



**TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ALONG WITH SYNCHRONIZED
COMPUTER-SUPPORTED COMMUNICATION FOR ENHANCING
INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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Abstract

Task-based language teaching (TBLT), also known as task-based instruction (TBI), focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks in the target language. Such tasks can include visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer service for help. Assessment is primarily based on task outcome (the appropriate completion of real-world tasks) rather than on accuracy of prescribed language forms. This makes TBLT especially popular for developing target language fluency and student confidence. Studies significantly increased over the past two years since the outbreak and worldwide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, but more research is needed on effective methodologies and their impact on the learning process. This research aimed to analyze student interaction and multimodal communication through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in a Synchronous Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC) environment. For this purpose, 40 Students of Pedagogy of English (B.Ed) enrolled in the at Jamshedpur Women's University were randomly assigned to create collaboratively digital based on different language teaching methods. Then, all the teams explained their projects online and the classmates completed two multimedia activities based on each method. Finally, the participants discussed the self-perceived benefits (relevance, enjoyment, interest) and limitations (connectivity, distraction) of SCMC in language learning. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through pre- and post-tests, class observation and online discussion. The statistical data and research findings revealed a positive attitude towards the integration of TBLT in an SCMC environment and a high level of satisfaction with multimodal communication (written, verbal, visual) and student interaction. However, the language teacher complained about the low quality of the digital materials, the use of technology just for substitution, and the lack of peer-to-peer interaction in their live online classes during the pandemic.

Keywords: student interaction; multimedia communication; Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC); Task-Based Teaching and Learning (TBLT)



Background of the Study

Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC) in Language Learning Computer-Supported communication (CSC) is by now a staple of research in language acquisition and pedagogy, just as it has become central to the social and professional lives of many millions of people worldwide. In parallel with this ascent, certain distinctions that once seemed clearcut have begun to blur, as communication platforms increasingly offer a mixture of modes, permitting users to choose between combinations of text, audio and video in synchronous or asynchronous modes, to communicate privately or publicly, and to interleave conventional text with images, animations, and emoticons. Computer-supported collaborative learning facilitates the extension of second language acquisition into social practice. Studies on its achievement effects speak directly to the pedagogical notion of treating communicative practice in synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC): real-time communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers in forms of text, audio and video communication, such as live chat and chartrooms as socially-oriented meaning construction.

However, there are several challenges for effective SCSC. Technologically, different studies have delved into the scarcity of digital resources in some educational contexts, poor connectivity resulting in delayed communication, lack of privacy and partly ineffective communication owing to the lack of nonverbal cues and true human contact . Pedagogically, some constraints reported were low computer literacy, lack of teacher readiness as regards class management in live online platforms and low student interest and interaction partly due to longer conversational turns, which might result in student disengagement.

Within the SCSC environment, research has concentrated on the differences in interaction and language learning between text-based, such as chat or instant messaging (IM), and video-based, e.g., videoconferencing. In this regard, some of the alleged benefits of text-based over video-based communication are increased saliency and extended opportunities to review the written interaction thanks to more processing time , mainly because ‘delayed SCMC obviously places a smaller time burden on the learners in responding than audio- and videoconferencing’, as pointed out by Stockwell. Based on the aforementioned issues, this study aims to investigate to what extent Synchronous Computer-Supported Communication help the students to enhance their communicative competence and language interaction skills with task based language learning approach.



Interaction in Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC) in Language Learning

Now many platforms make it possible to get partners to talk with globally involving users in different geographic locations, interacting to engage in learning dialogues (O'Dowd, 2016). With this opportunity, it usually used by English teachers to improve their students' English-speaking skills in oral interactions with foreign interlocutors (Osipov, Volinsky, Nikulchev, & Prasikova, 2016). There are also studies have examined the implementation of SCMC with native speakers, when talking with native speakers via SCMC, the EFL learners felt motivated to always talk and decrease their anxiety to talk in English (Iino & Yabuta, 2015; Kruk, 2016; Melchor-Couto, 2017), it also made the learners enjoy talking with native speakers. SCMC with native speakers also results in terms its effectiveness to improve oral skills (Abrams, 2003; Brown, 2016; Kung & Eslami, 2018). Based on those studies, and a condition where we are here implementing it with non-native speakers of

