Moving Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Online:

Assessing the Impact of Emergency Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lisa Rochman, Anna Janik-Kelly, Christine Woods, and Tara Penner

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3:30 – 4:45 PM EST

Panel Introductions

Dr. Lisa Rochman is the Associate Dean in the Faculty of Skills and Foundational Learning at NorQuest College, Edmonton, AB.

Anna Janik-Kelly is a Program Manager at Red River College, Winnipeg, MB.

Christine Woods is an Instructional Coordinator, PBLA Lead Instructor and CLB Level 1/2 instructor at Douglas College Training Group in Surrey, BC.

Tara Penner is an Associate Chair of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada at NorQuest College, Edmonton, AB and Board Director for New Language Solutions in Ottawa, ON.

Who is with us?

Administrators?

Instructors?

Employment Counsellors?

Settlement Counsellors?

Researchers?

Presentation Outline

- Overview of the Study
- Findings:
  - Student
  - Teacher
- Funded program perspective
- Discussion

Overview of Study

NorQuest College partnered with two other post-secondary institutions, Douglas College and Red River College, to study students' and instructors' experiences with remote delivery. Surveys were distributed in early July 2020 at all three institutions, which were engaged in Emergency Remote Teaching as a response to the pandemic.

Overview of Study

A total of 735 students and 49 instructors consented and participated in the study. The student survey included questions on student demographics, technology use and access, challenges during ERT, and satisfaction with support, services, and learning progress. The instructor survey included questions on instructors' challenges, successes, and support/needs, as well as general reflections on their experience. This project was funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC].

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada [LINC]

LINC is a free language and settlement program, funded and regulated by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC].

About 375 Service Provider Organizations with 4,000 teachers offer full-time and part-time English and French language classes to 100,000 adult permanent residents annually (New Language Solutions, 2020).

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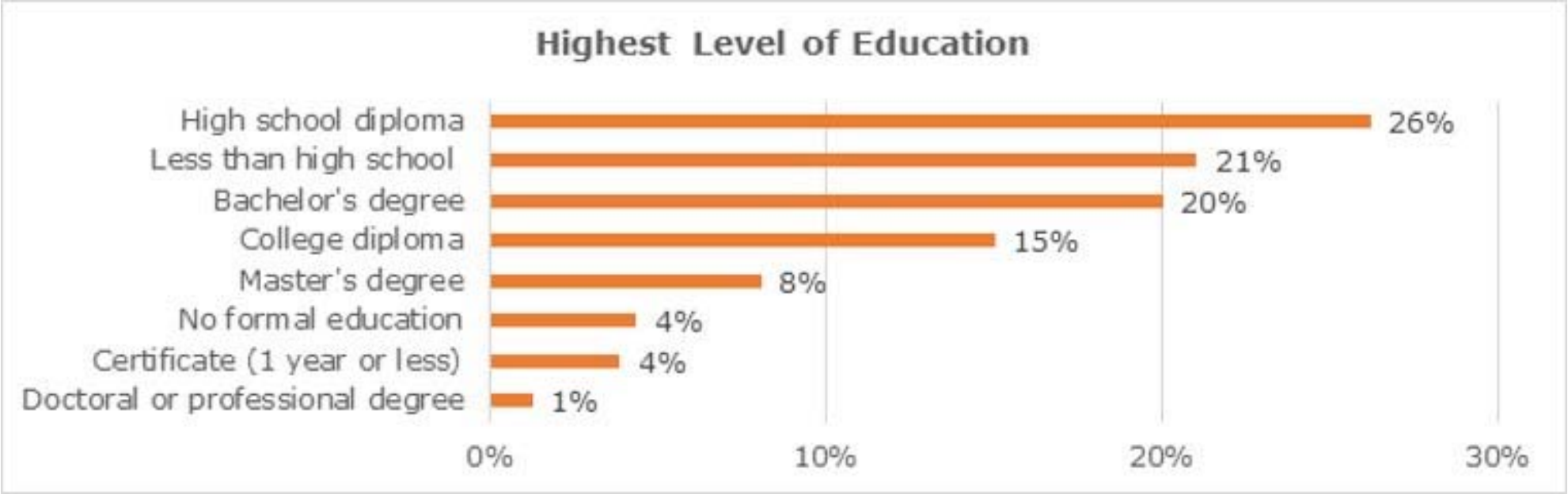
Student

