

Pandemic and Practice

The Impact of COVID-19 on
Second Language Teachers in Canada



Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)

1 877-727-0994 | admin@caslt.org | www.caslt.org

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Pandemic and Practice: The Impact of COVID-19 on Second Language Teachers in Canada

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Authors

Roswita Dressler, PhD, and Rochelle Guida, EdD

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IMPETUS FOR THE STUDY

Impetus for the Study

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020, school buildings abruptly closed, teachers pivoted to emergency remote teaching, and second language instruction moved online. Since education in Canada is provincially regulated, the guidelines for teachers were not identical across the country. Additionally, some decisions were left to the school district level, so there was variation even within provinces. Elementary and secondary teachers often faced different requirements. Furthermore, in some situations, the work of educators teaching homeroom and/or core subject classes (e.g., Mathematics, Science) was prioritized over that of second language teachers whose classes were considered optional. The first wave of the pandemic, therefore, impacted the nature of second language teaching dramatically.

Although teaching returned to in-person instruction for many educators in September 2020, it required teachers and students to follow new safety protocols. The various waves of the ongoing pandemic sometimes shifted instruction back online. Some teachers were even asked to teach both in-person and online simultaneously (known as hybrid, Hyflex, or bimodal) or maintain a parallel online asynchronous portal with schoolwork for absent students. The return to the classroom after the first wave of the pandemic, therefore, required teachers to attend to novel teaching situations.

By the end of the 2020–2021 school year, it was clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would remain a reality for the following school year (2021–2022). As an organization, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) determined that a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on second language teachers and their practice would provide important information on what these educators had experienced, what innovations may have emerged, and how the organization might support second language teachers as we move forward into a post-pandemic world.

Other Studies of Canadian Teachers

Our understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Canadian teachers is informed by timely work by provincial and national associations. The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) reported on compassion fatigue, emotional labour, and burnout experienced by its teachers during the

first wave of the pandemic (i.e., March–June 2020; ATA, 2020a). Follow-up surveys after each acute wave indicated that teachers remained concerned about their working conditions and student learning challenges (ATA, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b). The Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT) also surveyed its members during the first wave and reported on access and use of technology, along with the support needs of teachers and students (QPAT, 2020). This report painted a picture of teachers working from home and using their own technology. It indicated the need for training for teachers and ongoing support for students. Vaillancourt et al. (2021) examined education during the pandemic and came up with 10 policy recommendations, including improving teacher expertise in digital technology and supporting teaching as essential work. They noted the challenge that pandemic school closures and subsequent restrictions after reopening posed to children's learning and mental health. They underscored the relational aspects of teaching and their importance for learning. Together, these reports provided an overview of the challenging teaching and learning realities for teachers and students during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The unique experiences of Canadian second language teachers during the pandemic are just beginning to be documented. Afreen and Norton (2021) provided a case study of four Bangla teachers in a heritage language school. When their teaching moved online, the teachers found that families beyond their immediate catchment area were taking advantage of the online delivery to enroll their children in the school. The teachers perceived that this online learning supported both the linguistic and cultural identity of these minority language community families. Smith and Arnott (2022) interviewed four Ontario French as a Second Language (FSL) teachers with varying levels of comfort in online teaching and the use of online tools. The teachers who were less comfortable with technology reported many teaching challenges due to their lack of preparation. Those who were more comfortable found many opportunities to innovate their practice and were often called upon to serve as mentors and troubleshooters for their colleagues. Both studies provide a glimpse into challenges and opportunities for second language teaching that likely impacted Canadian second language teachers across the country.

Methodology

Recognizing that the pandemic had an impact on Canadian second language teachers and their practice, in the fall of 2021, CASLT invited Dr. Roswita Dressler (Associate Professor, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary) to conduct a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study team included Dr. Rochelle Guida, a French and Italian teacher, and two Ph.D. students, Ana Wee and Yue Ma. The study was approved by the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board of the University of Calgary (REB21-1421). Data collection took place from September to November 2021. With the support of the CASLT administrative team, a survey invitation in English and French was sent out on October 8, 2021, to the CASLT mailing list of 3,567 second language educators and stakeholders (see [Appendix A](#)). It was also advertised via the CASLT Facebook page and targeted Facebook advertisements (see [Appendix B](#)). The English ad was viewed by 10,523 people and clicked on 90 times, while the French ad was seen by 11,914 people and clicked on 105 times. A survey participation reminder email was sent on November 4, 2021, to the CASLT mailing list (then 3,564 email addresses). A specific follow-up email was sent out on October 25, 2021, for the focus group (see [Appendix C](#)), which would take place via Zoom on November 6, 2021. The focus group breakout sessions were recorded, and the data generated from the discussions were used to support the interpretations of the survey results. These data sources were analyzed to provide the descriptive statistics of quantitative data and thematic analysis of qualitative data for this report.

