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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN AN ONLINE INTRODUCTORY UNDERGRADUATE FRENCH COURSE

by

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A Dissertation in Practice
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
University of North Dakota

for the degree of

Doctor of Education
Specialty: Teacher Education

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Rachel Dwyer
June 30, 2022

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This research is dedicated to all my past students, who fueled my love of teaching and a passion for student engagement.

To my loving parents who told me anything is possible.

And to my spirited children and brilliant husband, who are my entire world and who push me to fulfill my dreams!

ABSTRACT

In the past decades, online course enrollment has steadily increased in popularity. In 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic suddenly shifted most teaching and learning into the virtual world. The entire education system tried to quickly learn how to cope in this environment. Given the clear benefits of online learning, such as flexibility and versatility, coupled with instructors being more capable because of the pandemic, it is projected that online learning will continue to remain a popular option for students. Knowing how to best engage students in an online environment is crucial to student success. Their engagement in the course positively correlates with academic success and satisfaction.

This study assesses which instructional strategies are most engaging according to participants' self-reported levels of engagement, as measured by motivation, enjoyment, and benefit to learning. This research assesses seven comparative sets of instructional strategies: three for writing online in the target language, three for speaking interpersonally in a breakout room, and one for peer presentational interaction. The participants were 19 undergraduate students in the second semester of introductory French at a liberal arts college in the Midwest. Results indicate that all strategies assessed in comparative sets were at least somewhat engaging, with all engagement averages between 3.2 and 4.4 on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. Although there were preferences for and against certain strategies, the positive results of this study result in a toolkit of instructional strategies that engage students in an online, synchronous course. This study culminates in an interactive website that explains the instructional prompts assessed and associated quantitative and qualitative results.

Keywords: student engagement, student motivation, instructional strategies, synchronous online learning, foreign language instruction

INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, online course enrollment has steadily increased in popularity (Ozogul, 2016). In 2020, the Covid-19 global pandemic suddenly shifted most teaching and learning into the virtual world (Quitishat et al., 2022). The entire education system tried to quickly learn how to cope in this environment. Given the clear benefits of online learning, such as flexibility and versatility, coupled with instructors being more capable because of the pandemic, it is projected that online learning will continue to remain a popular option for students moving forward (Gopal, 2021). Knowing how to best engage students in an online environment is crucial to their success. Student engagement in the course positively correlates with academic success and satisfaction (Soffer & Nachmias, 2017). Each online course is different, and there are synchronous and asynchronous formats. Online learning can take place at any age, and for any content area. This study specifically examines engagement strategies for a synchronous, online, undergraduate, introductory French course.

In the first artifact I define the contemporary problem of student engagement in an online environment and explains the purpose of the study. The seven research questions are defined, each being a comparative set of instructional strategies. The overarching question of this study seeks to find which instructional strategies are most effective in elevating student engagement and motivation in an online setting in a first-year French course from the students' perspective. Next I dive into relevant literature on the topic of engagement strategies in an online setting, as well as outlining common approaches and solutions to this problem of practice. I conclude that

there is a need for this research study, as there is no specific data on the topic of engagement in a synchronous, online, introductory French course.

In Artifact 2, I map the research study by describing the methodology, participants, researcher, instruments, study design, analysis, and procedure. I then describe the results of the research study for each of the seven research questions. Each question, or comparative set, has a more engaging instructional strategy according to students' self-reported levels of engagement. The instructional strategies are clearly defined with multiple examples of each strategy and how it can be used in a world language classroom. Data is displayed in histograms for each research question showing which instructional strategy was most engaging. There are also histograms separating each engagement question into results specifically on motivation, enjoyment, and benefit to learning. Finally, each research question has a qualitative component, with trends analyzed and described from the participants' comments to the open-ended question found on each research question survey.

Artifact 3 is the description of the product that was created in response to the problem of practice. The aim of the study is to find instructional strategies to improve student engagement, so the product—a website—describes the results of this study. The website is a robust and interactive description of the study. Viewers can navigate between pages to find the research questions, results, and many examples of the instructional strategies assessed. There are embedded videos that describe each instructional strategy, as well as videos that interpret the results of each survey. This website is the final piece of the investigation, the component that conveys the findings to the public. This study is most applicable to instructors who teach synchronous, online courses, especially introductory world language courses.

These three artifacts work together to tell the story of this research study. In them I describe the necessity, process, and results of this research. The seven research questions answer the overarching question of engagement in an online environment with broad and specific solutions to this contemporary problem of practice.

ARTIFACT 1: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE ANALYSIS PAPER

Overview of the Problem

The importance of student engagement to overall life satisfaction positively correlates in adolescents and young adults, particularly as it pertains to cognitive engagement (Lewis, Huebner, Malone, & Valois, 2010). In this study, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning French, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn this language and progress in their education ("Student Engagement Definition", 2016). The more engaged a student is in the learning process, the more they will see social, emotional, and academic success. Unfortunately, research indicates that student engagement and motivation significantly drop as students move from primary to secondary education, and then slightly improve at the post-secondary level (Martin, 2009). For students to perform at their highest potential, they must be interested in the content, such as French, as well as the learning process. Student engagement is not simply completing prescribed tasks; it is far more complex. It occurs when learners are actively committed to the learning environment, and are intrinsically motivated to succeed academically, emotionally, and socially (Dary, Pickeral, Shumer, & Williams, 2016, p. 5).

In the ever-changing 21st century, online learning environments are proving to be more important and widely used than ever before. The implications for student engagement and active learning in this domain look different than in a traditional, in-person class. The interactive nature of practicing and learning a world language pose different challenges in this setting, where the instructor and student can be hidden from view. Marcia Dixon (2010) examined the activities or

learning channels that could improve student engagement and motivation in an online setting. However, the study was inconclusive with no particular activity automatically improving student engagement in an online class. Dixon did find that multiple communication channels and effective student-student and instructor-student communication was strongly correlated to improved learning outcomes and engagement. The lack of a specific activity to improve student engagement shows the need for more research on this topic, particularly pertaining to active learning strategies in an online environment in a world language course. However, it could be that there is no one specific trick for improving student engagement in a virtual space.

The term "online classes" has many different connotations. This vague term can describe classes that are synchronous, asynchronous, web module-based, blended, e-learning, self-paced, hybrid, and more (Mayer, 2014). The terms "online classes" and "distance learning" are often used interchangeably. The term "distance learning" has been used for many decades to describe education using audio-visual tools to fill in a gap, such as the lack of a teacher for a specific elective in a rural school. However, for the purpose of this research, "online classes" refers to an online, synchronous French class taught using audio-visual conferencing software. Synchronous learning occurs at the same time, but in various locations by participants. This study examines online, synchronous French language learning, using contemporary audio-visual tools to communicate with students in real time ("Synchronous Learning Definition", 2013).

Purpose of Study

Active learning techniques implemented by an instructor increase student motivation and engagement (Cavanagh, 2011). According to Ozogul (2018), there is a "positive relationship between the use of learning technology, student engagement, and outcomes of learning" (p. 1).

The purpose of this study is to discover the most effective instructional strategies to raise student engagement and motivation in an online, synchronous, undergraduate French class. First, strategies to motivate written work in a virtual space will be evaluated. The specificity of the prompt, peer interaction with the written work, the length requirement of the writing, as well as the specific tools will all be assessed in this study to find best instructional practices to engage students in writing in an online course.

Next, the study will seek to find the most effective way to practice spoken, interpersonal conversation in the online environment. The spoken prompts, instructor accessibility/visibility, and peer configuration will all be evaluated.

Last, this study aims to find the best method for peer interaction of audiovisual presentational material. It will include an analysis of the student presenter and student commentator.

With the recent shift to online learning, the goal of this study is to find the most effective ways to teach and learn a beginning-level foreign language online. Understanding how to effectively prompt written communication in the target language is a different task in the virtual classroom than in the traditional physical classroom. Spoken, interpersonal communication is fundamental to foreign language acquisition, However, in separated "breakout" rooms, the instructor is not always present. Finding ways to encourage motivation in spaces that are invisible to the instructor is critical for practicing the target language in an online space. There are many tools for students to show presentational material to their peers. Finding engaging ways for their classmates to interact with the uploaded presentations is vital to build student-student relationships, as well as to ensure students learn important content their peers have presented. During the Covid-19 global pandemic, most instructors were thrown into a situation where they

were teaching online, sometimes synchronously, and did not have the tools or training to know how to do this effectively. This investigation will provide specific and useful strategies that will improve instructional strategies to engage students in an online classroom.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following primary research question and detailed sub questions: Which instructional strategies are most effective in raising student engagement and motivation in an online setting in a first-year French course from the students' perspectives?

A. What are the best strategies to encourage written participation in an online environment?
    1. Does the specificity of the prompt increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing open-ended paragraph, five specific questions, and missing words written activities.)
    2. Does peer interaction on written work increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing individual, interactive, and peer-edited written activities.)
    3. Which tools, or qualities of tools, are most effective in increasing students' self-reported participation in written work? (Comparing Zoom chat, Jamboard, and Gimkit Ink for writing activities.)

B. What are the best strategies to encourage spoken participation in an online environment?
    4. What types of prompts lead to increased students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing open-ended, translation, dice rolling conversation, and A-B information gap activities for interpersonal spoken activities.)

5. How much does instructor visibility and availability increase students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing intermittent instructor arrival, instructor available to join upon request, option for students to re-join the main room to see instructor, or instructor available by chat feature during interpersonal spoken activities.)
6. Does the addition of a written element increase students' self-reported spoken participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing no writing task and included writing task during interpersonal spoken activities.)

C. What are the most effective ways to encourage peer-peer interaction in student presentations in an online environment?

7. What types of interactions do students find most engaging for the audience and presenter? (Comparing video response and written response from the presenter and viewer perspectives for online peer presentations.)

Review of Relevant and Practitioner-Based Literature

Sullivan et al. (2010) compared a variety of online synchronous environments in relation to student engagement. They compared multi-user virtual environments (MUVEs), shared representations with chat and image features, and text-only environments and found that the MUVE environment, or interactive meeting platform, lead to higher levels of enjoyment and engagement. In a synchronous class, the MUVE environment, such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Adobe Connect, is more engaging and enjoyable for students, leading to more positive learning outcomes. There is, though, a wide variety of engagement in the online setting—from passive participants with no features enabled to active participants who are using the technology features to participate in the course.

A challenge for online instruction is often students' lack of motivation and poor self-efficacy (Smit et al., 2017). Busse and Walter (2013) found that in a group of undergraduate, first-year German students, participants began their language learning highly engaged in the content with a strong goal of becoming proficient. However, as the year progressed, despite an increased desire to become proficient in the language, students felt less enjoyment and engagement with the language and their confidence communicating in the target language decreased. In interviews, students stated they did not feel the university environment was conducive to language learning. Students are often in an undergraduate, beginning language course to satisfy a university requirement, which does not improve intrinsic motivation. Because of these challenges, there is a need for increased active learning strategies in beginning level foreign language courses at the university level.

Lin, Zhang, and Zheng (2017) examined the role of motivation and learning strategies in online, language courses at the high school level. They found student motivation did not necessarily predict online learning outcomes. Yet, their findings suggested that increased use of online learning strategies help improve student satisfaction, perceived success, and academic achievement. They suggest online language instructors encourage students to utilize online learning strategies, as these may increase student engagement and success. Some examples of online learning strategies mentioned in this study are preparing questions before joining a chat room, communicating with the instructor through email, setting goals for managing study time online, reading aloud instructional material posted online, and others. These online learning strategies were found to be beneficial for student success.

Some research mentions the importance of student motivation on learning outcomes, especially in an online setting. Wang and Shan (2020) examined student motivation in an online

language course. They found that online learning strategies operated at a moderate level in the process of learning a foreign language in an online class. They also focused on self-regulated learning, or SRL, which they determined to be the most important factor of student success in this setting.

In a foreign language class, communication is the ultimate goal. Hulbert (2013) provides a case study showing a strong correlation between speaking proficiency and writing proficiency. Hulbert explains the importance of communicative skills:

> Helping students to learn to communicate in meaningful and appropriate ways should be the goal of every foreign language instructor, and the development of students' ability to transmit genuine information in the interpersonal, interpretive, or presentational modes is perhaps the most important goal of 21st-century instruction (p. 88).

Interpersonal skills, particularly spoken, are a crucial part of foreign language curriculum, thus, appropriate measures must be in place to provide feedback to encourage growth in this area.

Several articles stated the importance of online instruction and the need for more empirical research on this topic. Sullivan and colleagues (2010) compared various learning environments to find the most engaging format for an online course, finding that more interactive formats were more effective. Czerkawski and Lyman (2016) proposed a framework for an engaging online setting that incorporates best practices in student engagement in the online study, but had not tested their theories at the time of the research. Dixon (2010) also examines which strategies are most effective for raising student engagement in an online setting, but found inconclusive results, with no specific instructional activities yielding higher results. These three articles all emphasize the need for more research on the topic of student engagement in an online setting and note the deficit of existing empirical findings on the topic.

After reviewing relevant research on the topic of student engagement in an online setting, it is apparent that more research is necessary on this topic. There are not many studies on student engagement in a synchronous format. Most studies involve asynchronous courses, which are not ideal for beginning-level language courses since students need more guidance. There is also limited information on student engagement in general in undergraduate foreign language courses. While reviewing the existing research, it is apparent there is a strong need for empirical data on engagement in synchronous, online world language courses.

Common Approaches and Solutions to the Problem of Practice

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is an organization providing extensive resources on language learning and best practices for language instructors (n.d.). They provide the following "5 Cs" as a framework for the foreign language standards: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Their core practices includes facilitating target language comprehensibility, guiding learners through interpreting authentic resources, designing oral interpersonal communication tasks, planning with backward design model, teaching grammar as concept and use in context, and providing appropriate oral feedback. Many of these core practices are important in multiple curricular areas and some are more specific to language instruction. According to ACTFL's Guiding Principles (2020):

> Oral communication is at the heart of language learning. It is the vehicle through which learners build relationships and develop intercultural competence. Through oral interpersonal communication tasks, learners engage with language in a low-stakes environment in preparation for real-life interactions (p.1).

Most active learning strategies done in foreign language classrooms revolve around oral communication. Creating level-appropriate opportunities for students to express themselves in the target language is paramount in foreign language instruction.

In the spring of 2020, ACTFL responded to the Novel Coronavirus global pandemic with an emergency virtual conference to cover the topic of online, foreign language instruction. Presenters covered a wide range of topics, from technology integration to interpersonal communication in a digital environment. Lauren Rosen (2020) speaks about encouraging engagement by showing empathy and building rapport in this new space. She encourages instructors to refrain from 50-minute instructional time, with 15 to 20 minute sessions more effective in the synchronous setting. On the topic of spoken, interpersonal communication, Rosen explains that there are a variety of ways to continue communicative practice in the target language, such as breakout rooms in a virtual space, Skype calls, and much more. She advocates for the instructor to provide a topic for the students to discuss for a casual conversation. She also explains the use of A-B information gap activities, where Student A has a sheet (emailed or found on an LMS) that has different information than the sheet for Student B. The conversation between these two students includes questions and answers about information furnished or missing from their own document. An example may be about which foods members of a family are eating. Student A sees that grandpa is eating a steak, but cannot see what grandma is eating. Student B sees the opposite information and the conversation ensues. Information gap activities are common practices for foreign language acquisition in a traditional class and most communicative activities can be re-conceptualized for a virtual setting.

In one study, Czerkawski and Lyman (2016) present an instructional design framework to foster learner engagement in online learning. They describe that in the first phase, the instructor

conducts a needs assessment and learner analysis to define instructional needs. The second phase is to defining instructional goals and objectives. The third phase is for developing learning environments by conducting formative assessments, developing interaction and collaboration strategies, designing online feedback, and selecting instructional resources. The fourth and final phase is to evaluate instructional effectiveness with a summative assessment. This framework attempts to guide instructors through teaching in an online environment. However, it is vague and not specific to synchronous, online learners.

Despite the vast research on the topics of online learning and foreign language instruction, there are fewer applicable studies on online foreign language courses at the university level. The majority of research about online classes prior to the Covid-19 global pandemic pertains to asynchronous classes where students are accomplishing tasks online, but with no virtual, face-to-face instruction. ACFTL has many guiding principles, but none specific to the synchronous, online settings. There is little direct research on reviewing active learning strategies in a synchronous, online courses, particularly in the domain of foreign language education. Activities studied in my research include both instructor facilitated activities and learner initiated activities or habits. This investigation compares the efficacy of specific instructional strategies to engage students in this environment.

ARTIFACT 2: RESEARCH APPROACH NARRATIVE

Methodology

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following primary research question and detailed sub questions: ***Which instructional strategies are most effective in raising student engagement and motivation in an online setting in a first-year French course from the students' perspectives?***

A. What are the best strategies to encourage written participation in an online environment?
    1. Does the specificity of the prompt increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing open-ended paragraphs, five specific questions, and missing words written activities.)
    2. Does peer interaction on written work increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing individual, interactive, and peer-edited written activities.)
    3. Which tools, or qualities of tools, are most effective in increasing students' self-reported participation in written work? (Comparing Zoom chat, Jamboard, and Gimkit Ink for writing activities.)

B. What are the best strategies to encourage spoken participation in an online environment?
    4. What types of prompts lead to increased students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing open-ended, translation, dice rolling

5. conversation, and A-B information gap activities for interpersonal spoken activities.)
6. How much does instructor visibility and availability increase students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing intermittent instructor arrival, instructor available to join upon request, option for students to re-join the main room to see instructor, or instructor available by chat feature during interpersonal spoken activities.)
7. Does the addition of a written element increase students' self-reported spoken participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing no writing task and included writing task during interpersonal spoken activities.)

C. What are the most effective ways to encourage peer-peer interaction in student presentations in an online environment?

8. What types of interactions do students find most engaging for the audience and presenter? (Comparing video response and written response from the presenter and viewer perspectives for online peer presentations.)

Study Participants

Participants were students in 100-level French, the second semester of beginning French. Of the 24 enrolled students, 19, or 79% of those students chose to participate in this study. Participants attended a liberal arts college in the Midwest with a student population of nearly 2,000.

The student participants had either taken the previous semester of French in the fall semester or passed into the second semester of French based on an entrance exam from prior French class experience, usually high school courses. The instructor was the same for both

semesters of 100-level French, so those who took the second semester, when this research was conducted, had rapport with the French professor and were familiar with the curriculum and online tools used. Students in the second semester of 100-level French intentionally enrolled in this fully online course. Because of the Coronavirus global pandemic, many traditional, face-to-face classes were forced into the online space. However, the 100-level French courses were intended to be fully online and the second semester fulfills the World Language Requirement, which is a requirement for all students at this institution.

Researcher

I was the principal investigator and professor of the second semester of beginning French. I made it clear to the students that participation was completely voluntary, and participation would not be held against them. I also made it clear that I had no preconceived biases about the results of the study, and that this research was born from a genuine curiosity about which activities increase student engagement. Surveys were conducted during class time on the students' computers, and those who did not wish to participate were encouraged to work on the alternative assignments, which were online activities, so it would not be obvious who participated and who did not participate.

Instruments

In this study, students rated activities—engaging, enjoyable, beneficial for learning—after they occurred. Below is a sample survey question to assess the first sub-question of the research questions.

Figure 1

Research Instrument

Survey Questions for Question 1:

For the written, open-ended paragraph prompt, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

For the written prompt of answering five specific questions, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

For the written prompt of filling in missing words, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

Please explain which prompt for written work you found most beneficial and why?

_____

Design/Analysis

The strategies applied for research were implemented for all students in the online section of the second semester of beginning French. All students in the course were invited to participate in the study and study participants completed the online surveys after various online activities. To assess strategies to encourage written engagement in the target language, students rated their engagement based on the specificity of the prompt, peer interaction during written work, and specific online writing tools, or qualities of the tools. To assess strategies to encourage spoken participation in French, students rated their engagement concerning the type of prompt, instructor visibility and availability, and the addition of a written element.

Finally, to assess best practices for peer-peer interaction in online student presentations, students rated their engagement for written and video responses to uploaded projects, both from

the perspective of the presenter and the audience. There were not different groups (control vs. experimental) since all students were assured the best instruction possible, including innovative practices. Survey results were administered and analyzed using Qualtrics.com, an online survey tool. The Likert-type scales for each question provided quantitative data, whereas the open-ended survey questions provided qualitative data, thus providing rich data for this research study.

Procedure

Participants took the online surveys after the final task of a comparative set. For example, one day participants had a spoken task in a breakout room where the instructor joined the breakout room to verify progress and check for questions. The next class, the instructor did not join the breakout rooms, but encouraged students to join the main meeting if they had questions. After this second, comparative activity, participants filled out a survey about the two experiences. Students received 15 extra credit points for participating in these surveys. An alternative online assignment was offered for students who did not want to participate in the study for the same 15 extra credit points.

Data Analysis and Results

This section includes the research results, which was conducted to answer the primary research question: Which instructional strategies are most effective in raising student engagement and motivation in an online setting in a first-year French course from the students' perspectives? The overarching question was answered with the quantitative and qualitative findings to the research questions below.

Research Question 1: Does the specificity of the prompt increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing open-ended paragraph, five specific questions, and missing words written activities.)

Specificity of Written Prompts Explanation.

Three different instructional strategies were compared to find the one that increases students' self-reported levels of engagement. With all question prompts, students are expected to respond in the target language, French. First, open-ended questions were asked, which are broad questions on a topic where students are able to answer in a personal way. Asking students to write on the topic of "Tell me about your family" or "Which fruits and vegetables are you favorite/least favorite" are examples of open-ended questions. Often, there is a time limit and an online tool used where students write and the instructor reads their written work at a later time. The second instructional prompt for writing is to simply provide five related questions for them to use as the prompt. On the topic of family, the questions might each be about different family members. Responses could be in a list or written as a cohesive paragraph. The third instructional prompt for written work is for students to write the correct missing word where there are missing words in a paragraph.

Specificity of Written Prompts Results.

Overall, students reported higher levels of engagement in the missing word prompt activity, with an average mean of 3.8 on the 1 to 5 Likert-type scale. This overall mean is the average of the means for motivation, enjoyment, and benefit to learning. However, open-ended questions had an average mean of 3.65 and the five questions prompt had an average mean of 3.66, so they were all similar. Students found all three instructional prompts to be between somewhat and very much engaging on the scale.

Comparing the three prompts looking only at motivation, participants found the five questions and missing word prompts to be more motivating than the open-ended prompt.

Comparing the enjoyment data, students found open-ended and missing word prompts to be more enjoyable than the five questions prompt.

Finally, comparing only data on the benefit to learning, participants found open-ended questions to be more beneficial, followed closely by missing words, and five questions to have the least benefit to learning. Again, all survey means were rated between 3.46 and 3.86 on the Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, so students found all instructional prompts to be between somewhat and very much. Figure 2 shows the overall comparison between the three instructional prompts. Figure 3 shows the breakdown between subcategories of engagement.

Figure 2

Written Prompt Summary Results

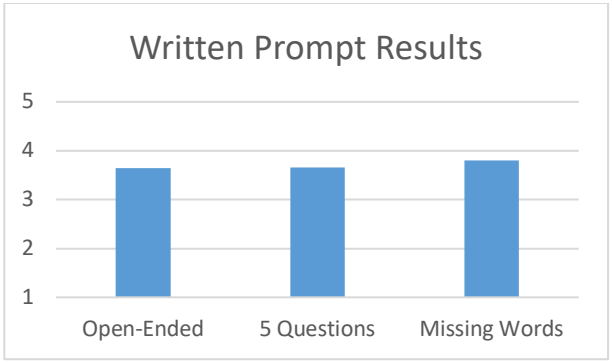
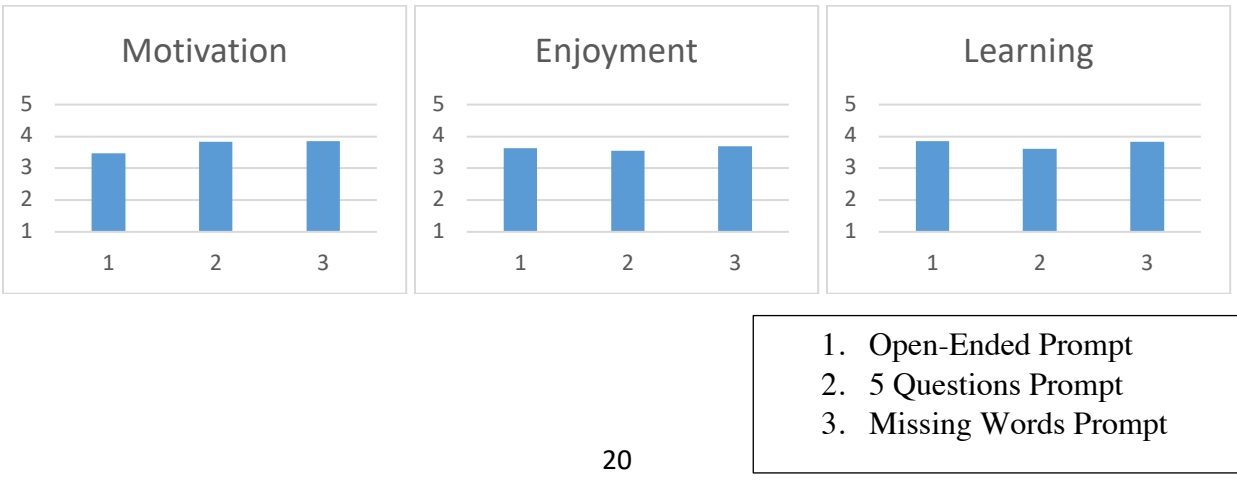


Figure 3

Written Prompt Engagement Breakdown



Specificity of Written Prompts Qualitative Results.

On each survey used in this research study, the final question is open-ended asking about the participants' overall thoughts regarding the research question. For this survey, the open-ended questions was, "Please explain which prompt for written work you found most beneficial and why." Although all 19 participants responded to the quantitative questions, only 12 participants chose to answer this qualitative question. Four participants mentioned preferring the open-ended prompt. One participant explained,

> I find the open-ended prompt to be the most beneficial because we are not only working on the specific grammar topics, but we are also reinforcing the grammar, structures, and vocab that we learned prior. I feel like this helps me engage in more critical thinking.

Four students also mentioned preferring the five questions prompts with one stating it is most beneficial because it gives structure but allows for some freedom in the response as well. Three participants mentioned the missing words prompts, citing that this strategy is most helpful when focusing on complicated grammatical concepts.

Research Question 2: Does peer interaction on written work increase or decrease students' self-reported engagement and motivation? (Comparing individual, interactive, and peer-edited written activities.)

Peer Interaction During Written Work Explanation.

In a synchronous, online class, students are often asked to collaborate on or peer edit written assignments. The goal of the second research question was to find which peer interaction instructional strategy increases motivation. For this study, the first option in the comparative set was interactive writing with a partner. Students were in breakout rooms with their partners and were collaborating on writing a paragraph in an online space that the instructor would see after

class. The second option was individual written work. The third option was for students to complete the written work individually, and then peer edit each other's work in an online space, such as Jamboard and Gimkit.

Peer Interaction During Written Work Results.

For this comparative set, participants reported higher engagement when writing individually, with an average mean of 4.14 using a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5. Participants reported interactive work at an average mean of 3.86. These are both much higher than the peer edited work, which had an average mean of 3.2, barely over the somewhat marker on the Likert-type scale. In all subcategories, participants reported higher engagement levels with interactive and individual written work than with peer-edited work. For motivation, students felt very motivated by the interactive and individual written work (means of 4.2 and 4.3), but much less motivated by the peer edited work. The pattern continues with enjoyment and learning as well. One surprise was that enjoyment was highest for individual work, even more than interactive written work. Learning was less dramatic between the three types of interaction, showing that despite being more motivated by and enjoying individual and interactive written work more, learning occurred from all three instructional strategies. Figure 4 shows the overall comparison between the three peer interaction methods. Figure 5 shows the breakdown between subcategories of engagement.

Figure 4

Written Prompt: Peer Interaction Summary Results

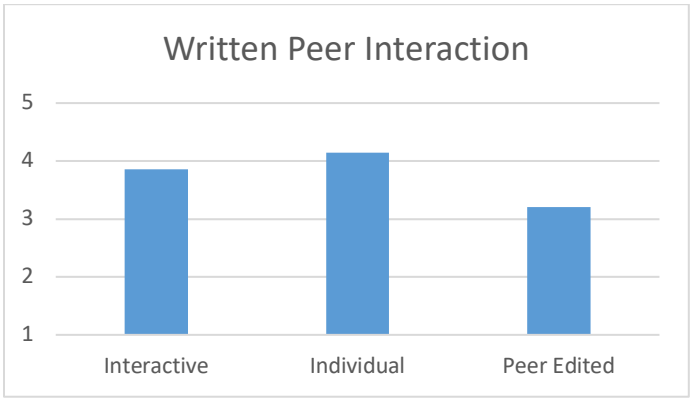
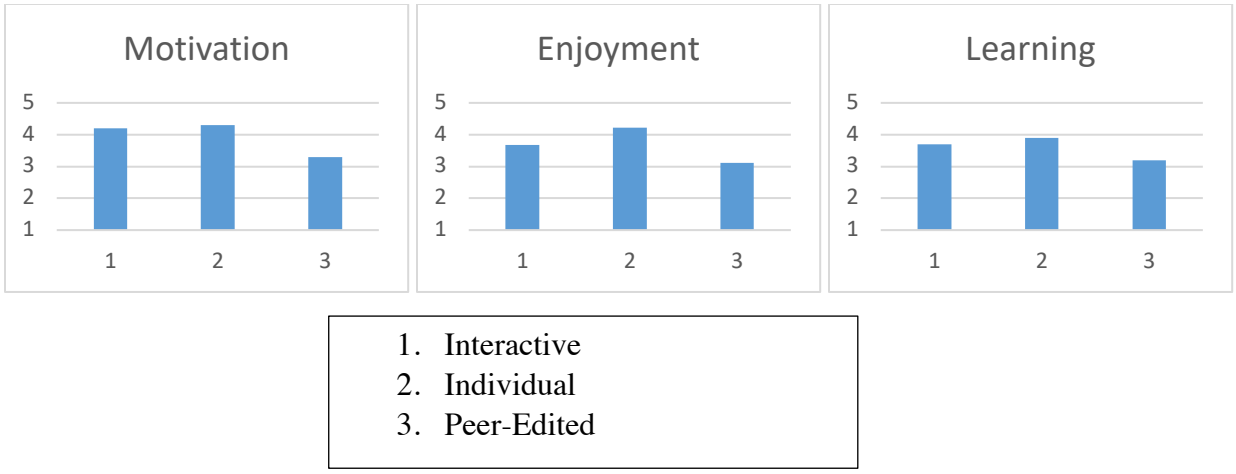


Figure 5

Written Prompt: Peer Interaction Engagement Breakdown



Peer Interaction During Written Work Qualitative Results.