However, the educational setting changed after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as most students were home-based and bound to distance learning. Therefore, new studies about SCMC have come to light in the past two years; for example, Junn ,analyzed student interaction and communicative competence in a course fully delivered online, focusing on expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning, and concluded that 'effective integration of technology can even increase student motivation to acquire L2 due to greater autonomy and individualization, enhanced opportunities for communication, identity development and the ability to utilize learners' IT skills' (p. 15). Nevertheless, research on multimodal interaction through SCMC remains very scarce to date , as multimodal analysis has traditionally given more attention to face-to-face contexts, and the majority of studies examined online interaction separately, either in a synchronous or asynchronous mode, with a few exceptions. Compared to traditional oral or written conversations, students today can interact online simultaneously through video, audio, images and text by using one or several digital tools, but this enriched multimedia interaction in modern distance learning poses new problems such as the effects of disruptions and distractions, whether for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons, and their impact on student engagement and the learning process [29]. For this reason, it is necessary to adopt digitally oriented methodologies to enhance online interaction, which can be threefold: teacher–student, student–student and student–materials.



Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and the Use of Infographics

Visual media are still ineffective in covering all learning focus and learning activities to support independent learning. Independent learning guides students to learn the material by themselves, but it is still not supported by the existing visual media. Infographics are a medium that underlies transformative skills in teaching because they can provide a complete learning focus in each material. This study was aimed at developing English teaching media for the 9th grade. A Design and Development research (DnD) proposed by Richey and Klein (2005) was used in this study, including design, development, and evaluation. Initial observations have been carried out at one of the junior high schools in Buleleng, Bali, Indonesia. Data collection was carried out by library research relating to the development of infographics and the nature of independent learning, document analysis by doing syllabus analysis, and expert judgment. The results obtained from the research are infographics are considered to be very good as a medium for teaching English for independent learning. This research implies that teachers' technology-based teaching skills can be assisted by developing this infographic teaching media.

Recent studies have started to examine the adoption of TBLT in a CSC environment Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-von Ditzfurth [32], for example, delved into the analysis of certain determining factors such as the teacher's role and online presence in SCSC, the learners' motivation and engagement, and the task goal and process, pinpointing that 'teachers and learners share the responsibility of promoting interactive leaning'. Therefore, communication and interactivity are key issues since SCSC is based on 'promoting real-world authentic tasks in the target language at a time when 1.5 billion people in the world have access to global forms of technology-Supported communication', according to Thomas and Reinders.

Generally, tasks are considered to be student-centered, authentic, holistic and communicative in nature since they focus on the content rather than the form of the message, 'although pre-tasks and post-tasks or pedagogic tasks, depending on the model of TBLT, can focus on language per se', as expressed by González-Lloret. Theoretically, tasks should be used to promote reflection and higher-order thinking skills in the learning process, but most of the tasks investigated in CMC to date, e.g., information-gap tasks, were designed to enhance productivity in language learning, not creativity and communicative competence,



mainly because ‘tasks were borrowed from SLA face-to-face research and transferred into the computer-mediated environment’ (p. 238).

Infographics have been integrated in language learning with different purposes, both as a data visualization format and as an effective tool to improve several language skills and components such as reading ,writing, grammar and vocabulary Dahmash et al defined them as ‘a visualization of ideas and data in a type of picture that combines data with design to communicate information to an audience in a comprehensible manner’ (p. 12). Bicen and Behesti investigated the impact of utilizing infographics in a flipped classroom with the purpose of improving the management of cognitive load as well as increasing motivation and autonomy of ESL learners. More recently, Dewantari et al. analyzed the use of infographics for independent English learning among secondary education students and revealed its positive impact on the students’ performance in combination with other tools such as Google classroom.

Combining different modes of online interaction, text- and video-based, with a task-based methodology such as the use of infographics, may result in an enriched and complex communication. Barrett et al. emphasized the need for more research in group oral presentations and projects with mobile and desktop devices as the collaborative, storage and creative tools. The novelty of this study is that it aims to analyze student multimodal interaction and communicative competence in an SCSC environment using infographics in a TBLT methodology.

Study Objectives and Method used

This article aims to investigate three research questions:

- Is Task Based Language Teaching be effectively used to enhance interaction in Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC)?
- Is Task Based Language Teaching be used to strengthen communicative competence in Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC)?
- What is the students’ perception of using Task Based Language Teaching in Synchronized Computer-Supported Communication (SCSC)?



