke poor or null communication connections. Unfortunately, this problem is totally out of control from teachers or educational institutions. One personal disadvantage is the high level of distraction that some learners may experience precisely because working at home implies the interaction with members of their family, outside noises, the lack of a proper study place, a lot of other distractors like television, films, video games, among others. Moreover, the lack of commitment to studies might imply lack of motivation or desire to continue. Thus, participants were very explicit to describe some suggestions for further online courses and for teachers.

### **3.7 SUGGESTIONS OF MIXED ONLINE COURSES**

As we explained in previous sections of this work, the change that teachers and students of the learning context we studied had to make from a face-to-face mode to an online mode was very abrupt. Teachers and students were hurried to work remotely. The experiences were varied in nature, but the most important was that new knowledge and proposals to improve emerged. Firstly, participants described what the students should improve. June suggested that learners should be attentive and hard-working. In Ariel's opinion, students should become more responsible for their own learning and search for the tools and sources they need. Ashley added: “As students, we need to work harder and search for the information we don't understand.” That is to develop a sense of exploring to identify what information can be useful for anyone. It is worthwhile noting that they all had suggestions for teachers.

The first suggestions we identified had to do with giving constant feedback to students and using different sources of input. But June added that “Teachers must also be confident using new technologies as a [pedagogical] tool and not as a necessity.” Some participants were very specific regarding the skills that should be improved such as April who affirmed that English teachers should use more readings to promote students’ learning as readings were so helpful to improve their fluency, pronunciation and understanding. Students are, then, conscious of the receptive skills they need to develop such as listening and reading comprehension and productive skills such as speaking and writing.

Moreover, Adrian pointed out that teachers must promote the participation of all learners and give assistance in the development of learning skills. He thought that in order to make the online sessions more rewarding the activities should be more interactive between students and teachers. He added that if teachers wanted to promote students’ learning, teachers would need to involve all students in the same way during the sessions; and if the pandemic had lasted longer, he would have needed good teachers; those who had cared about their learning skills. Finally, it would appear to be that in order to improve the teaching and learning process, it is a matter of how the main actors approach this process. The suggestions are not very new to any learning context, but they truly are specific to face these difficult pandemic times.

## CONCLUSION

It is clear now that there is a distinction between blended learning, which has previously combined traditional and online learning processes; and hybrid system which is the result of a response to a social emergency, precisely like the one teachers and learners lived because of the pandemic. Therefore, these two terms should not be used indistinctly. In addition, despite the belief that students are highly qualified users of technological devices, they do struggle to respond to face-to-face dynamics adapted to an online synchronic mode. They may be skilful to play video games, but they certainly need special training to make the best of technology as a pedagogical tool to learn a second language.

Furthermore, students experienced a real world immersed in an intangible world in which they were also able to put into practice new forms of behaviour to produce written evidence of their academic progress. Obviously, the ones who were lucky enough for having access to internet, computers, educational platforms and other similar devices seemed to be more successful. The quality of such technological devices play an important role. Thus, more practical training on remote teaching emerged as a necessary factor to enhance professional development for teachers as well as for students (Lopez & Buenfil, 2018). Finally, more research needs to be conducted on the new forms of interaction between teachers-students, and students-students. Curriculum design must also take into account students’ needs to redesign the different syllabi.

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