Student participants shared a variety of opinions on peer interaction during written work. Two participants mentioned how they like to work with other people and find it beneficial. One participant mentioned how they like working alone no matter what. Another participant mentioned liking a variety, so preferring that they had various experiences during the course. The most popular answer for the qualitative section on this question was that it depends on the

partner. One participant explained that he/she has had good partners for collaborative writing and bad partners. He/she said that their last partner had not done the preparatory work so they had to re-explain everything to them, which wasted the participant's time. One theme in this section is that participants would much rather work alone than with an unprepared or disengaged partner.

Research Question 3: Which tools, or qualities of tools, are most effective in increasing students' self-reported participation in written work? (Comparing Zoom chat, Jamboard, and Gimkit Ink for writing activities.)

Written Tools Explanation.

For written work in a synchronous, online foreign language course, it is important to find effective online tools that allow students to write individually or collaboratively. Although the three compared tools in this set are similar, they have different features and engage students in different ways. The three tools are the Zoom chat feature, Jamboard, and Gimkit Ink.

First, the Zoom chat feature is accessible on Zoom, where the synchronous class meets. This is a public chat, so the entire class is able to see what is typed. There are not many features, but the accessibility during class and the fact that the instructor and all students are seeing it is a benefit.

Jamboard is a Google tool that is used for collaborative written work. This is similar to Padlet, Microsoft's Whiteboard, Mural and Ziteboard. Jamboard is used in this study as an example of an interactive whiteboard accessible to the class with a link shared by the instructor.

The third option in this set is Gimkit Ink. This is a paid subscription (by the instructor) and includes features such as publishing projects and presentations for the class.

The participants used the Zoom chat feature in class each session, usually for quick responses. Jamboard was used many times for a variety of written projects, some collaborative

and some individual. Gimkit Ink was used only twice during the course. The novelty of Gimkit compared to the other tools is a consideration when looking at the results of this research question.

Written Tools Results.

For the written tools comparative set, all three tools were comparable with Jamboard having the lowest average mean of 3.7 and Gimkit Ink having this highest with 4.07 on the Likert-type scale of 1 to 5. Participants were fairly equally motivated to learn with all three tools with means between 3.9 and 4.1 on the 5-point scale. There was a difference in the subcategories of enjoyment and benefit to learning. With enjoyment, participants enjoyed Gimkit the most, the Zoom chat feature second, and Jamboard the least. For benefit to learning, participants rated the Zoom chat feature highest, Gimkit second, and Jamboard the lowest. One limitation to this set is that this class has used Jamboard for many assignments and they may be apathy with that tool. An assumption is that participants see the Zoom chat feature as a benefit to learning because they receive more immediate feedback in the synchronous class when using this chat feature, since it is visible to all during the Zoom class. Figure 6 shows the overall comparison between the three peer interaction methods. Figure 7 shows the breakdown between subcategories of engagement.

Figure 6

Written Tools Summary Results

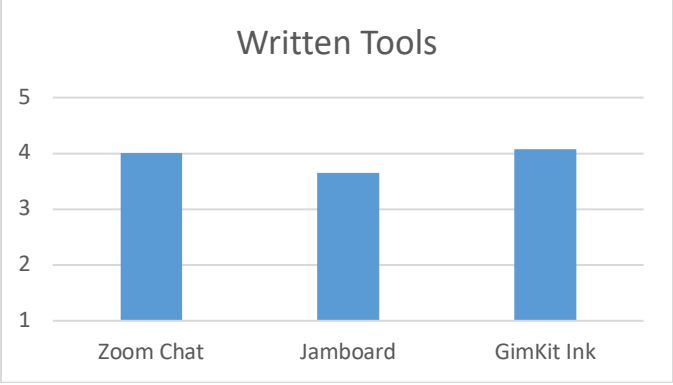
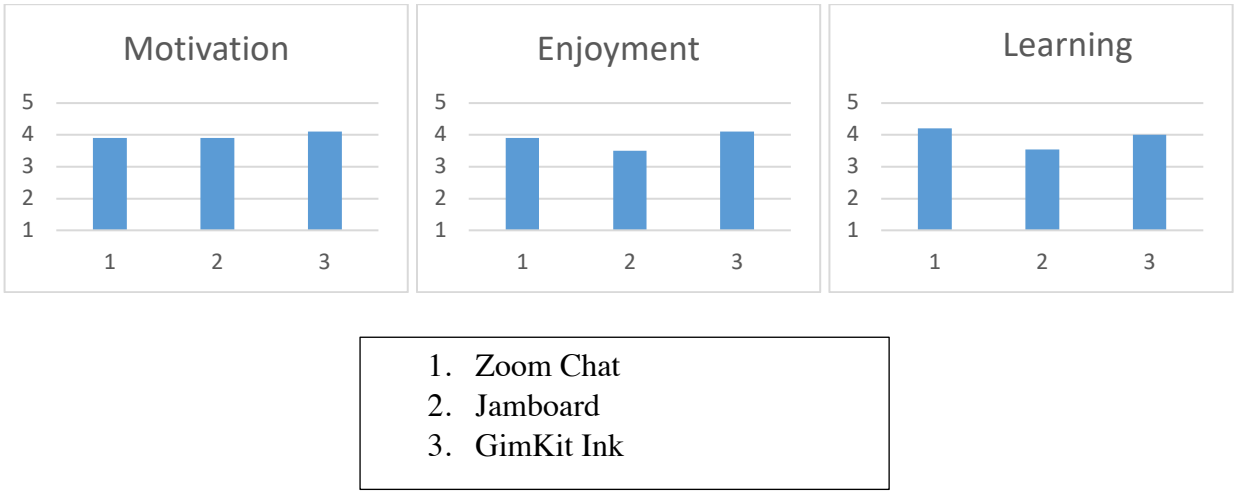


Figure 7

Written Tools Engagement Breakdown



Written Tools Qualitative Results.

Participants mentioned a variety of reasons for feeling engaged using the tools in the study. First, one participant said they like Jamboard, but did not give reasons. Three participants reported preferring the Zoom chat feature, both citing that the feedback is the fastest when using this tool. Three participants also explained that the enjoyed the features in Gimkit because it is the most engaging and fun. There were also four participants who did not have a specific tool that helped them the most. One participant explained that he/she was indifferent about the Zoom chat feature because it is stress inducing to have answers public, but there is also immediate feedback. Another participant explained, "I like writing in a place where it will be saved and where the professor will see it later. This gives me the most motivation to do my best!" The qualitative and quantitative results show that there are preferences for certain tools, or the general features of specific tools, but that students want instructor feedback and an ease of use to the tools used in class.

Research Question 4: What types of prompts lead to increased students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing open-ended, translation, dice rolling conversation, and A-B information gap activities for interpersonal spoken activities.)

Spoken Interpersonal Prompts Explanation.

Spoken, interpersonal communication in the target language is one of the largest goals in a foreign language classroom, yet it is a major source of anxiety for many beginning language learners. In a traditional class, an instructor can circulate listening to the spoken language of the students. However, in an online class, with students practicing together in breakout rooms, it is difficult for instructors to gage engagement and performance of students. The next set of research questions revolves around interpersonal, spoken conversations in the target language.

There are four prompts that are used in the comparative set for this research question. Finding a type of prompts that encourages students to participate and engage with their peers is an important task for foreign language teachers. Often students feel nervous about interpersonal communication in the target language, so creating engaging instructional prompts for spoken communication is paramount in foreign language education. All interpersonal spoken communicative activities are done in a Zoom breakout room with only the participants present, but with the instructor floating between rooms to answer questions. The first prompt in the comparative set was the open-ended prompt for spoken language production, such as conversing on the topic of what is worn in a variety of weathers. This type of prompt allows for language flexibility and creativity however, it provides the least amount of guidance. The next prompt type is spoken translation. This indicates exactly how the conversation will go, which provides little flexibility, but maximum clarity. An example of this is below.

Partner A: When it is raining, I wear (clothing item of choice). And you?

Partner B: Not me. When it is raining, I prefer to wear (different article of clothing). What do you wear when it is sunny and hot?

Partner A: In nice weather, I usually wear (clothing item).

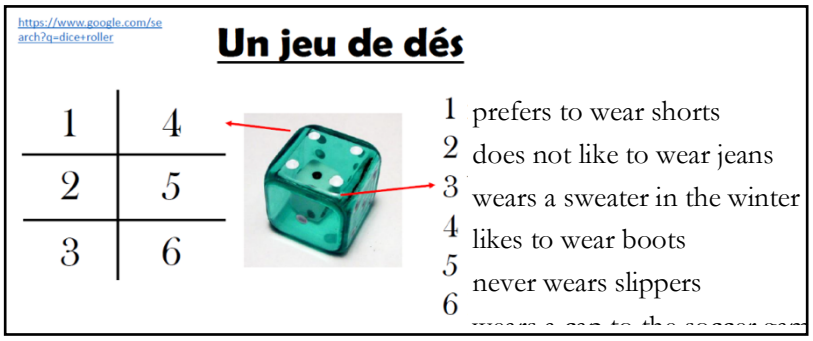
Partner B: Me too! I also wear (same clothing item as Partner A).

In this example, there is structure provided and some choice with the vocabulary topic that is being practiced.

The third conversation prompt is a dice rolling activity. Figure 8 shows an example of this type of instructional prompt where students would roll two virtual dice with the first indicating the subject of the sentence and the second indicating the predicate of the sentence. Students are familiar with the shape with numbers 1 to 6 on the left of Figure 8. The left column includes singular subjects while the right column includes plural subjects. The top row is first person voice; the middle row is second person voice; and, the bottom row is third person voice. The shape is frequently used in foreign language instruction. Therefore, if a student rolls a 2 with the first dice and a 6 with the second, they would say, "You wear a cap to the soccer game." This is particularly good for practicing subject-verb agreement. Students are encouraged to add expressions to make the activity feel like a conversation, such as, "Do you?"

Figure 8

Dice-Rolling Spoken Prompt Sample



The final prompt style in the spoken prompt comparative set is an A/B information gap activity seen in Figure 9. For this prompt, students are in breakout rooms together and one student would be Student A, the other Student B. They would each have only the document (found on the class LMS) that correlates to their letter. They would converse to find information that is missing from their chart. In this example, which is Claire's school schedule, student A would ask student B which class Claire has on Tuesday mornings, since that information is missing from their chart. Student B would respond that Claire has Spanish class at 9:00 on Tuesday mornings, then ask a question to student A.

Figure 9

A/B Information Gap Prompt Example

Student A:

	lundi	mardi	mercredi	jeudi	vendredi	samedi/ dimanche
matin	*cours de géographie, 10h30*				*étudier à la bibliothèque*	
midi	*resto U*	*resto U*		*resto U*		
après-midi			*étudier à la bibliothèque*			
soir		*préparer l'examen de géographie*	*écouter la radio*	*téléphoner à Cécile*	*retrouver des copains*	

Student B:

	lundi	mardi	mercredi	jeudi	vendredi	samedi/ dimanche
matin		*cours d'espagnol, 9h00*	*examen de géographie, 11h00*	*cours d'espagnol, 9h00*		
midi			*resto U*		*café avec Cécile*	
après-midi	*cours de sciences po, 2h00*	*regarder la télé*		*cours de droit international, 3h15*	*visiter Paris*	
soir	*dîner chez Sylvain et Marie*					

In all the instruction prompts, the goal is for students to create spoken interpersonal communication in the target language. Because breakout rooms are private, and the instructor can only be in one at a time, this research question aims to find which type of prompt is most engaging to students.

Spoken Interpersonal Prompts Results.

For the set comparing engagement during spoken work based on instructional prompts, spoken translation was the most engaging, with an average mean of 4.14 on the Likert scale, according to participant surveys. Participants reported higher levels of motivation, with a mean

of 4.3 compared with the next highest, open-ended prompts, at 3.75 on the scale. Participants found all prompts less enjoyable than they found them motivating and having a benefit to learning. This is not surprising since students often feel anxious about speaking in the target language to their peers. All subcategories of engagement followed the overall engagement pattern, with spoken translation being most engaging, motivating, enjoyable, and having the highest benefit to learning. The second, third, and fourth prompts were all close in scores, between average means of 3.5 and 3.65, with dice-rolling slightly higher than open-ended, which was slightly higher than the A/B information gap prompt.

Figure 10

Spoken Prompts Summary Results

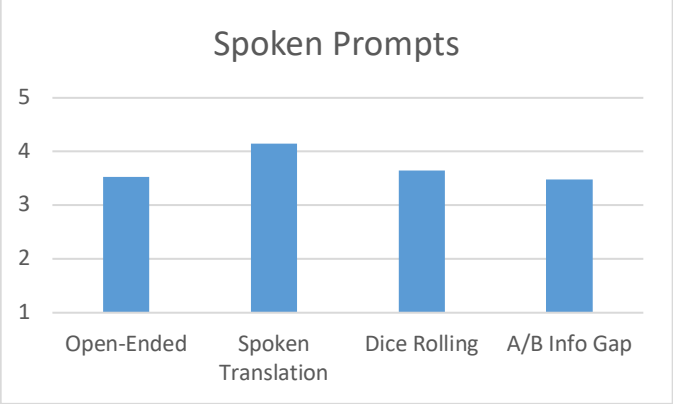
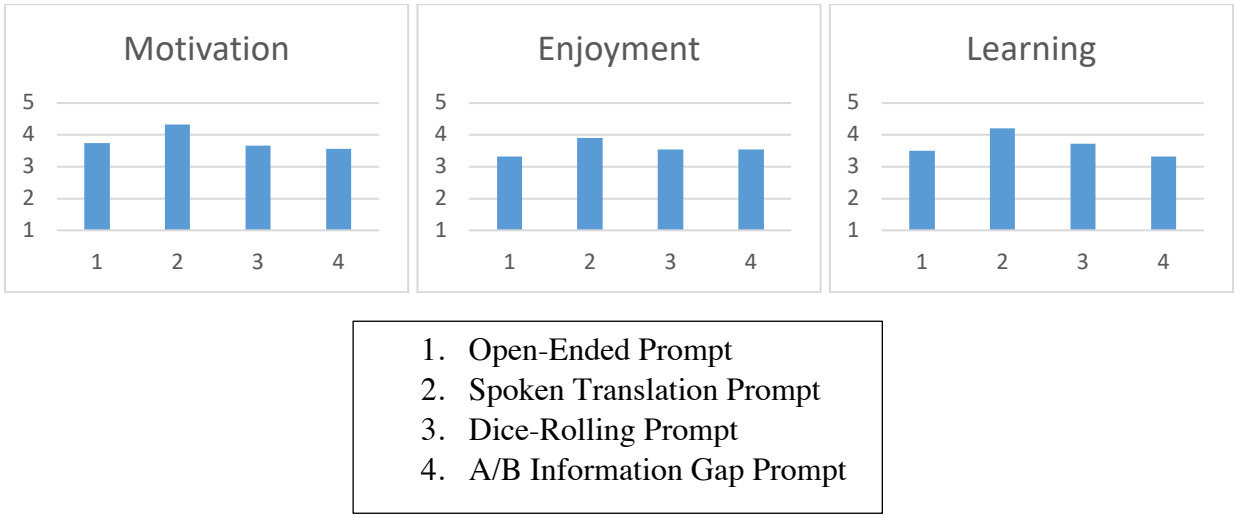


Figure 11

Spoken Prompts Engagement Breakdown



Spoken Interpersonal Prompts Qualitative Results.

Of the 19 research participants, 12 chose to respond to the qualitative question about spoken prompts. Two of the participants mentioned preferring the A/B activity prompt, two others preferred the open-ended prompt, three students preferred the translation prompt while three preferred the dice-rolling prompt, and two participants were indifferent to the spoken prompts.

After analyzing the responses, two themes emerged. First, students preferred prompts where there was a more clear and correct response, like in the translation and dice-rolling prompts. One participant mentioned liking when they got "the answer correct". The second theme that emerged was the difficulty of spoken interpersonal communication in general. Two participants said they were motivated by the spoken prompts in general because they knew they needed the most practice in this area. One said he/she did not enjoy any spoken prompts because of trouble understanding peers' speaking French and being understood by his/her peers. Overall, qualitative responses were varied on the most engaging instructional prompt for spoken

interpersonal communication, which shows that a variety of prompts is the most effective way to reach diverse learning needs.

Research Question 5: How much does instructor visibility and availability increase students' self-reported oral participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing intermittent instructor arrival, instructor available to join upon request, option for students to re-join the main room to see instructor, or instructor available by chat feature during interpersonal spoken activities.)

Instructor Visibility During Spoken Work Explanation.

In an online, synchronous class, instructor visibility is important so that students can have their questions answered and the instructor can check for understanding. In a Zoom online class when students are in breakout rooms, if the instructor is in the main meeting room he/she cannot see and hear what is happening in the breakout rooms. This has benefits and risks to student engagement and activity completion. The benefit is that the students know they cannot be seen and heard by others. They also know they are not recorded, which takes pressure off. The risk is that they are not completing the task or participating in the activity. Stemming from a genuine interest in finding out how students want the instructor to engage with students in a breakout room, this research question compares four instructor visibility and communication options.

1. Intermittent arrival into the breakout rooms by the instructor, which is unannounced.
2. The instructor is available to join the breakout room by student request.
3. Students re-enter the main meeting room to ask the instructor questions, and the instructor remains in the main meeting room.
4. The instructor is available to students via the Zoom chat feature.

Instructor Visibility During Spoken Work Results.

Participants preferred when the instructor joined the breakout room by request with an average mean of 4.2 on a 5 point Likert-type scale. They also rated the communication options of students re-entering the main meeting room to ask questions with an average mean of 4.2 and when the instructor is available by chat with an average mean of 4.4 out of 5 points.

The least engaging option was the communication, interaction and visibility option where the instructor intermittently arrived in the breakout rooms with an average mean of 3.5 on the 5 point Likert-type scale. With intermittent instructor arrival, participants saw the benefit to learning with a mean of 4, but did not enjoy this method (mean of 3.2) as much as other methods of instructor communication, interaction, and visibility. Interestingly, participants realized the benefit to learning of having the instructor present in any way, but did not enjoy this method as well. Re-entering the main meeting was slightly less preferable to participants, likely because of not having an efficient way to place students back into the breakout rooms after re-entry to the main meeting. Figure 12 shows the overall instructor visibility comparison and Figure 13 shows the separation of the engagement elements of motivation, enjoyment, and benefit to learning.

Figure 12

Instructor Visibility During Spoken Activities Summary Results

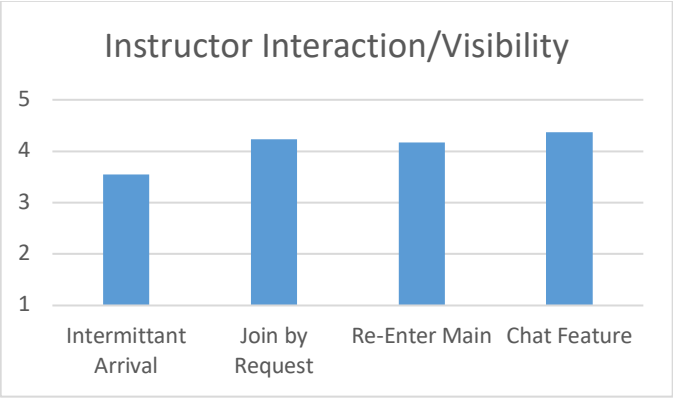
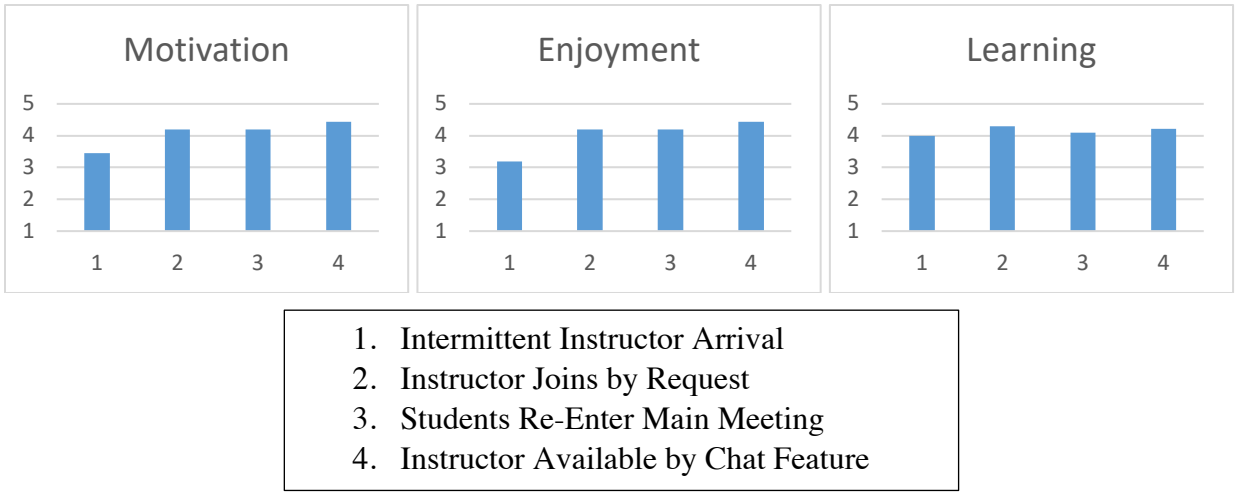


Figure 13

Instructor Visibility Engagement Breakdown



Instructor Visibility During Spoken Work Qualitative Results.

In the open-ended, qualitative question on the survey about instructor interaction and visibility, four participants discussed a preference for when the instructor arrives intermittently into the breakout room and three discussed a preference against it. One participant said,

> I think it is awkward when a professor enters a breakout room... but I also think it can refocus a conversation and give opportunities for asking questions that we otherwise might not have asked, I rarely use other ways to talk to a professor if they don't come into the breakout room.

This comment highlights the pros and cons that are present when an instructor arrives in a breakout room unexpectedly. Multiple participants mentioned feeling anxious or awkward when the instructor arrived. Other mentioned that it is good to have questions answered and it is motivating to be held accountable to do the spoken activity. Another participant wrote, "I think

that when she (the instructor) randomly pops into the breakout room it motivates me to not slack and actually do the work, so that I can ask questions and be more prepared." Overall, participants find it engaging and beneficial to have the instructor visible and available during spoken tasks, but there is a difference of opinion about unexpected arrivals into the breakout room.

Research Question 6: Does the addition of a written element increase students' self-reported spoken participation in breakout rooms? (Comparing no writing task and included writing task during interpersonal spoken activities.)

Written Element During Spoken Participation Explanation.

During an interpersonal, spoken communicative activity when students are in a breakout room, there are benefits and risks of adding a written element. When students can collaboratively write in a virtual space, they are able to brainstorm and work together on what they are going to say or how the conversation will be organized. However, often the task becomes primarily a written task, not a communicative spoken task if there is an option to write. Since French is not a phonetic language for English speakers, students tend to prefer written tasks to spoken tasks. This research question aims to discover if students are more or less engaged in spoken tasks when there is a written element.

Written Element During Spoken Participation Results.

Participants found it slightly more engaging to participate in an interpersonal spoken task with no written element, with a difference of average means of 4.1 compared to 3.9 on a 5 point Likert-type scale. Participants found spoken task engagement with and without a written element to be equally motivating, both at average means of 4.1. In the subcategory of enjoyment, participants found it slightly more enjoyable to not have a written element. In the subcategory of

benefit to learning, participants reported a more significant preference toward having no written element, with average means of 3.7 compared to 4.2. Figures 14 and 15 show these results.

Figure 14

Written Element During Spoken Activity Summary Results

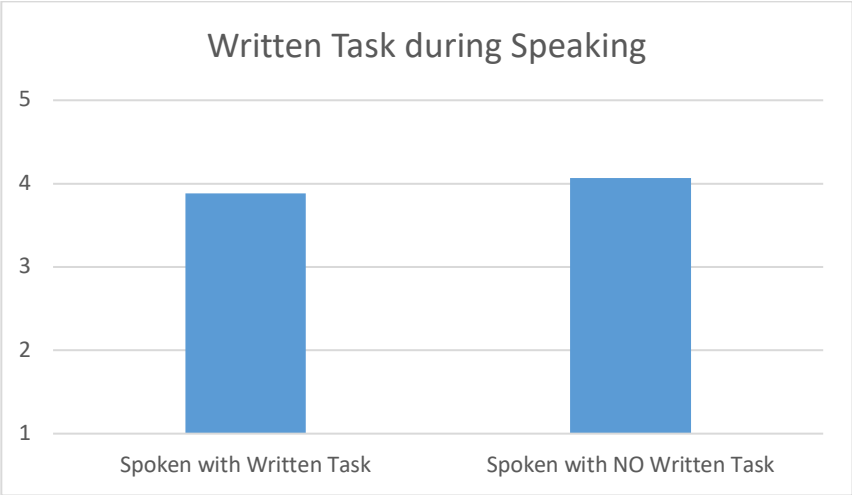
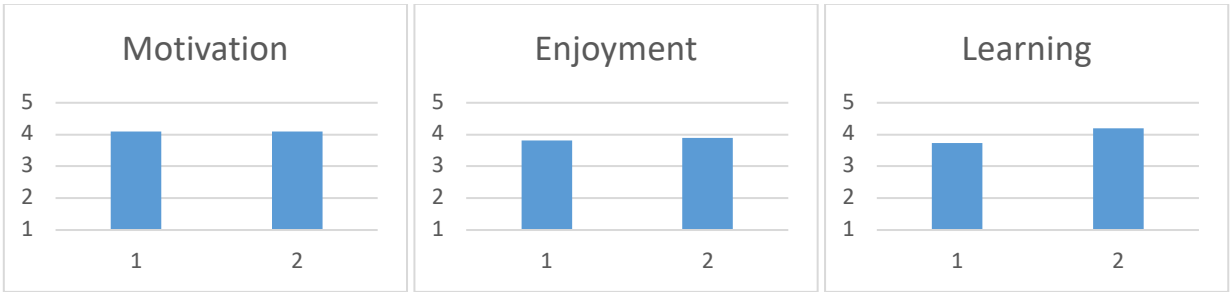


Figure 15

Written Element During Spoken Activity Engagement Breakdown



Written Element During Spoken Participation Qualitative Results.

Participants expressed preference toward writing during speaking activities. There was one major trend that emerged in these qualitative responses. Students found it easier and more concrete to organize their thoughts in writing. Two participants mentioned that it was easier to write in general, and the others mentioned it was easier to spot mistakes in writing than in speaking. One participant mentioned it is easier to understand written work of others than spoken work. Four participants mentioned that writing is a preferred mode of communication for organizing thoughts, such as seeing the subject-verb agreement and being able to play around with word order in writing. The preference was toward writing first, then presenting the responses orally. This is easier and more concrete for students, but it does not lead to true interpersonal communication. Reciting prepared language is the presentational mode of communication. However, in the novice levels, this type of support can be necessary to build confidence, which can lead to more spontaneous oral interpersonal communication.

Research Question 7: What types of interactions do students find most engaging for the audience and presenter? (Comparing video response and written response from the presenter and viewer perspectives for online peer presentations.)

Student Presentations Explanation.

When students present in a virtual space, such as Flipgrid, their peers are able to comment in the target language in writing or by video. From both the presenter and viewer perspectives, this research question set looked at how to best engage students in peer-peer feedback to an online audiovisual presentation. First, this study quantitatively compares video and written responses to student presentations. Second, this study qualitatively analyzes the most

engaging methods of responding to peer presentations from the perspective of the presenter and the perspective of the viewer.

Peer-Peer Interaction in Student Presentations Results.

The overall opinion of the participants was that written responses were slightly more engaging than video responses, with a difference of an average mean of 3.96 to 3.7. All subcategories indicate a similar pattern with participants reporting the benefit to learning higher than motivation and enjoyment for both written and video responses. Figures 16 and 17 show these results.

Figure 16

Peer Interaction During Student Presentation Summary Results

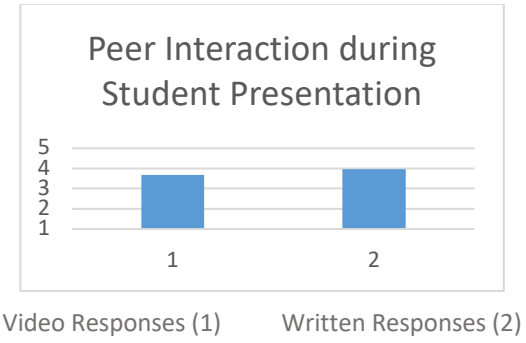
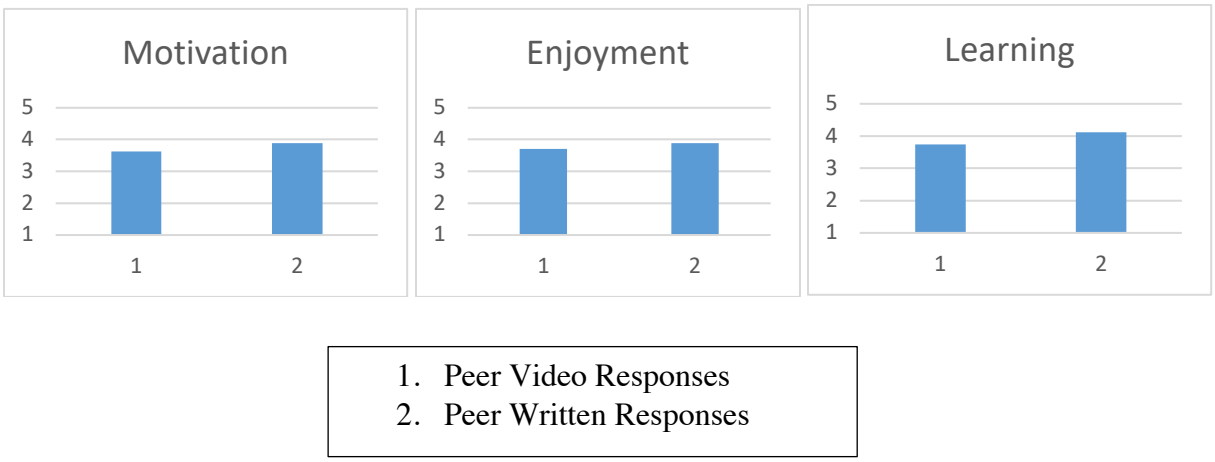


Figure 17

Peer Interaction During Student Presentation Engagement Breakdown



Peer-Peer Interaction in Student Presentations Qualitative Results.

In this final section of the overall research study I looked at peer responses to audiovisual student presentations. This was the only survey that included two open-ended qualitative questions, both of which asked for participants to identify the most beneficial format, length, and specificity of comments to student presentations. One survey question was from the perspective of the responding student and the other from the perspective of the presenter, which yielded similar results.