Data Collection

Survey

The survey, via SurveyMonkey, was the main data collection instrument (see [Appendix A](#)). The survey portal was open from October 7 to November 8, 2021, and the response rate was 275 of 3587 (7.67%). The survey focused on second language teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic at the national level. The survey contained 24 questions, which were primarily multiple choice. For most questions, survey respondents were invited to check all that applied to their practice. In the initial demographic questions (see [questions 2–6](#)), teachers were asked to identify their teaching region, years of experience, and current program

being taught. Next, the educators chose a description of their teaching assignment at various stages during the pandemic (see [questions 7–9](#)). Featuring expandable text boxes, [questions 10–15](#) invited teachers to comment on (a) equity and access issues, (b) digital literacy experiences for students and/or parents, (c) digital literacy experiences for teachers, (d) mental health experiences for students, and (e) mental health experiences for teachers. They were also asked to indicate whether a specific challenge “seldom or never arose,” “occurred once or was minor,” or “occurred often or was significant” (see [question 16](#)). Additionally, we provided space for open-ended comments. Subsequently, teachers commented on the support they received during the pandemic as well as what support they anticipated needing following the pandemic (see [question 18](#)). Finally, teachers documented their technology use from March 2020 onward by selecting the most applicable statement (see [question 20](#)). We estimated that the survey took 30 minutes to complete. Teachers could also submit their contact information for a prize draw to receive five free CASLT publications of their choice (see [questions 22–23](#)), but this was redacted before analysis.

Focus Group

Ten study participants from a variety of teaching backgrounds (i.e., elementary and secondary school teachers, curriculum consultants, etc.) attended the focus group event. Focus group attendees were informed that their participation constituted consent by specific action for their data to be included in the study. To maintain confidentiality, teachers were invited to change their display name to their first name and teaching level only (e.g., Sally, K–6). During the main session, participants viewed a bilingual PowerPoint, which guided the discussion and contained the focus group questions (see [Appendix E](#)). Ten second language teachers joined the virtual discussion and were organized into four breakout rooms specific to their teaching program and language of choice. This resulted in three breakout rooms with discussions in English (i.e., elementary, secondary, post-secondary) and one discussion in French. These discussions were recorded, and breakout facilitators took notes that were shared on Google Docs. Attendees responded to questions based on our initial analysis of the survey data. Their responses informed our report, but due to the small number of attendees, we did not conduct a separate analysis of the focus group data.

KEY FINDINGS

Key Findings

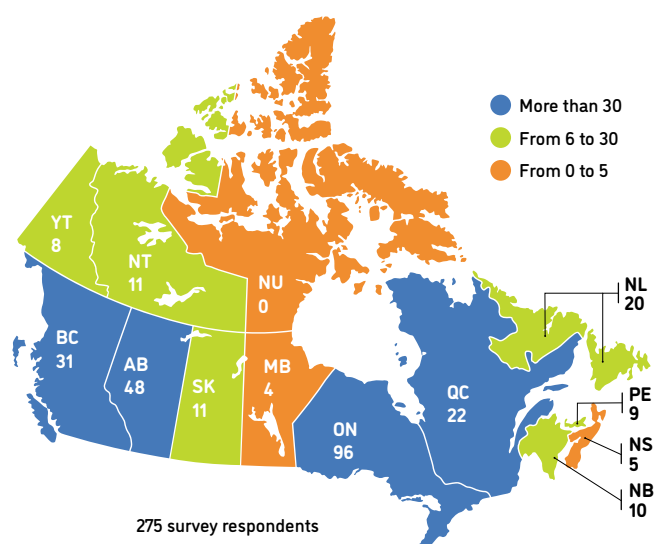
Survey Respondent Profiles

Under the ethics provisions for this study, we limited our collection of study participant profiles ($n = 275$) to those provided by the survey respondents. The charts and tables below show that respondents represented a cross-section of second language teachers from all Canadian provinces and territories (except Nunavut). Most respondents were from Ontario and Alberta (see [Figure 1](#)).

