PREFERRED LEARNING MODALITY OF PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHERS: TOWARDS POST PANDEMIC EDUCATION

*Antonia Bognot Fernandez

**Charles Jhon L. Aquino

Abstract

Teaching and learning have been traditionally delivered through face-to-face setting. The advent of the global crisis on health in early 2019 has forced many academic institutions around the world to explore alternative means of learning modality. With the help of technology, online learning was made possible. Recent developments in medicine have made it possible for vaccines to be developed that has, in turn, allowed schools and other establishments to partly open their gates via hybrid learning modality. With all that has transpired in the last 3 years, students were presented with 3 different modalities of learning. Learners were able to experience and test each of these 3 modalities and have been familiar with both advantages and challenges each type would possess. From that context, the researcher determined the preferred modality of English language learners from a University in Pampanga and the reasons by which these students preferred that modality. Results reveal that 49.6% of the 125 student participants prefer to study under the hybrid modality. As to the reasons why these students prefer their chosen modality, 69.6% agree with the statement "I can get more knowledge and a deeper understanding by observing and responding to teachers and other students.". In view of this, it is recommended that schools should reconsider what students have to say about the type of learning modality they best learn from when crafting policies, especially on the possible modality necessary in the post pandemic setting.

Keywords: Face-to-Face Setting, Online Learning, Hybrid Learning Modality.

Introduction

Education has been traditionally delivered via face-to-face interaction. Teachers and students would have to be physically present in school to take part in the teaching and learning process. Unfortunately, the global pandemic in 2019 has introduced a different learning modality to students in various schools all over the world. The shift from the traditional face-to-face classes has been explored to mitigate the impact of the Corona Virus, particularly to learners. For more than a year, learners were taught through the aid of Information Communications Technology (ICT). In 2022, the health situation all over the world has managed to improve. Academic institutions started to open their gates to limited face-to-face classes coupled with online modality on curtained schedules. This trend has introduced yet another learning modality referred to as "hybrid".

It is then important to consider that as changes in the world environment occur, so do changes in the manner of delivering instructions to students. This has exposed them to at least three choices: face-to-face, online, and hybrid. Given this observation, it is presumed that learners are supposed to be engaged in the choice of modality that best suits their learning style and preference to ensure that they get the most out of the available choices of instruction.

Involvement in this type of undertaking is said to be impactful on students' academic performance.

The Shift to Online Learning

Online learning, as opposed to traditional face-to-face learning, may have the potential to produce more in-depth discussions and to improve the quality of learning due to the more self-directed learning assumed to occur in online environments. It may also have the practical benefits of encouraging wider student participation and improving the cost-effectiveness of education (Alexander, 2001). Flipped classrooms are a current example, where students participate in active learning (typically through podcasts or online debates) while the teacher supports and scaffolds their learning (Strayer, 2012).

As mentioned by Rouselle Isla (2020), when Covid-19 cases continue to rise in the Philippines, most schools have adapted online teaching and learning to keep students safe and help control the spread of the virus. This in many academic institutions assisted the continuous provision of education during the height of the Pandemic.

Differing Preference

However, there are other reasons, though, why students might favor more conventional in-class

*Proponent and Presenter, Don Honorio Ventura State University, Philippines.

**Co-proponent, Don Honorio Ventura State University, Philippines.

activities. Even though social connectivity can be obtained online (Grieve et al., 2013), the majority of students believe that in-person interactions are crucial for creating a feeling of community (Conole et al., 2008). Students may believe that online discussion diminishes their sense of community with their peers and tutors, even when classes are only partially online.

Rajiv Shah (2022) asserts that face-to-face learning is essentially a teacher-centered method and tends to vary widely among cultures. Though many modern education systems have largely shifted away from traditional face-to-face forms of educational instruction, in favor of individual students' needs; there are the advantages of face-to-face learning in the classroom such as when students would be able to concentrate harder on learning because there will be less distraction than if they were at home. Students can also gain greater understanding, stories and real-world examples from teachers and other students and have a greater chance of completing the course successfully by doing it in a classroom situation.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of face-to-face learning are likewise present. First, the teacher only has a certain amount of time to get through subjects. If the student cannot keep up with the rest of the class, they will have to schedule extra classes, which could cost extra money. Second, due to time constraints in class, the teacher cannot answer every student's questions. This is indicative of unattended queries that may impact students' learning.

