PERCEPTION OF LECTURERS AND STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING SPANISH POST COVID-19

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Abstract. This research made it possible to determine the perception of lecturers and students of the University of Guyana about the teaching-learning of Spanish in the post-COVID-19 era, as well as the advantages and disadvantages they perceive using online classes. This non-experimental study had an exploratory-descriptive scope. The sample consisted of 7 lecturers and 145 students from the SPA1003 (Beginners Spanish) course at the University of Guyana. Participants answered surveys with open-ended and closed-ended questions. The data obtained were analyzed using the statistical tools of Microsoft Excel. After processing the results, it was determined that lecturers preferred blended education and students preferred the online modality. The main disadvantages with the use of online education were technical difficulties, too little interaction, limited practice of oral expression, insufficient mastery of technological tools by the lecturers, and increase in academic dishonesty of students. Advantages of online classes included the using of multimedia resources, immediate and direct communication through virtual platforms, and the possibility of learning at one's own pace. For future research, it is recommended to interview lecturers, to do an experimental study with students taking SPA1003 course in the same academic year in different modalities, to choose a probabilistic sample, to further investigate the issue of academic dishonesty among students, and to evaluate the possibility of introducing a competency-based curricular model for SPA1003 course.

Keywords: online education, higher education, teaching-learning post COVID-19, Spanish.

PERCEPCIÓN DE PROFESORES Y ESTUDIANTES DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE GUYANA ACERCA DE LA ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE DEL ESPAÑOL POS-COVID-19

Resumen. Esta investigación permitió determinar la percepción de docentes y estudiantes de la Universidad de Guyana sobre la enseñanza-aprendizaje del español en la época pos-COVID-19, así como las ventajas y desventajas que perciben al utilizar las clases en línea. Este estudio de tipo no experimental tuvo un alcance exploratorio-descriptivo. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 7 profesores y 145 estudiantes del curso SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) de la Universidad de Guyana. Los participantes respondieron encuestas con preguntas abiertas y cerradas. Los datos obtenidos fueron analizados utilizando las herramientas estadísticas de *Microsoft Excel*. Luego del procesamiento de los resultados, se determinó que los docentes preferían la modalidad semipresencial y los estudiantes la modalidad en línea. Las principales desventajas del uso de la educación en línea fueron las dificultades técnicas, la poca interacción, la práctica limitada de la expresión oral, el dominio insuficiente de las herramientas tecnológicas por parte de los profesores y el aumento de la deshonestidad académica de los

estudiantes. Las ventajas de las clases en línea incluyeron el uso de recursos multimedia, la comunicación inmediata y directa a través de plataformas virtuales y la posibilidad de aprender a su propio ritmo. Para futuras investigaciones se recomienda entrevistar a docentes, hacer un estudio experimental con estudiantes del curso SPA1003 en el mismo año académico en diferentes modalidades, elegir una muestra probabilística, profundizar en el tema de la deshonestidad académica de los estudiantes y evaluar la posibilidad de introducir un modelo curricular basado en competencias para el curso SPA1003.

Palabras clave: educación en línea, educación superior, enseñanza-aprendizaje pos-COVID-19, español.

Introduction

Today there is talk of the new normal, but not of returning to the routine prior to the last months of 2019. However optimistic one may be, life will not be the same after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, or at least not in the immediate years. Education, as an essential component of society, will have to survive under these new circumstances that are now considered normal.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to hit almost every country in the world on a massive scale, the immediate closure of movie theaters, restaurants, supermarkets, transportation lines, factories... and of course, schools and universities was determined. The slogan of the moment was "Stay at home". However, when the first weeks of fear, euphoria and bewilderment had passed, educational directors, teachers, parents and students began to ask themselves, "What now? One could not leave the house, but neither could one see a clear path to continue the class, course, semester or school year that had been interrupted due to the pandemic.

At the beginning of 2020, the implementation of online classes began to be considered, although in reality this "every man for himself" was nothing more than remote emergency education, an educational modality that had been used in many countries for several years to prevent the interruption of the teaching-educational process in the event of natural disasters, wars and other extraordinary circumstances.

However, for a significant sector of the world's population, the COVID-19 pandemic is a thing of the past. It would make no sense to continue to use emergency remote education when the "emergency" no longer exists. So, should we go back to face-to-face classes, keep online classes with more preparation and experience, or implement a combination of both modalities?

What needs to be known to better understand this research?

Online education is defined as "the process by which virtual educational environments are built to provide information, which is analyzed, processed and appropriated by active learners, without the need to attend a physical space" (Herrera and Herrera, 2013, p. 67). A narrower definition indicates that online education is:

> This is where teachers and students participate and interact in a digital environment through technological resources making use of the facilities provided by the Internet and computer networks in a synchronous manner, i.e., they must coincide with their schedules for the session. (Ibáñez, 2020).

However, online education is not only limited to the use of synchronous tools, but also asynchronous ones. In other words, the teacher and the students do not have to be connected at the same time, which is one of the main attractions of the online modality.

Closely related to the above concepts is that of remote emergency education, which became fashionable in the early 2020s in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In short periods of time, and in most cases without the necessary human preparation or technological resources, it was necessary to "transfer the courses that had been taught face-to-face to a remote, virtual, distance or online classroom" (Ibáñez, 2020). Thus, emergency remote education can be defined as "a temporary shift from instructional delivery to an alternative delivery mode due to crisis circumstances" (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 17).