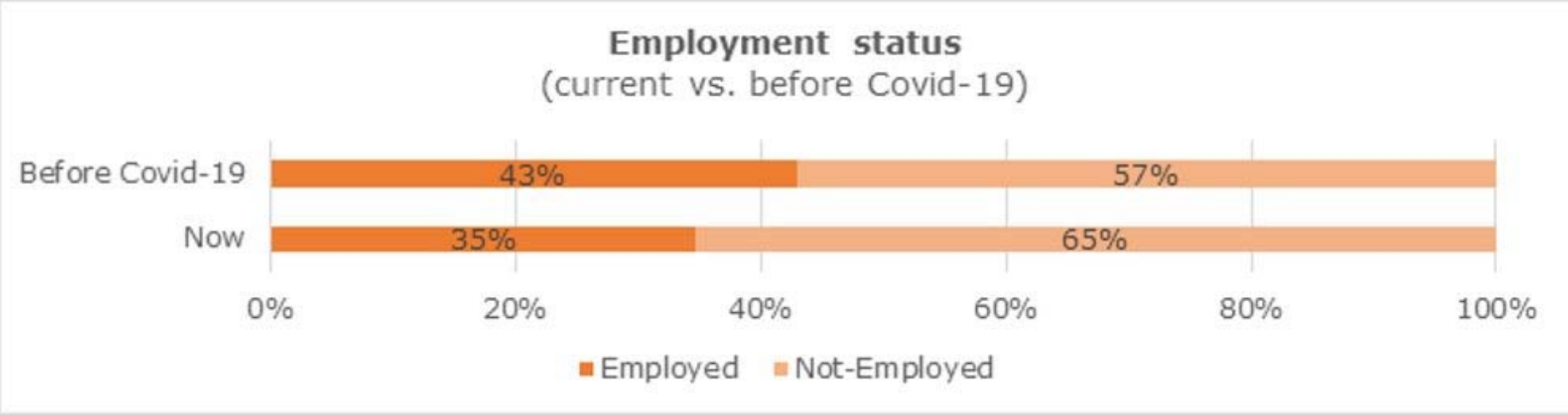
Impacts and Challenges

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of LINC Survey Participants	
Demographic Characteristic	Percent
Gender	
Women	66%
Men	33%
Other	1%
Age	
19 - 30 years old	31%
31 - 40 years old	37%
41 -50 years old	25%
51 or older	7%
Years in Canada	
A year or less	28%
2 - 3 years	35%
4 - 5 years	21%
6 or more years	16%
Number of dependents	
None	34%
One or two	39%
Three or four	19%
Five or more	8%
Household size	
One	6%
Two to three	41%
Four to five	33%
Six or more	20%