First, participants cited brevity as an important factor as both a presenter and a commenter. They said that keeping the comments short and to the point is helpful. Next, the theme of authenticity emerged through the commentary. One participant said, "While I like feedback, I would rather it be brief and authentic than exaggerated for a grade." Finally, participants found specificity toward the content to be important. Both presenters and commenters said they are more engaged when the comments are about a specific element in the presentation instead of general comments. In the qualitative responses from both perspectives of presenter and commenter, brevity, specificity, and authenticity were mentioned as important qualities in responses.

Participants disagreed in two areas. First, some participants preferred a video response to a video presentation and others preferred written comments. Those who preferred video responses felt more engagement between the presenter and commenter when there was a video response. Other students felt it was too anxiety-provoking to record a video response in response to a presentation. Another difference between presenter and commenter was on instructor specificity about comments. Some participants wanted a word minimum to make sure they met expectations, while others did not want to be limited in this way. One participant mentioned that

if the requirements for the responses were too specific, that takes away from the authenticity of the comment. A participant also mentioned that if the comments were not in the target language, it would be easier to be authentic and understood by the presenter. Overall, the feedback about student responses to peer presentations was varied and beneficial to foreign language instructors. Ultimately, a variety of formats and expectations would reach a large audience of students.

Validity/Trustworthiness

Since the instructional strategies used included a mixture of elements assessed, there is a question of element isolation and validity. For example, one activity might be a dice-rolling activity where the instructor was available by chat and there was no writing involved. In the next class the activity might be open-ended where the instructor arrived intermittently and there was a writing task associated. Whether or not the students could isolate and compare the prompts, instructor availability, and writing tasks associated was the question. If they preferred dice-rolling over an open-ended activity, did that create more enjoyment/motivation for the instructor available by chat or the lack of a writing element? The institution where this research was conducted was specific that their students were not guinea pigs and there was to be no control group in this study. If we know that active learning strategies work best for foreign language acquisition, there could be no traditional, non-active learning strategies present in the study. Considering this, it was not possible to isolate each element in repeated activities, although this would have yielded more valid results.

One additional concern for validity is that each instructional strategy was used with a different topic in class. Certain pieces of the content are naturally more engaging than others. Students enjoy discussing which fruits and vegetables they like or dislike more than they like using adverbs of frequency to describe how often they do homework. The specific content area

of each day could play in to their opinions of the instructional strategies assessed in this study based on their preferences, and the ease of conversation on some topics more than others.

Assumptions, Delimitations, Limitations

The following assumptions can be made regarding this research study: First, online classes will continue to remain popular post Covid-19 pandemic. Once, or if there is no fear of spreading illness, people will still choose to take classes online because of the flexibility of location and ease of access to the internet. Online spaces for synchronous classes will continue to have "breakout", or separate spaces where students can practice activities privately. World languages will continue to be taught online at the institution where this investigation took place.

As it pertains to the specific study, participants answered honestly. They took the test seriously and reflectively answered the survey questions. The students believed confidentiality would be upheld and that there were no consequences for not participating. They chose to participate mostly because of the benefit to the learning community. The minimal extra credit was not the only factor at hand with their decision to participate.

Significant limitations include the small number of participants and the lumping together of elements. Nineteen participants is not enough to make sweeping generalizations about teaching practices. Unfortunately, with only 24 students in that class, the pool of potential students was limited. Another limitation is that this study also took place at the end of the semester, so there was also some attrition that is seen toward the end of the semester. There were three students who stopped regularly attending.

As mentioned before, the IRB from my institution was specific that this study cannot look different than what I would do in the typical class. There could be no control group and the online class could not receive different instruction than the traditional courses of the same level.

There could have been more dramatic results comparing traditional learning activities to more interactive, active learning strategies, but there was no possibility of a control group. In order to test each element of the comparative sets, all other elements would have had to be static, but that would be too repetitive for the students, so each activity tested multiple elements. Participants were instructed to isolate the elements, but there is obvious influence if a prompt is easier or more engaging on the other elements.

Many decisions were made in preparation for this study. When applying for the doctoral program, I fixed my gaze on the contemporary topic of student engagement. I soon found that this is a broad term, but I always intended it as engaged with the content and learning goals. I began teaching one section both semester of 100-level French in a synchronous, online format because our college received a grant to be part of a consortium of universities who can have students take electives from other consortium colleges. My institution specializes in world languages, so this was a good fit. The college expressed their interest in advertising us as a language institute when the grant/consortium agreement was finished. French, German, Spanish, and Chinese all offer one section fully online in the first two semesters. I was trained in this teaching method in 2019, but soon found that I could not gauge engagement in this space. My first idea was to compare instructional strategies between the traditional and online learning environments as my dissertation topic. However, during the Covid-19 global pandemic I was unsure when/if we would return to classroom instruction, so I went to IRB with the notion to compare the strategies themselves in the online space. All decisions for this research study were intentional and made with a genuine interest in finding out more about student engagement in an online space.

I chose to examine three modes of communication: interpersonal speaking, writing, and presentational responses. This was a lofty goal, but I wanted this research to examine engagement in multiple areas. With speaking, I was most interested in the types of prompts participants found most engaging, but also wanted to add in how they found the instructor most helpful when they were in a separate space. With writing, I knew I wanted to look at prompts, but also if the students liked working together while writing. I was most undecided on incorporating writing tools, as I wanted this test to withstand some period of time. Specific online tools come and go quickly. For this area I was mostly concerned with the qualitative responses and looked at which aspects of the tools they found most helpful, rather than looking at the specific tool. How students best interact with each other's online presentations was the final question. This seems slightly unrelated, as it is more of an asynchronous question, but I liked the broad array of communication modes that were included with this question added.

There were other aspects I considered but that were not included in this study. First, to round out the modes of communication, including listening and reading compression would have been logical additions. However, I wanted this to be more about peer interaction, and those are more individual activities. I considered adding in questions about the "flipped" class all the way up to the Topic Proposal meeting with my committee. This is where students learn the basic tasks as their homework, then do the more complicated tasks in class. In math, they watch their instructor teach the lesson and do some practice questions as homework. Then in class, they work on their homework where the instructor is available to help. In my French courses, it is the same. In lieu of a textbook, students purchase language learning software and do basic modules as their homework. Then in class, we are able to do more complicated communicative activities. In theory, this works great. In practice, however, there is a wide variety of student preparation in

class each day. Some master the topic ahead of time, some look at it quickly, so they are familiar, and others do not open the modules. This creates a dilemma, as not all students are prepared for the communicative activities. I thought about incorporating this concept, as it pertains to student engagement, but decided against it because although it aligns with student engagement, I believe it would be a better stand-alone research project.

Ethical Concerns

Students were not obligated to participate in the study; they were invited. They were given class time to complete the seven surveys, and since all students have online work I could not tell who was completing the survey and who was not. I did not ask any questions in the surveys that would reveal any information about the participants. Surveys were administered and results were stored in Qualtrics software. I read a letter to the students explaining the goal of the study and describing the benefits to teaching and learning. The compensation was 15 extra credit points, which did not make much of a difference because there were more than 1,000 total points possible in the course that semester. Participants were all over the age of 18, so there was no parental permission necessary.

Discussion

The most surprising part of this Dissertation in Practice research was that there were not clear winners or losers for most of the research questions. By that I mean there was not one strategy that "won" or "lost" for most of the questions. While there were some identifiable preferences in the results, most of the instructional strategies assessed proved to be relatively engaging for students. Most results were between 3.5 and 4.25 on a 5 point Likert-type scale. I was expecting certain strategies to prevail as either very engaging or not engaging at all. I am

left, instead, with results that are more of a toolkit for engaging strategies to use in online courses.

One theme that emerged was that participants were not as motivated by more difficult tasks, but they understood that there was a bigger benefit to learning. Open-ended prompts in both speaking and writing were examples of this phenomena. Another research question where this emerges was on the topic of writing during a speaking task. Participants mentioned preferring writing over speaking in the target language, which is common at the novice level. However, they did not find that adding a writing element, usually a preparatory component to speaking, was beneficial to learning. Although more difficult, they found that there was a bigger benefit to learning, and engagement when there was no writing element during a spoken task. Those are two examples of students being more engaged by more difficult tasks.

Participants also mentioned a few strategies they found uncomfortable, thus less favorable or engaging. The first strategy was peer-editing. Students preferred working collaboratively or individually in written work and had noticeably lower engagement for peer-editing. They did not prefer to correct their peer's written work. The second strategy they disliked was when the instructor intermittently arrived in the breakout room during interpersonal spoken activities. They mentioned the arrival was awkward and/or anxiety evoking. Students in online courses do not prefer these abrupt instructional methods.

A final consideration for this study is participant apathy. Participants were at the end of the second semester of an introductory French course. They were accustomed to all the instructional strategies assessed in this study. The benefit of this was that they had many different examples of each strategy to draw on for their surveys. They were in the 10th unit of the curriculum out of 10. The class of potential participants often informally commented to me that

they were feeling apathetic about all classes at this point in the semester. Some even casually told me they would have rated these strategies higher earlier in the year. They were feeling burnt-out at the time of this study. Understanding participant apathy is a benefit to the overall research study. Most of the strategies assessed proved to be at least somewhat engaging, between 3.5 to 4.25 on the 5 point scale. If these results are skewed more negative than at a different point in the semester, the strategies are at least slightly more engaging than they statistically show. Instead of good and bad strategies, which is what I expected to find, this research study provides more of a toolkit of instructional strategies that are prompt student engagement in an online class.

Artifact 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF SOLUTION

Explanation of Final Product

Website Home Page Overview

Website link:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAFBFzM2Yos/EmJ1Bt1b4Rg94dw_lYobsg/view?website#4:home-page

For the final product, I created a website that serves as an interactive explanation of this research study. The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice was to find answers to my Problem of Practice and share the knowledge with others. When searching for the best ways to engage students in an online setting, I developed seven research questions, or comparative sets. The website's home page includes six header tiles that bring the viewer to a series of pages related to that topic. The header tiles are: Purpose, Literature Review, Research Questions, Methods, Results, and References.

I also included a welcome video introducing the viewer to the study and explaining the format of the website. The video explains that the website is primarily self-guided, but that there are videos embedded explaining each instructional strategy and each page of results.

Figure 18

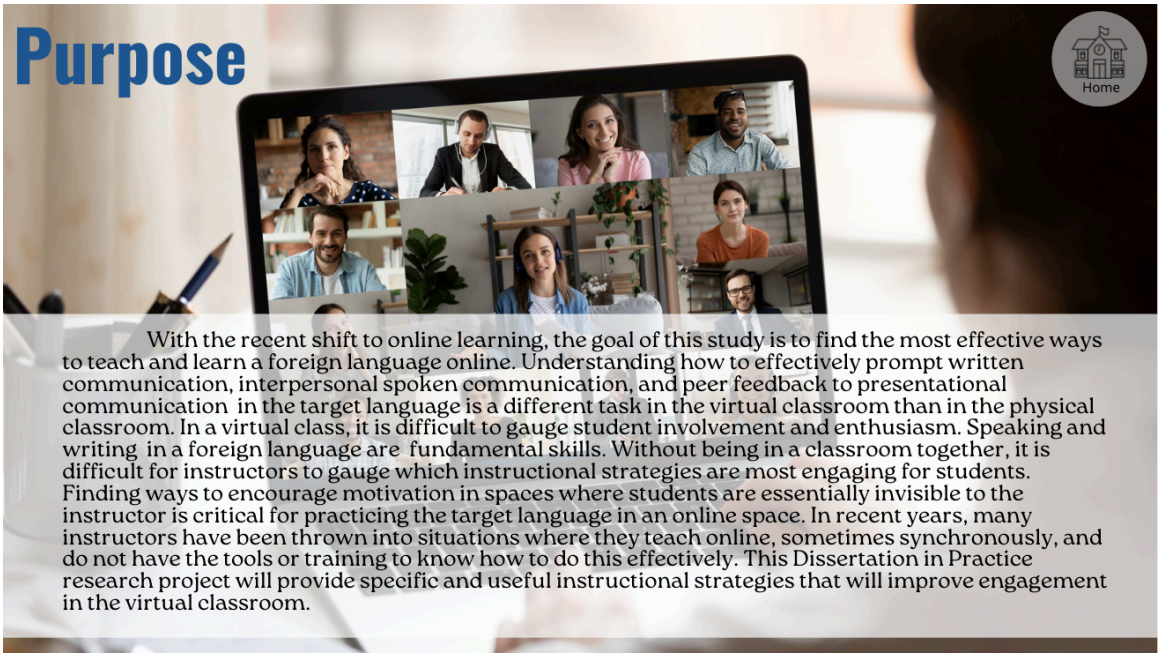
Website Home Page

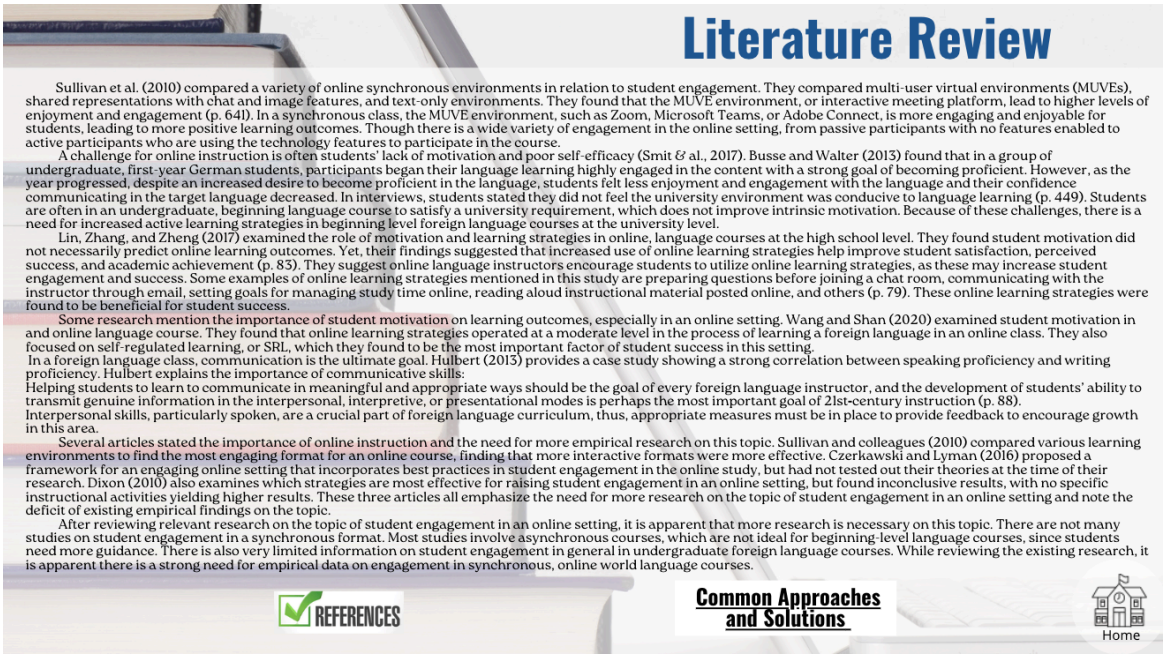
Purpose, Literature Review, Common Approaches and Solutions, and References Web Pages

Some of the pages on this website include information that is identical to the writings in this Dissertation in Practice. Those pages are: Purpose, Literature Review, Common Approaches and Solutions, and References.

Figure 19

Purpose, Literature Review, Common Approaches and Solutions, and References Web Pages





Common Approaches and Solutions

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is an organization providing extensive resources on language learning and best practices for language instructors (n.d.). They provide the following "5 Cs" as a framework for the foreign language standards: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. Their core practices include facilitating target language comprehensibility, guiding learners through interpreting authentic resources, designing oral interpersonal communication tasks, planning with backward design model, teaching grammar as concept and use in context, and providing appropriate oral feedback. Many of these core practices are important in multiple curricular areas and some are more specific to language instruction. According to ACTFL's Guiding Principles,

"Oral communication is at the heart of language learning. It is the vehicle through which learners build relationships and develop intercultural competence. Through oral interpersonal communication tasks, learners engage with language in a low-stakes environment in preparation for real-life interactions." Most active learning strategies done in foreign language classrooms revolve around oral communication. Creating level-appropriate opportunities for students to express themselves in the target language is paramount in foreign language instruction.

In the spring of 2020, ACTFL responded to the Novel Coronavirus pandemic with an emergency virtual conference to cover the topic of online, foreign language instruction. Presenters covered a wide range of topics, from technology integration to interpersonal communication in a digital environment. Lauren Rosen (2020) speaks about encouraging engagement by showing empathy and building rapport in this new space. She encourages instructors to refrain from 50-minute instructional time, with 15 to 20 minute sessions more effective in the synchronous setting. On the topic of spoken, interpersonal communication, Rosen explains that there are a variety of ways to continue communicative practice in the target language, such as breakout rooms in a virtual space, Skype calls, and much more. She advocates for the instructor to provide a topic for the students to discuss for a casual conversation. She also explains the use of A-B information gap activities, where Student A has a sheet (emailed or found on a LMS) that has different information than the sheet for Student B. The conversation between these two students includes questions and answers about information furnished or missing from their own document. An example may be about which foods members of a family are eating. Student A sees that grandpa is eating a steak, but cannot see what grandma is eating. Student B sees the opposite information and the conversation ensues. Information gap activities are common practices for foreign language acquisition in a traditional class and most communicative activities can be re-conceptualized for a virtual setting.

In one study, Czerkawski and Lyman (2016) present an instructional design framework to foster learner engagement in online learning. They describe that in the first phase, the instructor conducts a needs assessment and learner analysis to define instructional needs. The second phase is to defining instructional goals and objectives. The third phase is for developing learning environments by conducting formative assessments, developing interaction and collaboration strategies, designing online feedback, and selecting instructional resources. The fourth and final phase is to evaluate instructional effectiveness with a summative assessment (p. 535-537). This framework attempts to guide instructors through teaching in an online environment, however, it is vague and not specific to synchronous, online learners.

Despite the vast research on the topics of online learning and foreign language instruction, there are fewer applicable studies on online foreign language courses at the university level. The majority of research about online classes, pre-Covid-19 pandemic, pertains to asynchronous classes where students are accomplishing tasks online, but with no virtual, face-to-face instruction. ACFTL has many guiding principles, but none specific to the synchronous, online settings. There is little direct research on reviewing active learning strategies in a synchronous, online courses, particularly in the domain of foreign language education. Activities studied will include both instructor facilitated activities, as well as learner initiated activities or habits. This study will compare the efficacy of specific instructional strategies to engage students in this environment.

REFERENCES
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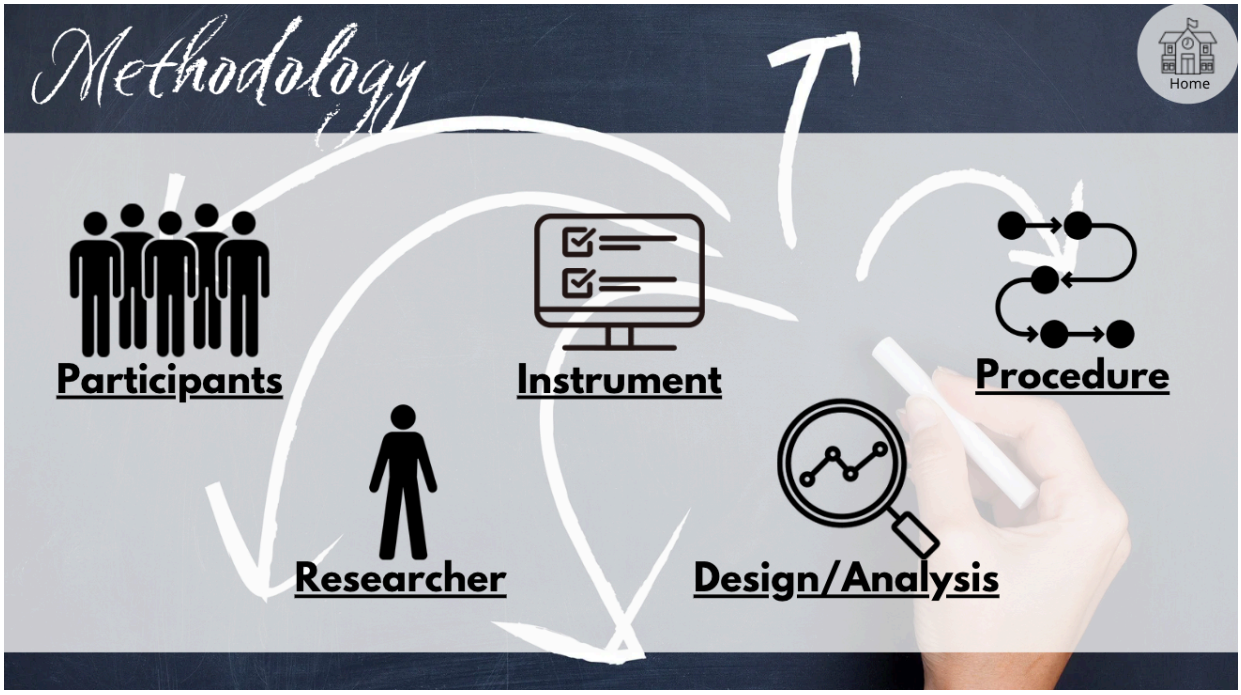
Methodology Web Pages

The methodology narrative is pulled from the writings in this Dissertation in Practice. It is separated into multiple web pages that include navigable links within that section.

Figure 20

Methodology Navigation, Participants, Researcher, Instrument, Design/Analysis, and Procedure Web Pages



Methodology

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Participants

Participants were students in 100-level French, the second semester of beginning French. Of the 24 enrolled students, 19, or 79% of those students chose to participate in this study. Participants attended a liberal arts college in the Midwest with a student population of nearly 2,000.

The student participants had either taken the previous semester of French in the fall semester or passed into the second semester of French based on an entrance exam from prior French class experience, usually high school courses. The instructor was the same for both semesters of 100-level French, so those who took the second semester, when this research was conducted, had rapport with the French professor and were familiar with the curriculum and online tools used. Students in the second semester of 100-level French intentionally enrolled in this fully online course. Because of the Coronavirus global pandemic, many traditional, face-to-face classes were forced into the online space. However, the 100-level French courses were intended to be fully online and the second semester fulfills the World Language Requirement, which is a requirement for all students at this institution.

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Researcher

I was the principal investigator and professor of the second semester of beginning French. I made it clear to the students that participation was completely voluntary, and participation would not be held against them. I also made it clear that I had no preconceived biases about the results of the study, and that this research was born from a genuine curiosity about which activities increase student engagement. Surveys were conducted during class time on the students' computers, and those who did not wish to participate were encouraged to work on the alternative assignments, which were online activities, so it would not be obvious who participated and who did not participate.

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In this study, students rated activities—engaging, enjoyable, beneficial for learning—after they occurred. Below is a sample survey question to assess the first sub-question of the research questions.

Instrument

For the written, open-ended paragraph prompt, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

For the written prompt of answering five specific questions, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

For the written prompt of filling in missing words, please respond:

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very much
How motivated were you to participate?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you enjoy the task?	1	2	3	4	5
How much did you learn from the task?	1	2	3	4	5

Please explain which prompt for written work you found most beneficial and why?

_____

_____

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Design/Analysis

The strategies applied for research were implemented for all students in the online section of the second semester of beginning French. All students in the course were invited to participate in the study and study participants completed the online surveys after various online activities. To assess strategies to encourage written engagement in the target language, students rated their engagement based on the specificity of the prompt, peer interaction during written work, and specific online writing tools, or qualities of the tools. To assess strategies to encourage spoken participation in French, students rated their engagement concerning the type of prompt, instructor visibility and availability, and the addition of a written element.

Finally, to assess best practices for peer-peer interaction in online student presentations, students rated their engagement for written and video responses to uploaded projects, both from the perspective of the presenter and the audience. There were not different groups (control vs. experimental) since all students were assured the best instruction possible, including innovative practices. Survey results were administered and analyzed using Qualtrics.com, an online survey tool. The Likert-type scales for each question provided quantitative data, whereas the open-ended survey questions provided qualitative data, thus providing rich data for this research study.

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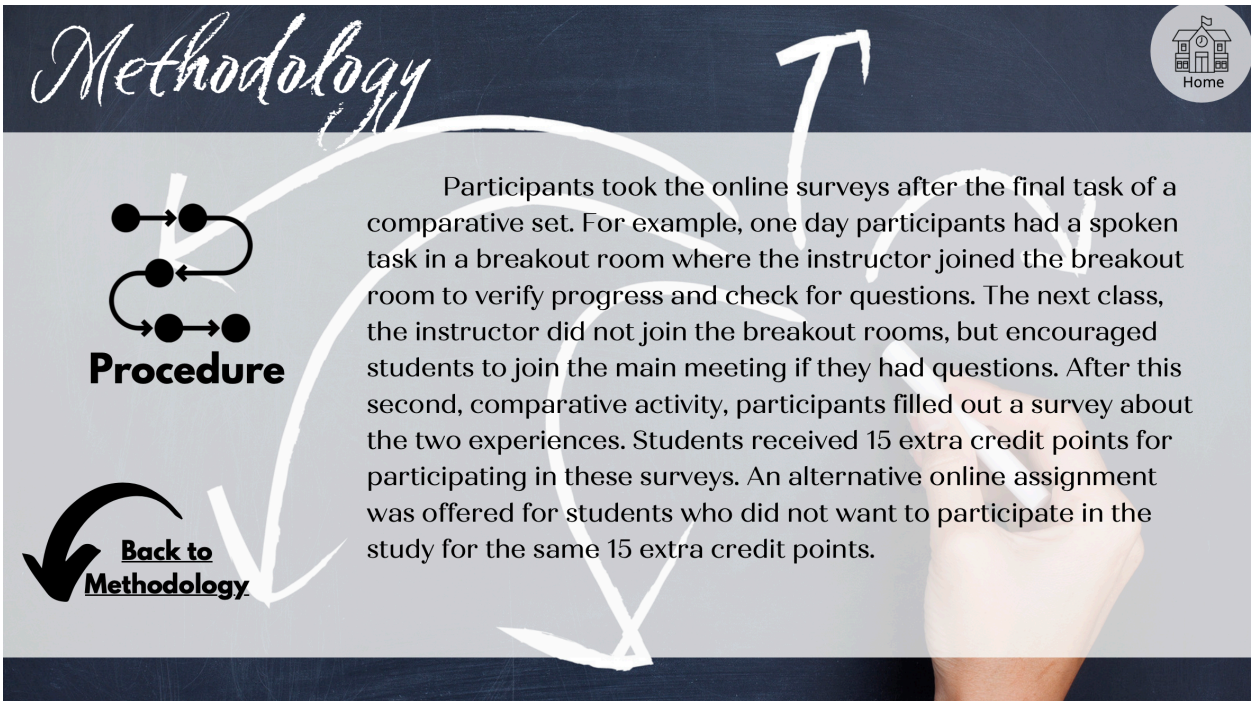


Research Questions and Results Web Pages

The research question section of the website is the most robust. First, there is one web page with the overarching research question and links to each of the three sub-topics: For Writing Activities (Q1-3), For Speaking Activities (Q4-6), and For Presentational Interaction (Q7). When the viewer clicks on one of those sub-topics, they are brought to a page with searchable research questions 1 to 3, 4 to 6, or 7. These pages lead to sets of web pages for each research question. Each of these comparative sets, one set per research question, has a different background color/texture. Each of the instructional strategy web pages includes a general definition of the instructional strategy, as well as a computer graphic that includes a graphic of the specific strategy that was used in this study and a video description of how it was used.

Each of the sets culminates to the "Results" page, which includes four histograms and a link to the qualitative results narrative. The four histograms for each research question include the overall histography showing overall engagement for each strategy assessed. Below, there are histograms showing the motivation, enjoyment, and benefit to learning. These can be interesting

to view, since some instructional strategies resulted in low enjoyment, but high benefit to learning. The nuances are discussed in the videos for each results page. A qualitative web page follows each histogram page and includes a narrative explaining predominant themes found in the open-ended, qualitative survey question at the end of each survey.