Provinces and Territories

FIGURE 1

Provinces and Territories Represented by Survey Respondents



To our knowledge, the findings from Figure 1 align with the enrollment trends in second language programs across Canada.

Languages Taught

Of the 275 survey respondents, 273 actively taught second languages (two supported second language teaching as post-secondary instructors). Most second language teachers who responded to the survey teach French, followed by English. This distribution appears proportional to that of second languages taught across Canada (see [Table 1](#)) since instruction in the country's official languages is more common than instruction in minority languages.

TABLE 1

Languages Taught by Survey Respondents

Language(s) Taught	Respondents
French	215
English	27
French and another	8
English and French	7
English and another	2
German	5
Mandarin	4
Indigenous language(s)	3
Italian	1
Spanish	1
Total	273

Teaching Levels

Most survey respondents taught second languages at the elementary level (K–6) followed by middle school (Grades 5–9). Others taught at multiple levels or in community programs. Since many programs begin at the kindergarten or Grade 1 level (see [Program Types](#) section), the predominance of elementary and middle school survey respondents appears representative of the distribution of second language teachers (see [Table 2](#)).

TABLE 2

Teaching Levels Represented by Survey Respondents

Teaching Level	Respondents
Elementary	104
Middle School	80
Secondary	42
Elementary and Secondary	26
Post-secondary	16
Other	7
Total	275

Program Types

Teachers responding to the survey were asked to indicate which program they taught in. We used common second language teaching terminology, and the question allowed for

multiple responses since some teachers work in more than one program. Upon examination, some responses did not seem logical (e.g., claiming to teach in a bilingual program in a province that does not offer them). We concluded that some survey respondents did not understand the terms as we did. Therefore, we analyzed the open-ended comments, cross-referenced the provinces with the programs claimed, and adjusted some responses accordingly. With that caveat, we present the responses to the programming question in [Table 3](#).

TABLE 3

Programs Represented by Survey Respondents

Program	Respondents
Second language (language as school subject, K–12)	133
Immersion (100%)	114
Other: language consultant, post-secondary, or adult continuing education	25
Bilingual (partial immersion)	5
Total	275

Years of Teaching Experience

Responses came from teachers with a range of teaching experience. While most teachers had 0–20 years of teaching experience, the ranges in five-year increments were relatively evenly distributed (see [Table 4](#)).

TABLE 4

Years of Teaching Experience

Teaching Range (years)	Respondents
0–5	66
6–10	57
11–15	44
16–20	47
21–25	27
26–30	22
31+	12
Total	275

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Our findings were drawn from both survey and focus group participants to provide an overview of common experiences and noteworthy situations in second language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey respondents were asked

about the impact of the pandemic on their teaching during the first wave (March–June 2020), the subsequent school year (September 2020–June 2021), and the beginning of the school year in which the study took place (September 2021). They could choose more than one response, and we provided an open-ended comment section to capture the nuances of their situations.

March–June 2020

Of the 270 survey respondents who answered this question, most provided emergency remote teaching during this period, either immediately ($n = 134$) or after instruction resumed (e.g., extended spring break; $n = 97$). A small number of teachers lost their jobs or were reassigned to other roles such as guidance counsellors ($n = 18$). Very few still taught face-to-face ($n = 8$); those who did were mostly in alternative learning settings (e.g., adult continuing education).

2020–2021 School Year

Regarding the 2020–2021 school year, we received 253 responses. Most teachers ($n = 160$) taught face-to-face with COVID-19 safety measures, such as social distancing, masking, frequent cleaning, and hand sanitization, while others taught entirely online ($n = 37$). Some found themselves teaching online for periods due to school or class outbreaks ($n = 23$) or division or provincial mandates ($n = 28$). Fewer teachers answered this question, but the response rate demonstrated that in-person teaching following safety measures was the norm during this period.