This study was based on a sequential mixed method approach aimed at exploring participant perceptions and views of using infographics for second language learning through SCSC. This research method combined quantitative and qualitative data which were gathered through two types of instruments: semi-structured discussions and surveys. Firstly, the participants completed a pre-test including three sections: the first was related to socio-demographic information (age and gender) and technology ownership (number and type of electronic devices); the second section contained 10 items about the student previous experience with live online presentations; and the third section comprised 5 items associated with the previous use of collaborative infographics in language learning.

The post-test was designed to measure the student perception of the online presentations and interaction after the experiment and encompassed two sections: the first one was related with the tools used by participants to create their own infographics and multimedia activities based on language teaching methods; the second comprised 12 items including three dimensions (enjoyment, relevance and intention) about the perception of the collaborative infographics and online presentations. In this section, reverse-coded items were used to avoid the acquiescence bias of some self-perceived scales. The results were analyzed through the IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software.

For the qualitative data, online discussions and semi-structured debates were used and later transcribed. The online presentations, student interaction and discussion through Google Meet were recorded with permission from the research participants. Personal data collected were processed and treated anonymously, except for cases in which students gave written consent to use their images for scientific purposes.

Context and Research Procedure

For the digital projects, which were task-oriented and collaborative, participants were randomly assigned in teams of 4–5 members as a ‘learning group’. This article shows the results of the first project created by the students based on digital infographics. First, the participants had to fulfill three Moodle tasks (reading articles, watching videos, exercises) related with language teaching methods and become familiar with different concepts, which were mainly taken from Celce-Murcia [50], and complete the pre-test. Next, each team was assigned a different method and all participants received an online training session on how to create digital infographics. All the project instructions were included in the class handbook, which contained detailed information about the learning objectives, step-by-step procedure, content and format requirements, recommended digital tools, samples and a rubric.



The teaching language methods proposed for the infographics were: the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, Total Physical Response, the Silent Way, Situational Language Teaching, Suggestopedia, Communicative Language Teaching and Community Language Learning. The home-based students needed to find relevant information about the assigned method, summarize the main ideas and collaboratively create an infographic to be explained online. Additionally, they were required to prepare two multimedia activities based on their method to illustrate it among their peers. In this stage, most of the creative work was performed autonomously by the different teams, so live online sessions (SCMC) were reserved for project supervision and problem solving. Finally, participants were required to complete a post-test based on their perception (relevance, enjoyment, intention) of the online presentations and student interactions.

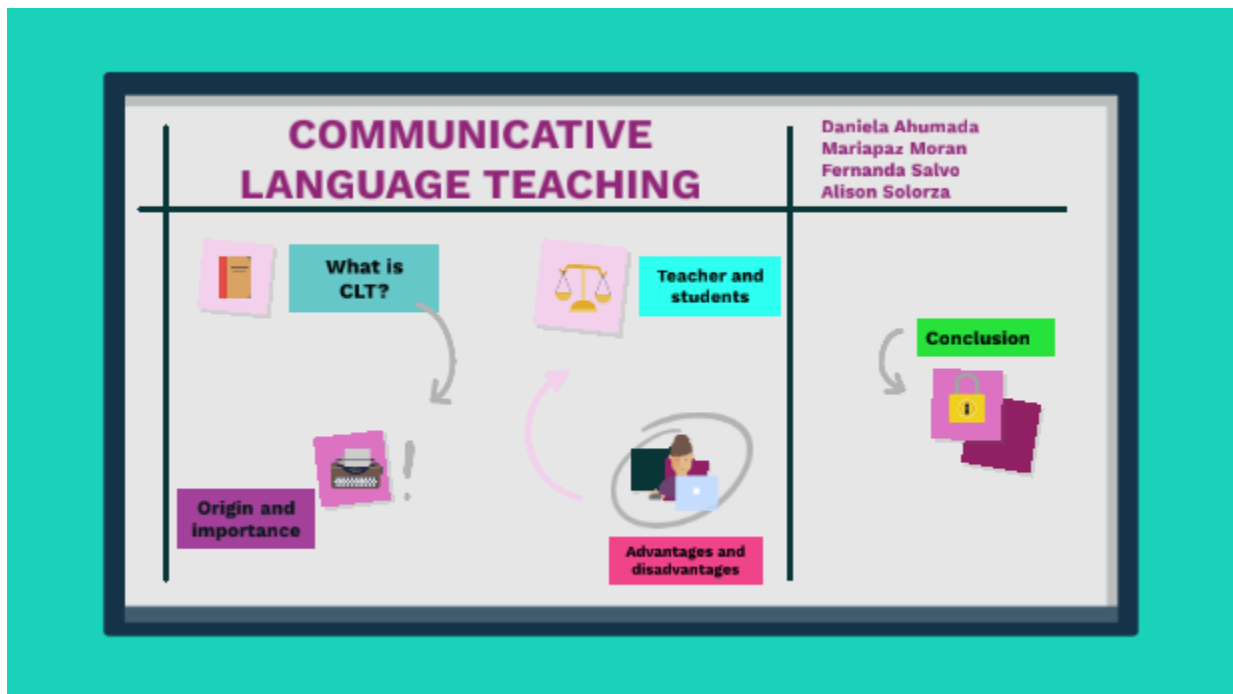
The experiment was carried out for four weeks with eight two-hour sessions. The first week was devoted to the pre-task activities, the following two weeks to project development and online presentations (task) and the last week to online discussion and evaluation (post-task). To minimize extraneous variables, the pre- and post-tests were administered online during class time. **Figure 1** summarizes the TBLT cycle.