Adopting Blended / Hybrid Learning

The birth of a more flexible modality in the easing out of transactions and operations during the pandemic was experienced through the Hybrid Learning Model. Safe Shumate (2020) describes a hybrid learning model as a system where students attend virtual classes for half of the week and in-person classes for the other half. Other institutions created schemes suitable for the nature of their operations in implementing the learning model.

Just like the other modalities, a number of advantages using Hybrid learning were observed. First, it allows for in-person interaction. Additionally, when compared with 5-day on-campus learning, hybrid learning reduces a student's chance of exposure to COVID-19. By giving students the option of not attending class in-person 5 days a week, the hybrid learning schedule shortens the amount of time they are in contact with others, and therefore limits their risk of contracting the virus.

Another equally significant advantage is that the hybrid model typically reduces stress. By giving people a break from driving to school, the hybrid learning schedule helps alleviate the stress that comes from getting up and getting ready to be in-person. And for some, decreasing the amount of time on campus takes away Covid-related anxiety. For others, getting out of the house and having the chance to connect with others provides them with a sense of comfort. The consensus is that the hybrid model is a fairly happy medium that doesn't eliminate stress, but it certainly reduces it.

Learners' Preference

With all the innovations in modality and strategies brought about by the fast-changing predicaments of learners, considering students' preference for learning modality may provide supplementary solutions to better facilitate learning in varying conditions.

Drew (2022) stated that some students learn best through one modality and worse through others. Many students use multiple different modalities to learn effectively. Educators can use this learning theory to differentiate their classroom teaching for their students. Through differentiation, they can ensure their teaching is student-centered, fair, and equal. It empowers children to learn in new ways that are most accessible and easiest for the child. This can help the learner have the best chance of success in the class as possible. A teacher might create a lesson with lots of graphics for visual learners, a physically active lesson for kinesthetic learners, a story time lesson for auditory learners, and a hands-on inquiry-based lesson for tactile learners.

Students are not reborn every so often. They are not new to education or to subject-area content. Their desire to learn is innate. While students may get a "clean-slate" at the start of the school year, they also have the opportunity to make a new first impression, which is, in fact, the same learner they were the year before. They have the same needs, the same perception of learning and school, and the same eagerness (or perceived lack thereof) that they had on the last day of school the previous year (Larenas & Westman, 2016). One thing is certain, learners' choices or preferences is deemed impactful in their overall progress and may be contributory in establishing standards and institutional policies in the academe.

Considering Foresight on Education Policies

The difficulty of crafting good education policies, especially in places with limited resources and fragile institutions is often observed. Theoretically at least, doing something new almost always means not doing something else. If more teachers are trained, perhaps fewer textbooks are bought. If more money goes into secondary schools, it might be at

the expense of primary education which illustrates that budget trade-offs are real.

Given the huge need and the scarce resources available, education policymakers, policy advisers, and donors should want independent evidence telling them (a) if a policy is delivering better outcomes at an affordable cost and (b) whether the policy is better than viable alternatives. And they should want to act on the evidence generated to expand, course-correct, or stop the reform. But education reform usually takes place in a highly charged political context and the reality is far more complex. A low or precisely estimated zero effect in a study does not always mean a policy will-or indeed should-be thrown out. And likewise, a very positive effect doesn't mean it will or should be scaled nationally (Hares, 2018).

Significantly, studies are now starting to flourish specifically addressing foresight on the nature of Education in Post Pandemic scenario. Institutions are obliged to revisit their social roots and support the communities within which they live. Education institutions for that matter are thinking beyond short-term plans and devote efforts to looking into longer strategic plans as proactive measures to mitigate mishaps in the continuous provision of accessible and quality education.   This is indeed something worth celebrating, but at the same rooted in the future social purpose of universities as they traverse the post-pandemic world. Grant, J. & Hooker, R. (2021).