The Real Academia Española defines "-semi" as a compositional element meaning "half" or "almost". Therefore, the term semipresential would mean "almost face-to-face". Blended learning, also called *blended learning*, is strictly speaking facilitated learning through the effective combination of different delivery modes, teaching models and learning styles, and based on transparent communication between all areas involved in a course (Heinze and Procter, 2004). When studies are carried out on a blended learning basis, "education takes place at home except for certain periodic sessions in which the student must attend classes" (*Educación semipresencial*, 2022). As stated by Sivula (2018): "in blended learning, digital tools do not compete with traditional teaching and education methods, but complement them, improving the efficiency and flexibility of the education process". The same article states that "blended learning is one of the most effective training and education methods [...] we can safely say that blended learning is here to stay" (Sivula, 2018).

With the ever-increasing amount of material to be learned by the student, the traditional classroom became a marathon where the teacher was the center of the teaching-learning process. The role of the students would be limited to taking notes. There would be hardly any time left to clarify doubts, review homework or do activities, as there would be much more material to cover before the next exam. Educators around the world are trying to practice a more learner-driven approach. This other model, known as flipped learning, consists of "a student-centered model that deliberately consists of moving some or most of the direct instruction outside the classroom to take advantage of class time by maximizing one-on-one interactions between teacher and student" (Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 2014).

Flipped learning is one of the modalities of blended learning. The *Flipped Learning Network* (2014) defines flipped learning as:

A pedagogical approach in which direct instruction is shifted from the group learning dimension to the individual learning dimension, transforming the remaining group space into a dynamic and interactive learning environment in which the facilitator guides students in the application of concepts and their creative engagement with the course content.

For its part, UNIR REVISTA states the following:

This is a groundbreaking system because it proposes that students study and prepare the lessons outside the classroom, accessing the contents of the subjects at home so that, later, it is in the classroom where they do their homework, interact and carry out more participatory activities (analyzing ideas, debates, group work, etc.). All of this is strongly supported by new technologies and with a teacher acting as a guide. (JOIN MAGAZINE, 2020)

Will education be the same during and after the COVID-19 pandemic?

These days, even customs such as blowing out a birthday candle and shaking hands are considered dangerous because of the high degree of contagion involved. The school did not escape this peculiar dynamic of life brought about by COVID-19. With the transition from face-

to-face to online classes, technological tools quickly went from being support resources to become the essential means upon which the teaching-learning process would be sustained during the pandemic. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Moodle or Edmodo have constituted the space for exchange between teachers and students from the end of 2019 to the present (March 2022). Even digital media that were not originally conceived for that purpose, such as WhatsApp, Facebook or YouTube, have been integrated into online classes at a dizzying pace.

López (2020) states that "the analog and the digital have been merged, at least, in a single world; we cannot renounce the value of virtuality in the teaching field" (p. 132). However, the same article warns that "it is not enough to simply incorporate technological tools into teaching in order to consume knowledge; it is necessary to redesign teaching with the help of the virtual world, to enrich content and reconstruct learning experiences" (López, 2020, p. 133). For all these reasons, it is necessary to carefully examine the disadvantages and advantages of online classes before assessing the definitive migration to a modality that was adopted out of obligation, not choice.

As for the disadvantages of the online modality, one of the most obvious is the stress it generates in the teaching staff. Teaching was one of the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Cortés (2021), "the adaptation process resulted in an exhausting task that derived in work stress, which seriously affects the physical and mental health of teachers, considerably affecting their quality of life" (p. 3). Overnight, teachers and students had to assume a new routine that, whether they liked it or not, constituted the new normal. An interview with professors from the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) shows the following:

Teachers have left the traditional classroom, to which they have been accustomed for decades, to become forced users of the technological tools that exist to interact remotely between themselves and their students, while having to deal with the personal pressures of confinement and its economic, health and emotional implications. (Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 3)

In addition to the stress caused by the new conditions, the technological gap of education in almost every country in the world. Many students were affected by factors such as "the availability of equipment and connection at home or the time and place to go to an establishment where they can access these elements" (Cortés, 2021, p. 5).

Connectivity problems and the lack of adequate technological tools pose "a serious difficulty for a good number of students who may be deprived of their fundamental right to education" (López, 2020, 134). One of the major lessons learned from education in times of the COVID-19 pandemic "is the imperative need to close the digital divide in the population, an issue that is not new, but which the pandemic highlighted as a major determinant of access, or not, to the possibility of continuing to learn at a distance" (Furman, 2020, p. 40).

The pandemic also demonstrated that teachers were not prepared to incorporate digital technologies into their classrooms. One of the priorities in the post-COVID-19 stage will be "to strengthen teacher training policies and the generation of teaching content with a focus on the design of sequences and activities that take advantage of the potential of blended learning" (Furman, 2020, p. 41).

The practice also revealed that the online modality requires teaching students to learn autonomously, without expecting teachers to "chew everything over", as could be attempted, and even achieved, in the face-to-face modality. When online classes began, many teachers assumed that their students would continue to be as diligent as they were intended to be in the

classroom, but this did not happen. The very essence of the online modality "requires greater doses of autonomy on the part of the students, reflected in abilities such as the organization of their time, planning work routines, perseverance and the capacity for self-evaluation" (Furman, 2020, p. 41).

As for the advantages of the online modality, the most visible one is the possibility of making the teaching-learning processes more flexible, "not only in terms of time and space, but also to facilitate reinforcement for students who are lagging behind, with the consequent boost for greater group cohesion" (López, 2020, 134). As Furman (2020) mentions, "distance work enables new possibilities that complement and enrich face-to-face work" (p. 39). Some of these possibilities include better organization of learning time, access to resources in audiovisual format, novel means of assessment, and opportunities for collaboration between teachers in different locations (Furman, 2020).