Pre-Task	Task	Post-Task
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Complete Moodle Tasks Complete the pre-test about previous experience with online presentations and infographics Quiz on language teaching methods <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Team arrangements and project overview•Introduction (1 week - 2 sessions)	Find and select relevant information on language teaching method assigned <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Select digital tools•Create infographic and 2 activities Present online collaborative project <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Development and implementation (2 weeks - 4 sessions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Discuss pros and cons of teaching methods and online presentations•Complete post-test about perception of online presentations and infographics <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz on language teaching methods (replicated) <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Reflection and evaluation (1 week 2 sessions)

Figure 1. TBLT cycle (8 two-hour sessions distributed over 4 weeks).

Results and Discussion

A total of 18 infographics were created by the participants based on different language teaching methods. They needed to contain meaningful imagery, charts and minimal text as an aid for visual representation of data and communication during the online presentations, and the content should focus on the origins, context, principles, techniques and some advantages and disadvantages of each method. Although students received a training session on digital tools (Canva, Piktochart, Glogster, Genially, Easel.ly, etc.), they could select the program that best suited their needs. In this sense, they had to consider different factors such as graphic design, image library, editing format, publishing options, pricing, etc.



The pre-test results evidenced the teacher candidates' low experience with infographics, as shown in **Table 1**. Only 18% declared to have some practice creating infographics (#1), barely half of them had done so in English (#3) and just 4% had used them during online presentations (#5). In this sense, most research participants manifested that their online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic were lecture-type or based on teacher–student interaction and not peer-to-peer interact.



<i>N</i> = 40	YES	NO
#1. Have you ever created an infographic?	18.3%	81.7%
#2. Have you ever created an infographic collaboratively?	12.9%	87.1%
#3. Have you ever created an infographic in English?	8.6%	91.4%
#4. Have you used your own infographic to present in English?	6.5%	93.5%
#5. Have you used your own infographic to present online in English?	4.3%	95.7%

Table 1. Previous experience with infographics.

#1. Online presentations (individual)	3.76	1.104	-0.601
#2. Online presentations (team or collaborative)	2.20	0.940	-0.653
#3. Online presentations for lesson delivery (no content creation)	2.63	1.156	-0.565
#4. Online presentations for project demonstration (project design)	2.64	1.301	-1.093
#5. Online presentations using mostly text-based files (pdf, etc.)	2.50	1.318	-0.999
#6. Online presentations using PPT files or similar (Prezzi, etc.)	4.09	0.907	-0.398
#7. Online presentations using posters and/or images	2.07	1.225	-0.424
#8. Online presentations with little or no interaction (just the presentation)	2.44	1.191	-0.731
#9. Online presentation with teacher–student interaction (questions and answers)	3.43	1.142	-0.464
#10. Online presentation with student–student (–teacher) interaction (discussion, questions, etc.)	2.43	1.112	-0.771

The second section of the pre-test about previous experience with online presentations revealed significant differences, as shown in **Table 2**. Although a number of participants had moderate experience, it was based on individual presentations (#1 $M = 3.76$) as opposed to team presentations (#2 $M = 2.20$). Regarding purpose, there was no difference in scores between online presentations using PPT files (#6 $M = 4.09$) clearly outnumbered those exclusively based on text (#5 $M = 2.5$) or posters (#7 $M = 2.44$). To summarize, the live online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic were mainly based on individual presentations involving PPT files with teacher–student interaction.