Figure 21

Overarching Research Question and Subtopic Navigation Web Page

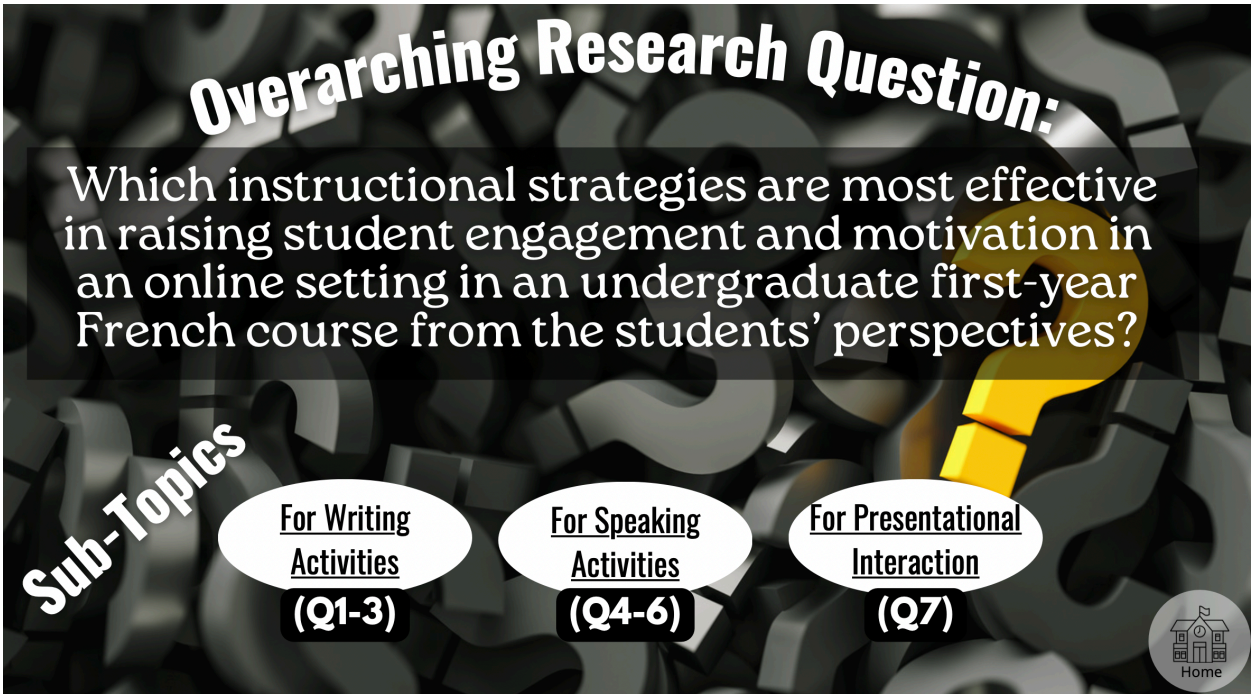


Figure 22

Research Questions on Writing Activities Navigation Web Page

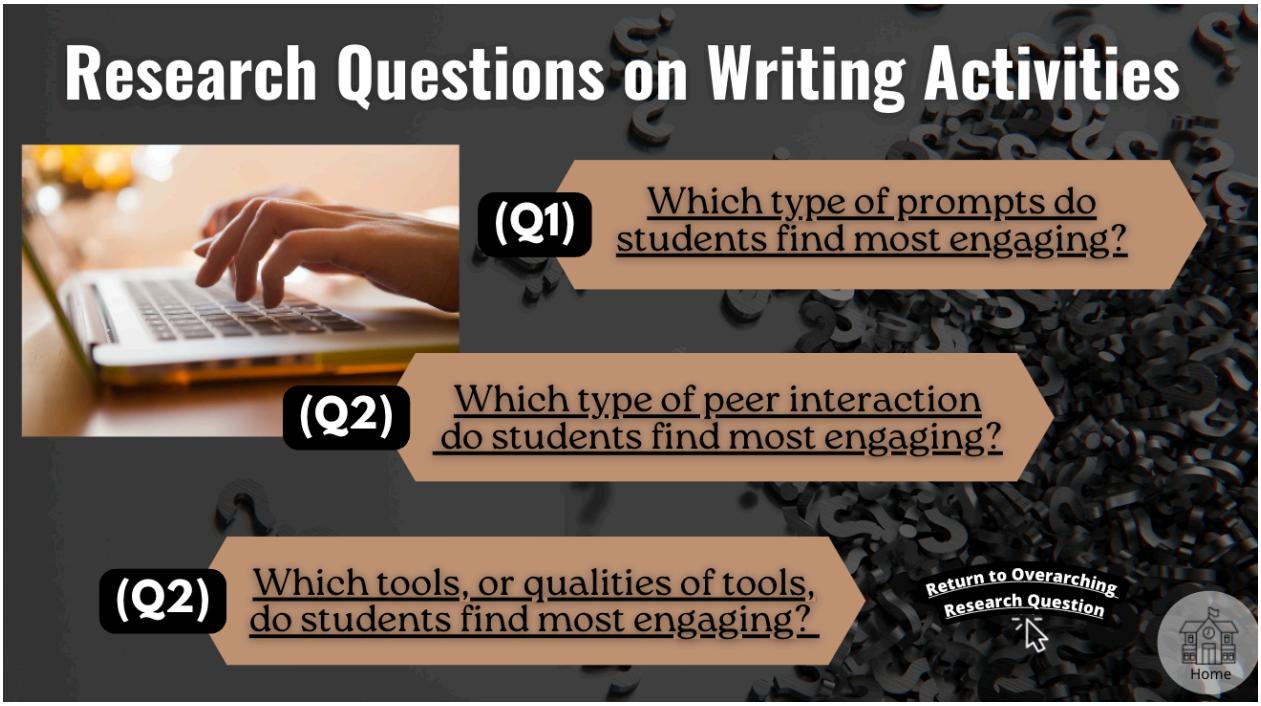
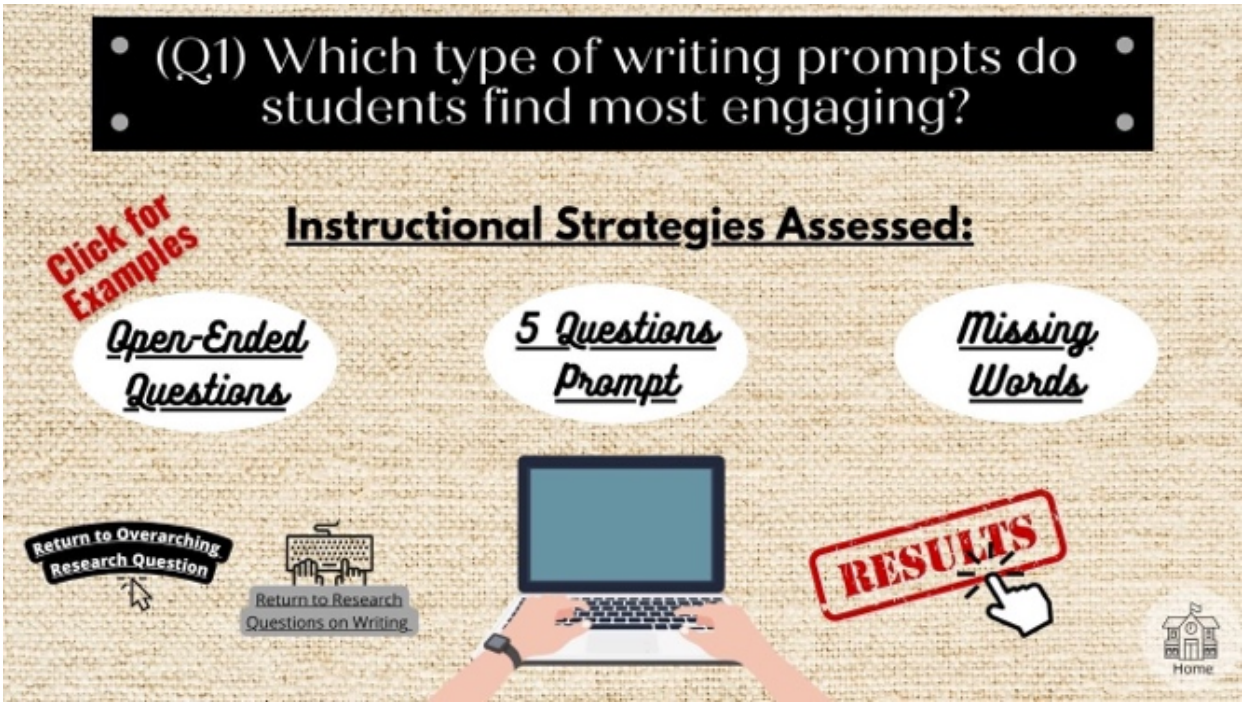
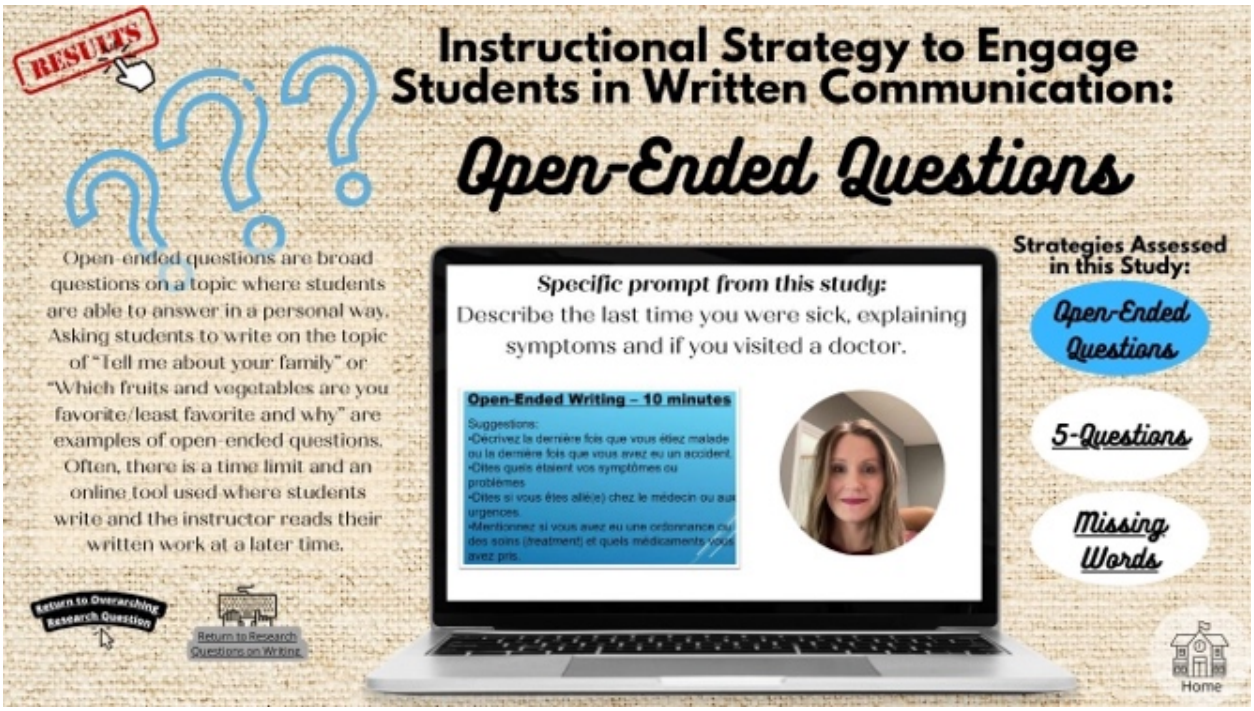
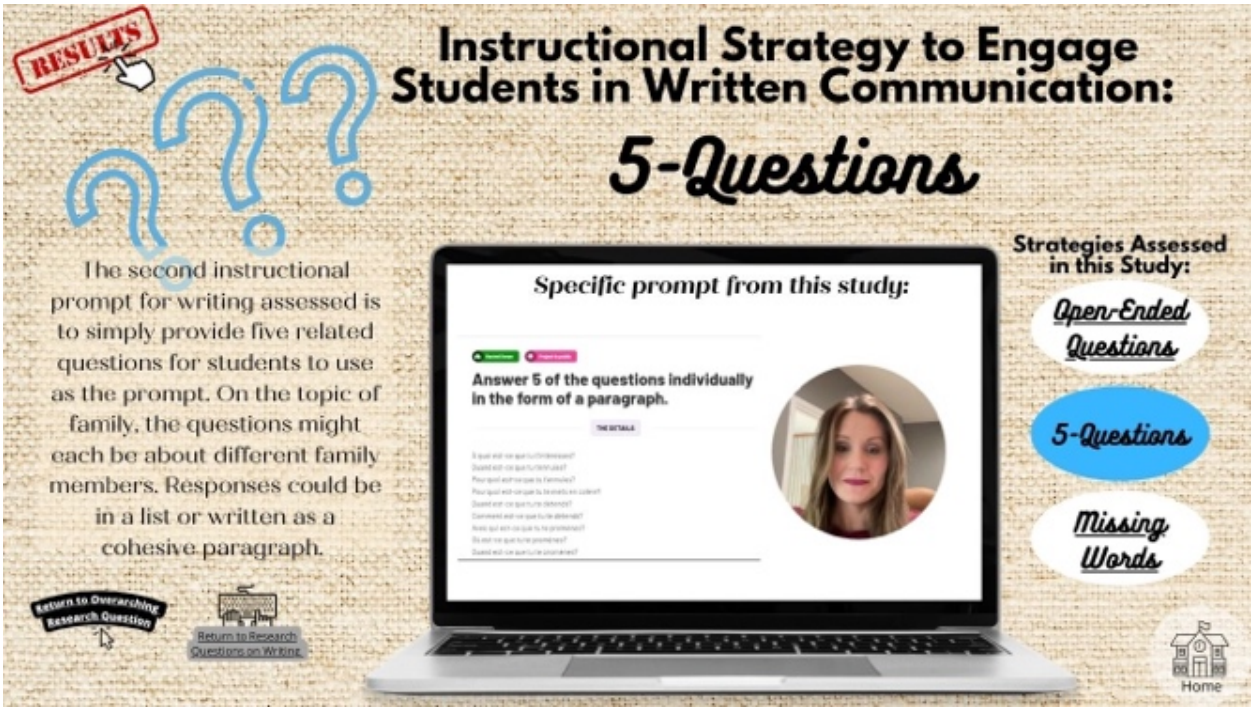


Figure 23

Q1 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages




RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:
Open-Ended Questions
Open-ended questions are broad questions on a topic where students are able to answer in a personal way. Asking students to write on the topic of "Tell me about your family" or "Which fruits and vegetables are you favorite/least favorite and why" are examples of open-ended questions. Often, there is a time limit and an online tool used where students write and the instructor reads their written work at a later time.
Specific prompt from this study:
Describe the last time you were sick, explaining symptoms and if you visited a doctor.
Open-Ended Writing – 10 minutes
Suggestions:
•Décrivez la dernière fois que vous étiez malade ou la dernière fois que vous avez eu un accident.
•Dites quels étaient vos symptômes ou problèmes.
•Dites si vous êtes allé(e) chez le médecin ou aux urgences.
•Mentionnez si vous avez eu une ordonnance ou des soins (treatment) et quels médicaments vous avez pris.
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Open-Ended Questions
5-Questions
Missing Words
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home


RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:
5-Questions
The second instructional prompt for writing assessed is to simply provide five related questions for students to use as the prompt. On the topic of family, the questions might each be about different family members. Responses could be in a list or written as a cohesive paragraph.
Specific prompt from this study:
Answer 5 of the questions individually in the form of a paragraph.
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Open-Ended Questions
5-Questions
Missing Words
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home

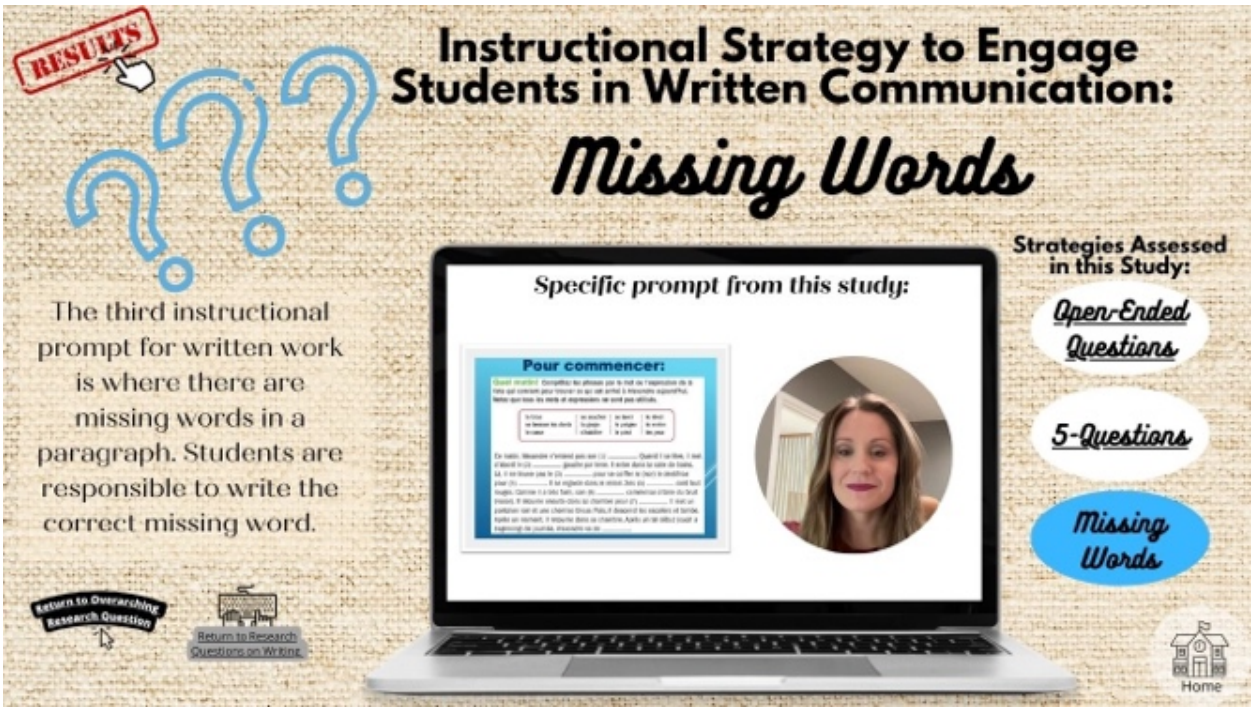
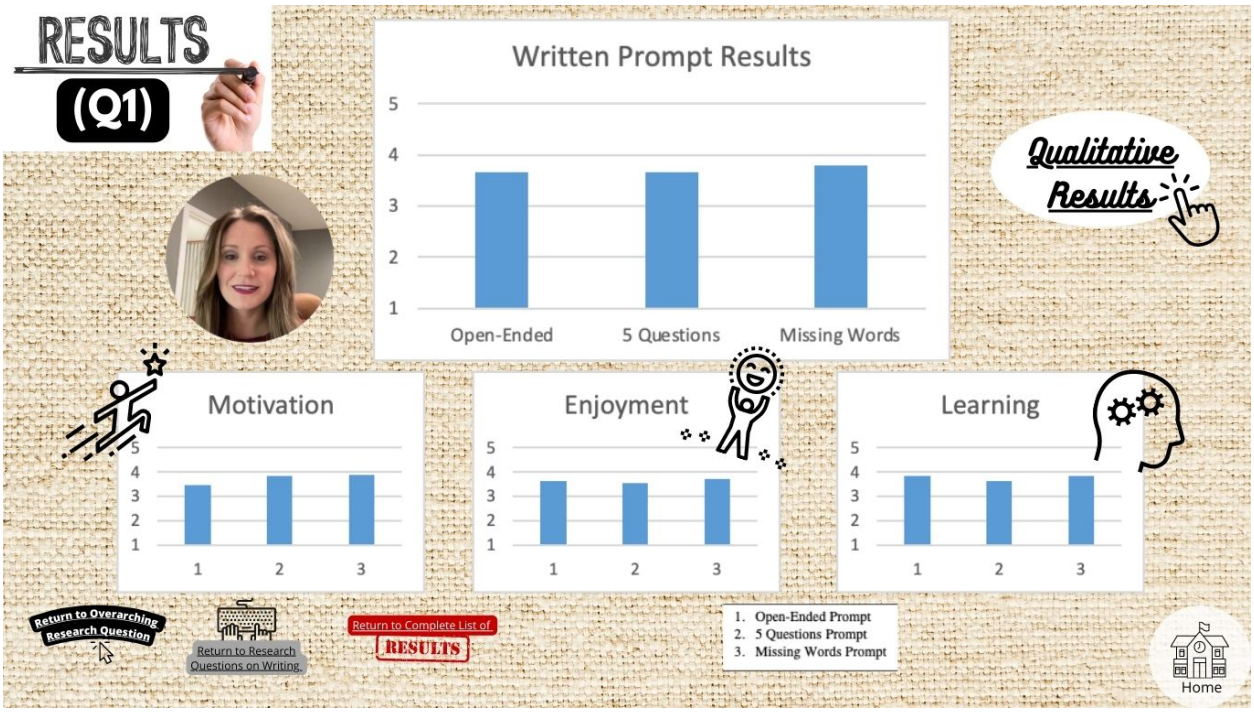


Figure 24

Q1 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



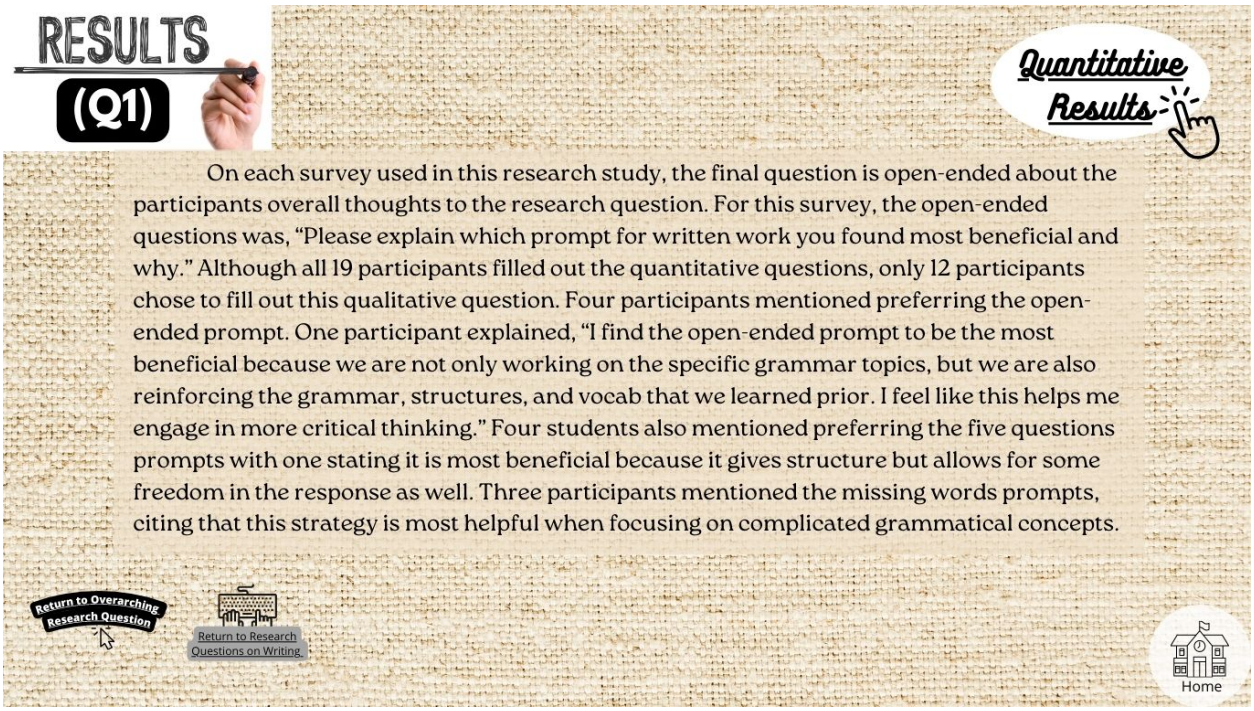
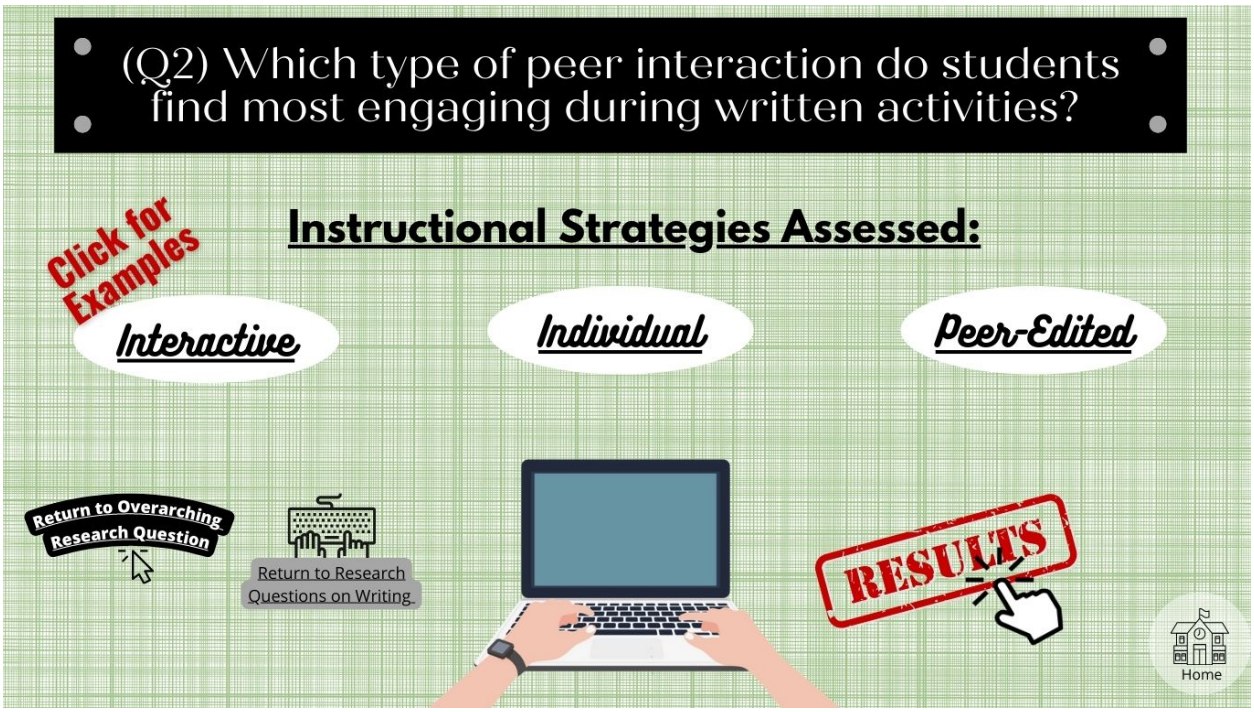


Figure 25

Q2 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages

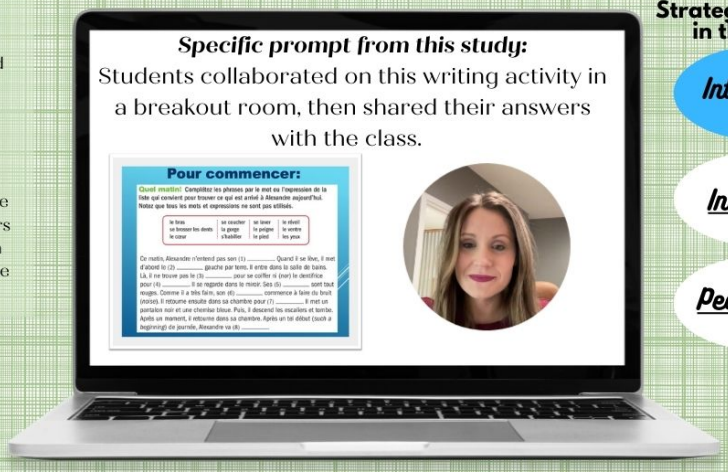


RESULTS

Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:

Interactive

In a synchronous, online class, students are often asked to collaborate on or peer edit written assignments. The goal of the second research question is to find which peer interaction instructional strategy increases motivation. For this study, the first option in the comparative set was interactive writing with a partner. Students were in breakout rooms with their partners and were collaborating on writing a paragraph in an online space that the instructor would see after class.



Strategies Assessed in this Study:

- *Interactive*
- *Individual*
- *Peer-Edited*

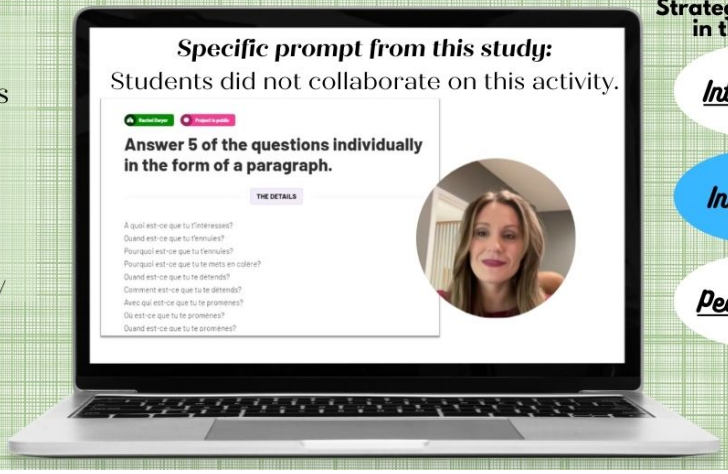
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home

RESULTS

Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:

Individual

The second option is individual work. This is typical of many traditional writing activities, where students do not collaborate in any way



Strategies Assessed in this Study:

- *Interactive*
- *Individual*
- *Peer-Edited*

Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home

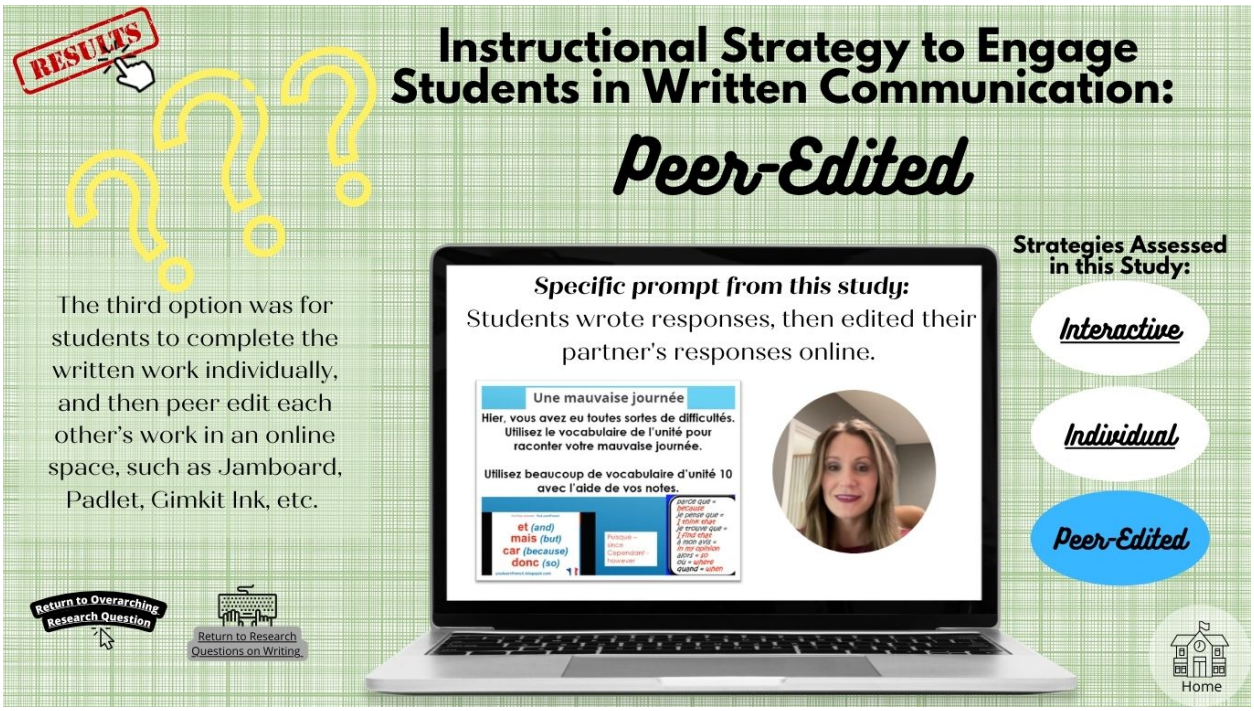
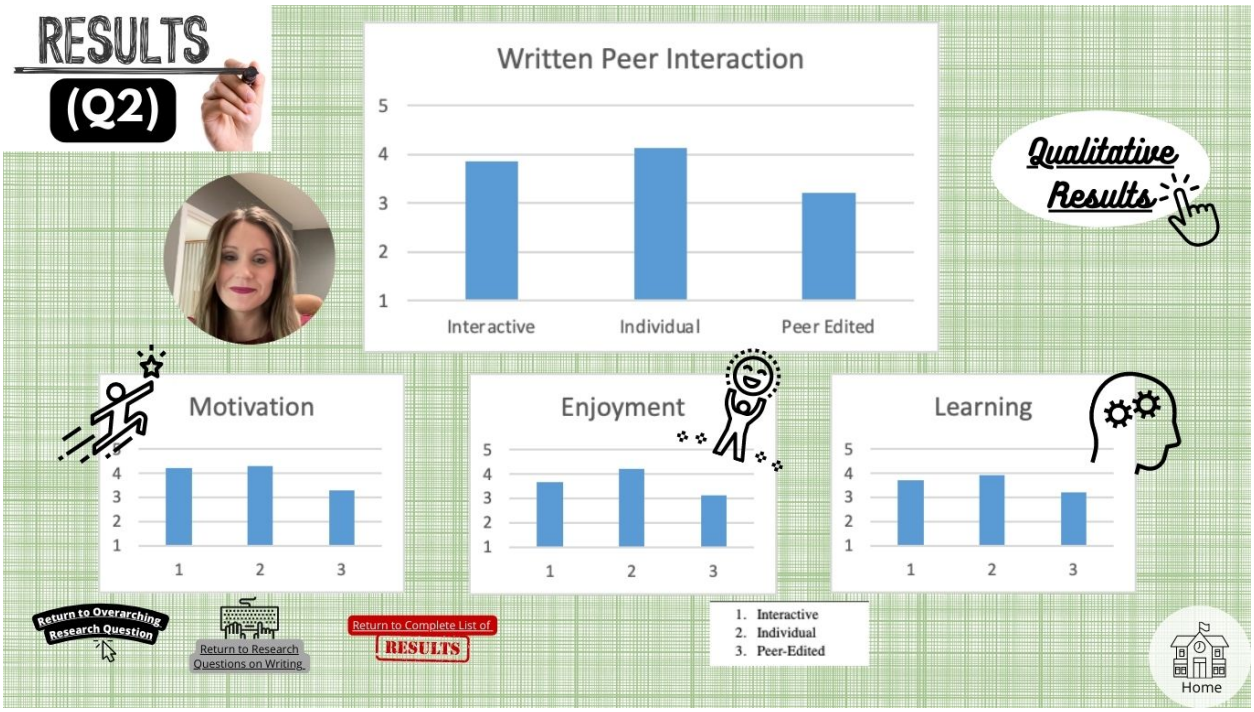