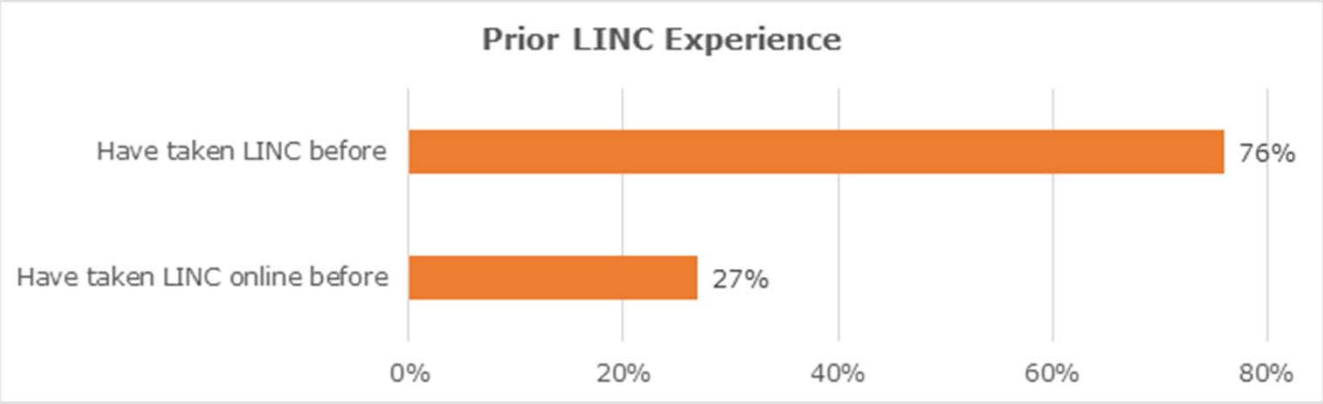
Student Level of Education

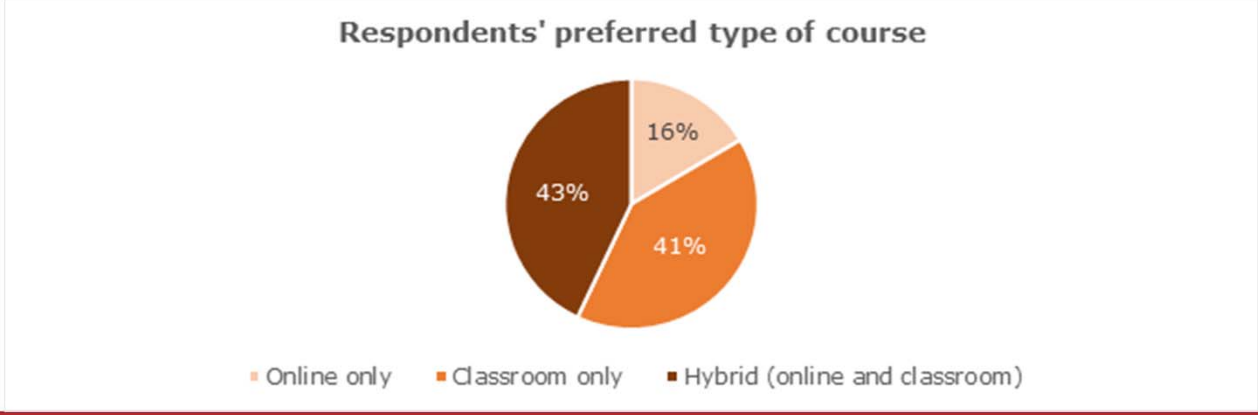


Employment Status



Experience with LINC Online vs Preferred Format