A good number of participants considered that these results mirrored the typical presentations in a traditional face-to-face classroom, but they called attention to the highly discouraging

factor of this practice in distance learning when classes are fully delivered online and different factors need to be considered (lack of physical human contact, disruptions and distraction, technological problems, etc.). In fact, they believed that presentation format, length and type of interaction had a great impact on online attention and enjoyment, or in other words, the longer and less interactive the presentation, the higher the risk of student distraction and disengagement in live online lessons. This was consistent with previous literature stating that longer conversational turns may hinder interaction in SCMC, resulting in student disengagement. However, the novelty was that participants stressed the importance not only of length but also of format (games, collaborative dashboards) and type (peer-to-peer) of the presentations as key factors to enhance online student participation.

Figure 3. Tasks and critical thinking skills involved in the live online presentations.

Explaining	Demonstrating	Discussing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Content: Infographic Purpose: Explain the method and infographic Description: Presenters cannot be orally interrupted but classmates may use chatbox for questions or comments to be answered by other team members •Focus on meaning Time: 10 min 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Content: Activities •Purpose: Illustrate with 2 activities based on the method •Description: Team members present 2 activities to be completed by peers. Chat box can be also used for questions, comments and additional information •Focus on meaning •Time: 5 min 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Content: Questions and comments Purpose: Discuss the teaching method and presentation Description: Students and instructor can make questions or comments to team members about the method and online presentation (corrective feedback) Focus on form and meaning Time: 10 min

This image could be divided into 5 different frames from a multimodal and interactional perspective the main frame (1) with a presentational function corresponded to the space used to share visual content; the middle frame (2) was used for personal contact (face or profile) with other classmates and control different modes of communication (visual, aural, gestural, etc.); the right-hand side frame (3) formed by the chat box and list of online attendants was

used to keep interaction alive as all participants could chat via text in real time while the presentations were taking place, and the students could exchange messages (text, emojis, etc.) and share links that might activate new screen tabs; the bottom frame (4) corresponding to the control panel was used with functions such as turn taking or activating subtitles, which proved to be helpful for students with a hearing impairment; the top frame (5) displayed all the active tabs or windows connected with the right frame (3) and was used to provide additional information (videos, articles) and complete multimedia activities (exercises, games) through links provided in the chat box.

Figure 4. Frame sections of the screen in live online sessions through Google Meet.