Figure 26

Q2 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



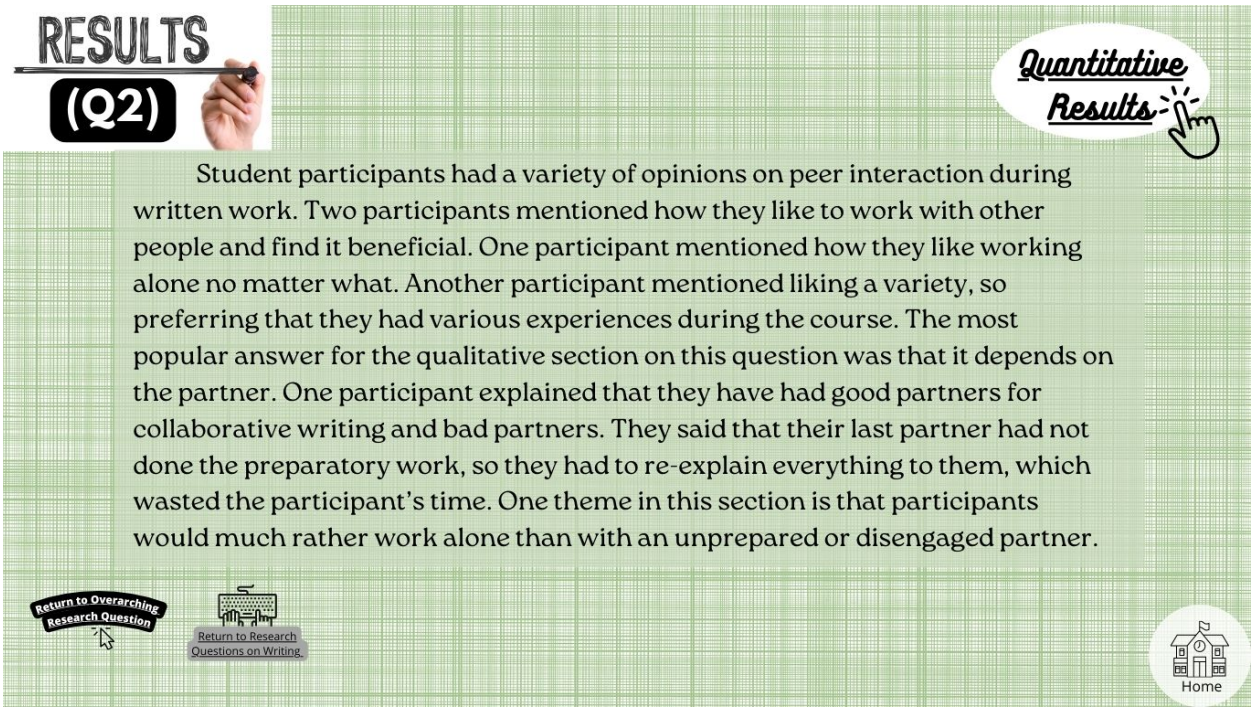
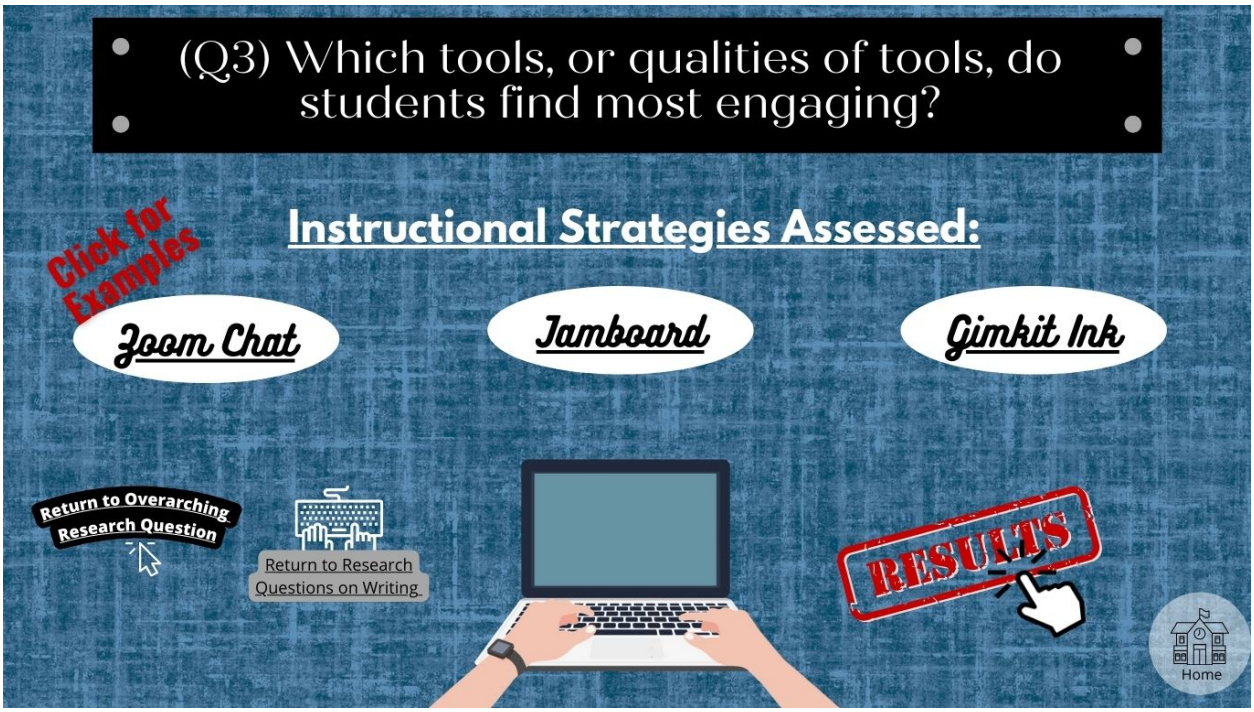
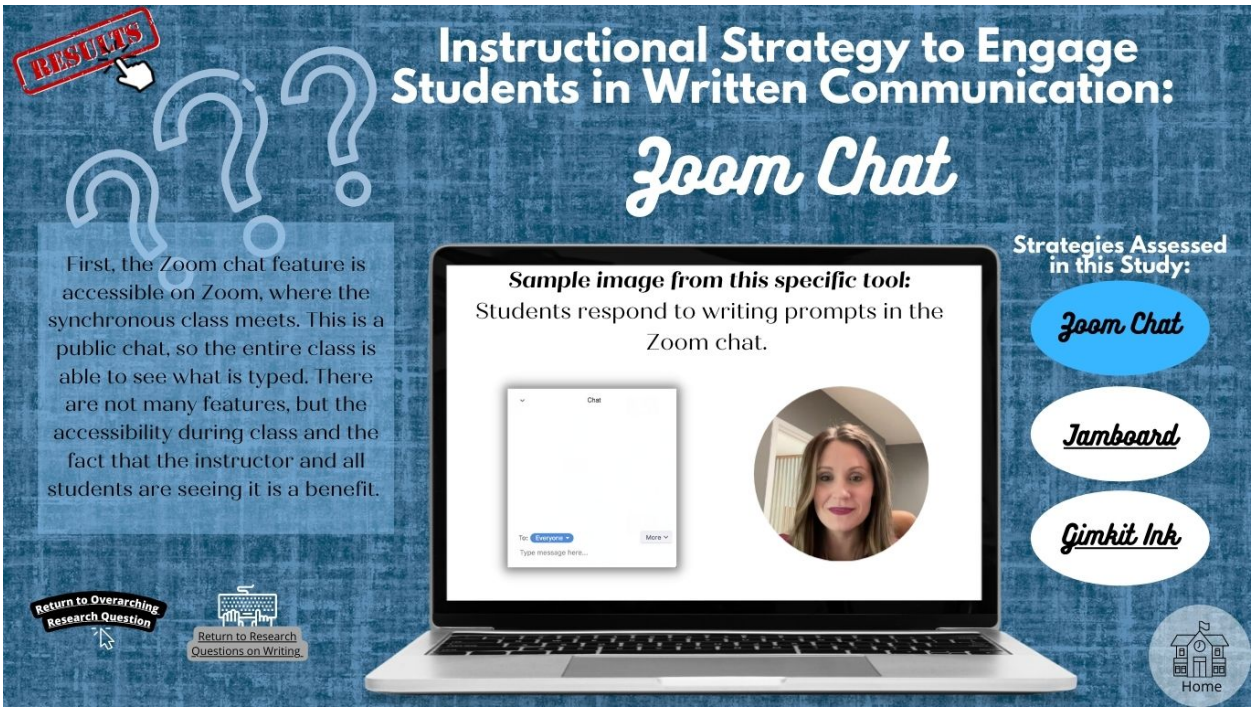
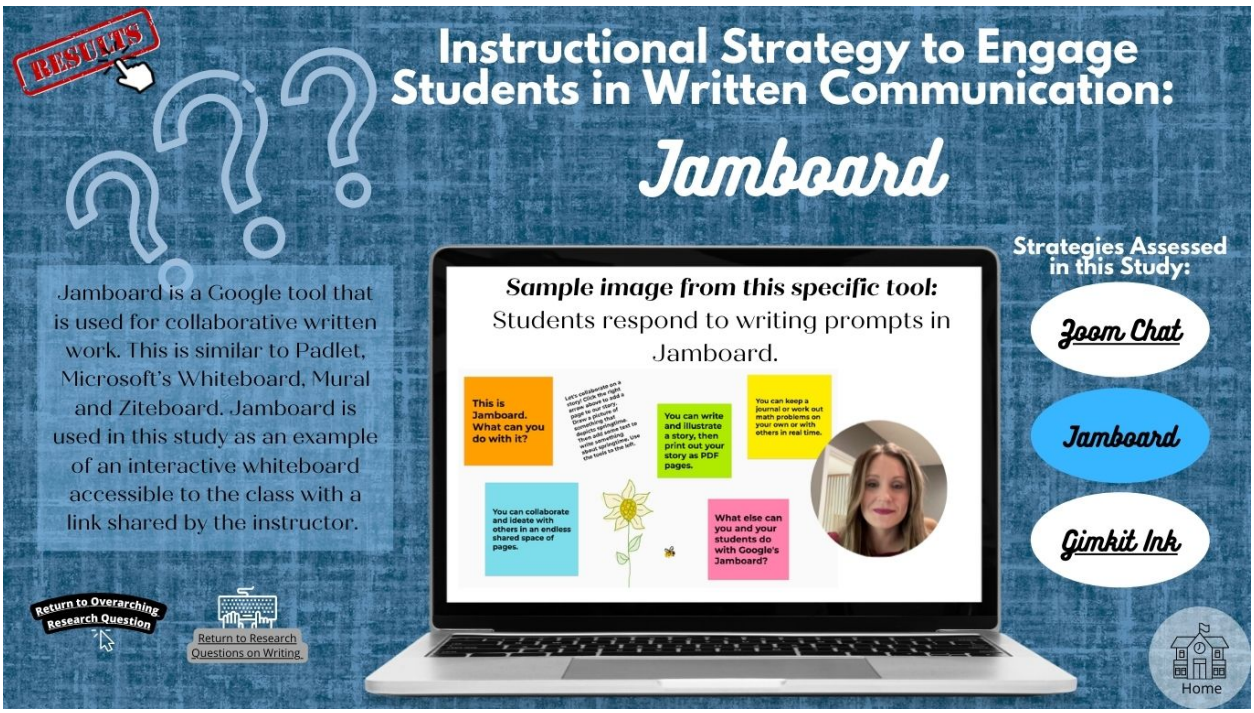


Figure 27

Q3 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages




RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:
Zoom Chat
First, the Zoom chat feature is accessible on Zoom, where the synchronous class meets. This is a public chat, so the entire class is able to see what is typed. There are not many features, but the accessibility during class and the fact that the instructor and all students are seeing it is a benefit.
Sample image from this specific tool:
Students respond to writing prompts in the Zoom chat.
Chat
To: Everyone
More
Type message here...
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Zoom Chat
Jamboard
Gimkit Ink
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home


RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Written Communication:
Jamboard
Jamboard is a Google tool that is used for collaborative written work. This is similar to Padlet, Microsoft's Whiteboard, Mural and Ziteboard. Jamboard is used in this study as an example of an interactive whiteboard accessible to the class with a link shared by the instructor.
Sample image from this specific tool:
Students respond to writing prompts in Jamboard.
This is Jamboard. What can you do with it?
You can write and illustrate a story, then print out your story as PDF pages.
You can keep a journal or work out math problems on your own or with others in real time.
You can collaborate and ideate with others in an endless shared space of pages.
What else can you and your students do with Google's Jamboard?
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Zoom Chat
Jamboard
Gimkit Ink
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions on Writing
Home

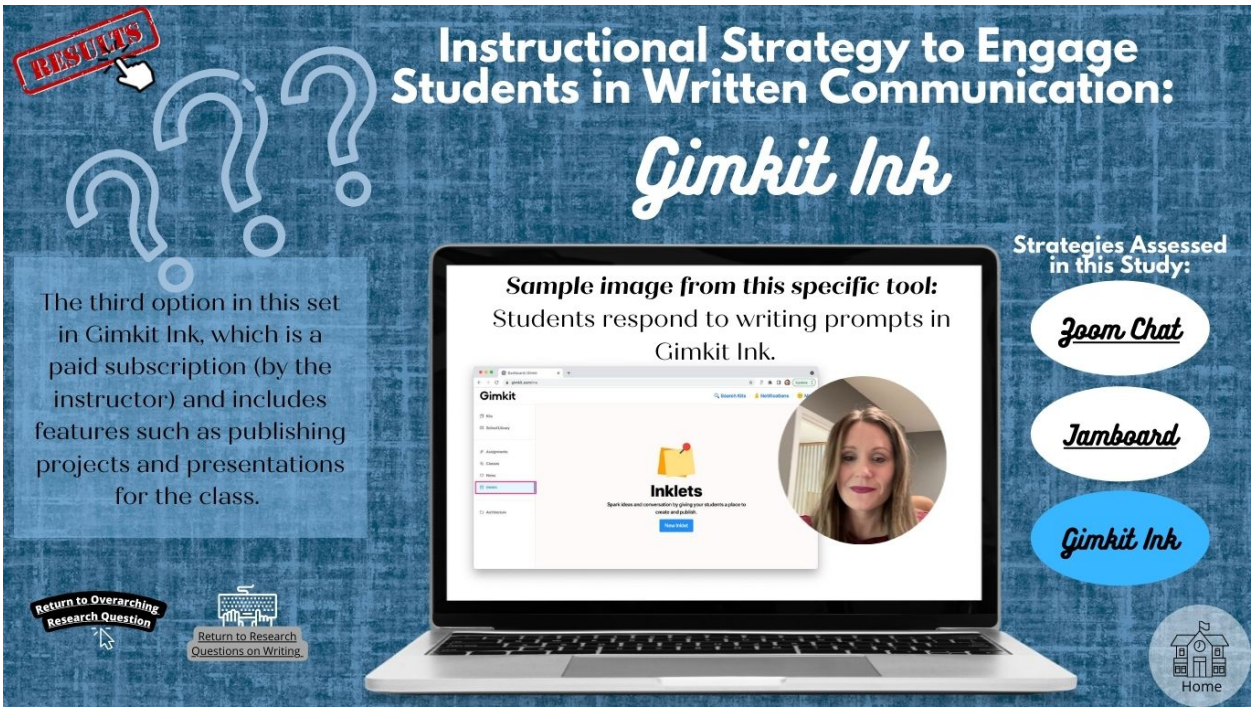
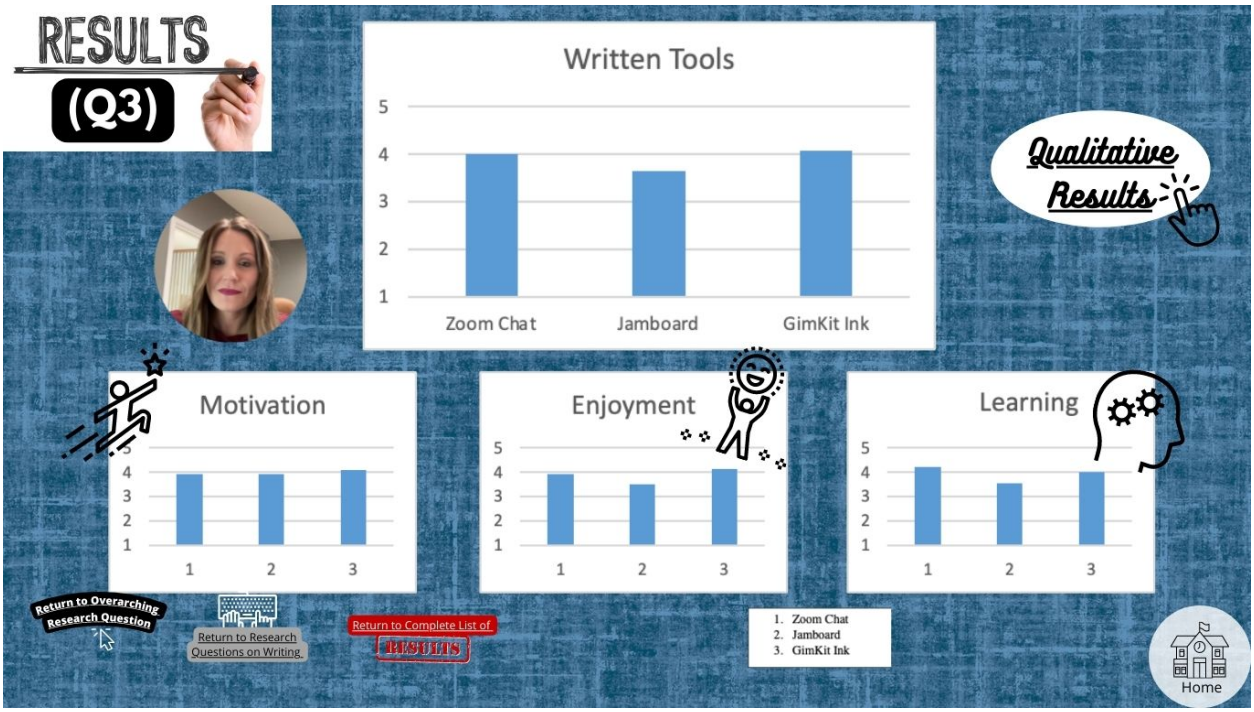


Figure 28

Q3 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



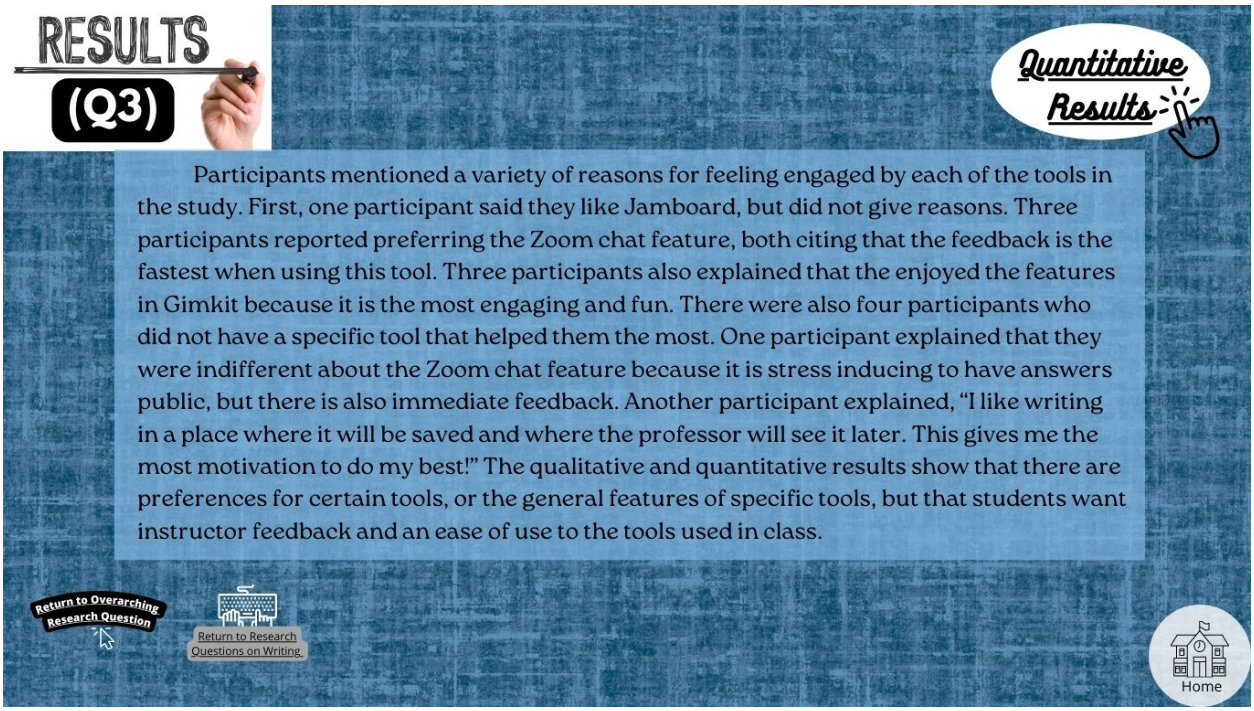


Figure 29

Research Questions on Speaking Activities Navigation Web Page

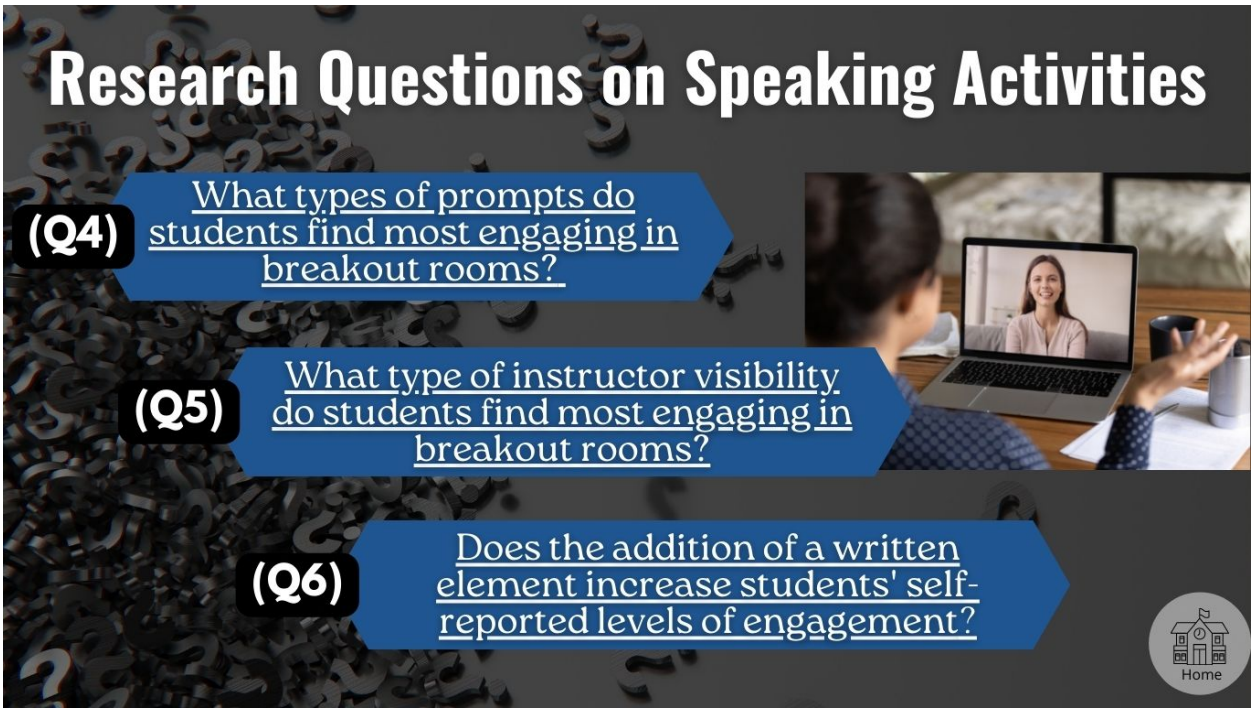
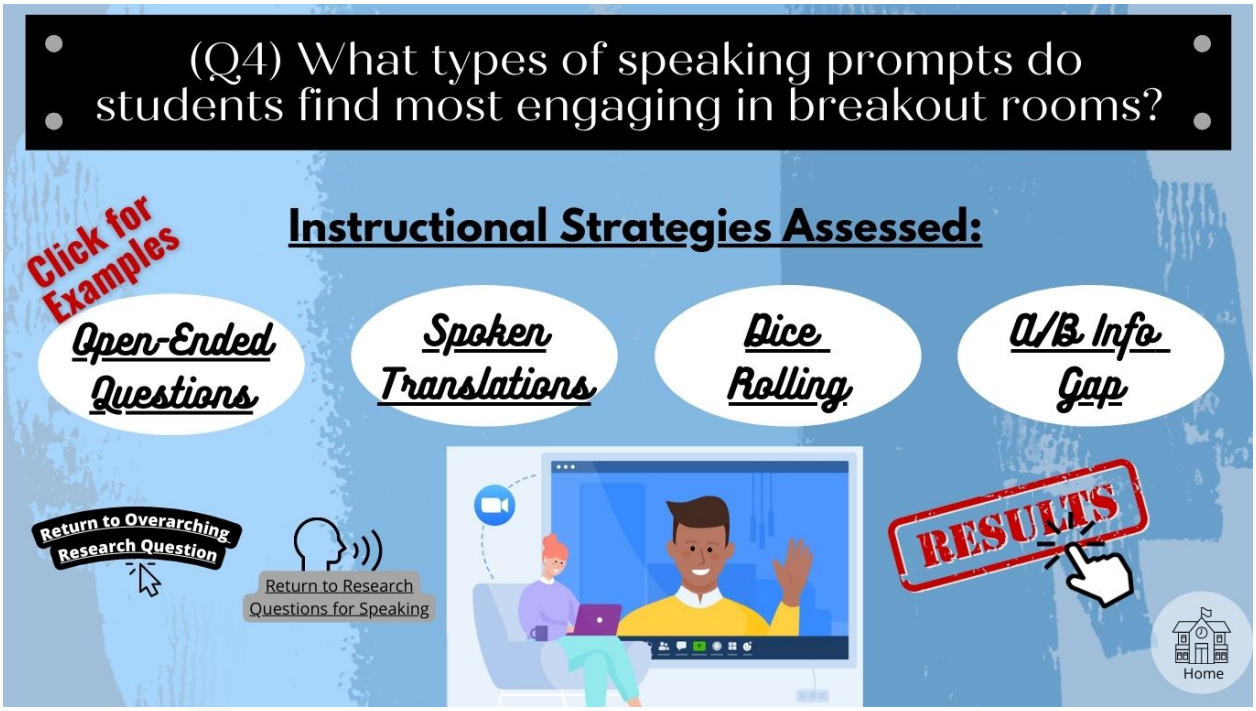
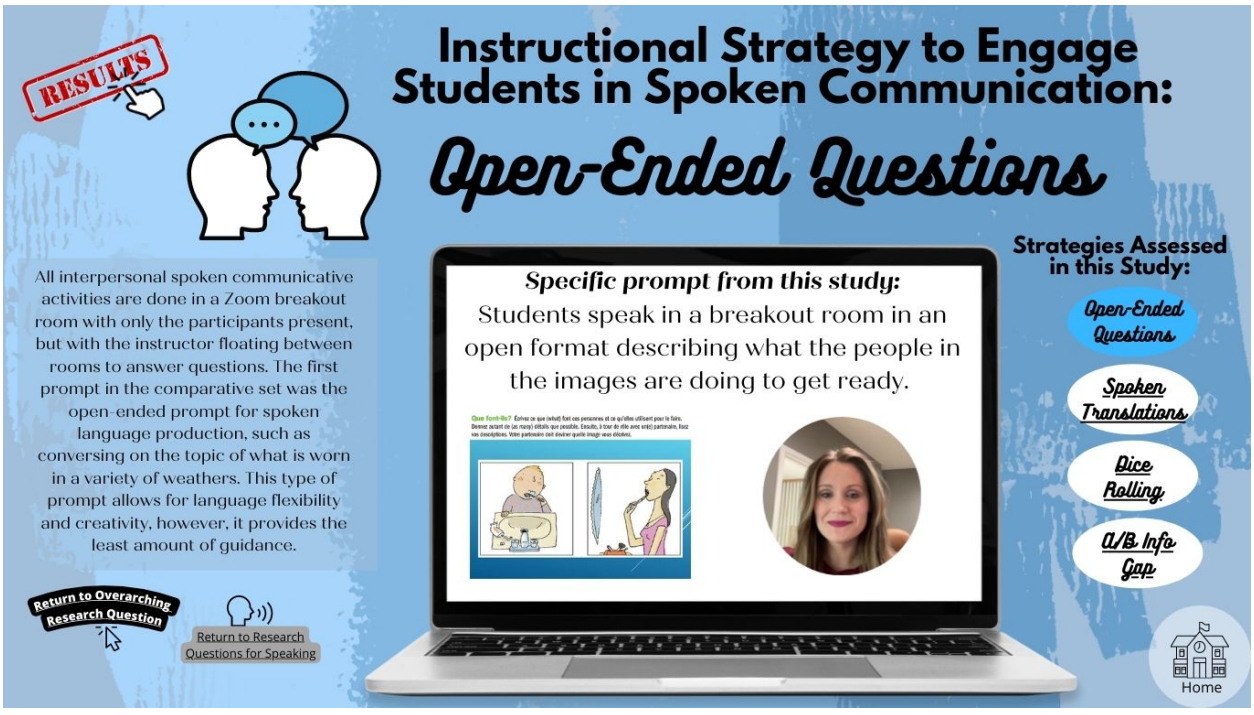