Setbacks on appropriate planning and available policies for implementation, specifically among struggling nations at the height of the Pandemic were evident. It is therefore important to note that factors of educational inequalities were observed and experienced though maybe in a new form during the pandemic. It was described from the study by Terang (2022) that during the Covid-19 pandemic factors like smartphone, internet connectivity, electricity supply, home environment, parental support, and computer skills determine to what extent children will have access to education. "Attempts have been made to discuss the problem of online learning that has raised the need for computer skills, good internet connection, stable power supply, smartphones, conducive learning environment at home, and parental support. Although the issue of educational inequality during the pandemic may seem very trivial to some people yet this has the potential to be the cause of problems like loss of motivation among the students, grade loss, loss of employment opportunities, and lacking behind their peers in some students. Most of the students facing virtual learning issues during the pandemic belong to the group whose voice did not receive much attention even when they raise their

voice." Grant, J. & Hooker, R. (2021). Pondering on this statement reinforces the need to listen to the students' voices, specifically on matters that affect their education. In doing so, teaching and learning towards post-pandemic may be envisioned as inclusive and equitable.

Though there may be studies focusing on students' preferences relative to their scholastic performance, data is limited in terms of linking such choices as bases for shaping the future operation of Philippine education, specifically eyeing on post-pandemic scenario. This study explored which of the three modalities is best preferred by students in the learning of the English language. Moreover, it revealed the reasons why these students chose the type of learning modalities they identified. In this essence, the results which could be referred to in future undertakings such as drafting academic policies, planning and designing instructional materials, and updating strategies utilized in the classroom maybe further investigated.

Theoretical Framework
The study is anchored on the Rational Choice Theory which was developed by Adam Smith. The Rational Choice theory discusses that people use rational calculations to arrive at choices that will produce outcomes that are aligned with their own personal objectives. In this theory, the results of making decisions are also associated with maximizing an individual's self-interest. Using rational choice theory is expected to result in outcomes that will provide people with the greatest benefit and satisfaction considering the given limited options that are available.

This theory further states that individuals consider their self-interest to make choices that will, in turn, provide them with the greatest benefit possible. People weigh their options and make the necessary decisions in making their choices that they think will serve them best. Moreover, individuals also decide what will serve them best is dependent on personal preferences.

Statement of the Problem
The study aims to determine the students' Preferred Learning modalities, results at which could be referred to in the Post Pandemic Education. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:
1. How may the informants be described in terms of their Preferred learning modalities?
2. What are the reasons why students choose their preferred learning modalities?

Scope and Delimitation
This study focused on the preferred learning modality of 125 fourth year students enrolled in the

College of Education of a state university in Pampanga with specialization in English, herein referred to as Pre-service language teachers during the academic year 2022-2023. Other pre-service teachers with a different specialization were not covered. Further, this study considered the demographic profile of respondents limited to their age, sex, and preferred modality. Reasons for the choice of preferred learning modality were considered but options are limited to what the instrument offers and does not include an open-ended interview. Other variables and factors that could influence the preferred learning modality are not captured in the present study.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers made use of the quantitative descriptive method which utilized the collection, analysis, and statistical treatment of numerical data. The research strategy employed the gathering of data using a questionnaire from a target group of respondents who matched the predetermined qualifications. The quantitative method was chosen for this research as the variables in the study are quantifiable and measurable (Creswell, 2009) and through the chosen targeted population, generalizations can be made after data collection and analysis (Zikmund et al., 2010). Additionally, using a questionnaire, numerical data can be analyzed to be able to interpret the results into graphs and tables. This method fits the study because the topic itself requires a quantitative design to be used. Since the objective of the researchers is to determine the preferred learning modality of English language learners and their reasons for their choice, the quantitative design fits well.

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were students from the College of Education of a State University located in Bacolor, Pampanga enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education program with specialization in English. Since the study is focused on language students who are studying in a public higher educational institution where the researchers are currently affiliated, the locale was chosen for the conduct of the investigation. These are composed of 169 4th-year students. Of this total number of population, 125 were considered as the sample size. Most of the students who took part in the study are between 20-22 years of age. Out of the 125 respondents, 101 falls within the specified age range which represents 80. 8% of the total sample size. Further, the majority of those who took part in the study are female. Out of the 125 respondents, 72 are of the specified sex. This represents 57.6% of the total sample size. The remaining 53 respondents are male which represents 42.4% of the total sample size.