Another point in favor (and against) of online classes is the achievement of better academic results by students. According to Pardo (2020), "the students who were used to passing by the skin of their teeth succeeded with a B or A" (p. 4). In turn, a study by Romero (2021) reveals that Spanish students at the University of Guyana have achieved better academic results since the emergency remote education model was implemented. Romero leaves open the question of whether students "obtain better grades in exams taken remotely because they have the required knowledge and skills or because this modality is more permissive in terms of evaluation" (Romero, 2021, p. 391). For Pardo (2020), the better academic results could be the result of greater leniency on the part of teachers due to the greater amount of homework they have to face in the online modality or because some students seek help from friends or classmates to take the exams. This same professor also considers that the better academic results may be due to the fact that students "look for new learning strategies and have their own techniques to get the best out of distance learning" (Pardo, 2020, p. 4).

What to expect from this research?

The objective of this research was to determine the perception of teachers and students at the University of Guyana about the teaching-learning of Spanish post-COVID-19. At the same time, this study also sought to learn about the advantages of online and face-to-face classes for teachers and students of the University of Guyana who have taught or received the SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) course at this institution, respectively. After processing the results, it was concluded that teachers preferred blended learning for the post-COVID-19 era, while students opted for online classes.

Method

Design

This research consisted of a non-experimental study of exploratory-descriptive scope. No hypotheses were posed as only the opinion of professors and students on the teaching of post-COVID-19 Spanish at the University of Guyana for two consecutive academic years was sought. Participants answered surveys with open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Participants

The population comprised teachers and students of the SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) course at the University of Guyana for 2 consecutive school years: 2020-2021 y 2021-2022. The teaching population consisted of the 7 teachers who taught this course in both periods. Of these teachers, 4 are Guyanese between 27 and 36 years of age. All 4 are Spanish graduates who have been teaching Spanish in local secondary schools for 8 to 15 years and have also been working part-time at the University of Guyana for 3 years (one teacher) and one year (3 teachers). The other 3 teachers work full time at the University of Guyana, hold master's degrees and are native Spanish speakers. One is Panamanian, 57 years old and has been teaching Spanish for 24 years; in addition to the SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) course, she teaches Spanish and Spanish-American literature, comprehensive practice, and translation. The other 2 professors are natives of Cuba. One is 57 years old and has taught Spanish for 6 years; he also teaches dialectology, history of Spanish, and morphology and syntax. The other Cuban professor is 44 years old and has taught Spanish for 16 years; he also teaches Spanish and Latin American literature. None of these 7 teachers had taught online classes prior to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The population of students chosen was the one accessible at the time the instruments were applied. In the 2020-2021 academic year it was 125 students. Of these, 79 (66.4%) came from SEBI (School of Entrepreneurship and Business Innovation), 37 (31.1%) from the Faculty of Social Sciences and 3 (2.5%) from the Faculty of Natural Sciences. In the following year, the student population was 102 students. Of these, 68 (66.7%) belonged to SEBI and 34 (33.3%) to the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Non-probability sampling was used in the research, "whose purpose is not generalization in terms of probability" (Hernández et al., 2014, p. 386) and, therefore, does not aim to achieve a representative sample. The sample of teachers matched the population because all 7 teachers were accessible at all times. Of these faculty members, 3 are employed at the University of Guyana on a full-time basis and 4 are employed on a part-time basis. Her Spanish teaching experience ranges from 6 to 24 years. The student sample consisted of 72 students (60.5%) from the 2020-2021 school year and 73 (71.6%) from the 2021-2022 school year. Here, voluntary participant sampling was employed, in which "people propose themselves as participants in the study or respond to an invitation" (Hernández et al., 2014, p. 387). This sampling method was used because, as the instruments were applied online, it was impossible to control the number of students who would respond.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were a teacher survey and two student surveys. The three forms were created and published in the survey management program *Google Forms*.

The teacher survey, consisting of 14 questions (6 open-ended and 8 closed-ended), was available for 3 weeks: from November 29 to December 19, 2021. The 2 objectives of this survey were as follows:

1.   Determine the modality preferred by teachers in the post-COVID-19 era.
2.   Know the advantages and disadvantages of online and face-to-face classes for teachers;

In the case of students, the first survey was applied in the 2020-2021 school year and the second in the 2021-2022 school year. Both forms consisted of 3 open-ended and 5 closed-ended questions. The first survey was open for 3 weeks: from November 23 to December 20, 2020, with a response rate of 60.5%. The second student survey was also open for 3 weeks: from November 22 to December 19, 2021, with a response rate of 71.6%. The 2 objectives of both surveys were as follows:

1. Determine the modality preferred by students in the post-COVID-19 era.
2. Know the advantages and disadvantages of online and face-to-face classes for students;

As noted above, the questions used in the instruments were both open-ended and closed-ended. The open-ended questions were of the essay type, while the closed-ended questions were both dichotomous (offering a single choice of two answers) and polytomous (participants had to select different answers). The Likert scale was used in one of the closed-ended questions in the student surveys.

Data analysis

The information collected was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Tables and graphs were used for the analysis of the quantitative data resulting from the processing of the closed-ended questions. For the analysis of the qualitative data, key words were assigned based on the frequency of certain terms used in the answers to the open-ended questions. Some of these key words were "assistance", "participation", "connectivity", "electricity supply", "lack of resources", "interaction", among others. The data obtained were processed, organized and tabulated using the statistical tools of the *Microsoft Excel* program. Percentage calculation was used to process the information and arrive at conclusions about the perception of professors and students at the University of Guyana about the teaching-learning of Spanish in the post-COVID era.