Beginning of the 2021–2022 School Year

Since we administered the survey in fall 2021, our question asked respondents to describe their situation at the time they filled out the survey (September–November 2021). Of 250 respondents, 195 were teaching face-to-face using COVID-19 safety measures. Fewer were teaching online than in the previous year ($n = 18$). Rather than asking about teaching online during outbreaks, we asked about teaching a blend of online and face-to-face, since that practice had emerged over the previous school year. Thirty survey respondents indicated they were in that situation. As with the previous school year, the beginning of 2021–2022 could be characterized as in-person teaching following safety measures.

Summary

The immediate impact of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was that most second language teachers in Canada moved to emergency remote teaching, either immediately or following a break in face-to-face instruction. Open-ended responses indicated that not all second language teachers had direct access to their students (e.g., they provided materials

via the homeroom teacher) nor were they able to teach as much as they would have normally (e.g., they were asked to cut back on or cease second language teaching entirely). Most educators returned to in-person schooling with COVID-19 safety precautions, which remained in place at the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year. Survey and focus group responses indicated that the degree to which these safety precautions were in place varied considerably with (a) the availability of health supplies (e.g., masks, sanitizer, cleaning supplies), (b) the available space (e.g., for social distancing), and (c) the age of the students (e.g., some younger students were exempt from masking). Furthermore, some schools reduced class sizes or created instructional cohorts to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19. Teachers reported spending considerable time on COVID-19 safety precautions, which took away from instructional time in the second language. The general impact of the pandemic was an overall reduction in the amount of second language teaching.

Challenges Encountered

Survey respondents were asked to comment on specific challenges they — or their students and their students' families — may have encountered over the time from the first wave of COVID-19 to the end of the first full school year following it (i.e., March 2020–June 2021). The teachers responded to questions about equity and access to learning, digital literacy, and mental health. One focus group question asked specifically about the biggest challenges teachers faced. Together, these responses inform our understanding of how the pandemic impacted second language teaching in these three areas.

Equity and Access to Learning

Teachers commented on challenges they experienced regarding equity and access to learning — as well as any they observed in students and families — from March 2020 to June 2021. Many survey respondents documented challenges to learning that can be categorized as technical, home support, and teacher or student engagement. Technical challenges included a lack of reliable Wi-Fi, software, or hardware. Most educators observed home support challenges, which included a lack of (a) parental supervision, (b) appropriate workspace, or (c) parental knowledge to help with technology or school tasks. According to some survey respondents, school closures and Internet access problems reduced the level of student-teacher interaction as students lacked curriculum materials (either hard copies or digital copies). Some students disengaged from learning in general or in their second language classes by not participating actively in online sessions, being absent from class, and/or not completing assignments. As one participant in the focus group observed, “There was a huge diversity [of learning experiences as to] what students received during the three months.” On a

positive note, a few survey respondents reported that their schools provided various supports to families who were struggling, including food and laptops, to facilitate learning for students. The responses to this question provided insight into the complexities faced by second language teachers during this period.

Digital Literacy Challenges of Second Language Teachers and Students

Survey respondents were asked to comment on any digital literacy challenges that they or their students may have encountered between March 2020 and June 2021. As one focus group attendee said, “I thought I was tech-savvy until we went online and then I felt like a complete idiot.” Overwhelmingly, second language teachers felt unprepared to transition to online learning since they did not receive adequate training support from their administration. Furthermore, most second language teachers did not have sufficient access to free, authentic, or age- and language-level-appropriate resources for remote learning. Often, hard copy resources were not permitted to be given to students for home use, or, due to the frequent lockdowns, teachers were unable to retrieve their tangible resources promptly. The lack of virtual materials required many educators to redesign units and activities to mimic in-classroom learning. Other survey respondents returned to lecture-style teaching in their online lessons due to their inability to benefit fully from digital literacy opportunities. While some teachers reported that they had no online teaching challenges (“Not only was I a language teacher, I was also a technology fixer”), many educators reported multiple challenges in this new situation.