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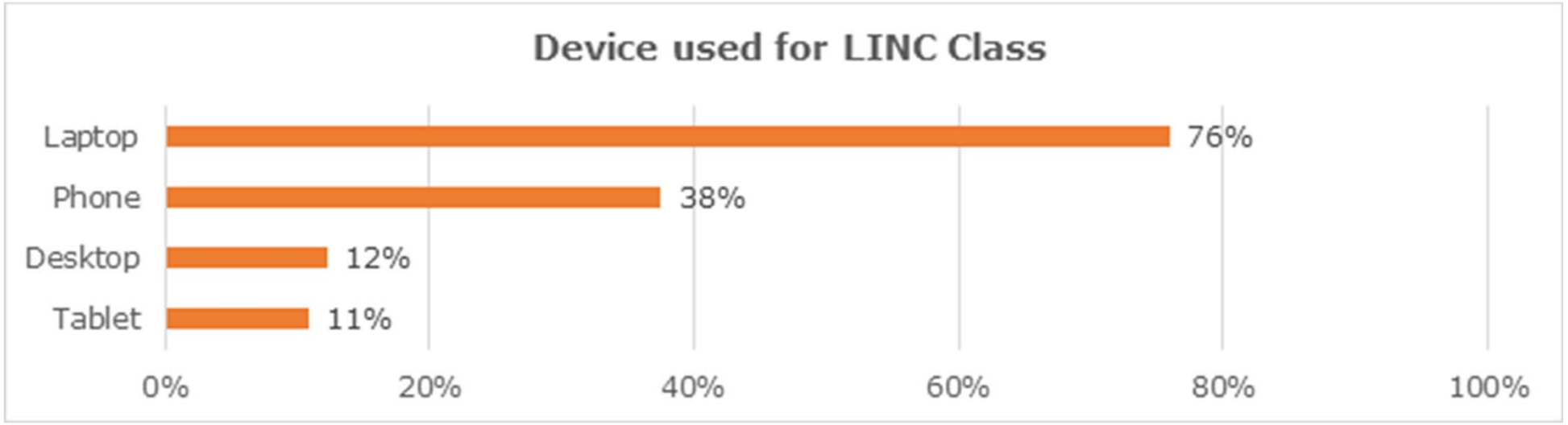
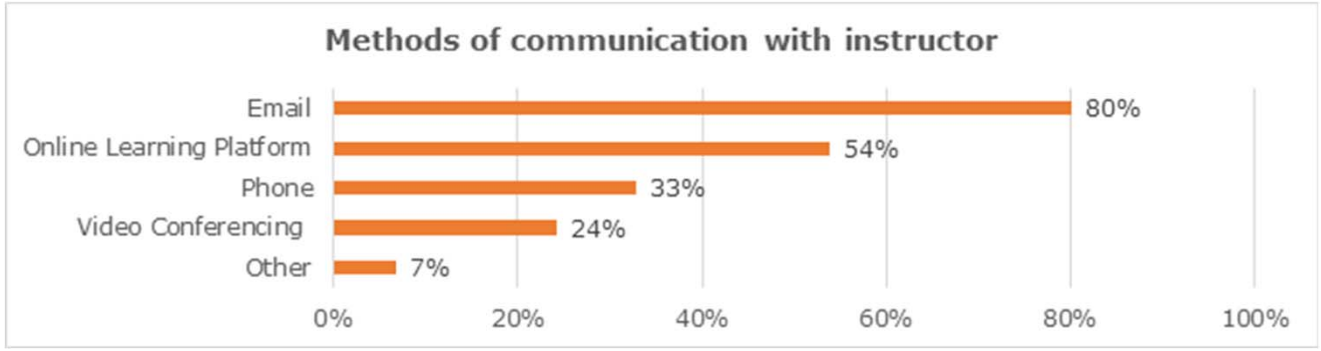
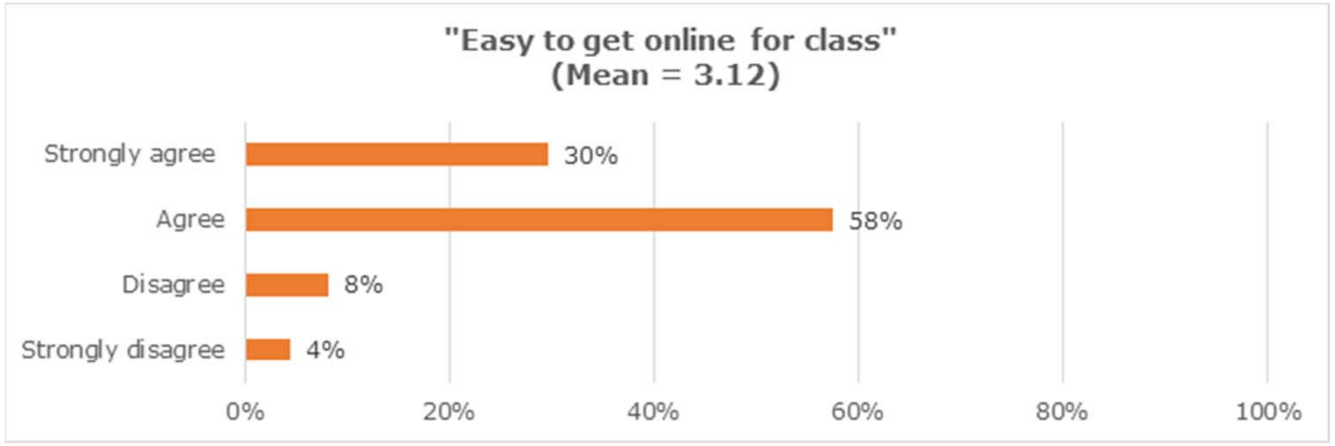
Technology access