Results

Of the 7 teachers who taught the SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) course during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years, 2 part-time teachers (28.6% of the sample) expressed that the online classes did not present a challenge, while the other 5 (71.4%) expressed that they did. The disadvantages of online classes listed by teachers were poor student attendance and participation, technical difficulties (especially poor internet service and power outages), and lack of expertise in handling the computer tools required to teach online. According to the opinion of 5 teachers (71.4%), face-to-face classes favored interaction and oral practice by students, allowed for better academic results and eliminated the suspension of classes due to connectivity problems or power outages. It is noteworthy that one permanent and one part-time professor (28.6%) consider that online teaching could be more effective than face-to-face teaching with more experience and availability of resources.

When asked about the advantages of online teaching, the teachers surveyed acknowledged that they would retain several aspects of it if classes returned to the classroom. Some would be communication with learners via WhatsApp, systematic online assessments, pre-recorded lectures in video format, dialogues in audio format, PowerPoint presentations, subgroup work and integration of multimedia resources.

When asked about the preferred modality for teaching Spanish after the pandemic, 3 part-time professors and one staff professor (57.1%) preferred to keep the lectures online, but to teach the reviews (practical classes) and administer the exams in person. These results indicate that 5 professors (the 4 part-time and one full time, for 71.4%) would take advantage of both teaching modalities. These results translate into teachers' preference for blended learning to teach Spanish post-COVID-19 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Preferred mode of teaching the SPA1003 course in the post-COVID-19 period: online, face-to-face or blended learning
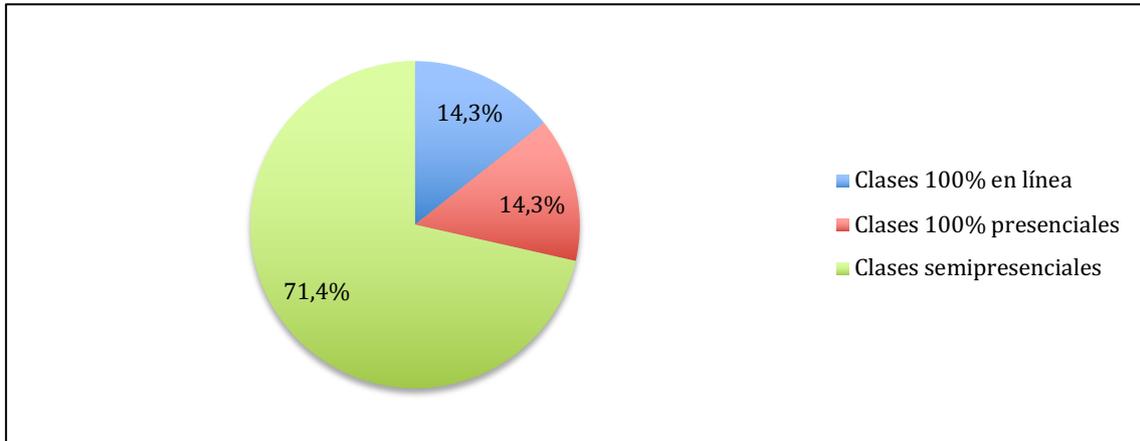
When teachers were asked about the modality that, according to them, students would prefer to learn Spanish in the post-pandemic period, 4 (2 part-time and 2 permanents, for 57.1%) considered the blended learning modality, while 2 part-time (28.6%) and 1 permanent (14.3%) chose the online and face-to-face modalities, respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Methods that, according to teachers, students would prefer to take the SPA1003 course in the post-COVID era: online, face-to-face or blended learning
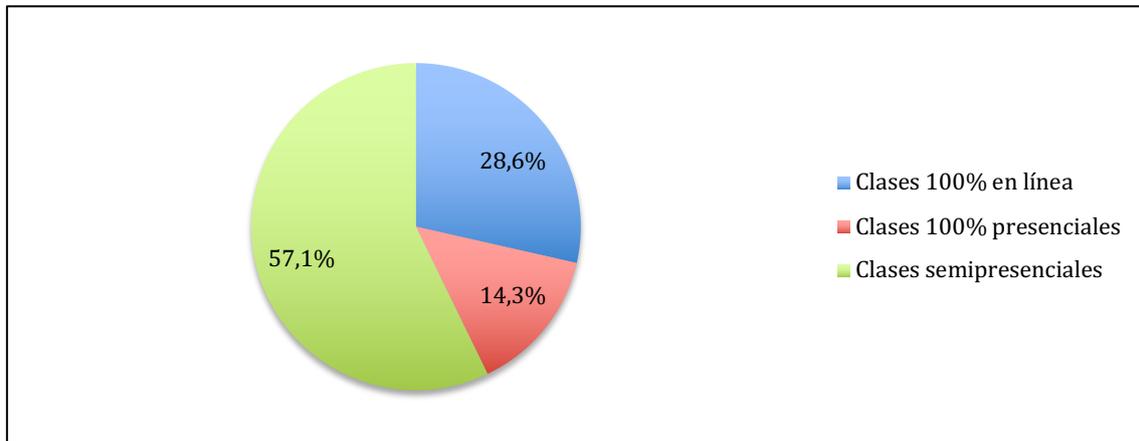
Teachers were also questioned about academic honesty in the exams. 100% were of the opinion that fraud does occur in written tests. Six teachers (85.7%) believe that fraud is also committed in oral exams, while one (14.3%) believes that it is not. Some of the general suggestions for maintaining academic honesty in Spanish exams consisted of designing intelligent tests based on the higher categories of Bloom's Taxonomy, using platforms that prevent fraud, and, ultimately, conducting face-to-face exams. For oral tests, it was suggested to establish a spontaneous conversation instead of asking questions known in advance, to require that the student's camera be activated for the duration of the exam, to pay attention to the student's body language to detect possible fraud attempts, and to require the presentation of the identification card to verify the student's identity.

