

# TEACHERS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

An ethno-cognitive approach

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantine it provoked on the teachers' decision-making process. I believe that the more we understand why and how we decide, the more it can help us make better decisions in the future. This type of study is of extreme importance, because the decisions made by teachers will influence the educational environment for both teachers and students. For this reason, I developed a questionnaire with seven questions and used Woods' (1996) ethno-cognitive model of language teachers' decision-making to analyze the answers of five teachers who had never taught online before. The results show that all the teachers had to change the way they made decisions during the pandemic according to their interpretations of what was happening to them.

**KEY WORDS:** ethno-cognitive model. decision making. interpretations.

## RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo é compreender como a pandemia do COVID-19 e a quarentena por ela provocada afetaram a forma como os professores tomam decisões. Acredito que quanto mais entendermos como as decisões são tomadas, mais isto pode nos ajudar a melhorar a qualidade das decisões no futuro. Este tipo de estudo é de extrema importância, uma vez que as decisões que os professores tomam influenciarão o ambiente educacional, tanto para professores quanto para alunos. Por este motivo, desenvolvi um questionário com sete questões e usei o modelo etnocognitivo de tomada de decisões por professores de Woods (1996) para analisar as respostas de cinco professores que nunca haviam dado aula on-line anteriormente. Os resultados nos mostram que todos os participantes da pesquisa tiveram que adaptar seus processos de tomada de decisão de acordo com suas interpretações acerca do que a pandemia havia provocado.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** modelo etnocognitivo. tomada de decisões. interpretações.

## Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the teachers' decision-making process using an ethno-cognitive approach. The pandemic brought a new scenario to teachers who were obliged to deal with so many new challenges all of a sudden like teaching online, for example. Therefore, I would like to understand some of the factors that affected the teachers' decision-making process and how teachers reacted to those factors along the way.

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When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, nobody was prepared for it. We all had to adapt our lives to a new reality. We had to start using masks, stop seeing our friends and family, in most cases we had to stay home all the time, sanitize our clothes and food whenever coming in from outside. We had to learn a lot of new habits in no time and for teachers and students it was not different.

Because of the quarantine that came along with the pandemic, soon teachers and students lost their access to the school building, printed paper, being able to see and hear each other face to face and so many other things that we only realized we had when it was taken away from us.

Both teachers and students were faced with the necessity to adapt to a new reality with no preparation time. Students had to learn how to watch classes by means of platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and so on. Teachers had suddenly moved to the other side of the screen and all the material for school became digital in most situations. At the same time, teachers suddenly had their students on the other side of the screen and had to create classes for a new environment most of them had never worked with before.

Therefore, both teachers and students were forced to learn how to behave in a totally new situation. Whatever existed before had changed and new knowledge had to be created about teaching and learning with no previous preparation time. Teachers and students had to reinvent themselves overnight because that was the only way to keep the system working.

The pandemic revealed another fact that had been hidden, namely how different our population is in relation to their access to technology. Students of the private sector immediately started to have classes using some kind of platform for interactions, while their counterparts of the public sector had to wait a lot longer because not all of them had access to internet connection and devices that could help them access their classes, such as smartphones, tablets or last generation laptops. Once again, our country revealed to us how different we all are.

Considering all the scenarios depicted above, teachers had to make new decisions for their classes. The ones they were accustomed to resort to were not valid or possible anymore. Teachers were confronted not only with a new scenario but also with limited possibilities to make things work at the beginning of the quarantine.

Making decisions is not easy. Human beings make decisions about many different aspects of their lives every day. However, even after practicing a lot, every decision presents their own challenge. Whenever you decide to follow a certain route, you choose from a myriad of possibilities, keeping one and leaving all the others out. This process defines who we are in

a certain way. From the most simple to the most complex, the decisions we make will set experiences in motion, which, in turn, will shape the way we exist in the world. Therefore, who we are is a reflection of the decisions we have made so far.

Now, imagine having to perform a task that is so important with no previous knowledge. That is exactly what happened to most teachers when the quarantine started. Most of the teachers who were teaching at schools, private language institutes and universities had never taught online classes before. They had to start anyway because that was the only option, and had to do it with no previous preparation.