Learning Interactions





Average Student

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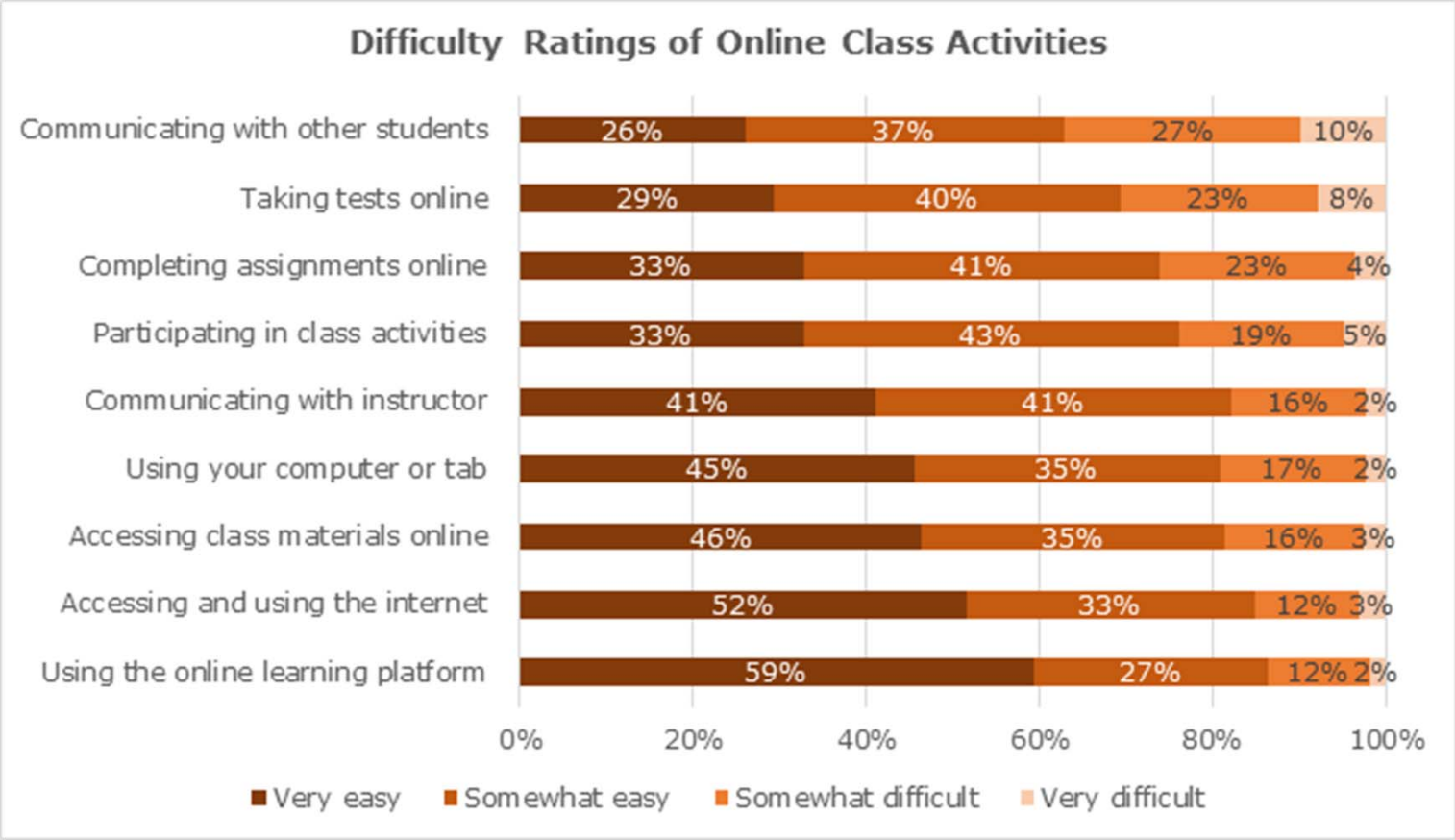
Student Challenges p.1