Regarding teachers' readiness to teach online, 2 part-time (28.6%) expressed that they were ready at the time of transition, but 5 (71.4%) posited that they started teaching online without being fully prepared. On how digital competence was acquired, 3 teachers (two part-time and one staff, for 42.9%) acquired it self-taught, 3 (one part-time and two staff, for 42.9%) were trained at the University of Guyana or the Ministry of Education, and one part-time (14.3%) claimed to possess digital competence at the time of starting online classes (Figure 3).

Figure 3

How teachers acquired the digital competence needed to teach online classes
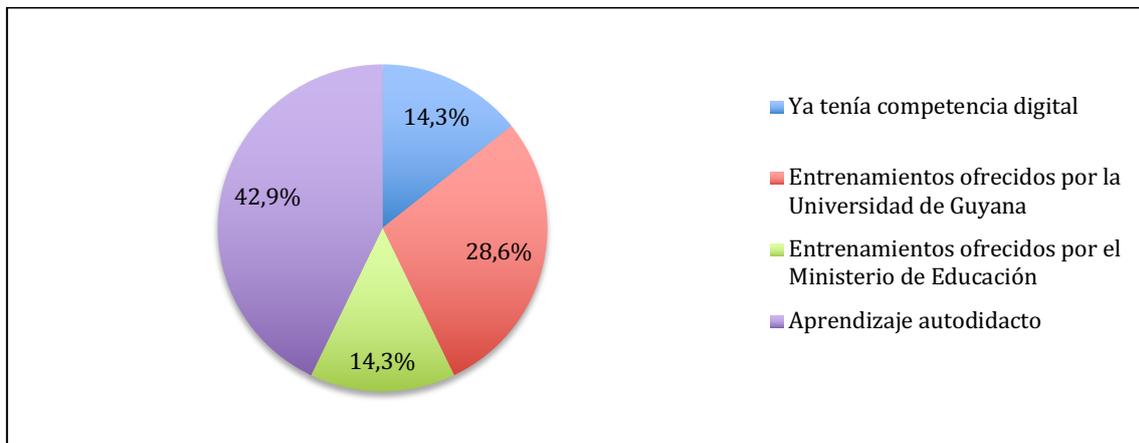
Tabulating the student surveys, it was apparent that the online classes did not present a challenge for 61 students (84.7%) from the 2020-2021 academic year and 55 (75.3%) from 2021-2022, while 11 (15.3%) from the 2020-2021 academic year and 18 (24.7%) from 2021-2022 claimed to have presented some type of difficulty, especially less interaction, increased distraction, and shortage of practice (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Students' challenges in learning Spanish online

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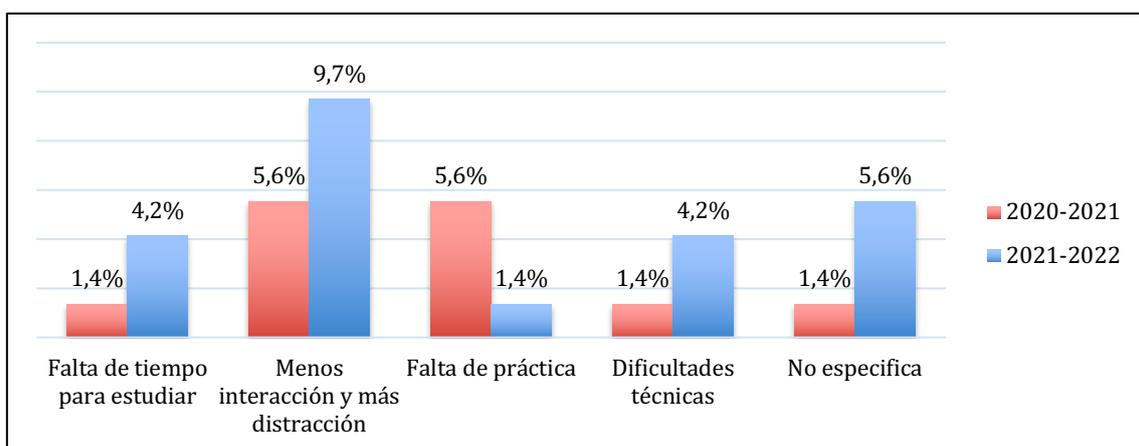
Face-to-face learning was considered less effective than the online modality by 47 students (65.3%) from academic year 2020-2021 and 48 (65.8%) from 2021-2022, while 25 (34.7%) from 2020-2021 and 25 (34.2%) from 2021-2022 felt otherwise. Students who preferred face-to-face learning cited several reasons, especially more interaction and less distraction (Figure 5).
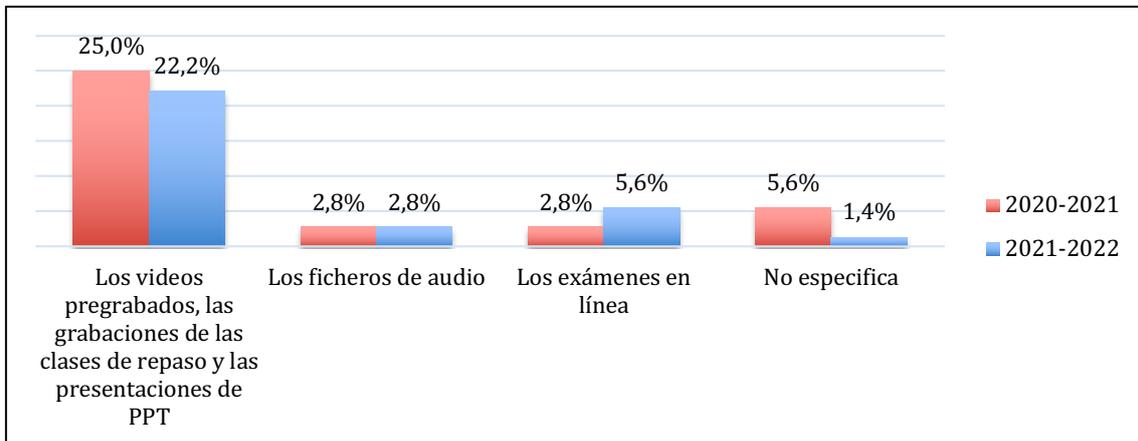
Figure 5