Eggleston (1977) states that teachers are constantly making decisions in their classrooms: “indeed decision-making is probably the central feature of the role of the teacher.” Teachers make decisions about the content of the lesson, the way the class is going to be organized, what kind of activity will motivate students, and so on. (EGGLESTON, 1997). When we make a decision, we are not necessarily choosing the best option. Sometimes, we have to choose what is feasible or possible at that specific moment due to factors such as time, money, feelings, among others. In this sense, deciding can bring a certain level of pain, for you choose what is possible and not what you would like to choose. According to Delgado-Gaitan (1990), “Language educators need to construct the best answers for their own contexts on the basis of a decision-making process involving the community the program is intended to serve.”

Teachers have to make many different kinds of decisions in their daily lives. We have to choose activities, resources, dynamics, and so on. This process involves a careful analysis of all the options available so that we can select the one that will suit a specific class the most. Imagine when you have to decide based on a situation that has no equivalent in history. That is exactly what has been happening to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. We had to adapt a lifetime of practices overnight, so that our students could continue having classes somehow. We had to keep on deciding what to do without what Prabhu (1990) calls “sense of plausibility.” We had to start creating personal theories of teaching and learning in this new reality from scratch with no references to previous experiences.

Widdowson (1990, 7) explains that “teaching languages can be seen as a problem-solving activity, a kind of operational research to find solutions for local problems with global resources.” Therefore, the teacher is a managing professional who analyzes the resources and limits presented — curriculum, students, technological appliances, textbooks, among others — and makes use of this information to decide the way they are going to plan their classes and consequently present them. Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that teaching is essentially a thinking process. The authors also explain that teachers make decisions along the whole

educational process; in other words, teachers do not only decide during the planning stage, they also make decisions during and after classes. In the case of our study, teachers had to make decisions with very little information or knowledge about the new scenario.

As we can see, making decisions is an important part of teachers' job and deserves a lot of attention from us. Moreover, it is of great importance to understand how teachers are making decisions during the pandemic and how all the new aspects brought by the new scenario are affecting those decisions so that we can inform future ones. During the pandemic teachers were demanded in ways that they had never been before. For that reason, if we are able to shed light on this moment of change, maybe we can help teachers make better decisions in the future. Furthermore, as we believe some of the changes brought by the pandemic may not go away as soon as it is over, studies about teachers' decisions can inform teacher training courses and help future teachers.

According to Moita-Lopes (1996, 181), the background knowledge of the future teachers should involve knowledge about the nature of language, which is related to the theoretical understanding about the kinds of knowledge language users possess and to the ways this knowledge can be used in specific social contexts situated culturally, historically and institutionally as well as knowledge about how to act as an educator. In order to achieve this goal, the future teacher may leave behind what the author calls a dogmatic vision of education and must instead be involved in a critical reflection about their job.

Moreover, research on teaching has begun to demonstrate that investigating the teachers' decision-making process has the potential to improve the effectiveness of the educational environment of the classroom (SHAVELSON, STERN, 1981; PETERNOS, WALBERG, 1979). Some studies of classroom academic work (DOYLE, 1984; TOBIN, GALLAGHER, 1987) reveal that teachers' knowledge structures and beliefs are strong factors in determining the characteristics of the learning environment. Clark (1988) states that

(...) research on teachers' preconceptions, implicit theories, planning, and reflection on classroom instruction has documented the many heretofore unappreciated ways in which the practice of teaching can be as complex and cognitively demanding as the practice of medicine, law, or architecture (CLARK, 1988, p. 8).

Therefore, as the author stated above, teaching is an extremely complicated task that can occur in extremely complicated environments. More so the one we are facing right now. In turn, teachers are limited beings, as are all human beings, with a limited number of factors that can be processed at any given time in any given environment. Thus, in order to cope with the complex environments that present themselves, teachers construct models of reality upon which decisions are based as we will see in more detail later on.