In commenting on what they felt were the digital literacy challenges of students, survey respondents reported that some students were unfamiliar with online learning, such as using the learning management system (LMS) or computer software. Other students appeared disengaged or experienced social isolation. As one focus group participant and language consultant reported,

The teenagers were making noises, turning their computers on and then leaving, acting as rascals, as they normally are, and the teachers didn't have the strategies. *How do I bring them back to the screen? How do I get them [. . .] talking to one another in the group, in the breakout rooms? How do I be sure that they are actually going to talk in French in the breakout room? The teachers weren't used to giving away all of that control. In the same room, we had strategies as language teachers [. . .] no strategies for any kind of oral communication during that whole three months.*

Most teachers indicated that some parents were not able to assist or monitor their children while learning online, especially in the second language. Student learning was seen

to suffer throughout this part of the pandemic due to these challenges.

Mental Health of Second Language Teachers and Students

Teachers commented on both personal and student mental health from March 2020 to June 2021. Many teachers experienced social isolation, exhaustion, and COVID-19 anxiety. Some reported a decrease in confidence. One survey respondent reported feeling “like a bad teacher, like I wasn’t doing enough to help them.” Some teachers experienced a lack of administrative and/or parental support. Others found themselves working overtime or feeling adrift with the loss of the usual school structure. One survey respondent was very honest about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health: “Je dirais que la routine est ce qui a été le plus affecté pendant la pandémie. Le manque de structure m’a encouragé à devenir plus amorphe.” (“I would say that the daily routine was the most affected by the pandemic. The lack of structure caused me to become more scattered.” —Author’s translation).

While some teachers felt unaware of student challenges with mental health or unable to comment on them, others observed that their students experienced several mental health challenges. In order of frequency of mention, these included stress, isolation and/or depression, disengagement, frustration with timetable changes, and fatigue. Not all students appeared to be challenged in the same areas, and some educators noted the positive effects of home support for access to technology. Generally, though, educators and their students shared feelings of social isolation, disengagement, and stress.

Examples of mental health challenges mentioned briefly in the surveys were reinforced during the focus group. Participants from Northern Canada shared that both teachers and students felt extremely isolated from southern communities. Other focus group participants reported that, when at school, they were not allowed to socialize with other staff. Some classrooms returned to individual rows for student seating to increase social distancing, which made group work challenging. When students had their cameras and microphones turned off during online teaching, many teachers interpreted that behaviour as disengagement. Educators lamented the student participation they could not elicit as they could in face-to-face teaching. In some jurisdictions, secondary students were already aware of policies that their grades during the pandemic would not be lower than their grades before the pandemic, thus contributing to student disengagement with online classes.

Stress impacted the mental health of both teachers and students. Many were exhausted by learning about unfamiliar LMSs and adapting to ever-changing classroom configurations and timetables (e.g., transitioning from a daily, 40-minute French class to every second week). Many teachers and students were anxious about becoming infected with COVID-19. Due to ongoing teacher shortages, curriculum consultants returned to the classroom, teaching unfamiliar students. In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic brought many shared mental health challenges to both online and in-person classrooms.

Extent of Challenges

This was far greater than I have ever experienced in my career. Tight deadlines and turnaround time for adapting and creating content made for a crushing experience with little rest. Lack of sleep, unending amounts of work, and trying to maintain a positive presence with students while teaching took a heavy toll. Add to this the fact that when teaching, I was often looking at a blank screen since almost all students had cameras off. There was no constant feedback on how much was being understood or if students were there at all. (Survey respondent)

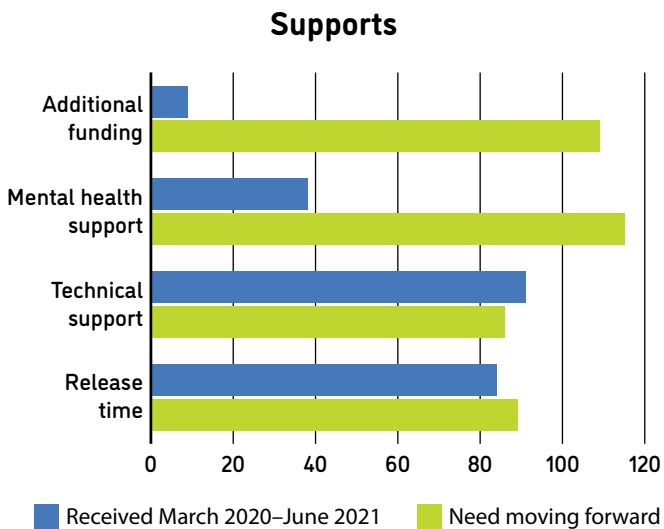
In the survey, we asked about the extent to which certain challenges were encountered from March 2020 to June 2021 (see [Appendix D, question 16](#)). Most survey respondents considered all of the challenges we listed as occurring often or being significant. The three most significant were increased workload, difficulties hearing students due to masks or face shields, and increased student absenteeism due to COVID-19 safety measures (quarantine or isolation). At the time of the survey, teachers were cognizant of how all these aspects impacted and were possibly still impacting their practice.