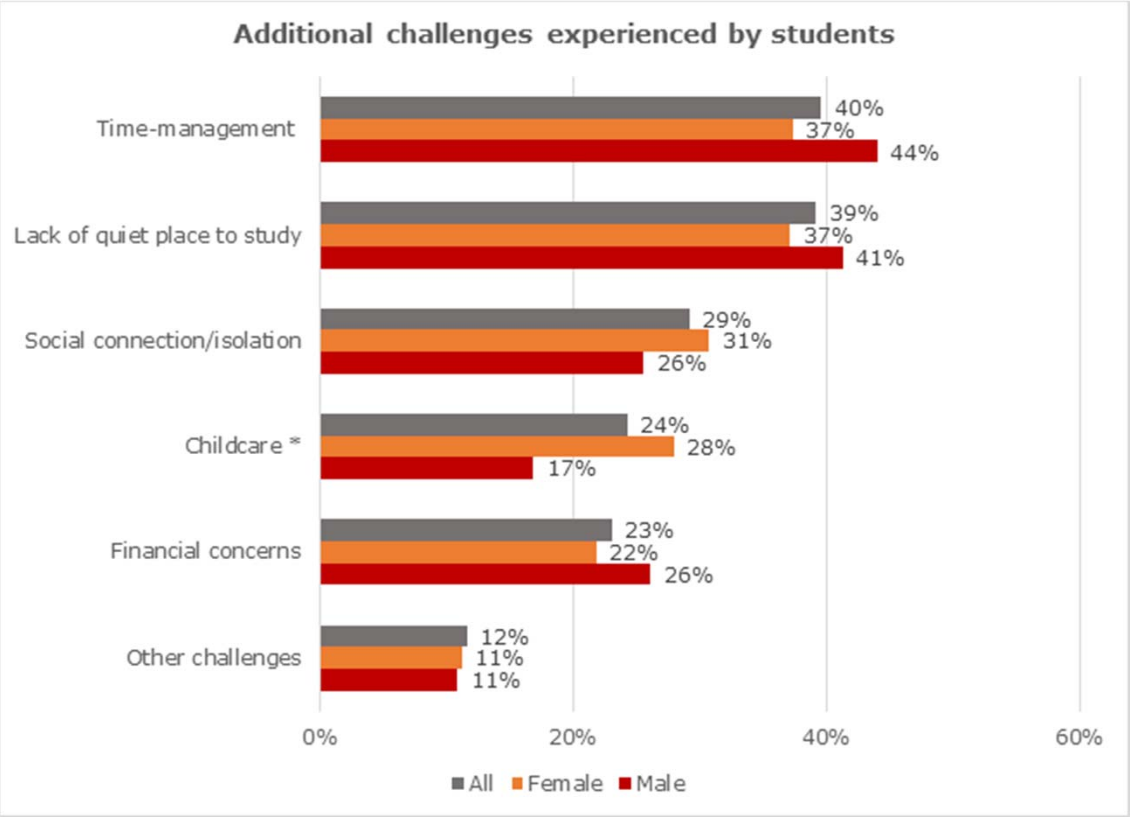


Solutions – 5 mins

Connecting with peers

Assessments/Assignments

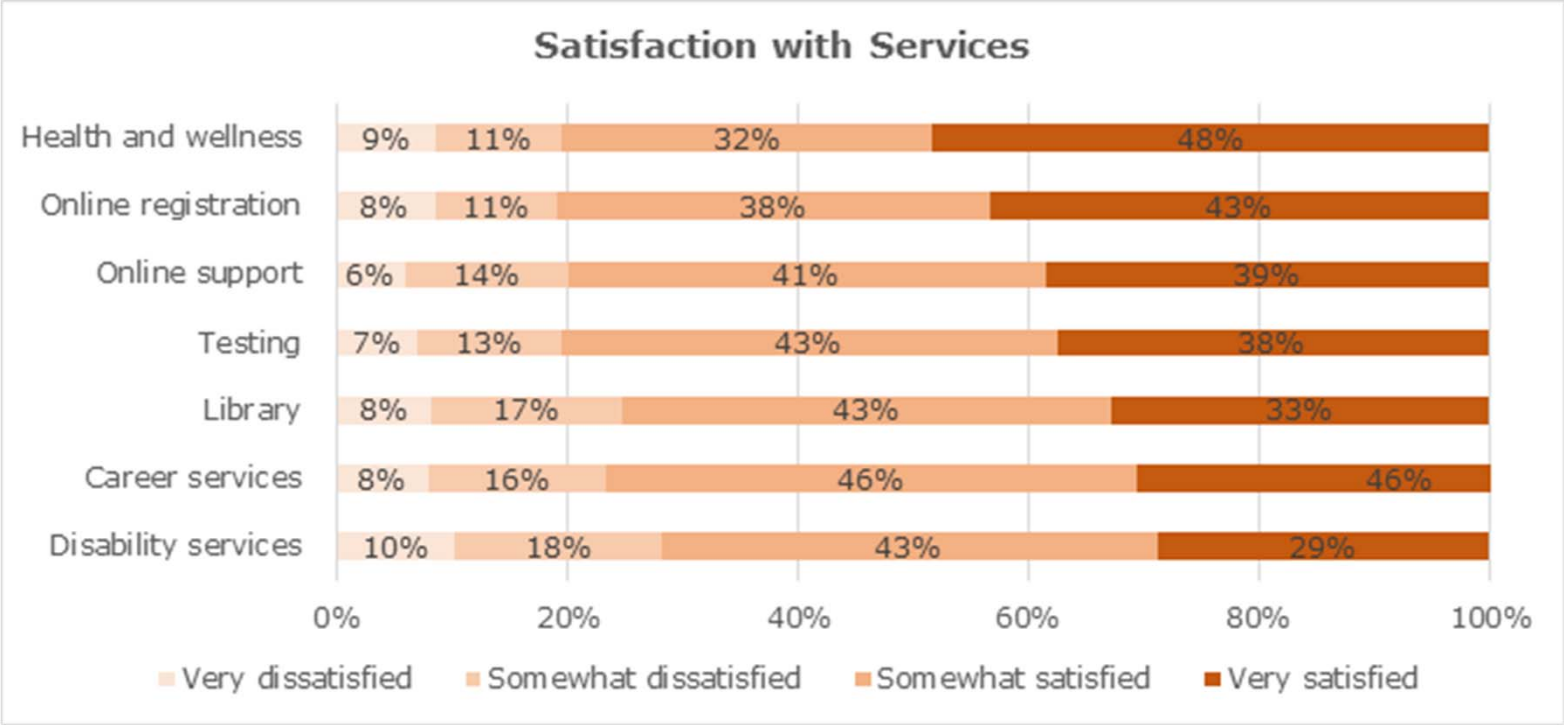
Student Challenges p.2



Solutions – 5 mins

Quiet place to study...

Student Challenges p.3



Solutions – 5 mins

Health/Wellness

Disabilities

Career Services

Instructor

Impacts and Challenges

Instructor Demographics

Table 2. Summary Statistics for Instructor Survey Respondents	
Instructor Characteristics	Percent
Have taught online classes before transition	35%
Have taught LINC online before transition	14%
Total number of students taught (mean = 24)	
Fewer than 15	20%
15 to 29	57%
More than 30	22%
Course load	
Full-time	52%
Part-time	38%
Full-time & Part-time	10%
CLB Level	
Lower-level (3 or lower)	22%
Mid-level (4 & 5)	27%
Higher-level (higher than 5)	29%
Mixed CLB	22%

Overview of Instructor Challenges

1. Student access to appropriate technology and digital literacy

2. Students' perception of remote teaching and learner environment.

3. Assessment related concerns

Instructor Challenges: Student Access

Mostly commonly cited concern amongst instructors are:

- Students not checking emails
- Reliance on non-optimal technologies for class attendance & accessing online materials

Student Access – Instructor Comments

The biggest issue I face is being able to get an accurate depiction of what my students can and can't do, especially in writing. Typing is a very different skill than writing in a notebook. I have some previous students repeating this term whom I know can write well, however, their writing ability seems to have regressed. One barrier is the students lack experience with technology/typing. Some students are improving with capitals, punctuation, and spacing, but it is still a challenge.