Students' opinions on the advantages of face-to-face learning
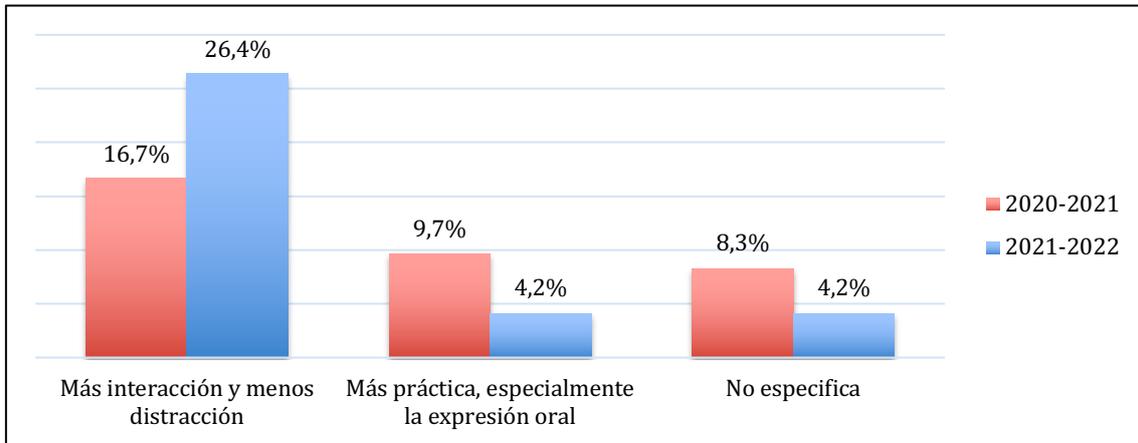
Regarding aspects to retain if Spanish classes return to the classroom, 26 students (36.1%) in the 2020-2021 academic year and 23 (31.5%) in the 2021-2022 academic year would retain some elements of the current online deliverables, such as pre-recorded videos, review class recordings, PowerPoint presentations (PPTs), audio files, and online exams (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Elements of the online classes that students would retain in the face-to-face classroom.

When students in 2020-2021 were asked about the modality they would prefer for learning Spanish in the post-pandemic era, 52 (72.2%) opted for online classes, 14 (19.4%) preferred blended classes and 6 (8.3%) chose face-to-face classes. Those figures for 2021-2022 were 48 (65.8%), 13 (17.8%) and 12 (16.4%) respectively (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Students' preferred method for learning Spanish post-COVID-19: online, face-to-face or blended learning.
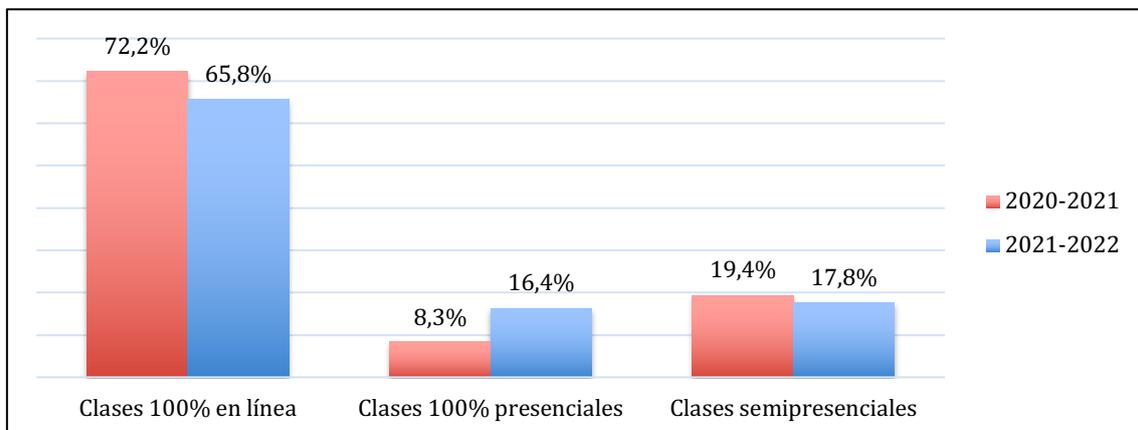
Of the 2020-2021 students, 69 (95.8%) expressed that the online classes allowed them to study at their own pace, while 59 (81.9%) stated that these favored better punctuality. These values were 66 (90.4%) and 62 (84.9%) respectively for 2021-2022. Technical problems affected students in different proportions. The most frequently mentioned difficulties in 2020-2021 were power outages (27 students, 37.5%), internet outages (29 students, 40.3%) and device breakage (17 students, 23.6%). In 2021-2022 these figures were 26 (35.6%), 31 (42.5%) and 12 (16.4%) respectively (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Extent to which technical problems affected students' online Spanish language learning.
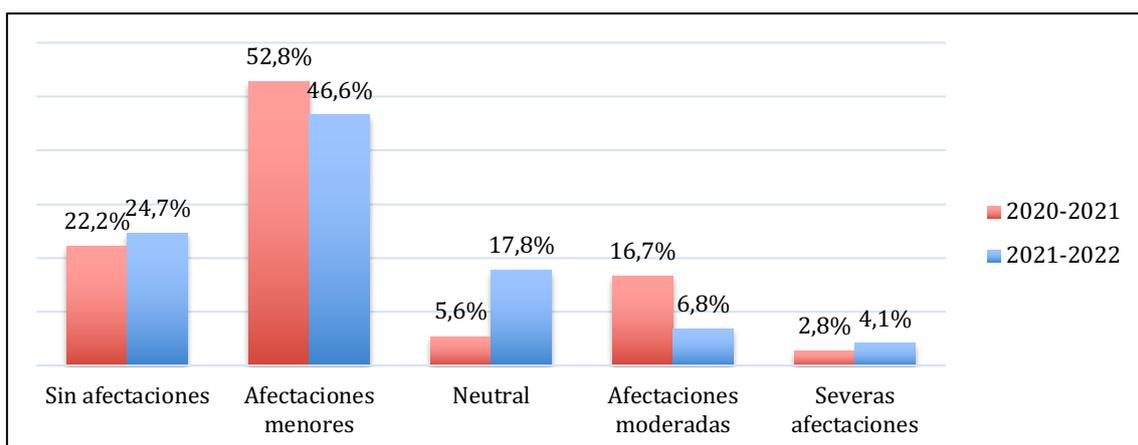
Discussion