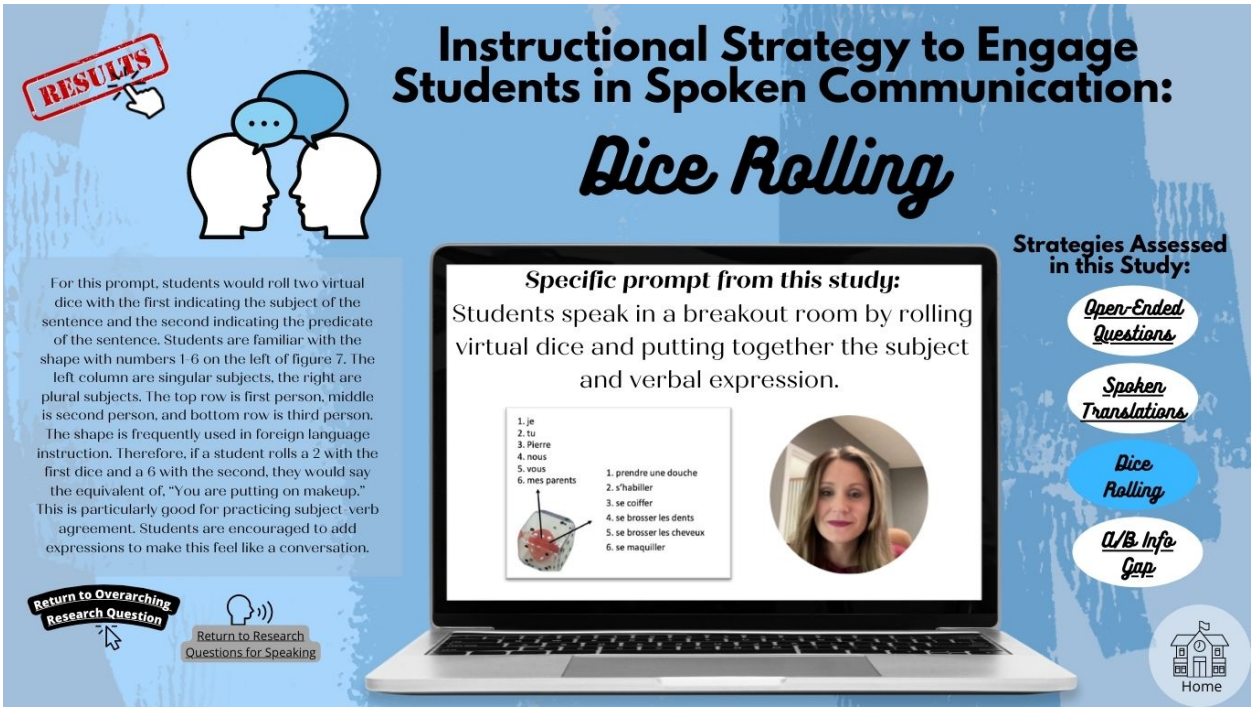
Figure 30

Q4 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages





RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Spoken Translations
The next prompt type is spoken translation. This indicates exactly how the conversation will go, which provides little flexibility, but maximum clarity.
Specific prompt from this study:
Students speak in a breakout room by translating this conversation.
Avec un(e) partenaire, traduisez la conversation suivante:
(This time, write in the chat as you speak)
A – What time did you wake up this morning?
B – I woke up at 7:00. And you?
A – I woke up at 9:00. I went to bed late last night. What time did you go to bed?
B – I went to bed at 11:00, but fell asleep at midnight!
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Open-Ended Questions
Spoken Translations
Dice Rolling
A/B Info Gap
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home


RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Dice Rolling
For this prompt, students would roll two virtual dice with the first indicating the subject of the sentence and the second indicating the predicate of the sentence. Students are familiar with the shape with numbers 1-6 on the left of figure 7. The left column are singular subjects, the right are plural subjects. The top row is first person, middle is second person, and bottom row is third person. The shape is frequently used in foreign language instruction. Therefore, if a student rolls a 2 with the first dice and a 6 with the second, they would say the equivalent of, "You are putting on makeup." This is particularly good for practicing subject-verb agreement. Students are encouraged to add expressions to make this feel like a conversation.
Specific prompt from this study:
Students speak in a breakout room by rolling virtual dice and putting together the subject and verbal expression.
1. je
2. tu
3. Pierre
4. nous
5. vous
6. mes parents
1. prendre une douche
2. s'habiller
3. se coiffer
4. se brosser les dents
5. se brosser les cheveux
6. se maquiller
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Open-Ended Questions
Spoken Translations
Dice Rolling
A/B Info Gap
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home

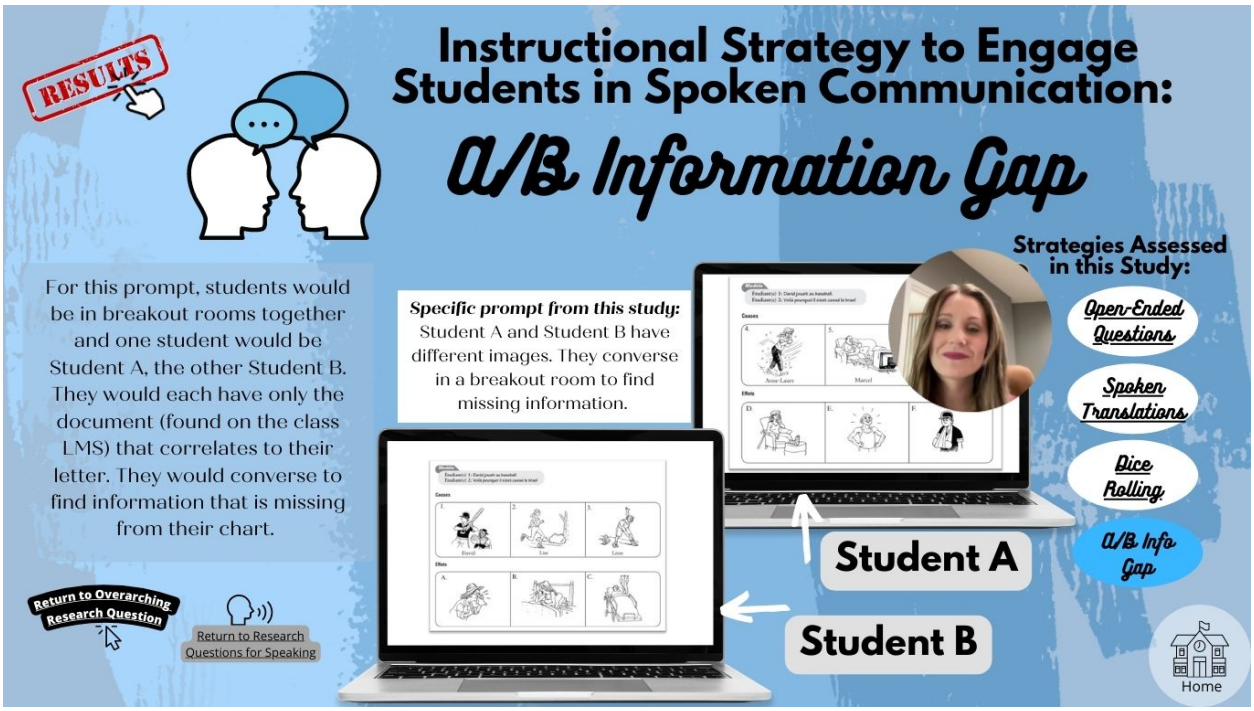
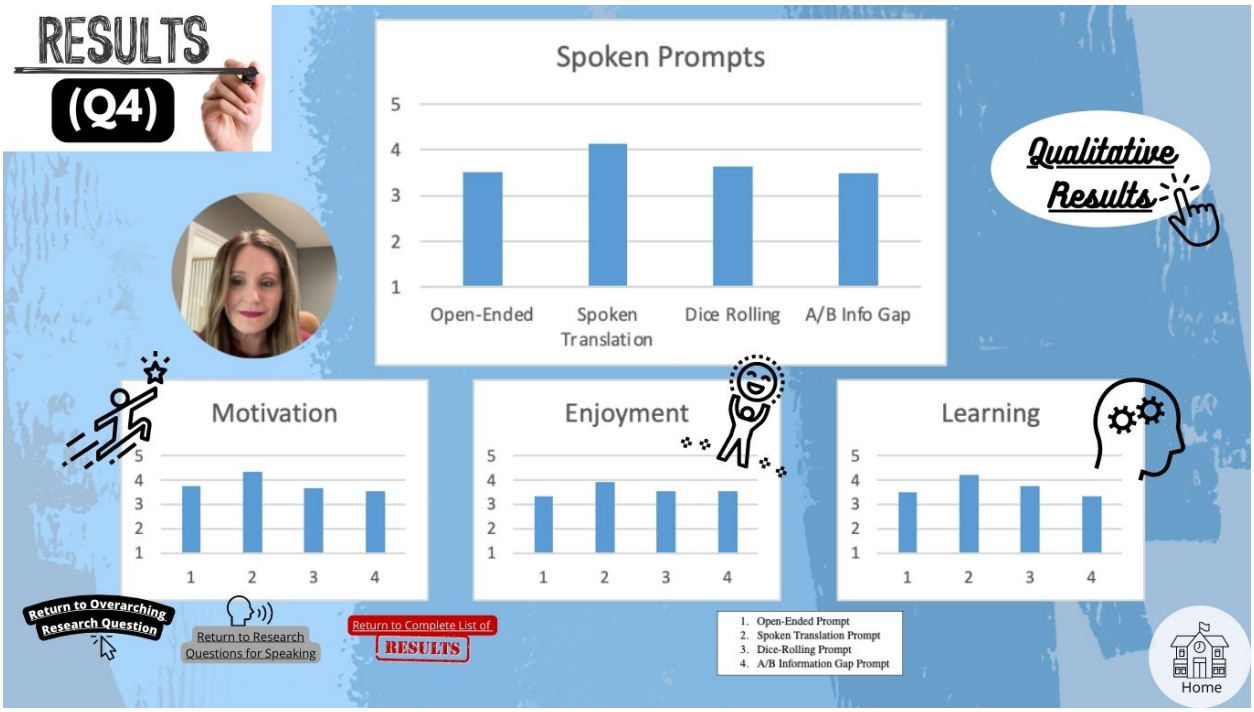


Figure 31

Q4 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



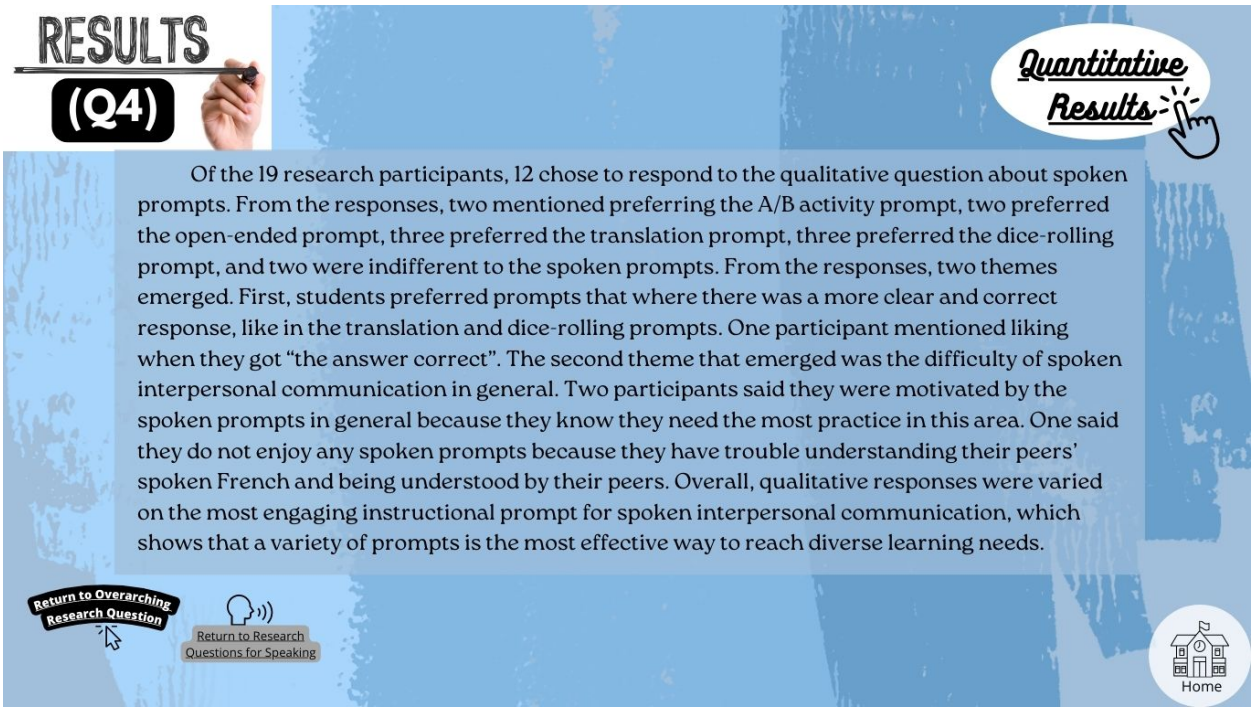
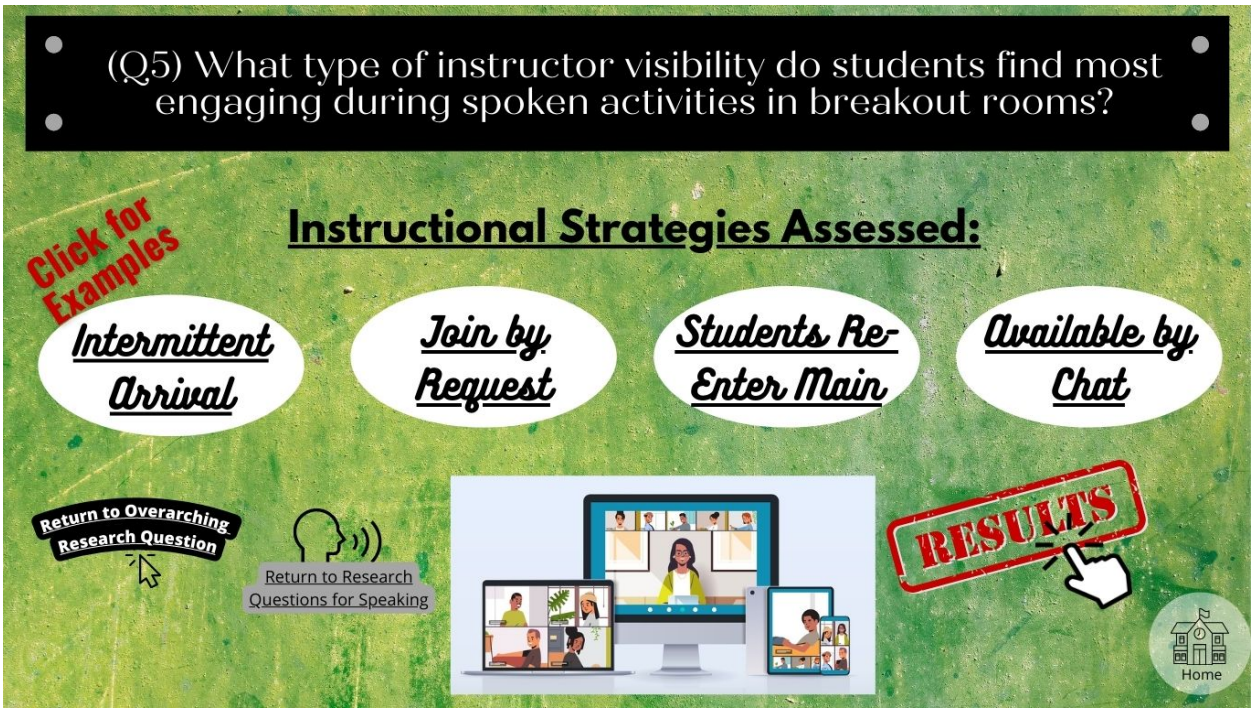
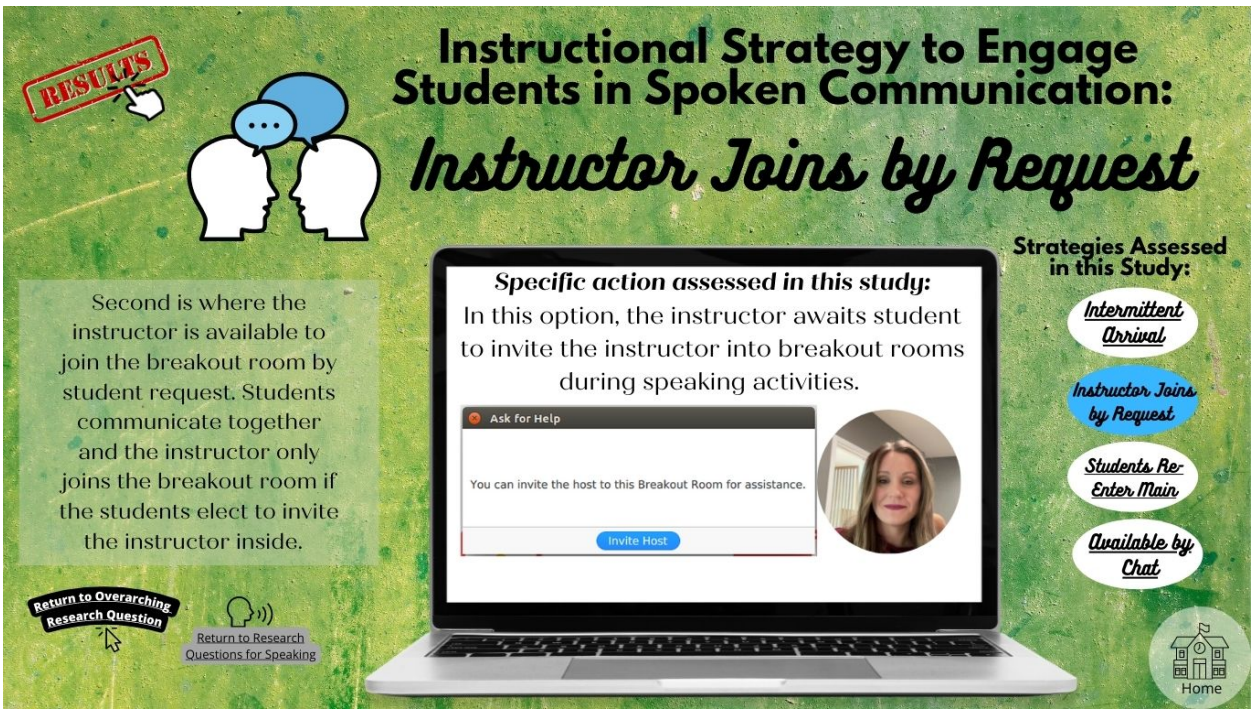


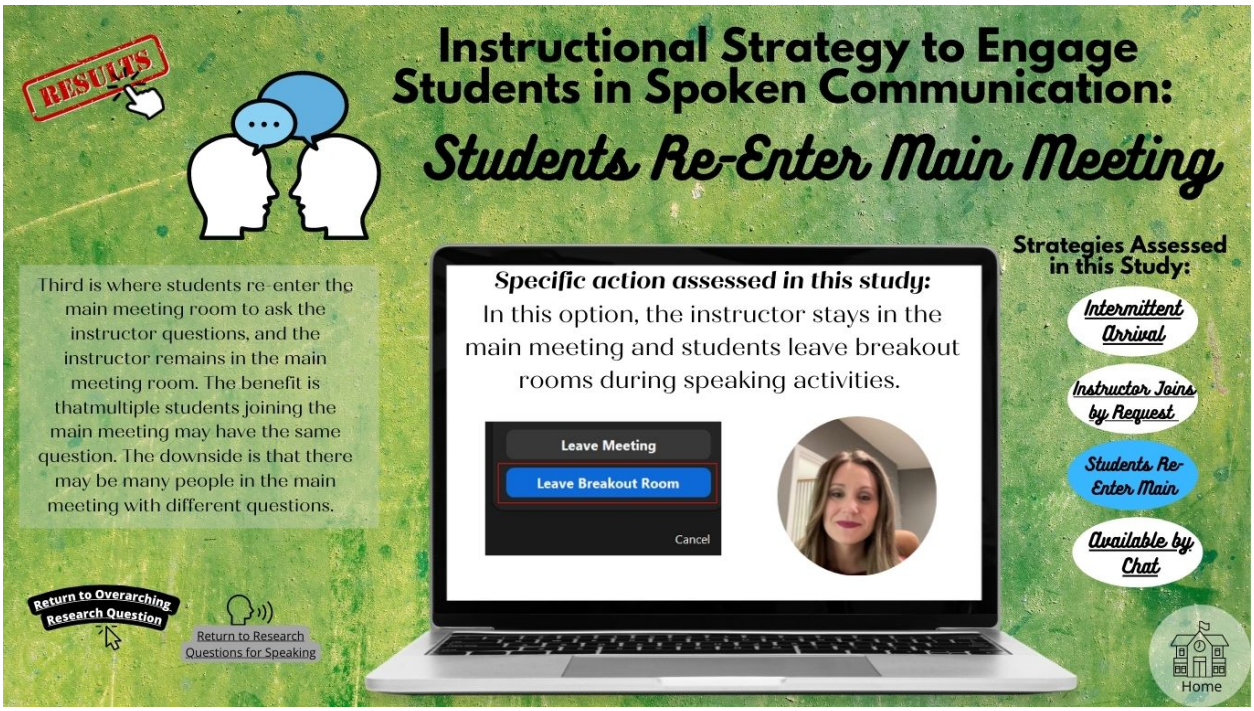
Figure 32

Q5 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages



RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Intermittent Arrival
In an online, synchronous class, instructor visibility is important so that students can have their questions answered, and the instructor can check for understanding. In a Zoom online class, when students are in breakout rooms, if the instructor is in the main meeting room, they cannot see and hear what is happening in the breakout rooms. First is intermittent arrival into the breakout rooms by the instructor, which is unannounced.
Specific action assessed in this study:
In this option, the instructor circulates between breakout rooms unannounced during speaking activities.
Joining Breakout Rooms...
Breakout Room 1
It may take a few moments.
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Intermittent Arrival
Instructor Joins by Request
Students Re-Enter Main
Available by Chat
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home


RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Instructor Joins by Request
Second is where the instructor is available to join the breakout room by student request. Students communicate together and the instructor only joins the breakout room if the students elect to invite the instructor inside.
Specific action assessed in this study:
In this option, the instructor awaits student to invite the instructor into breakout rooms during speaking activities.
Ask for Help
You can invite the host to this Breakout Room for assistance.
Invite Host
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Intermittent Arrival
Instructor Joins by Request
Students Re-Enter Main
Available by Chat
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home


RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Students Re-Enter Main Meeting
Third is where students re-enter the main meeting room to ask the instructor questions, and the instructor remains in the main meeting room. The benefit is thatmultiple students joining the main meeting may have the same question. The downside is that there may be many people in the main meeting with different questions.
Specific action assessed in this study:
In this option, the instructor stays in the main meeting and students leave breakout rooms during speaking activities.
Leave Meeting
Leave Breakout Room
Cancel
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Intermittent Arrival
Instructor Joins by Request
Students Re-Enter Main
Available by Chat
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home

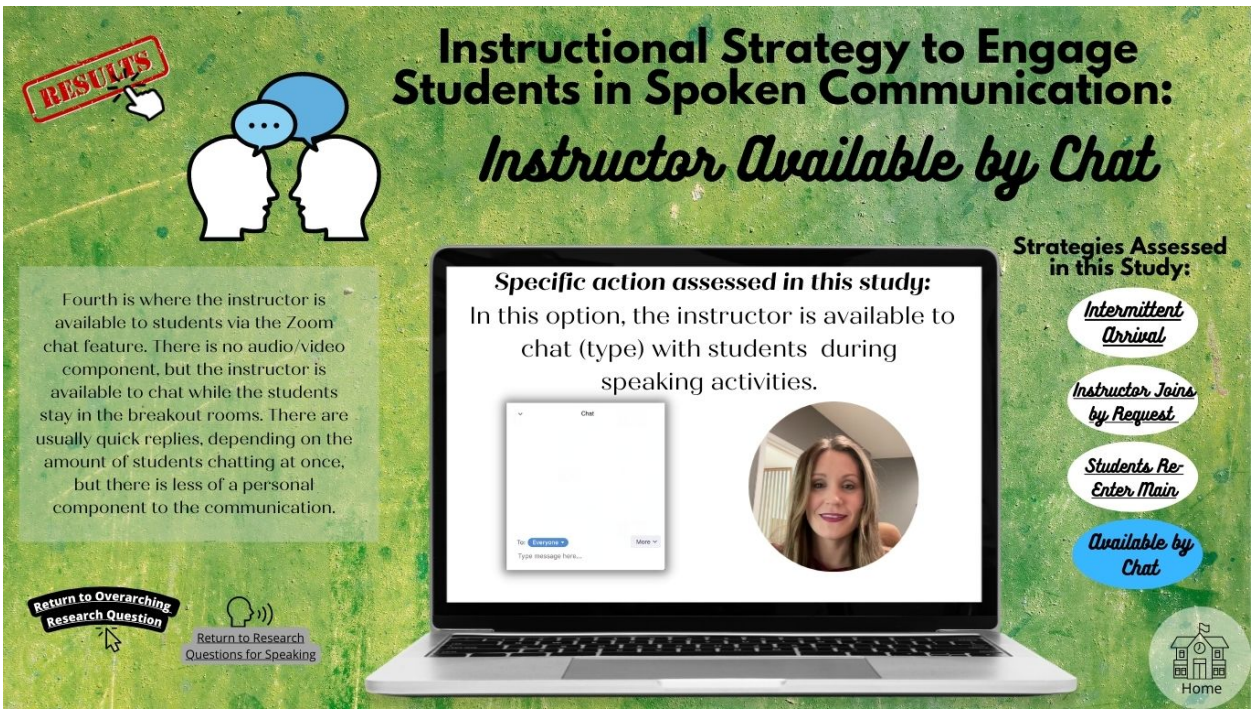
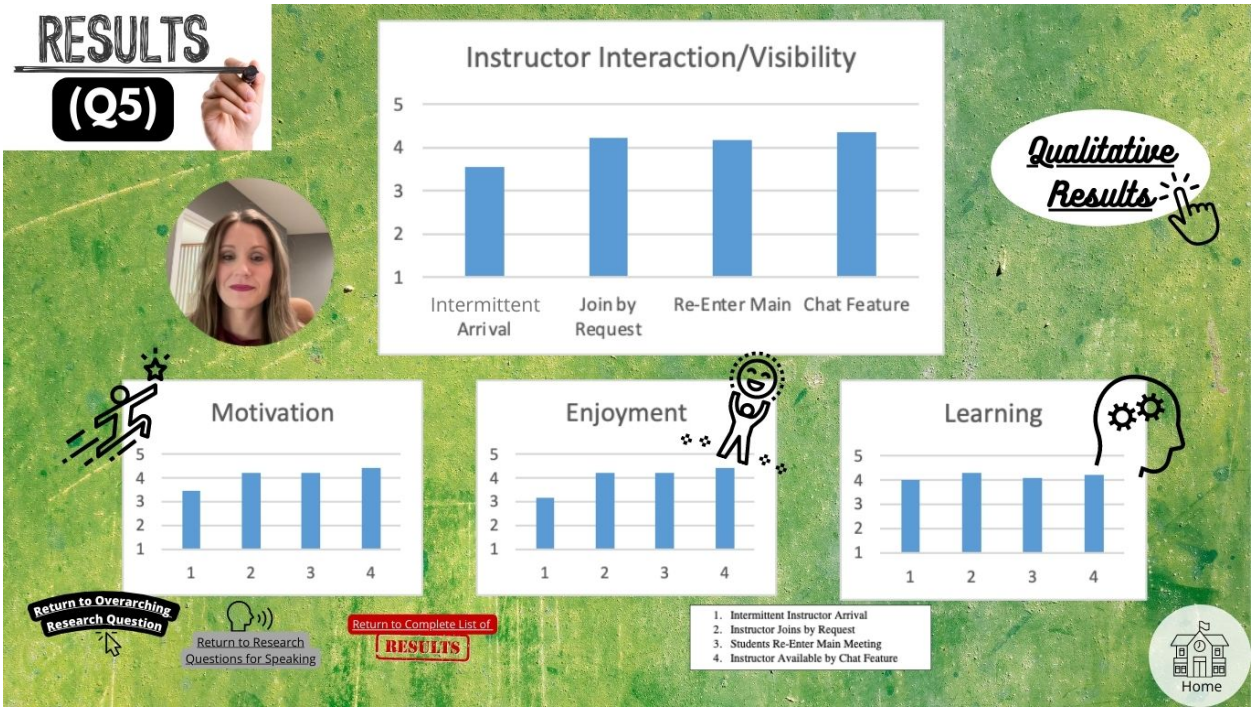

RESULTS
Instructional Strategy to Engage Students in Spoken Communication:
Instructor Available by Chat
Fourth is where the instructor is available to students via the Zoom chat feature. There is no audio/video component, but the instructor is available to chat while the students stay in the breakout rooms. There are usually quick replies, depending on the amount of students chatting at once, but there is less of a personal component to the communication.
Specific action assessed in this study:
In this option, the instructor is available to chat (type) with students during speaking activities.
Chat
Strategies Assessed in this Study:
Intermittent Arrival
Instructor Joins by Request
Students Re-Enter Main
Available by Chat
Return to Overarching Research Question
Return to Research Questions for Speaking
Home