This study is an ethnography in its approach. Ethnographic research produces “theories of cultures, i.e., explanations of how people think, believe, and behave, that are situated in local time and space” (LECOMPTE; J. SCHENSUL, 2010, p. 12). It “seeks to understand what is happening, what it means, and its significance to the social group from an emic (native, insider) perspective rather than from an etic (external, outsider) perspective” (GRENFELL, 2014). Moreover, Woods (1996, p. 48) affirms that “ethnomethodology is the study of everyday life and the way language is used by members of a culture to represent the world to themselves and to others in normal patterns of communication”. And, since the author is a member of the culture of language teachers, he has what the ethnographic tradition calls ‘member’s competence’, that is the ability to interpret teachers’ statements from an insider’s point of view. In order to understand the way the pandemic has affected teachers’ decisions, I developed a structured questionnaire as follows:

1. Has the pandemic affected the way you plan your classes? Why?
2. Has the pandemic affected the way you present your classes? Why?
3. Has the pandemic affected the types of activities you use in your classes? Why?
4. Has the pandemic affected the way you assess your students? Why?
5. Has the pandemic affected your students' development? Why?
6. Has the pandemic affected your expectation towards your students' development? Why?
7. Has the pandemic affected your level of satisfaction with your job? Why?

The use of questionnaires is explained by Seliger and Shohamy (1995) who state that:

Collecting data by means of procedures of a high degree of explicitness involves the use of “formal” and structured types of data collection procedures which determine in advance the specific focus of the data that will be sought. Examples of such procedures are structured questionnaires, discrete point tests, formal interviews, and metalinguistic judgement tests. In all of these procedures, the subject is constrained to respond to specific questions or stimuli determined in advance, often with little or no elaboration. These types of procedures are typically used in studies of the analytic or deductive type, where the researcher usually has a specific hypothesis or research question, and where the data to be elicited can be determined in advance. (SELIGER; SHOHAMY, 1995, p. 157).

Thus, I decided to develop a questionnaire as neutral as possible so as not to influence the participants in any way, even though we understand that this kind of data collection procedure is of high explicitness. The questions were developed so as to understand the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on different levels of teachers' decisions. Another aspect of the questionnaire is the question “why” in each item. This question was included to make teachers give more complete answers with more information than simply “yes” or “no”. Questionnaires

are also a useful way of obtaining more uniform and standard information, given that the same questionnaire was given to all the participants.

The questionnaire was answered by five teachers who work in different teaching institutions as well as teaching private lessons. None of them had previous experience with online teaching and for the purpose of this study I am going to identify them with letters of the alphabet. They are all teaching synchronous classes using the platform Zoom. The decision to interview teachers who deal with many different kinds of institutions and students intended to understand more directly the effect of the pandemic itself on teachers' decisions and how it affected the whole process. Here is, a brief description of the kind of classes each participant teaches.

Chart 1 — Participants' profile

A	private language institute, private classes and university.
B	private classes
C	private language institute, private classes and university.
D	private language institute and private classes.
E	private language institute, private classes and university.

The answers reveal that all of the teachers were affected by the pandemic in a way however, they did not react to or dealt with the situations in the same way. Each one underwent a different process to deal with the new scenario established by the conditions imposed by the pandemic such as teaching online, having to work and live in the same place, not being able to make use of the activities and techniques they were used to, not being able to see their students most of the time, being able to use handouts, etc.

Next, I will introduce the ethno-cognitive model created by Devon Woods used in this study to help analyze the teachers' decision-making process.

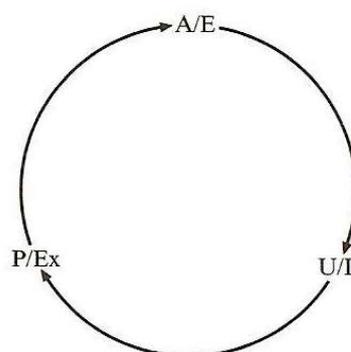
### **An ethno-cognitive model of language teachers' decision-making**

As we have seen from the paragraphs above, making decisions is an extremely important part of teachers' job. Therefore, it is of great importance to understand this process and help teachers make better decisions along the way.

In his book called *Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching* (WOODS, 1996), Devon Woods defines what he calls ethno-cognitive model of language teachers' decision-making

(Picture 1), which includes three components: (i) the actions/events of a classroom, which combined will form a course; (ii) the plan that precedes the actions and events, where teachers will include all the elements that will compose the class and (iii) the understanding/interpretation that comes right after the end of the class, through which teachers will comprehend and evaluate the actions and events creating information that will feed the planning process, and thus start a new cycle.