The results of the study showed substantial differences between the perception of teachers and students at the University of Guyana about the teaching-learning of Spanish post-COVID-19. Teachers preferred blended classes, while students preferred online classes (Figure 9). It is noteworthy that part-time (younger) teachers were more open to online or blended classes than full professors. It is likely that the age of teachers influences their perception of new technologies: the older they get, the greater the resistance to change. The opinion of teachers coincides with that expressed in several research that ponder the advantages of blended learning for the post-COVID-19 era (Heinze and Procter, 2004; Sivula, 2018; López, 2020), especially flipped learning (Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 2014; UNIR REVISTA, 2020).

Figure 9

Preferred mode of delivery for the SPA1003 course in the post-COVID-19 era: online, face-to-face or blended learning.
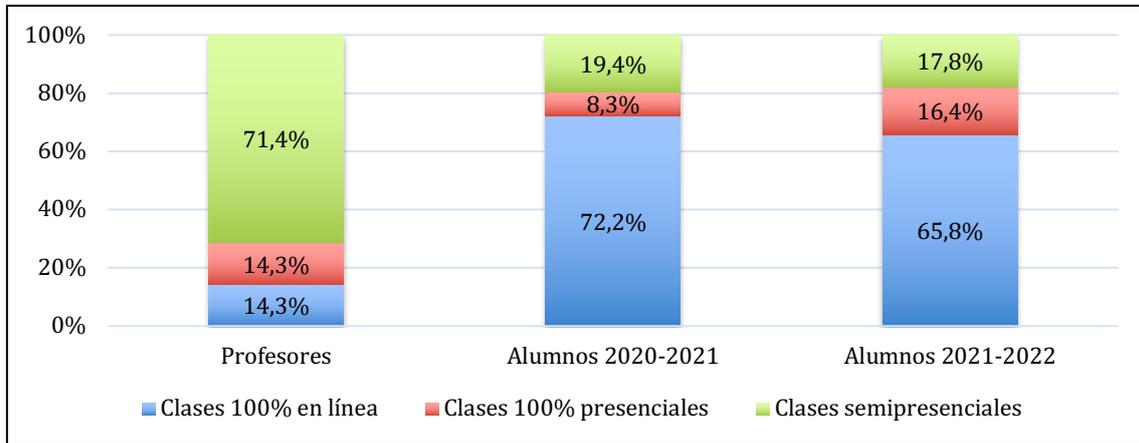
From the comparison of the results obtained from processing the responses of teachers and students, it was appreciated that online classes represented a greater challenge for the former than for the latter (Figure 10).

Figure 10

The challenge of online classes for teachers and students
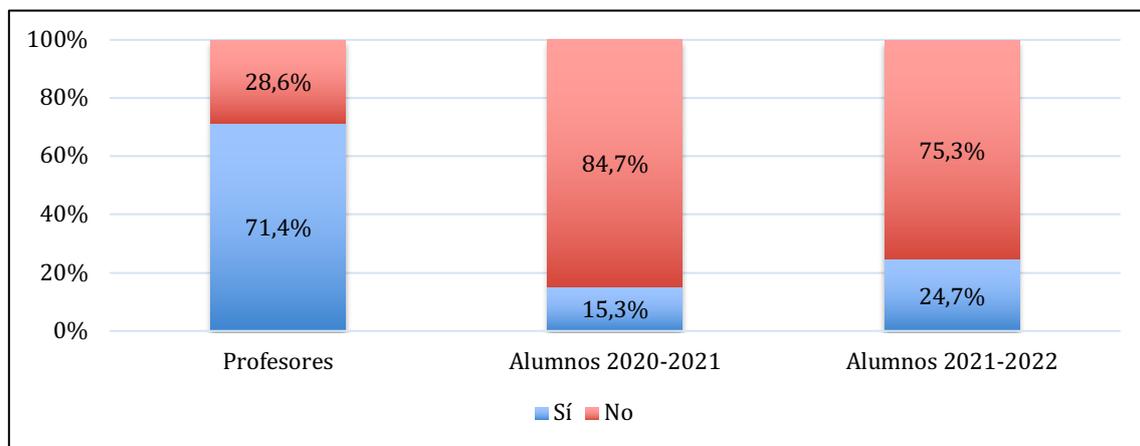
On the disadvantages of online classes, teachers and students agreed that technical difficulties, especially blackouts and Internet service interruptions, interfered with the teaching-learning process, which coincides with the findings of Cortes (2021), Furman (2020) and Lopez (2020). Teachers also argued that student attendance and participation was lower in the online classes. For their part, students reported less interaction, greater distraction at home and lack of practice as the biggest drawbacks, in agreement with studies on stress in online environments by Cortés (2021) and Sánchez et al. (2020).