Figure 33

Q5 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



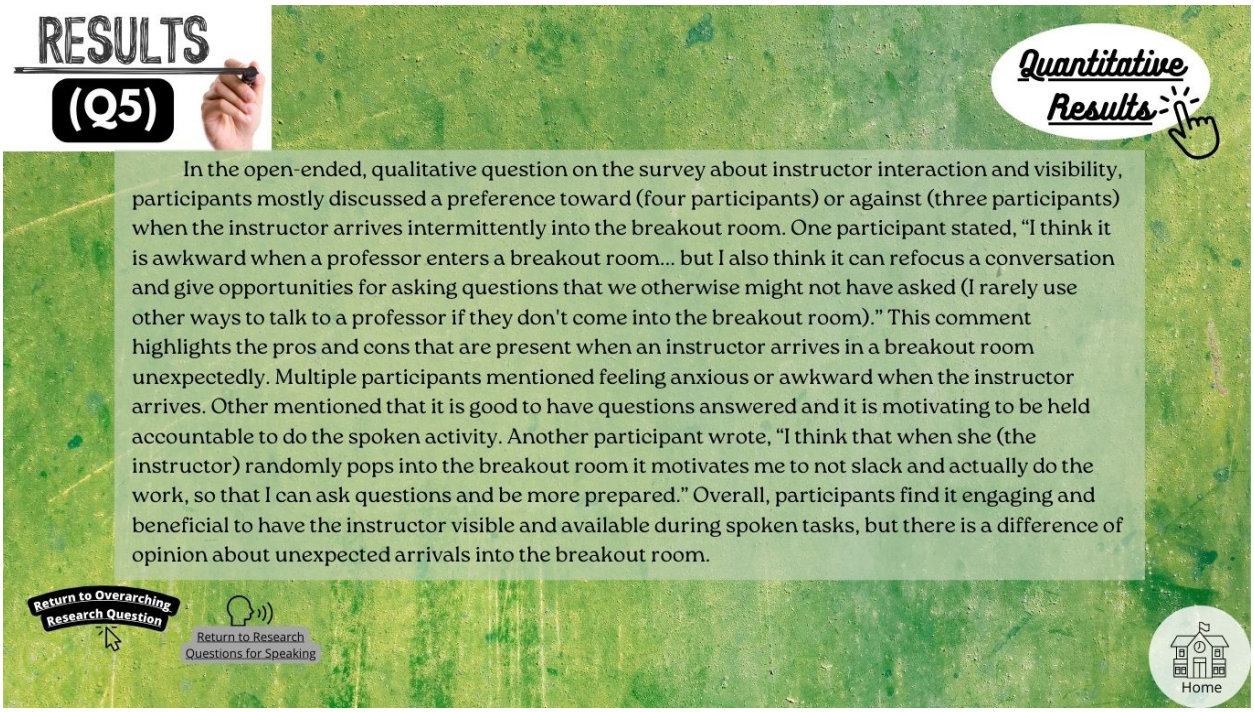
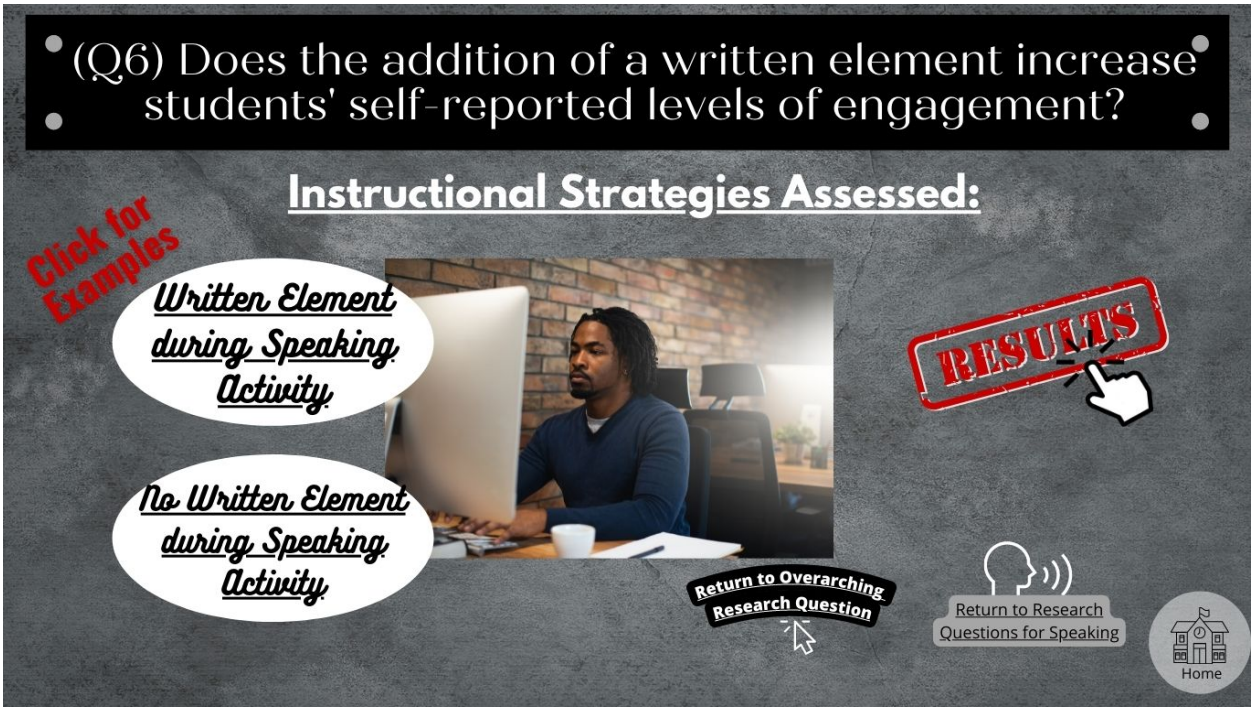
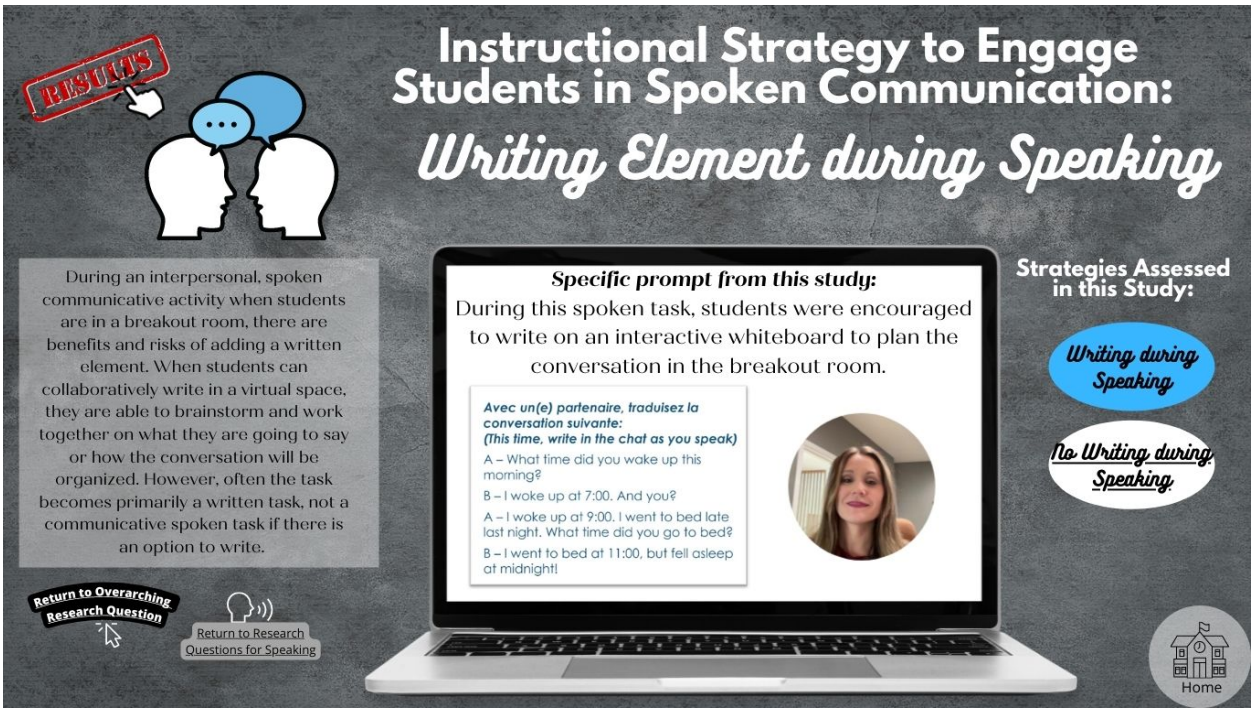


Figure 34

Q6 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages





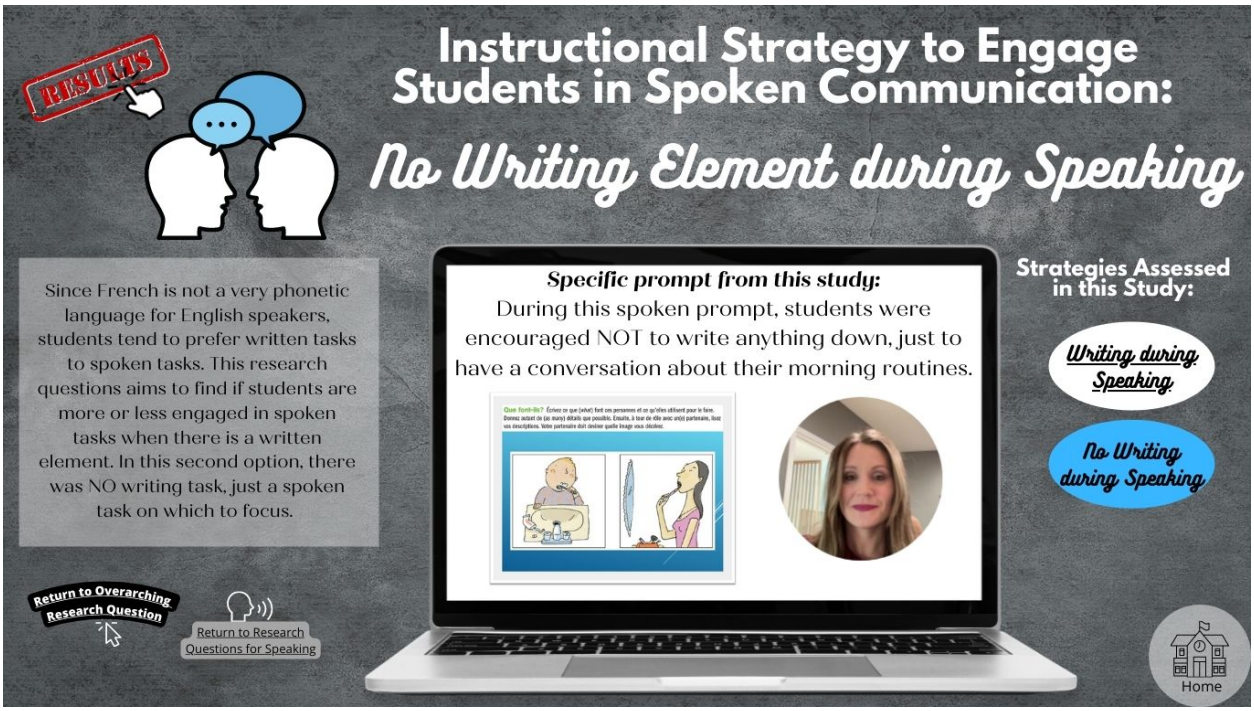
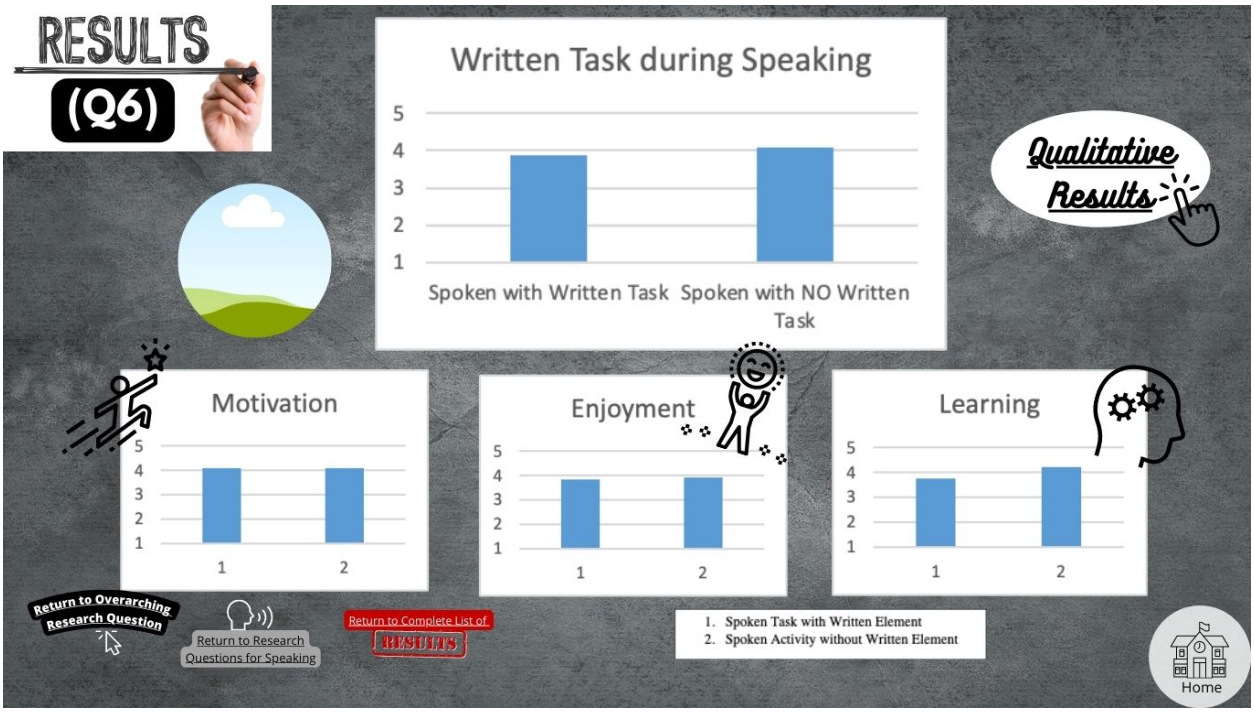


Figure 35

Q6 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



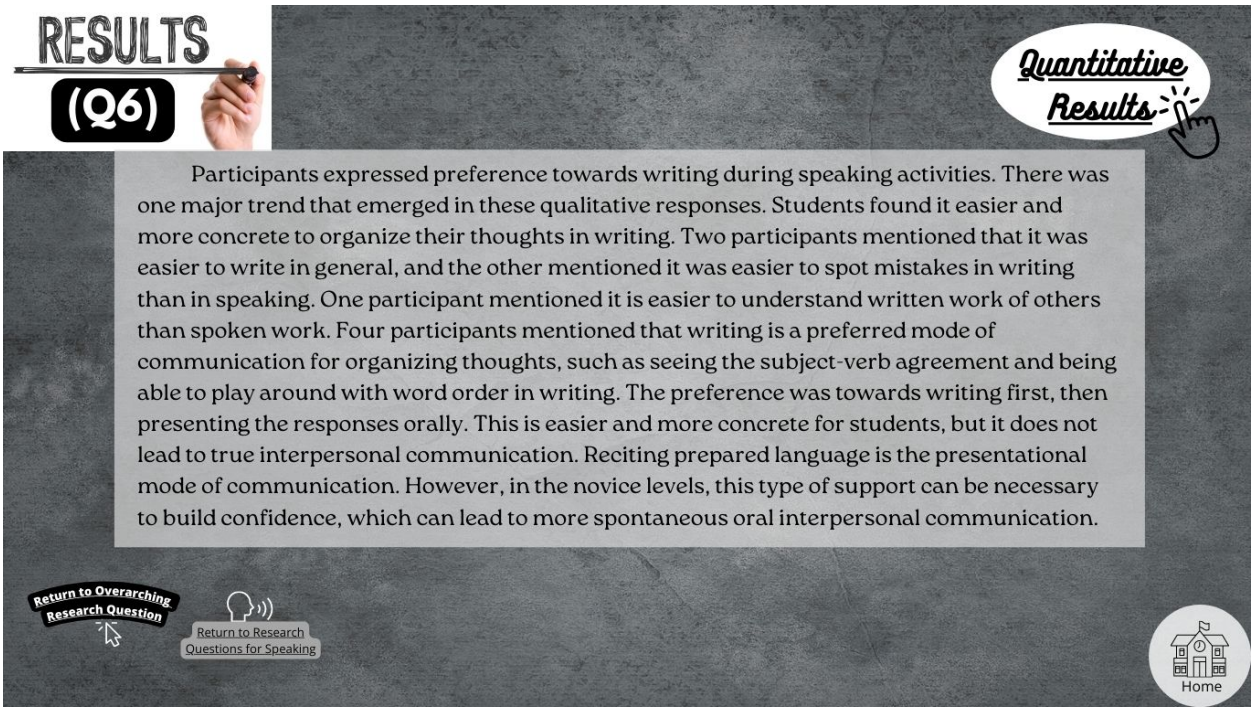


Figure 36

Research Question on Presentational Peer Interaction Navigation Web Page

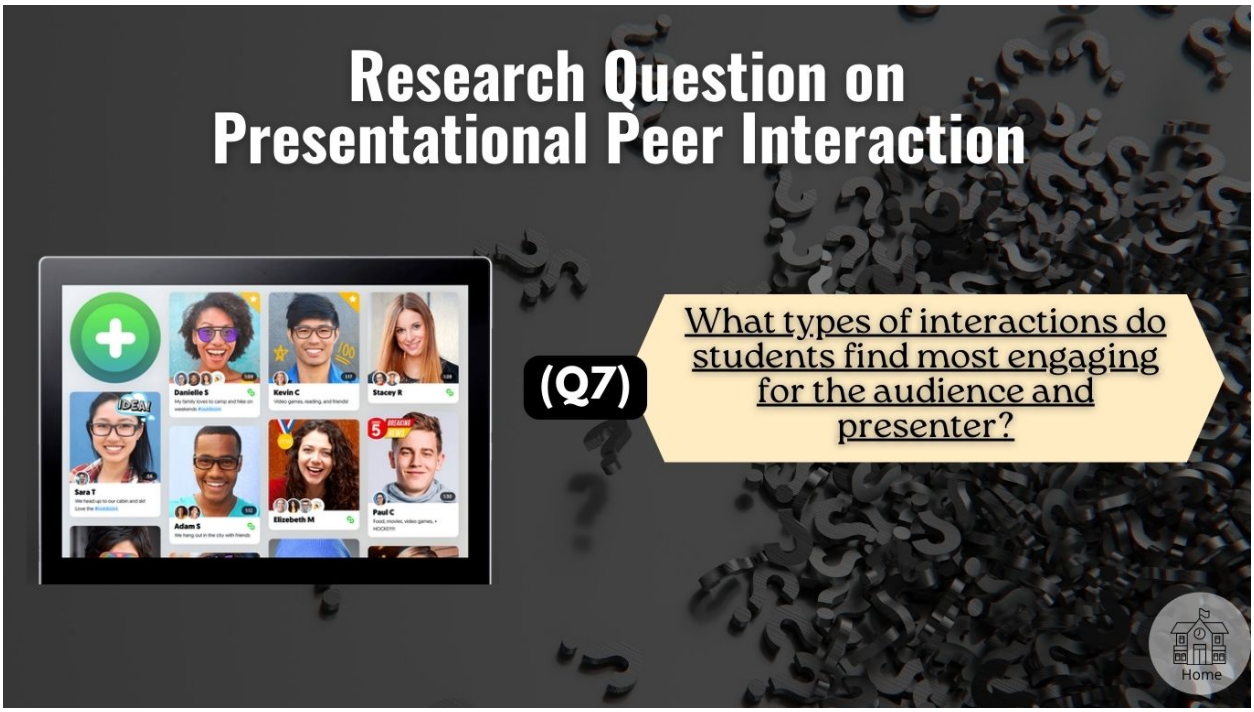


Figure 37

Q7 Navigation Page and Instructional Strategies Assessed Web Pages

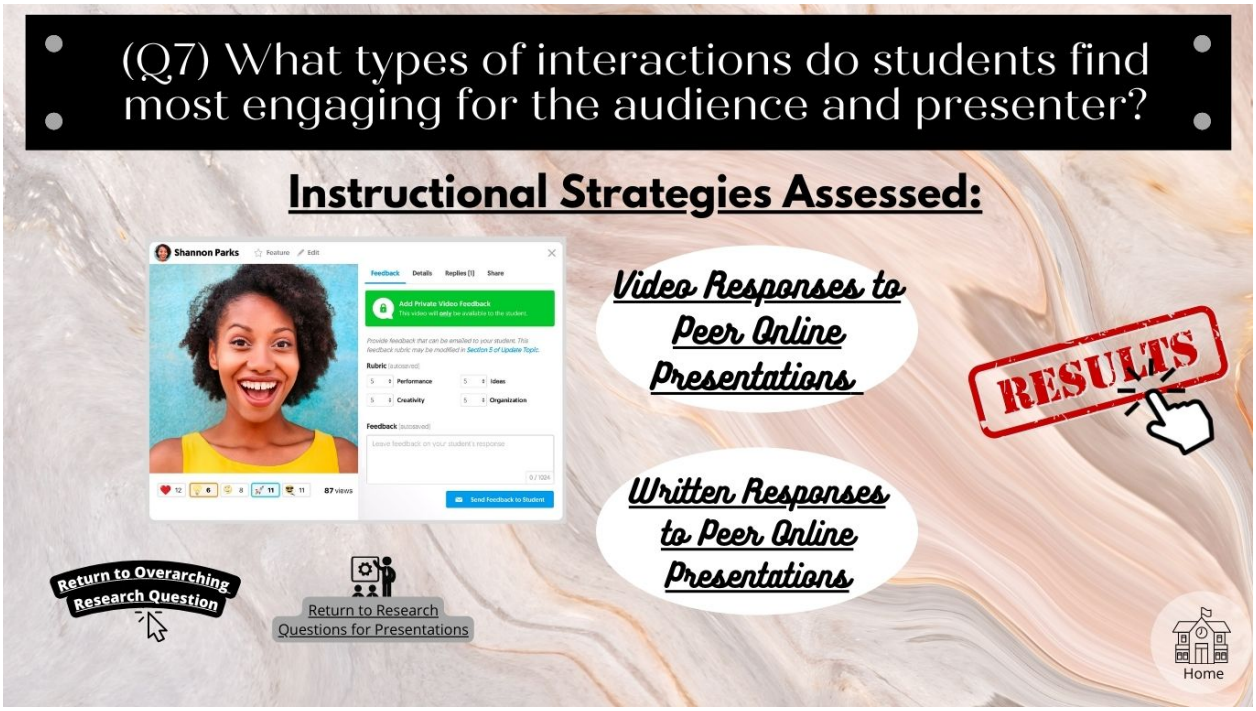
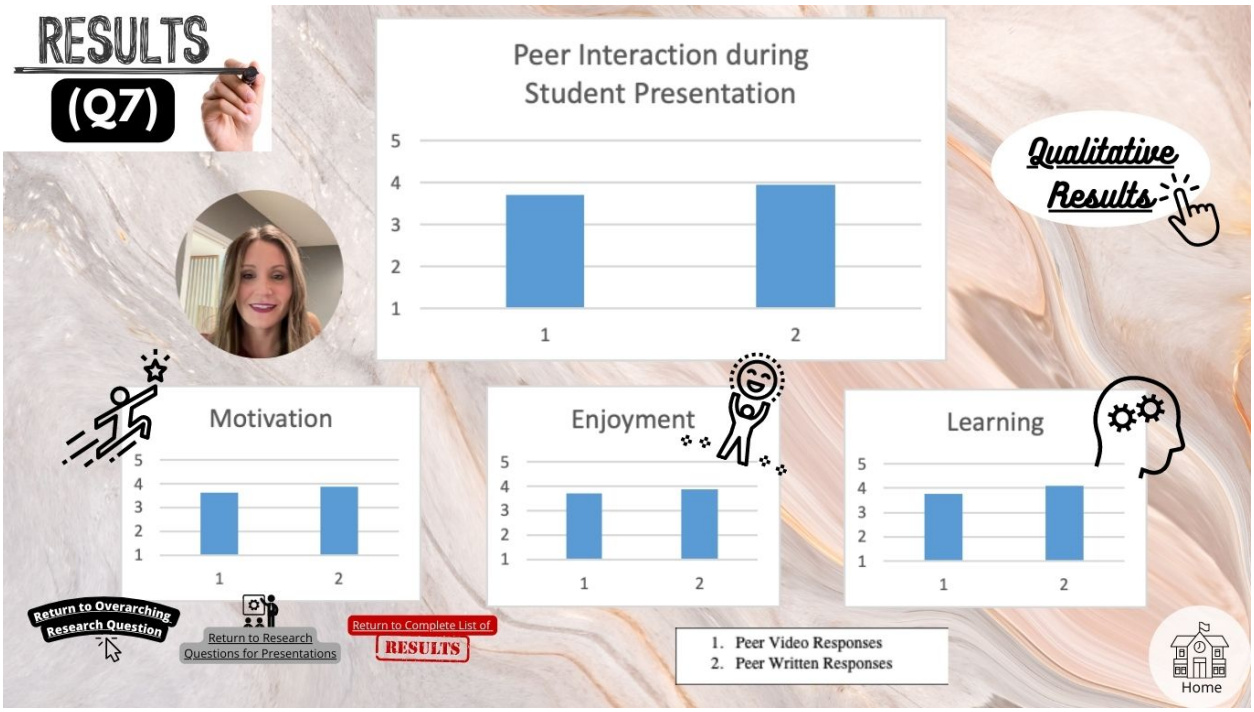
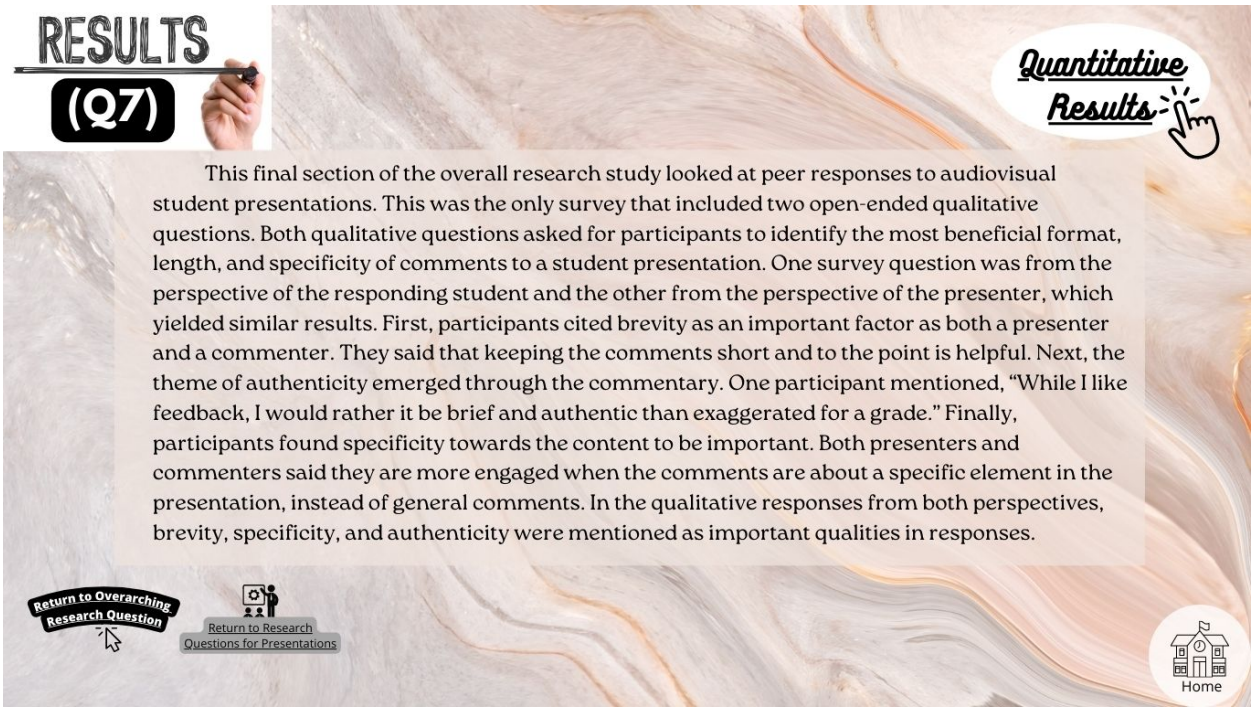


Figure 38

Q7 Quantitative and Qualitative Results Web Pages



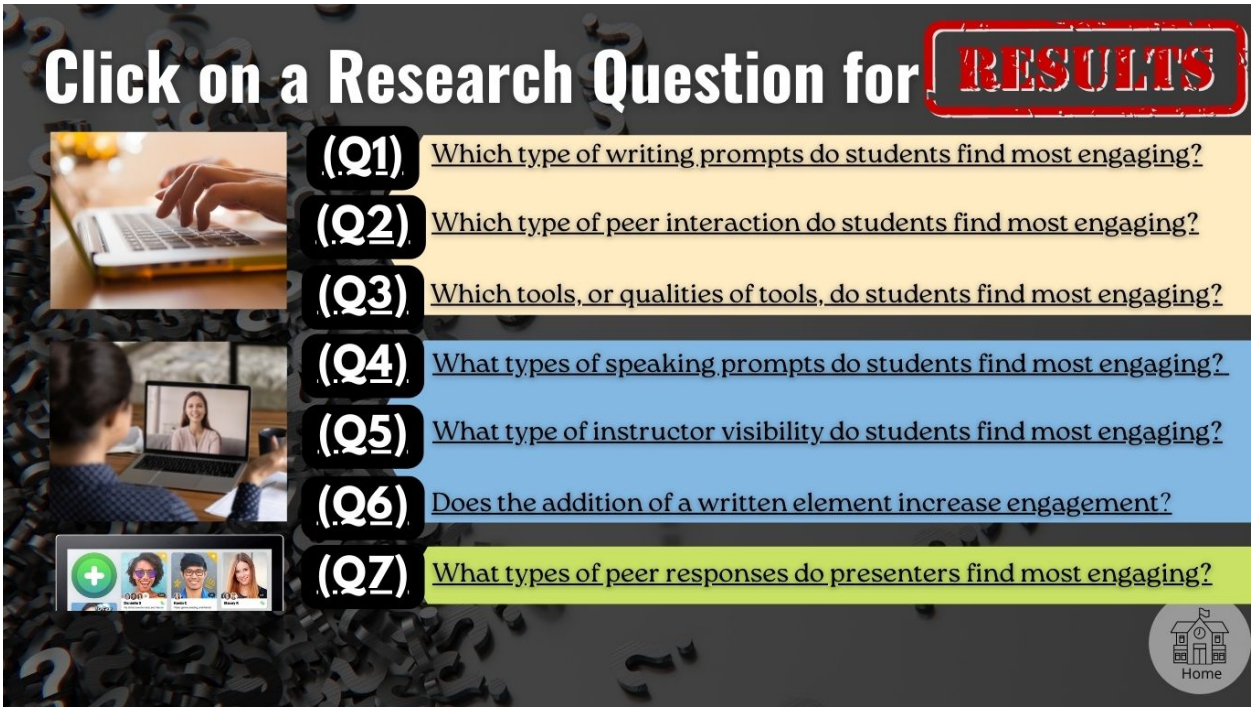


Additional Navigation to Survey Results Web Page

From the home page, there is also a "Results" tab, which takes the viewer to a web page that includes all seven research questions. Each question is also a link to the quantitative results page. There is a link on each quantitative results page to the corresponding qualitative results page. This navigational method is for the viewer who would like direct access to the results.