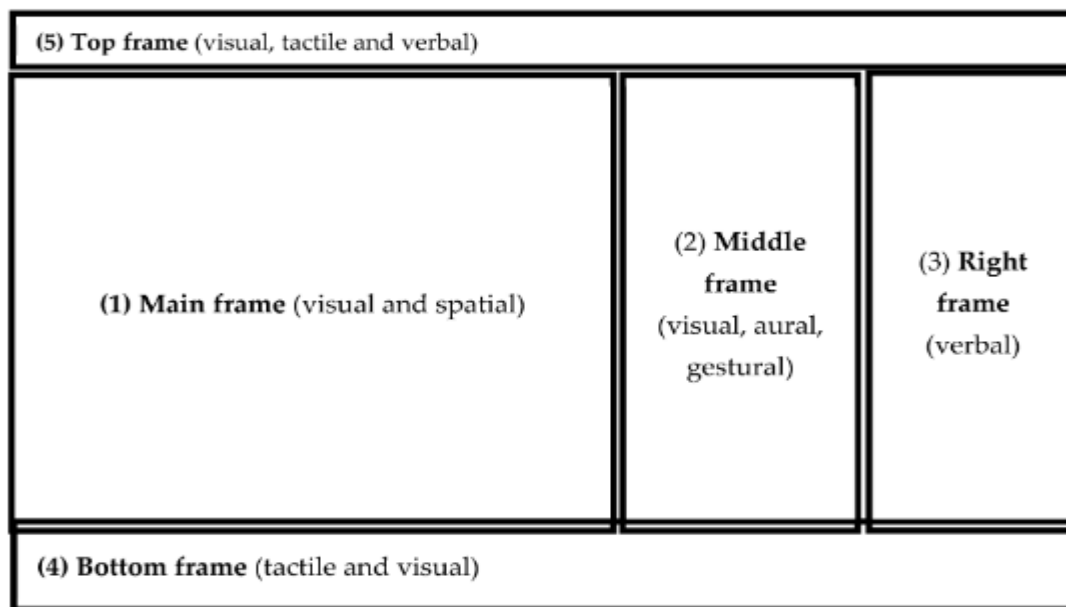


Figure 4 illustrate, live online learning can become a very rich and complex experience from an interactions perspective if used to its full potential, but it requires effective online class management and digital expertise. In this experiment, teacher talk time was kept to the minimum and the rubric provided the first week of class clearly stated that active participation, and not just ‘being online’ (the online presence), was a key factor in the assessment process, so students were highly encouraged to promote as well as be involved in oral and written communication. Furthermore, the two activities illustrating each method and designed by the participants made use of a wide array of tools (Nearpod, Educaplay, Quizziz, Mentimeter, Socrative, etc.), which contained different types of exercises (online quizzes,



gap-filling, word rearranging, multiple choice, odd-one out, sentence translation, jigsaws, etc.) aimed to enhance peer-to-peer interaction.

The post-test results revealed an overall satisfaction with the TBLT methodology (infographics) and live online presentations, The survey designed to measure the teacher candidates' perception was based on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and included three reverse coded items (#6, #10, #11) to avoid acquiescence bias in self-reported scales. The items were associated with three different dimensions (enjoyment, relevance and intention), the data were analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics 20, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was 0.868. The first six items of the scale related with enjoyment yielded positive results: shared enjoyment when presenting (#1 M = 4.24) and watching others' projects (#3 M = 4.32), completing the online activities (#4 M = 4.17), using digital tools (#5 M = 4.27) and collaborative work (#2 M = 4.29). Regarding relevance and in line with previous findings in Bicen et al. [46], students believed infographics can be used effectively for better illustration in SCMC (#7 M = 4.47), the online activities can help to enhance student participation and engagement (#8 M = 4.42) and improve the learning progress in live online sessions (#9 M = 4.36). In contrast, the participants did not think that the infographics and online activities could be distracting (#10 M = 2.29) or confusing (#11 M = 2.28), and expressed their interest in other classes with similar methods (#12 M = 3.92).

These findings are consistent with previous works highlighting the positive impact that live online classes may have on students' motivation and communicative competence if they are actively involved, but the relevance of this experiment is that the participants used technology in a transformative manner to design their own infographics on language teaching methods and to share their knowledge and skills with other classmates. As stated by the participants, they did not only learn new theoretical content, but they also acquired new knowledge and competence in digital tools and multimodal communication through the online project presentations

Conclusion

Regarding the first research question (RQ1), a TBLT methodology was effectively used encompassing different types of tasks (explaining, demonstrating, discussing) and critical thinking skills (understanding, analyzing, applying, evaluating, and creating) to enhance



student interaction. Concerning the second research question (RQ2), the teacher candidates demonstrated their communicative competence through live online presentations (SCMC), which had been conveniently structured in three different parts (presentation, demonstration and discussion). The online multimedia presentations required focused and sustained attention from the learners as the screen was conveniently divided into five frames, and each frame could integrate several modes (visual, oral, textual, gestural) and be used with different functions (texting, turn-taking, etc.).

In relation to the third research question the post-test results evidenced a self-perceived positive attitude toward the integration of TBLT (info graphics) in SCSC among participants. The statistical results scored high on shared enjoyment and relevance, as students enjoyed presenting as much as watching other students' projects and they strongly believed that collaborative infographics could be effectively used in language learning to better illustrate their knowledge and ideas and to improve the learning progress.

Given the rapid expansion and availability of technology worldwide and the need to be prepared for an unforeseeable context in the future, further research is needed on multitask-based learning and teaching (MTBL), student interaction (motivation, engagement) and pre-and in-service teacher readiness (digital and pedagogical competence) in live online learning, particularly from a constructivist approach. Finally, multimedia studies should also focus on synchronous computer-mediated communication and analyze the specific issued related with this virtual environment (visual, aural, gestural, etc.)

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