Picture 1: An ethno-cognitive model of language teachers' decision-making (WOODS, 1996, p. 82)



A/E = action/event

U/I = understanding/interpretation

P/Ex = planning/expectation

Woods (1996, p. 49) explains that:

A model of language teachers' decision-making processes needs to include three essential elements. The central core of such a model is what we observe in the classroom: decisions being carried out as classroom actions and events. By projecting forward to planned future lessons, we can focus on the planning processes by which future events and actions are chosen and organized. By projecting backward from the classroom events to previous lessons, courses and other relevant experiences in the life of the teacher, we can focus on the interpretive processes, including background knowledge, assumptions and beliefs, by which these classroom events and actions are understood and evaluated. (WOODS, 1996, p. 49).

Woods (1996, p. 47) states that his model combines ethnography and cognitive science. He explains that the notion of studying culture and discovering the values of a culture or subculture and their conventions for communicating those values during their normal daily activities is a contribution from ethnography. Cognitive science supports the notion of cognitive processes underlying the process of planning and carrying out "normal daily activities" and the cognitive processes used to interpret those activities.

Underlying people's actions and behaviors are their interpretations of the situations they are in, including the texts and events which occur in those situations, and the prior texts and events they have experienced which are related to those situations. There is a dynamic interaction between schema and event. The schema influences the

perception of the event; and the perception of the event influences the evolution of the schema. This is a crucial aspect of our examination of the interpretation of classroom actions and events, including, but not limited to, verbal action and events. (WOODS, 1996, p. 63).

In addition to the two fields mentioned above, linguistic analysis and discourse analysis form an important basis for this study so that they support the idea that language and discourse are structured to create and convey meaning.

This model created by Devon Woods will help us dissect the decision-making process of the teachers, as well as help us approach the data in a way that it will help us understand the connections underlying the different phases of the model. Also, as mentioned above, teachers had to face many new factors and take them into consideration during their planning process: closed schools, classes that used platforms of interactions, etc. How did those factors influence the interpretation teachers create about their classes and therefore affect the way they plan future classes? The pandemic has presented many impairments for teachers to continue teaching the way they were used to; therefore, all their beliefs had to be reorganized in the face of a new reality unfolding, with little time and not so many options to choose from.

Teachers “interpret” a teaching situation in the light of their beliefs about the learning and teaching of what they consider a second language to consist of; the result of this interpretation is what the teacher plans for and attempts to create in the classroom. (WOODS, 1996, p. 69).

### **Planning and Expectations**

We know very little about teachers’ planning processes and even less about the relationship between planning and what happens in the classroom. However, we all agree that teachers’ decisions are a strong influence in the way things will happen. Therefore, the major focus of this study is to discover if the pandemic has affected the participants’ planning process.

Why do we plan? Woods (1996, p.52) explains that “planning occurs when an individual’s ‘current state’ is different from a ‘desired state’ or goal.” Therefore, teachers generally plan by bearing in mind both students’ actual state and what they want to achieve with it. For that reason, they will develop a sequence for the class, choose the activities that will be put together, as well as the way things are going to be introduced to the students, among many other things, so as to achieve a certain goal. Woods also states that planning is an ongoing process that involves a constant monitoring of the current state (student’s knowledge and abilities, the contents of the curriculum, and what is happening in the classroom) that will feed future plans.

Plans also involve expectations. Teachers will organize their classes with a certain idea of how things are going to happen the moment their plans are put in action. These expectations can be matched or not and one way or the other it will affect the teachers' level of satisfaction with their plans. Therefore, plans involve an idea of what we want to happen in the classroom, as well as how people will react to those actions.

Below are two charts with participants' answers. Chart number 2 refers to the effects of the pandemic on the plan itself, and chart number 3 refers to teachers' expectation towards students' development.

Chart 2 — Has the pandemic affected the way you plan your classes? Why?

A	Yes	Classes had to be adapted to the online mode.
B	Yes	It has influenced the kind of material (and activities) I prepare.
C	Yes	I had to readjust the plans. I used to plan my classes while I was at my workplace, now there are at least three elderly people talking all the time and in need of help around me. I had some activities which were based on body language movement, but as the visual contact is lost (most students with the cameras off) I had to give them up.
D	Yes	By using my computer as a tool (in class), I have more resources to work with.
E	Yes	Because I had to learn new things and it was not in my plan that time.