The teachers pointed out that the biggest problem with online classes is the academic dishonesty of the students, to the point that 100% of the teachers expressed that all their students commit fraud in the online written exams. Opinions on the elimination of fraud are divided: some professors believe that it can be eliminated, others that it cannot, while a third group believes that it can only be reduced. On this subject, studies by Pardo (2020) and Romero (2021) affirm that academic results are better for students in the online modality. Pardo ventures the opinion that they may be the result of greater leniency on the part of teachers or that some students seek help from others to take their exams. For his part, Romero wonders whether students get better grades because they really have the knowledge or because the online modality is more permissive in terms of evaluation.

The teachers' lack of mastery of technological tools is another weakness of the online modality. Furman's studies (2020) insist precisely on the need to train teachers in the use of these technologies. Despite the initial difficulties, a generative resilience was found in the Spanish teachers at the University of Guyana that allowed them to adapt to new environments, especially in a self-taught manner.

Teachers and students agreed that the face-to-face classes fostered a climate of greater interaction, allowed for better communication, facilitated the practice of oral expression and minimized the distraction caused by interruptions and noises typical of the home environment.

The advantages of online classes most frequently mentioned by teachers and students were the use of multimedia resources, such as pre-recorded videos, recorded lectures, audio files and PowerPoint presentations. Teachers also recognized the usefulness of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Moodle to interact with their students. Furman (2020) and López (2020) agree that the main advantage of the online modality is the greater flexibility of the

teaching-learning processes. For their part, more than 80% of students in both academic years indicated that online classes favored self-paced learning, as well as increased attendance and punctuality, which is consistent with studies by Furman (2020) and Lopez (2020). However, the latter contradicts the assertion of the teachers surveyed that student attendance was lower in online classes than in face-to-face classes.

Conclusions

Continuity proposals

The application of teacher interviews may yield more information to clarify certain points. It will also be useful to conduct a didactic experiment with three groups of students to assess the effectiveness of their learning. One group would receive the course face-to-face, another one online and a third one blended.

The choice of voluntary sampling was due to the impossibility of contacting the students in person. In future research, it is recommended that a probability sample be obtained by randomly selecting a representative number of students in order to be able to extend the results to the entire population.

The issue of academic honesty in the students of the SPA1003 (*Beginners Spanish*) course at the University of Guyana is another issue that is recommended to be investigated in depth. The fact that all teachers consider that 100% of their students commit fraud on written exams and most think that these students do the same during oral exams is a wake-up call that cannot continue to be ignored.

Didactic implications

According to the present study, students would prefer to receive Spanish classes online in the post-COVID-19 era, while teachers would prefer to partially return to the classroom. There is no clear agreement, and this is neither healthy nor desirable. Rather than weighing the relevance of adopting face-to-face, online or blended learning when the pandemic is over, rather than returning to the classroom because students would commit less fraud or because teachers are more fluent with the blackboard and chalk than with Zoom or Moodle, a deeper reflection is needed.

For several centuries, various modes of content delivery have been tried and tested, and perhaps this is precisely what needs to change. It is time to think about abandoning the model in which the student is conceived as a passive recipient of content -grammar and vocabulary in the case of the SPA1003 course-, to adopt a curricular proposal where the student is the center of the teaching-learning process, while the teacher adopts the role of facilitator. Teachers should not be afraid because their students have not mastered the content, because it is not content that should be being taught. Teachers would be better off ensuring that their students acquire the competency-based learning necessary to fully and functionally insert themselves into the global village of the 21st century.

By adopting a competency-based curriculum, the current concerns about students' academic dishonesty would not exist because traditional forms of assessment such as oral or written exams that require the reproduction of content would not be applied, but rather collective assessments or self-assessments would be used. Currently, by working with a content-based model, "the collective nature of assessment is dramatically cut to individualize training and prevent the attribution of false learning" (Corral, 2021, p. 10).

In many parts of the world, competency-based curricula are already being used and innovative forms of assessment are being tested. However, implementing new models implies, first and foremost, a change of mentality. This "can only be achieved with participation, personal commitment and reflection; it requires cooperation and interdisciplinary work; it is not immediate or magical, it promises effort and transformation" (Corral, 2021, p. 12). It is time that in the SPA1003 course, and in general in all Spanish courses at the University of Guyana, steps are taken to begin to move away from the content-based model and adopt the competency-based curriculum approach. This is the perfect time: the buildings have been renovated, the classrooms are freshly painted, the new plants are blooming. "We wish to return to normality, but to a normality, if possible, improved" (Lopez, 2020, p. 137).

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