Purposive sampling was used in the study. This technique allowed the researchers to select participants without bias and created a larger pool for the quantitative design. This ensured that each member of the target population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants who must be 4th year students and are enrolled in the BSED program with specialization in English, academic year 2022 – 2023. Additionally, the respondents were considered since they were able to experience instruction under three modalities - purely onsite, purely online, and hybrid learning. These criteria were set to make sure that the students who participated in the study have a clear understanding of the key concepts of language learning and teaching as delivered in the modalities. This shall in turn allow them to make reasonable and informed decisions as to which modality best fit their learning requirements.

Instrument/s of the Study

The study made use of a questionnaire that was developed by the researchers. This was validated by experts in the field of education and statistics. The first part of the questionnaire investigates the demographic profile of the respondents as well as their preferred learning modality. The second part looks into the reasons for the choice of learning modality. The choices in these items in the questionnaire are grouped into 3 categories namely: strengths of face-to-face classroom setting, strengths of online classroom setting, and strengths of hybrid classroom setting. This was done to highlight the best features of the 3 modalities of lesson delivery for students to choose from. The facets covered are:
1. demographic profile which includes age, sex, and preferred learning modality
2. reasons for the choice of learning modality.

The data obtained are in the form of answers representing the respondents' responses. Quantitative data were gathered using a form, which may be done personally or electronically/ digitally. The researchers preferred that the test be administered personally. Uses of survey questionnaire can be descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory and is suited best for studies where individual people act as unit of analysis (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

Data Collection and Analysis

The respondents were briefed about the nature and purpose of the research and were subsequently given 30 minutes to answer the test. The schedule for the administration of the instrument was arranged, set, and confirmed considering the most convenient time during their face-to-face classroom sessions. Overall, the researchers anticipated that the administration of the test as well as the collection of

it would flow smoothly to ensure the best result of the study.

The evaluation of the quantitative data gathered through the test were then collected, tabulated, computed, and processed with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences Version 23 software. The results were interpreted and were used to analyze the objectives and questions of the study (Neuman, 2010). Frequency, percent distribution, and ranking were employed to describe the respondents' demographics and their choice of learning modality as reflected in the questionnaire. Subsequently, the result was tabulated and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools. Through this, the researchers arrived at the interpretation and discussion of the results.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important in every study to ensure there are no biases or influence done by the researchers. All information gathered were treated with utmost confidentiality by the researchers. The respondents of the research are not to be subjected to any form of harm. Informed consent was obtained from the concerned group and priorities were given in respect of their dignity. Privacy and anonymity of the respondents were ensured. Adequate level of confidentiality of data gathered was observed and presentations of the primary data were kept unbiased.

Results and Discussion

Presented in this part of the study are the data that show the demographics, choice of modality, and the reasons for the respondents' choice. There are 125 4th year college students enrolled in the BSED Program with specialization in English from the College of Education of a State University in Pampanga.

Table 1: Preferred Learning Modalities

	Number of Respondents (N =125)	
	f	%
Preferred Learning Modality		
Face-to-face	46	36.8
Online	17	13.6
Hybrid	62	49.6

Table 1 presents the data that show the preferred learning modality of the respondents.

Most of the students who took part in the study chose to study and learn through hybrid learning delivery. Out of the 125 respondents, 62 selected the specified learning modality which represents 49. 6% of the total sample size. Similarly, in an article by Neelakandan (2021) some students are still very much into the traditional way of learning. For this reason, many schools are willing to adopt the hybrid learning method, which combines face-to-face learning with online resources. This modality addresses the needs of practically all students and remains significant in education.

On the other hand, out of the 125 respondents, 46 chose to study via face-to-face instruction which represents 36.8% of the total sample size. The remaining 17 respondents chose to study via pure online instruction which represents 13.6% of the total sample size. This illustrates that the 4th year BSED students with specialization in English in the College of Education of a State University in Pampanga prefers to study via a hybrid modality which is a combination of both face-to-face and online classes.