As we can understand from the answers above, all teachers had to adapt their planning during the pandemic due to the fact that classes were not face to face anymore. Teachers A, B, C and E had to adapt because of the new reality of teaching with Zoom. Teacher C introduces a new factor that is the fact that he lives and takes care of three elderly people who depend on him for some tasks. During the pandemic, many people, besides working from home, had to let their helpers go because of the quarantine. Another aspect he presents is the fact that most students keep their cameras off, making it more difficult for teachers to feel their development or use their bodies for any activity.

Teacher D uses a very curious argument in her answer. She states that because she is working from home, using her computer, she has more resources to use with her students. Although she works in schools where they have computers available in class for the teacher, she finds the experience of using her own richer. This situation poses an interesting question:

why does she not have what she needs at school? What is the aim of having computers in class if teachers are not allowed to install all the resources they find necessary?

Another important fact brought to my attention by teacher D's response is that a lot of teachers to whom I talk to about the pandemic have this tendency to list only its bad aspects. Teacher D is expressing that with the pandemic she was able to use more resources with her students, bringing in a positive one.

According to Rubie-Davies et al. (2004), “all teachers have expectations for their students’ learning and these expectations may form the basis of teachers’ planning and instructional decisions.” From the findings of their extensive research, the authors report that teacher expectations may have immediate effects on student achievement by influencing the opportunities to learn that are provided. Variations in teacher expectations can lead to variations in what is taught, which ultimately will lead to variations in what is learned (BROPHY, 1982). Beliefs about teaching and learning can influence teachers’ expectations for student performance and, in turn, these beliefs and expectations will be employed to group children, plan for their learning and in due course to deliver lessons (WOODS, 1996).

Chart 3 — Has the pandemic affected your expectation towards students’ development? Why?

A	Yes	Since this is a reality no one has ever experienced before, I feel unable to hold the same expectations as I used to in face to face classes. Everyone's lives have been affected; I just do the best I can and let things happen.
B	No	I've lowered my expectations. There's so much we/they can do.
C	Yes	As I said before, I expected that they were fluent in the digital field, but they were not. Besides, I also expected that they could do the same effort I did trying to learn how to deal with online issues.
D	No	My expectation is that they pay attention, ask questions when they feel like it, and learn. I still hope they do all of that.
E	No	Because the pandemic affected my life in the same way.

The teachers of this study probably brought their expectations to this new reality. The answers in chart 3 show different reactions when we focus on these expectations. Although teacher B responded “No” to the question about the pandemic affecting her expectations, in reality she changed her expectations by “lowering them.” Teachers develop understandings of the same situation in different ways. At the same time that teachers A, B and C report having

changed their expectations, teachers D and E did not. Moreover, each one of them presents a different explanation for the phenomenon, be it facing a new reality and taking it into account (A) or realizing that students were not so tech savvy as we imagined (C).

Teachers D and E report no change in their expectations towards students, also for different reasons. Teacher D seems to be keeping the same expectations she had in her regular classroom, and teacher E expects her students to apply the same effort she did in order to cope with the new reality.

### **Actions and Events**

Actions and Events are the central core of Woods' model. According to the author, the term "action" carries the idea of something intentional and goal oriented, while the term "event" lacks intentionality. Woods (1996, p.53) states that "an individual's action is a part of a larger event which results, and which also includes others' actions and unforeseen consequences." Therefore, actions are something that can be planned while events are what actually happened in the course of the class. The author explains that:

Plans are formed by comparing goals to consequences of actions, and then by choosing actions whose consequences match the goals and whose prerequisites are satisfied in the current situation or become goals that can be achieved by further planning. (WOODS, 1996, p. 53)

As teachers progress through their careers, they develop ways of organizing the actions in their planning. We test things that do not work and then use things that we know will always work. We create a portfolio of activities that will help us along the way. We also create what Prabhu (1996) calls sense of plausibility, which is a feeling of what is or is not appropriate for each class.

With all the changes brought by the pandemic, sometimes we were not able to use the activities kept in our personal portfolio. The answers in charts 4 and 5 are clear examples of teachers adapting actions to match their goals due to the constraints brought by the quarantine.

Chart 4 — Has the pandemic affected the way you present your classes? Why?