The largest challenge is that many students either join classes on their smartphones because they lack laptops OR they have a poor Internet connection. Both scenarios affect functionality.

Differing levels of technical skill and comfort, e.g., some students respond quickly to messages and emails, but others don't. There can be a significant lag time. Synchronous communication can be problematic due to connectivity issues, inferior technology, etc. For example, some students are using phones to connect; some have old laptops that don't always work, etc.

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Solutions – 5 mins

Student Access

Learner Environment and Students' Perception of Online Learning

Instructors highlighted various factors affecting the learner environment including challenges related to:

- Childcare
- Competing responsibilities
- Financial concern
- Social isolation

Instructors also noted challenges related to student engagement and buy in.

Learner Environment and Students' Perception of Online Learning – Instructor Comments

The atmosphere is not as relaxed because we are not as comfortable communicating in an online environment where we can't see each other's faces and we have very limited teaching time. It feels sort of impersonal. When [lower-level] students do the asynchronous learning, I think they get more frustrated because there is quite a lot for them to do each day, and when they don't understand something, they have no one to ask and they get tired. I think some students have difficulty concentrating on the asynchronous learning because they live with a lot of people, and they can't find a quiet place to study. Some students just always have difficulty getting a good internet connection.

Lack of participation/ engagement due to various reasons: accessibility, availability; personal commitment clashes; technical competence; lack of desire for online learning.

I think the biggest challenge about teaching online during this pandemic is that it is a pandemic and we are expected to carry on almost as normal. Students have so many more issues to deal with including childcare, income loss, concerns about friends and family around the world, etc. The amount of work we are requiring our students to do is really difficult for them. This time is not the same as choosing to teach or learn online. The world is totally upside down and causing a lot of anxiety and stress for everyone.

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Solutions – 5 mins

Learner Environment

Students' Perceptions

Assessment Challenges

Instructors highlighted inherent assessment challenges that come with remote teaching:

- Administering reliable assessments
- Ensuring academic integrity
- Additional time to provide feedback

Assessment – Instructors Comments

Assessing the listening skill is challenging since there are few opportunities to listen to individual students.

I think the hardest thing for me to stay motivated about is assessments. Creating, marking, and uploading assessments in e-portfolios takes about three times longer than it did in the classroom. Although I have thoroughly explained how to see feedback, I rarely get follow up questions, so it makes me wonder if students are actually checking their feedback and applying it to their mistakes.

[It] is hard to make a judgement about students' progress as there is likelihood that students get help completing assessments and tasks assigned to them.

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Effective Strategies

- Use of breakout rooms
- Interactive games
- Incorporating audio-visuals effectively
- Offering help to individual students
- Providing individualized and peer feedback
- Other interactive activities to increase "student talking time"

Effective Strategies – Instructor Comments

Routine, Routine, Routine. Get a consistent system going for the students so they know what to expect. Also, more repetition than usual seems to be helping. Each lesson has a similar structure. Intro question. Flashcards. Substitution dialogues etc... Homework assignment. Homework is 5 links, the last of which is a SCORM so I can track daily progress. It seems to be working.

I use different activities each session and chunk them to small parts. I use breakout rooms to let students discuss their ideas. I use different types of activities, for example listening to audios, watching videos, reading, etc. Also I use photos, different types of file formats, and anything to make the session more interesting.

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Solutions – 5 mins

Assessment Challenges

Successes

The following were noted as successes of remote learning and teaching.

- An opportunity for both students and instructors to learn new skills and strategies
- An opportunity for instructors to develop their awareness and experience with remote teaching technology
- An enhancement of digital literacy amongst students
- An increased confidence related to online teaching.