Table 2: Reasons for the Choice of Learning Modality

What reasons are enumerated in the respondents' choice of learning modalities?	f	%	Rank

Statement			
1. I can get more knowledge and a deeper understanding by observing and responding to teachers and other students.	87	69.6	1
2. The teacher can have more efficient and effective instruction as well as express their thoughts well.	82	65.6	2
3. The teacher can entertain all the comments and questions raised by the students	79	63.2	3.5
4. Students are given the chance to establish more connections, conversations, and attachment in society.	79	63.2	3.5
5. Teachers are allowed to give courses to students in a more efficient manner through virtual classrooms and other platforms.	42	33.6	11
6. Teachers become more efficient instructors by expanding the lessons beyond standard textbooks to include internet resources.	47	37.6	8
7. It is practical for students who live far away from school.	53	42.4	6
8. It will avoid students from being late to class.	40	32.0	12
9. It will avoid students from contacting any virus causing diseases.	35	28.0	13
10. Students can access the different sources on global websites.	24	19.2	14
11. It is less expensive.	58	46.4	5
12. Complex topics can be covered in the classroom, while internet resources can be used for other topics.	43	34.4	9.5
13. It saves time since teachers can discuss a topic inside the classroom then afterwards provides activities online.	52	41.6	7
14. It offers flexibility and convenience of how and when your fellow students can participate in an activity or project.	43	34.4	9.5

Table 2 presents the data that show the reasons for the choice of learning modality as selected by the respondents.

Most of the language students who took part in the study choose statement no. 1 "I can get more knowledge and a deeper understanding by observing and responding to teachers and other students." to be the primary reason as to the choice of learning modality. This ranks 1st of the 14 statements that were presented in the questionnaire. Out of the 125 respondents, 87 selected the specified reason which represents 69. 6% of the total sample size. This can be relative to the advantages of Hybrid learning as mentioned by Safe Shumate (2020). First, it allows for in-person interaction. As most people would

agree, virtual learning removes many of the fun aspects of school and limits students' ability to collaborate. Having the opportunity to speak face to face with another person supports a more fulfilling learning experience. These features of hybrid modality allow for the better learning of language and its features allowing students greater mastery of their specialization.

On the other hand, out of the 125 respondents, 82 chose statement no. 2 "The teacher can have more efficient and effective instruction as well as express their thoughts well." which ranks 2nd out of the 14 statements in the questionnaire. This represents 65.6% of the total sample. On the 3rd rank are statements no. 3 "The teacher can entertain all the

comments and questions raised by the students" and no. 4 "Students are given the chance to establish more connections, conversations, and attachment in society." which were chosen by 79 respondents that represent 63.2% of the total sample size. On the 5th rank is statement no. 11 "It is less expensive." which was chosen by 58 respondents that represent 46.4% of the total sample size. On the 6th rank is statement no. 7 "It is practical for students who live far away from school" which was chosen by 53 respondents that represent 42.4% of the total sample size. On the 7th rank is statement no. 13 "It saves time since teachers can discuss a topic inside the classroom then afterwards provide activities online." which was chosen by 52 respondents that represent 41.6% of the total sample size. On the 8th rank is statement no. 6 "Teachers become more efficient instructors by expanding the lessons beyond standard textbooks to include internet resources." which was chosen by 47 respondents that represent 37.6% of the total sample size. On the 9th rank are statements no. 12 "Complex topics can be covered in the classroom, while internet resources can be used for other topics." and 14 "It offers flexibility and convenience of how and when your fellow students can participate in an activity or project." which were chosen by 43 respondents that represent 34.4% of the total sample size. On the 11th rank is statement no. 5 "Teachers are allowed to give courses to students in a more efficient manner through virtual classrooms and other platforms." which was chosen by 42 respondents that represent 33.6% of the total sample size. On the 12th rank is statement no. 8 "It will avoid students from being late to class." which was chosen by 40 respondents that represent 32% of the total sample size. On the 13th rank is statement no. 9 "It will avoid students from contacting any virus causing diseases." which was chosen by 35 respondents that represent 28% of the total sample size. On the 14th rank is statement no. 10 "Students can access the different sources on global websites." which was chosen by 24 respondents that represent 19.2% of the total sample size.