A	Yes	I had to learn to teach online and discovered it is different from face to face classes.
B	Yes	I've been flipping my classes more often.
C	Yes	As I am a person who constantly walks around the room while teaching, I had to readapt myself into getting stuck on a chair. I used to ask my students to volunteer for answering the questions, but now most of them don't want to do it.
D	Yes	I find myself relying a whole lot less on body language, because due to connection instability sometimes I just can't turn on my camera.
E	Yes	I have to think of strategies to make the students interact more during the classes. It was something that used to happen naturally.

As we can see from the answers above, all the teachers had to adapt the way they present their classes. Due to the new online environment, they had to learn new strategies to deal with the new reality since it is quite different from the one they were used to. Although all the teachers were affected, each one had to adapt for a different reason. Teacher A started to understand that teaching online is different from face to face; teacher B shows some knowledge of how to flip the classroom; teacher C felt more affected in the way she monitors her students because now she has to be sitting on her chair without moving and now her students do not volunteer as they used to; teacher D had to learn to convey meaning without relying on body language; and teacher E had to reinvent the way she provokes interaction because the online environment took away the interactions that used to happen naturally.

Chart 5 — Has the pandemic affected the types of activities you use in your classes? Why?

A	Yes	I am not able to use activities that require moving around the classroom or handling some teaching resources made of paper, for example.
B	Yes	Some students have not adapted to the listening format.
C	Yes	I adapted the materials once I had planned to use with my students materials which were based on touching objects, coloring, handcrafting.
D	Yes	I have a bigger selection of interactive activities.
E	Yes	Somehow I continue using some strategies I used to use before. However, I am always worried about researching new ways of making the students interact during the classes.

Chart 5 shows us that teachers not only had to adapt the way they present their classes but also the type of activities they use because of the pandemic. All of us were obliged to teach using platforms for interactions; therefore, each one reacted in a different way, having to construct a new repertoire of actions that will help us achieve our goals during this new phase of our professions. Teacher A had to give up using activities that require moving around as well as activities on paper; teacher B perceives that the listening activities became a struggle for some students; teacher C also had to adapt a bunch of activities based on using the hands; teacher D had to create a bigger selection of interactive activities; and teacher E managed to use the same ideas but in a different interactional mode.

### Understanding and Interpreting

In order to develop Prabhu's (1990) sense of plausibility, teachers need to form an understanding of what is working out or not in the classroom. According to Woods (1996):

How teachers, in particular, interpret the events and actions that occur in a classroom will clearly influence subsequent planning processes, and affect what subsequently happens in the classroom in the following moments, days and weeks. (WOODS, 1996, p. 58)

Another important notion introduced by Woods (1996) in his research is that of "background knowledge structures." The author states that "in order to take appropriate action, people need to understand; and to understand they need knowledge about the world and specifically about the situation they are in." However, as we already know, the participants of this research; in the same way as all the teachers in the world, did not have any knowledge

about the situation they were in when the pandemic and the quarantine started. They had to make decisions as the situation unfolded.

Besides changing the patterns of interaction and the kinds of activities they had to choose, teachers had to change the way they interpreted their classes. The charts below are examples of how each one of the participants reacted in a different way when called upon to describe the way they assessed their students and how satisfied they were with their jobs.

Chart 6 — Has the pandemic affected the way you assess your students? Why?

A	Yes	Although the exams are in the same format as in face to face classes, I feel that the fact that students have to do them from home (and thus may use their textbooks or any other source) does not enable me and them to assess their real progress.
B	Yes	At the moment students need much emotional support other than language support.
C	Yes	Collaborative techniques were inserted in my online classes, so I had to learn how to assess my students as a group and also provide them with some knowledge about self assessment. I must confess that in some places where I work it still kept the exams the way they were in the past. I just had the opportunity to assess my students in a different way at the university.
D	No	Because I kept the method I already used. Making sure I keep them talking as much as possible.
E	Yes	I think that everything is too heavy now. We're not normal, so I try to make things lighter.

Chart 6 shows that each teacher will interpret the new scenario brought by the pandemic in a different way and this interpretation will affect not only the way they plan their actions, but also the way they assess their students.

Chart 7 — Has the pandemic affected your students' development? Why?