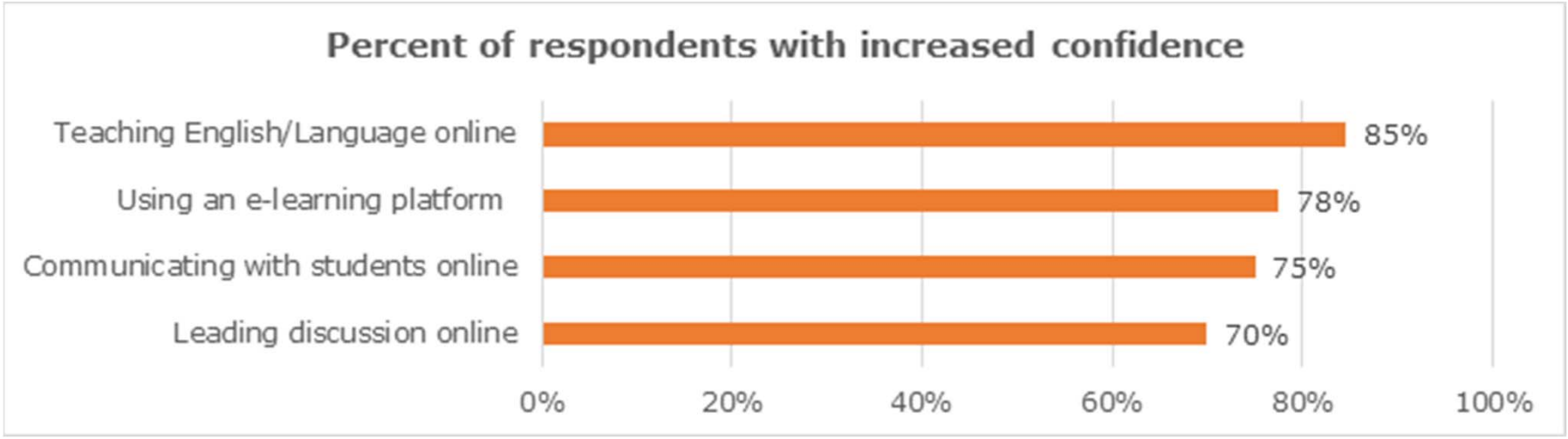
Successes – Digital Literacy

Some students that usually are shy and nervous in class have found a voice by being behind a screen.

[P]utting content online does not mean that teaching and learning goals are being met - instructors and students are learning what "success" can mean in this new online world for both parties. [S]uccesses are many - students are very resilient and open to learning in this new environment, as are instructors; online communities are being built with students connecting in breakout rooms in BB with each other and their instructor during online webinars/phone chats/Moodle messaging/email etc.,

I am surprised by the tenacity of my learners logging into class each day. I have realized that I need to continue making digital skills a top priority in my future lessons when we are back in class.

Successes – Instructor Confidence



Successes – Instructor Development

I am learning a lot about helping students with troubleshooting! This is great, as I feel like I am able to help them solve problems, and when they succeed, they are so pleased with themselves.

I've done a lot of professional development during this time. It was time consuming but rewarding. I spend a lot of time designing digital activities. I never thought that I would make it this far:) I have grown immensely in my ability to integrate technology into my lessons, and also am growing in my capacity to teach tech skills to my students. This is a positive outcome. This mode of teaching, however, challenges our ability to foster an appropriate work-life balance.

Funded Program Perspective

Strategies and Support

Technology Enhanced Language Learning

Technology Enhanced Language Learning:

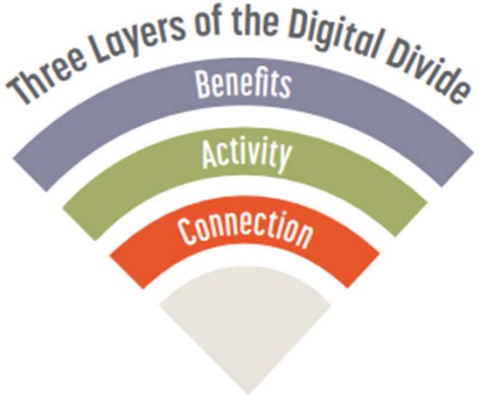
- is a normalized part of language learning
- helps achieve settlement goals
- improves access through flexible delivery models
- promotes self-efficacy
- builds social connections

(McBride, 2018; Walker & White, 2013)

Canada's Digital Divide

Differences in:

- Benefits
- Activity
- Connection



(New Language Solutions, 2020)

COVID-19 has <u>increased</u> inequalities that existed pre-pandemic.

http://www.learnit2teach.ca/wpnew/Learnit2teach_other_help_files/Digital-Divide-NLS-WEB.pdf

Strategies and Supports

Access:

- to affordable Internet access
- to appropriate devices

Training:

- to develop digital literacy for learners and teachers
- to promote online course quality standards for instructors

Skills:

- to develop self-regulatory learning strategies
- to develop work-force ready skills

Strategies and Supports

Childcare

- to support newcomer women
- that is both accessible and affordable

Partnerships

- with settlement organizations are crucial

Employment and career services

- with an increased focus on employment needs and career service outcomes

Discussion

Looking ahead

Discussion Questions

Q1: How could partnerships with settlement organizations help support students enrolled in LINC programs? What partnerships can you suggest?

Q2: How can digital skills for employment be developed and how can industry support?

Q3: What role does the federal and provincial government play in helping people respond to the rapidly changing digital demands, particularly when more essential services are moved online?

References

McBride, R. (2018). Learning Technology Innovation Leadership: Course Evaluation & Lessons for the Settlement Training Sector. New Language Solutions.

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