Conclusion

Most of the respondents are females and are between 20-22 years old. They are 4th year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education program with specialization in English in a State University in Pampanga.

Most of the language students prefer to study via hybrid learning modality. Blended learning is seen as an educational methodology that combines online or digital components with face-to-face instruction. The inclusion of technology in education can help set up students to be successful later in life since computers, internet, smart phones, and other connected devices are so integral in communication and business today. When students learn in a blended learning setting, they not only master the language subjects they are learning but also familiarize themselves with the use of technology as well as take advantage of the scheduling system that will allow them more flexibility. By making in-person and online learning complementary, blended learning is seen to create a truly integrated language classroom where the demands of all types of learners are met. Keeping students engaged, stimulated, and motivated also helps teachers to be more effective in the delivery of their lessons and topics as well as make greater gains with their students.

The next preferred learning modality is the face-to-face instruction. Rajiv Shah (2022) asserts that face-to-face learning is essentially a teacher-centered method of education and tends to vary widely among cultures. Many modern education systems have largely shifted away from traditional face-to-face forms of educational instruction, in favor of individual students' needs. There were advantages observed in the use of face-to-face language learning in the classroom such as when students concentrate better on learning situations because there will be fewer distractions than if they were at home. This is important since concentration plays a vital role in the effective study and learning of language. Students of language can gain a greater understanding through stories and real-world examples from teachers and other students and have a greater chance of completing the course successfully by doing it in a classroom situation. In addition, students may feel more comfortable and learn more easily in a familiar and traditional classroom situation. They can access more information and richer understanding through the teacher and with other students' body language and voice. Lastly, they have more opportunities to connect with, problem-solve with, and network with their classmates who are from a wide range of backgrounds.

The least preferred learning modality of language students is pure online instruction. There are several reasons to believe that certain students could prefer online learning to regular classes. Previous studies have suggested that the additional time provided for online activities may enable students to think about the course material more critically and reflectively, resulting to a deeper knowledge of the course topic, as opposed to the faster, real-time pace of face-to-face classrooms (Robinson and Hullinger, 2008). Others have asserted that because e-learning is less confrontational and personal, it can allow shyer students to participate more and feel less pressure than they would in face-to-face encounters (Hobbs, 2002).

Among the reasons why language students selected the type of learning modality they choose, results

show that the primary concern learners take into consideration is their wanting to get more knowledge and a deeper understanding of language-related lessons by observing and responding to their teachers and other students they work with. This embodies the real essence by which educational institutions exist. Schools are supposed to make students learn and acquire knowledge and skills that will prepare them for their active roles in the community and the ever-changing demands of the workplace. The attainment of knowledge and skills in language needed by students to respond in their chosen field of work can only be realized if they are given the opportunity and avenue to learn from observing their teachers and working on certain projects together with their classmates. Since hybrid learning works best by combining the strengths of both face-to-face learning and online classes, the aim of preparing our students for their future is possible.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. **School Heads and Authorities.** School heads and authorities may reconsider policies on the conduct of full face-to-face classes specifically to language classes. Since the introduction of hybrid learning have opened the possibilities of more flexible teaching and learning methodologies, schools offering programs and courses in languages should likewise adopt with the ever-changing educational climate towards progressive education looking into Post Pandemic education as one which is a probable immediate scenario.

2. **Curriculum Designers and Planners.** Students specializing in language learn best in ways and styles they are comfortable with. Considering this, schools may reflect in the crafting of plans the manner by which to create a conducive learning environment which in turn will foster their active engagement in strengthening the crafting of school policies.

3. **Teachers of Languages.** Since language students view the need to learn from their teachers and to collaborate with their classmates to be of utmost importance, teachers must make it a point to not only teach well but include activities that shall likewise foster the sociability of students both in face-to-face and online classes.

4. **Future Researchers.** Areas that were not covered in this research but may be of significance in the academe can be explored by future researchers. A larger number of populations with varied major field of specializations may be considered. This paper can be a rich source of review of related literature and studies on which future papers can be anchored on.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

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