A	No	Those who used to show maturity in face to face classes were able to gain even more maturity after being taught online, and those who were immature students before the pandemic remain immature in the same proportion. By maturity I mean: commitment. The motivated students were able to keep their motivation high as well.
B	Yes	They have been less focused on the program and they have been struggling with a systematic study routine.
C	Yes	They seemed to be lost, lazy and not curious about learning (even when I brought some topics related to their life). It also showed me that although we call them native digital learners, half of them are unable to solve online obstacles while attending the classes. Students got even more in silence and kept their cameras off because they said they felt uncomfortable showing their faces on the screen. But, surprisingly, they don't feel ashamed of exposing themselves on Instagram, Whatsapp and Facebook stories.
D	Yes	Students who are extremely shy are more comfortable talking to their screens. That caused them to participate more and the direct consequence of that was better grades for those students.
E	Yes	Because now it seems they have more things to do and they are not in the proper places. At home, life keeps happening, dinner, lunch, Tv, people talking, kids...

The question in chart 7 was included so that we could have a little glimpse of the students' process through the teachers' point of view. We can see by the answers that the pandemic affected students in different ways. We suggest a similar research with students to give us a clearer picture of what happened to them. The answers show that students reacted differently, but they also show that teachers may be interpreting what happens to them through their own perspective.

Chart 8 — Has the pandemic affected your level of satisfaction with your job? Why?

A	Yes	I feel dissatisfied. Too many new tasks have been added to the ones I already had, and there seems to be no recognition for being able to handle them. I wish one (in particular) of the people who are in charge of supervising my job were a leader instead of just a boss, but since this person has never been this way before the pandemic, I will not blame it on the virus — it has just highlighted this situation.
B	Yes	I miss the real interaction with the students (I need "touch" I need "feel")
C	Yes	I suffered a lot with this issue. I am a teacher because I really love my occupation. So, everytime I concluded a class, I felt I was not giving my best, I felt I was not doing what I did the way it was in the past. But then I realized that the effort for better classes could not come just from me, my students should also change their way of learning. This must be a mutual effort. After 8 months of online classes, it seems that I have to learn a little bit everyday in order to provide better classes. I felt uncomfortable with the way I was teaching in March and April, but now, as I try to learn new ways of teaching I must say that my level of satisfaction has increased.
D	Yes	Being able to work with the computer during classes has helped me improve how things roll in general. I feel like I am helping them have more fun with all the interactive material I am able to present. Seeing how much fun they're having now makes me feel more satisfied.
E	Yes	Now it's clear, and I am sure about what I really like to do.

Chart 8 shows how the pandemic affected teachers' satisfaction in different ways. The answers show that what brings satisfaction to one teacher may not be the same for another. Teacher A feels dissatisfied because she feels unrecognized in her efforts, and this does not seem to be provoked by the pandemic; teacher B feels dissatisfied because her teaching style is more face to face, and suddenly she was forced to teach from a distance; teacher C felt some frustration in the beginning, but managed to adapt her teaching and now seems more satisfied with her results; teacher D feels that she is much better online than she was face to face and teacher E feels certain about her professional choice.

It is very interesting to perceive that each teacher will interpret the pandemic scenario according to their own perspective. However, they were all forced into a situation they had no choice but to teach in a certain way with certain resources.

## Final words

In his research, Woods (1996) introduces the concept of BAK: beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, which in his findings are used by the teacher to interpret what goes on in the classroom. Although the aim of this study was not to identify teachers' BAKs, we pretty much agree with the author when he states the importance of studying teachers' decisions as a way to:

(...) allow us to take into account the different legitimate ways in which both learners and teachers are interpreting events (including language events) in the classroom. If teachers are making plans and carrying out decisions to transmit learning through language, then our understanding of how ideas are transmitted and perceived by the participants are important in how we analyze classroom processes. How teachers, in particular, interpret the events and actions that occur in a classroom will clearly influence subsequent planning processes, and affect what subsequently happens in the classroom in the following moments, days and weeks. (WOODS, 1996, p. 58)

Therefore, shedding light on teachers' decisions and understanding why and how they were made will hopefully help other teachers make better decisions. Since this is a process that can be perfected and that can be improved once you understand the consequences of each decision you take, we have to keep on with the research in this area.

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