Figure 39

Results Navigation Web Page



Connection to Problem of Practice

This website responds to the contemporary problem of practices of student engagement in an online setting. Knowing that student engagement is paramount to student success, finding ways to engage students in on online setting is critical. Without the natural interpersonal visibility of a traditional, in-person class, it can be difficult to appraise student engagement in a synchronous, online course. In this research study I sought to find answers to seven research questions, both quantitative and qualitative. The website is an engaging product for viewers to discover what the participants found most engaging during this investigation. Viewers who teach online may find ways to increase student engagement in the virtual setting. Videos embedded throughout the website are helpful for the viewer to understand how the specific strategies were used. There are explanatory videos for the instructional strategies used, as well as videos

explaining the quantitative results of each of the seven surveys. It is my sincere hope that this website helps other online instructors improve student engagement in their courses.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Artifacts

In Artifact 1, I explained the problem of practice, describing the importance of student engagement on overall academic success and satisfaction. This artifact also presented the need for this research study, showing a lack of empirical data on the topic. Although there is no shortage of research on the importance of online courses and student engagement, there is not much information on student engagement in a synchronous online course.

Artifact 2 maps the research project, as well as the results of the study. Overall, the findings show many strategies that are effective and engaging for students in a synchronous, online course. There were a few preferences, such as the slight dislike of intermittent arrival by the instructor or less engagement with peer-editing of written work. However, even the instructional strategies, which were less engaging, still had an engagement average more than 3 on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale. The least engaging strategies were still somewhat engaging to student participants. There were some preferences, but overall, the results show many strong strategies that engage students.

Artifact 3 is a website that presents the strategies and results to viewers. This interactive website shows how these strategies can be implemented in an online class and gives data about students' self-reported levels of engagement for each instructional strategy.

Implications of the Work Presented

The culmination of this research is a publicly viewable website showing the results of this study. Viewers can find explanations and specific examples of instructional strategies assessed in my study. Although the number of participants was small, the research contributes to the body of academic knowledge on the topic of engagement in an online course.

This study had a relatively narrow audience—instructors of introductory online world language courses. However, there are positive implications for many different instructors making this a broader study. Any instructor of a synchronous online course could find beneficial information. While the prompts for speaking and writing are specifically in the world language, these types of prompts could be used in any content area. Tools for writing, collaboration preferences, instructor visibility preferences, and presentational interaction are all topics that can be used for any synchronous online course. Even world language teachers who teach in person may find benefit from this study, as many of the engagement strategies could be used in a face-to-face setting as well. Overall, I believe this study contributes to the body of academic literature on online instruction and student engagement.

Reflection

The overarching theme of student engagement in an online synchronous class is answered in the responses to the seven research questions. First, I tried to find a way to best encourage students to engage in written work. Students found all of the written prompts to be engaging, which gives instructors multiple options to encourage students to write in an online environment. As it pertains to student interaction during writing in an online space, students preferred writing collaboratively and individually. This is great statistical information that will drive me to alternate between these options. I was hesitant to include online writing tools in this study since online tools come and go quickly. I was mostly looking for qualitative information on this topic. I wanted to discover what qualities of online tools are engaging to students. The participants responded to this nuanced question by stating that they liked the Zoom chat feature for quick responses and because they received immediate feedback. They found the more complicated tools more engaging for longer written work, or work they know the instructor would return to

assess. The one tool they found the least engaging for written work was a tool that I overused the semester of this study. The results reminded me to change tools frequently to best engage students in online writing.

Practicing speaking in a non-native language is intimidating for students. In a face-to-face class, they need encouragement and practice. In a breakout room, I cannot see if they are doing the task, let alone doing the task well. The information about how to best encourage spoken interpersonal communication was a valuable section of this study to my practice. While face-to-face students have found dice rolling activities engaging, it was not the "winner" in this comparative set. Students slightly preferred the spoken translation prompt. The other three activities—open-ended, dice rolling, and information gap—were all equally engaging, just not as engaging as the spoken translation prompt. Many language instructors do not like direct translation, but participants mentioned a preference to the right/wrong nature of this type of activity. In my practice, I will continue to vary the instructional prompts for speaking, since these showed positive results for engagement. While in breakout rooms working on spoken tasks, participants had a preference for a simple chat feature to communicate with the instructor. They did not prefer intermittent arrival, but they admitted it did not negatively affect learning. While speaking with a partner, students had a slight preference to no writing task. Although they mentioned a preference to writing over speaking, they found the writing task took away from the learning component of engagement during interpersonal communication.

In the final section of my research study I examined how students best interact with a peer's online presentation. To encourage students to engage with classmate's online presentations, I compared written and video responses to the presentations. There was no strong preference either way, with both styles of interaction proving to be engaging for students.

In summary, this research study provides a toolbox of instructional strategies that encourage engagement in an online course. Every strategy assessed earned an average engagement score of more than 3, or somewhat engaging. The accompanying website shows how these strategies can be implemented. The culmination of these instructional strategies answers the overarching question about how to engage and motivate student in an online setting in a first-year French course from the students' perspectives.

Suggestions for Future Inquiry

There are many possibilities for future inquiry on the topic of student engagement in an online setting. Looking only at student engagement, I could examine strategies that are effective in a face-to-face course, then compare engagement to the online environment. Another option is to continue research on online engagement. I would be interested in assessing which instructor-student and student-student methods of communication are most engaging. It would also be interesting to see which curricular elements are most engaging, i.e., certain activities or projects. My situation is unique in that I teach the same class in face-to-face and online environments, so I could compare engagement strategies, curricular components, or communication methods between these two groups of students. There are multiple options for future inquiry on the topic of online instruction and student engagement.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Research Study Participant Invitation Script

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY TO STUDENTS IN FRENCH 112

Script:

Hello class! In addition to being your French 112 professor, I am also a doctoral student at UND. I am in my fifth semester out of nine in pursuit of an EdD, or a Doctorate of Education. I am at a point where I will be conducting a research study as part of my Dissertation in Practice. This type of dissertation addresses a specific problem of practice. My problem of practice is low student engagement in an online setting.

My specific overarching research question is: Which instructional strategies are most effective in raising student engagement and motivation in an online setting in a first-year foreign language course from the students' perspectives? Sub categories include: strategies to encourage written participation in an online setting, strategies to encourage spoken, interpersonal communication in an online environment, and strategies to encourage peer-peer interaction in an online setting.

We will be doing various activities throughout the semester that are effective for practicing skills in the foreign language. Your job is to self-report your motivation, enjoyment, and learning by answering survey questions. I will be comparing the educational practices by scoring and analyzing your data. For each comparative set, or survey, you will respond to 3-5 questions. The first questions are on a Likert, or sliding scale, and the final question of each set is open-ended. There will be a total of seven surveys, or sets of questions, you will complete if you choose to participate in this study.

Fifteen points of extra credit will be given to a category of your choice by participating in the entirety of this study. If you choose to NOT participate, you can do 20 VHL assignments for the same 15 extra credit points. Surveys will be online, using Qualtrics, and will take place throughout the semester. There are no foreseen risks to participating in this study.

As your professor, I have no bias toward or against any of these educational practices, which makes me an impartial investigator. I am genuinely curious about what students find most motivating in an online setting. I look forward to analyzing the results! I will use this information to guide my future teaching practices, as well as sharing the information with colleagues and others to positively affect their instructional practices.

Never hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study. Thank you for your time!

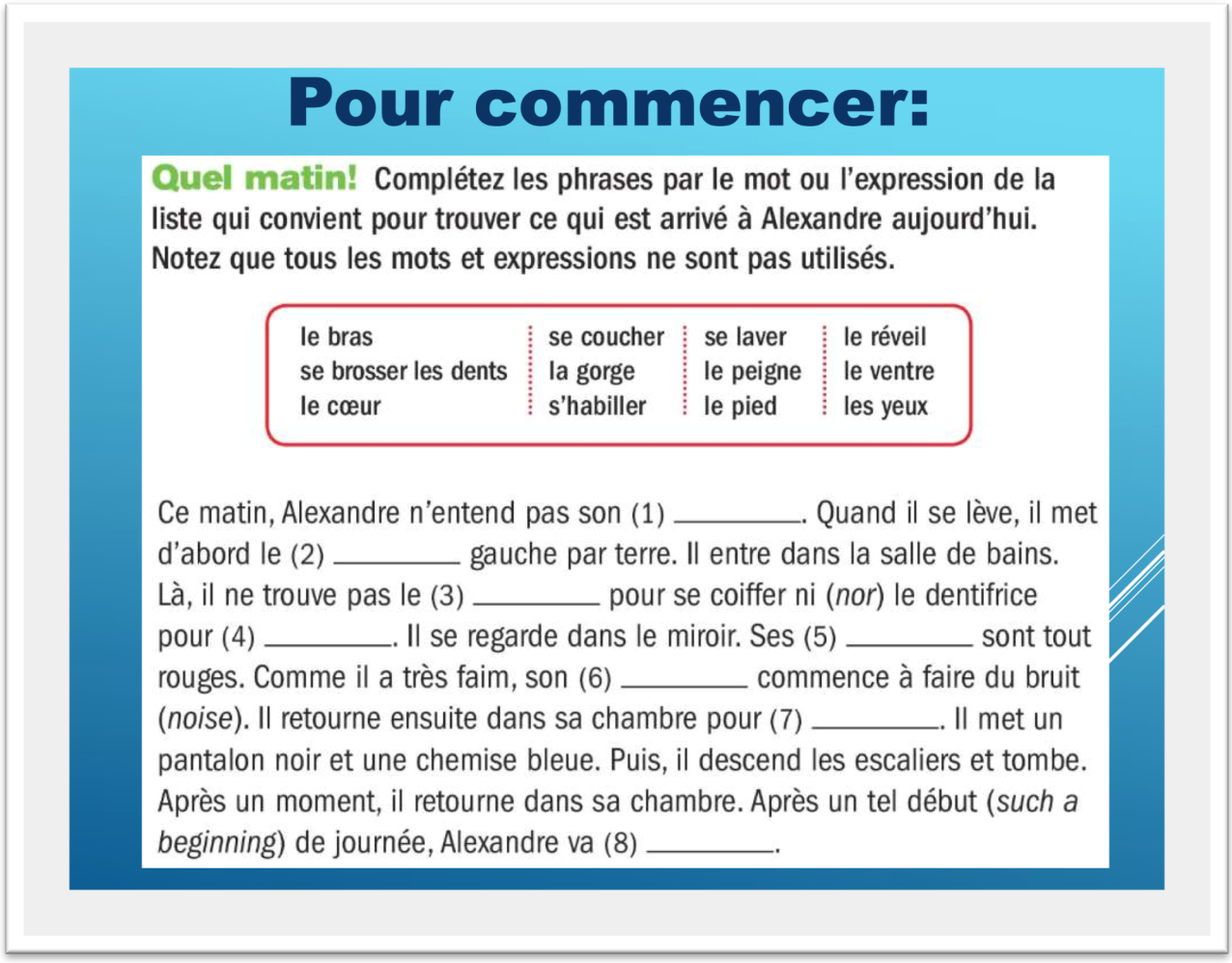
Appendix B

Student Record Keeping Document

Notes on Self-Reported Student Engagement in an Online Course		How motivated were you to participate?					How much did you enjoy the task?					How much did you learn from the task?				
Written Tasks: *(Survey 4/7)*	Missing Word (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	5 Questions (3/26)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Open-ended (4/7)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Writing Interaction: *(Survey 4/12)*	Interactive (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Independent (3/26)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Peer Edited (4/12)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Writing Tools: *(Survey 4/12)*	Zoom Chat (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Gimkit Ink (3/26)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Jamboard (4/12)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Speaking Tasks: *(Survey 4/9)*	Open-ended (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Dice Rolling (3/26)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	A/B Info Gap (4/7)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Spoken Translation (4/9)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Prof Help: *(Survey 4/7)*	Prof arrives impromptu (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Ask prof to join (3/26)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Re-enter main meeting (4/7)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Writing during speaking: *(Survey 4/9)*	No writing (3/24)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Writing during (4/9)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Presentational Interaction: *(Survey 4/21)*	Written Responses	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
	Spoken Responses	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

3/24/21 Activity to Assess: Missing Words Written Prompt (Q1), Interactive Writing Interaction (Q2), and Zoom Chat Tool (Q3)



Pour commencer:

Quel matin! Complétez les phrases par le mot ou l'expression de la liste qui convient pour trouver ce qui est arrivé à Alexandre aujourd'hui. Notez que tous les mots et expressions ne sont pas utilisés.

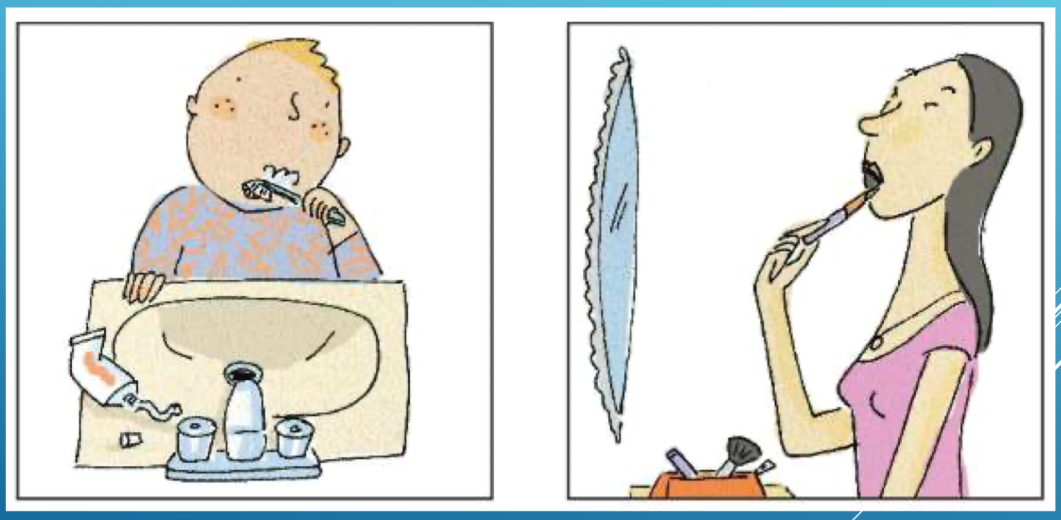
le bras	se coucher	se laver	le réveil
se brosser les dents	la gorge	le peigne	le ventre
le cœur	s'habiller	le pied	les yeux

Ce matin, Alexandre n'entend pas son (1) _____. Quand il se lève, il met d'abord le (2) _____ gauche par terre. Il entre dans la salle de bains. Là, il ne trouve pas le (3) _____ pour se coiffer ni (*nor*) le dentifrice pour (4) _____. Il se regarde dans le miroir. Ses (5) _____ sont tout rouges. Comme il a très faim, son (6) _____ commence à faire du bruit (*noise*). Il retourne ensuite dans sa chambre pour (7) _____. Il met un pantalon noir et une chemise bleue. Puis, il descend les escaliers et tombe. Après un moment, il retourne dans sa chambre. Après un tel début (*such a beginning*) de journée, Alexandre va (8) _____.

Appendix D

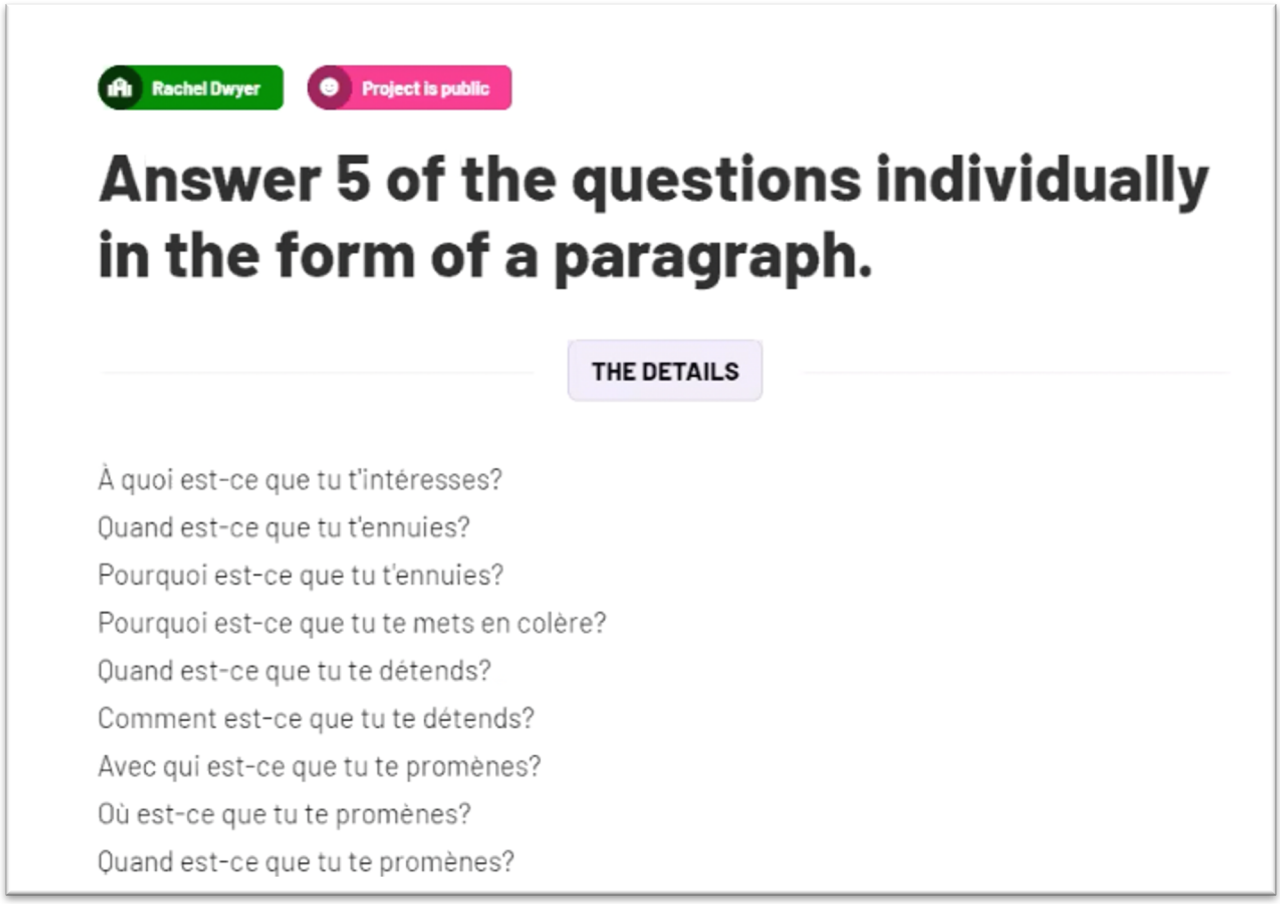
3/24/21 Activity to Assess: Open-Ended Speaking Prompt (4)),
Instructor Arrives Impromptu (Q5), No Writing Element during Speaking Activity (Q6)

Que font-ils? Écrivez ce que (*what*) font ces personnes et ce qu'elles utilisent pour le faire. Donnez autant de (*as many*) détails que possible. Ensuite, à tour de rôle avec un(e) partenaire, lisez vos descriptions. Votre partenaire doit deviner quelle image vous décrivez.



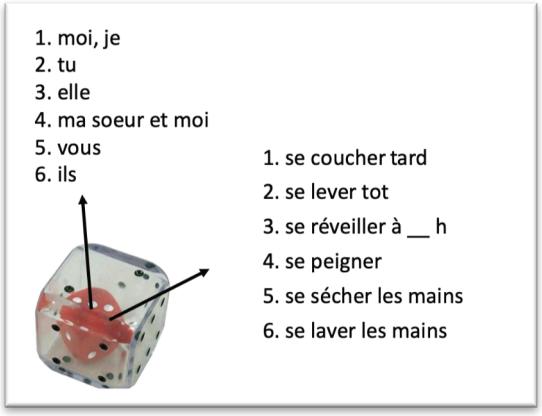
Appendix E

3/26/21 Activity to Assess: 5 Questions Written Prompt (Q1), Independent Writing Interaction (Q2), and GimKit Ink Tool (Q3)



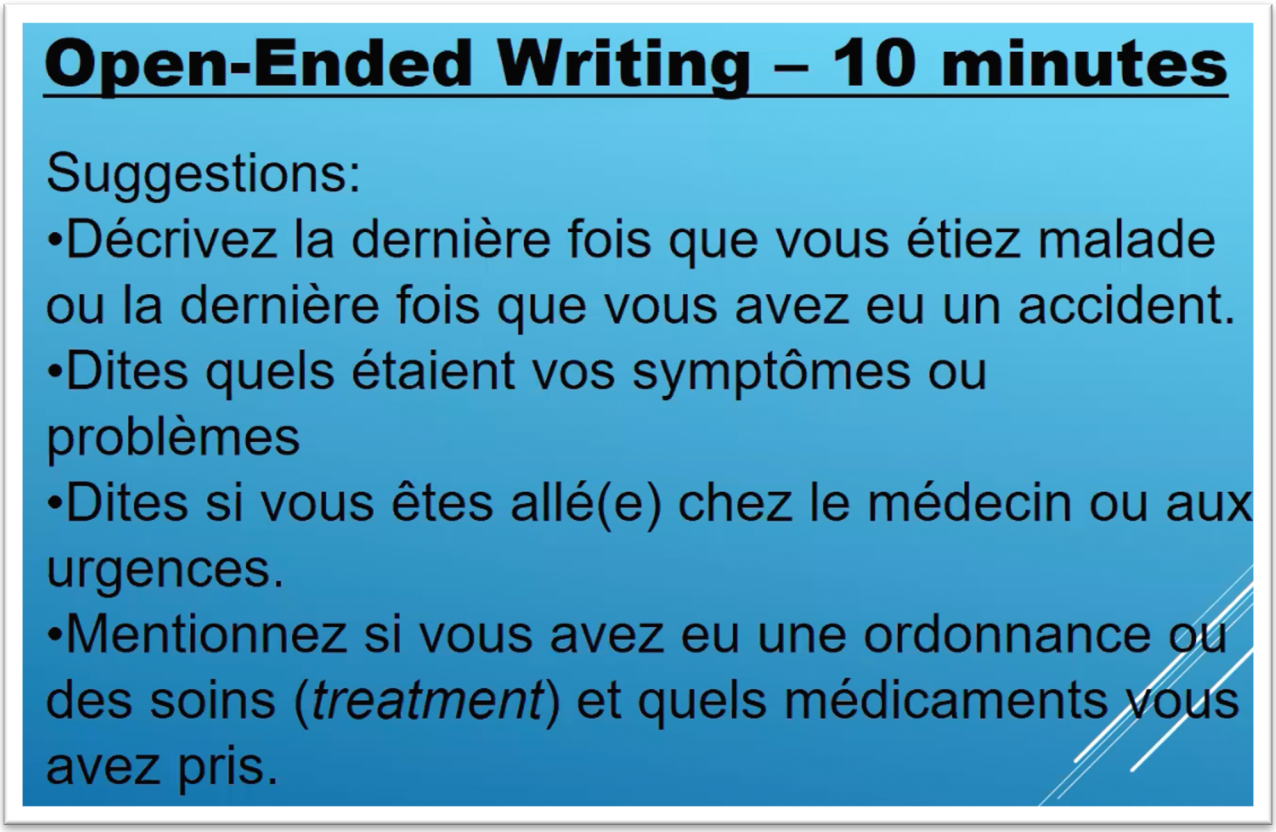
Appendix F

3/26/21 Activity to Assess: Dice-Rolling Speaking Prompt (Q4), Ask Instructor to Join Room (Q5)



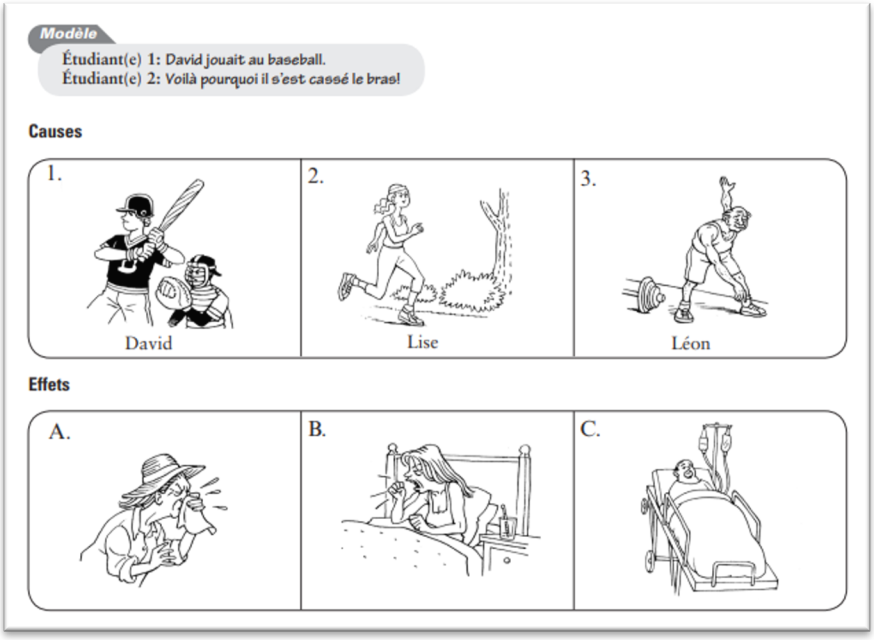
Appendix G

4/7/21 Activity to Assess: Open-Ended Writing Prompt (Q1)



Appendix H

4/7/21 Activity to Assess: A/B Information Gap Speaking Prompt (Q4), Re-Enter Main Meeting during Speaking (Q5)



Modèle

Étudiant(e) 1: David jouait au baseball.
Étudiant(e) 2: Voilà pourquoi il s'est cassé le bras!

Causes

1. David

2. Lise

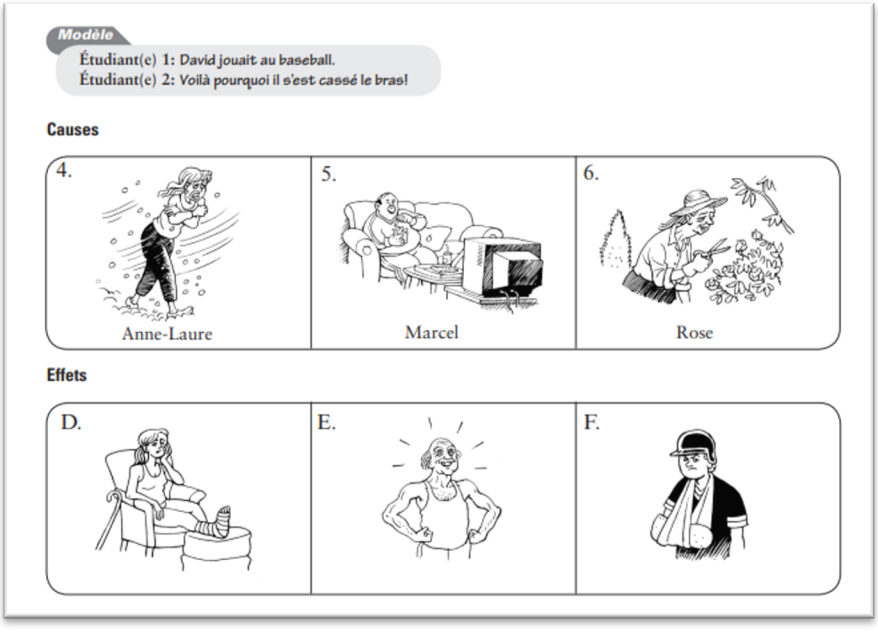
3. Léon

Effets

A.

B.

C.



Modèle

Étudiant(e) 1: David jouait au baseball.
Étudiant(e) 2: Voilà pourquoi il s'est cassé le bras!

Causes

4. Anne-Laure

5. Marcel

6. Rose

Effets

D.

E.

F.

Appendix I

4/9/21 Activity to Assess: Translation Speaking Prompt (Q4), Writing during Speaking Activity (Q6)

Avec un(e) partenaire, traduisez la conversation suivante:
(This time, write in the chat as you speak)

A – What time did you wake up this morning?

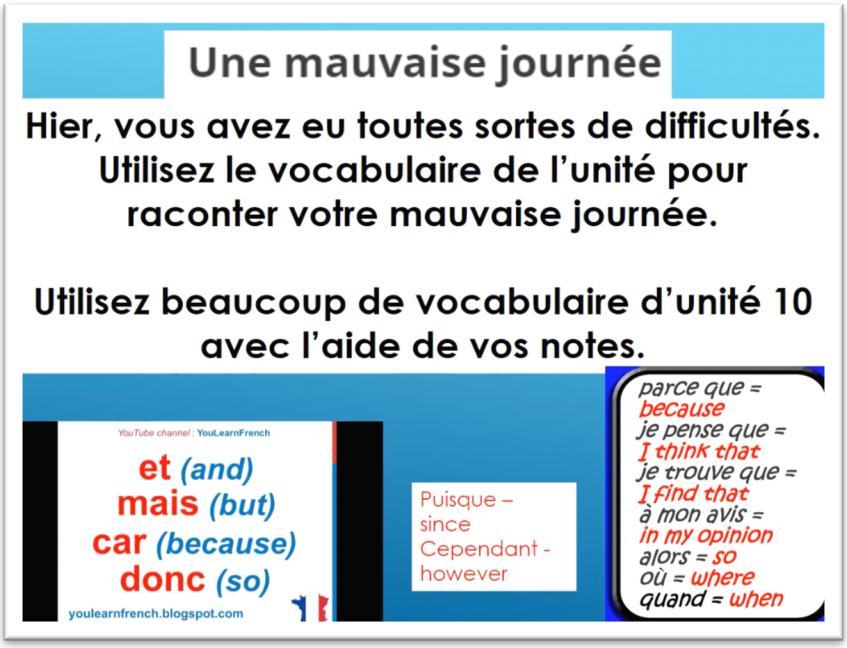
B – I woke up at 7:00. And you?

A – I woke up at 9:00. I went to bed late last night. What time did you go to bed?

B – I went to bed at 11:00, but fell asleep at midnight!

Appendix J

4/12/21 Activity to Assess: Peer Edited Writing (Q2),
Jamboard Writing Tool (Q3)



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