Supports for Teachers

The final section of the survey focused on discovering enduring innovations in second language teaching and identifying areas for future support post-pandemic. Specifically, we asked about four aspects: 1) additional funding for the classroom, 2) mental health support, 3) technical support, and 4) release time to prepare for transitions. Of the 182 survey respondents who answered this question, more than half reported receiving the last three supports, whereas few teachers received additional funding (see [Figure 2](#)). Moving forward, the perceived need for technical support and release time did not change, but respondents indicated a considerable need for additional funding for classroom and mental health support.

FIGURE 2

Supports Received March 2020–June 2021 and Requested Moving Forward



Use of Technology

I introduced myself and my classes to Google Classroom just before Spring Break as a safeguard. Spring 2020 was brutal . . . When I learned that they were not reading notes on their own, we began making notes live during the week's first Zoom call . . . We did breakout rooms for conversation practice. I had a giant ear to show that I was a fly on the wall. They said this was their favourite part of the Zoom meetings. Conversation practice aside, they felt connected and used this time to work out challenges: mini-tutorials within the class time. Summer 2020 to now has been amazing with our generous and creative sharing resources . . . now the [World Language](https://www.worldlangteachers.com/)

[Teacher Summit](#).¹ My newest challenge is being disciplined in a pedagogical candy store. (Survey respondent)

Considering that some enduring innovations might arise through the use of technology, survey respondents were asked about their use of LMSs, document sharing, video conferencing, gamification, social media, and video/voice recording and editing. While multiple possibilities exist for each, we provided respondents with examples from the most popular tools (see [Appendix D, question 20](#)). Before March 2020, approximately two-thirds of the 182 teachers who responded to this question used document sharing ($n = 137$), their school's LMS ($n = 127$), gamification ($n = 117$), and social media ($n = 101$). Fewer educators used video recording/editing ($n = 74$) and video conferencing ($n = 39$) in their classes. The use of an LMS, document sharing, and gamification remained relatively stable during the March 2020–June 2021 period. However, considerably more survey respondents reported using video conferencing and voice recording and far fewer teachers used social media during these pandemic months than before the pandemic.

Turning to which of these technologies they might use moving forward, LMSs and document sharing were slightly less desired than pre- and during the pandemic. Moving forward, most respondents predicted that their use of video conferencing and voice recording/editing would continue at levels higher than pre-pandemic, but much lower than during the pandemic. Gamification and social media use would likely remain lower than during the pandemic. During the focus group, attendees discussed possible reasons for these results. The varied extent to which these innovations might endure often pivoted on whether they would be supported by the school jurisdiction, both financially and in principle, and how the nature of instructional delivery might change post-pandemic.



1 <https://www.worldlangteachers.com/>

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Discussion of the Findings

This research provided a national overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadian second language teachers and insight into the enduring innovations that emerged. The findings confirmed that the struggles of second language teachers in the areas of technology and mental health were similar to those of a more general population of teachers in Alberta (ATA, 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b) and Quebec (QPAT, 2020). They also shed light on the unique struggles of second language teachers whose subjects are often marginalized to the point that their teaching time was reduced or eliminated (Smith & Arnott, 2022). Unlike the findings of Afreen and Norton (2021), many second language teachers did not report online learning to be generally facilitative for both language and cultural learning.

Innovations that might endure include the increased use of technological tools of all types. More teachers will be developing a base level of understanding of technology and some teachers will be innovating in their teaching practice. Due to their multimodal nature, we believe that the most likely enduring innovations will be video conferencing and video/voice recording used to support student learning or enrich second language communication. However, since pandemic restrictions in teaching are ongoing as we write this report, conclusions regarding the enduring nature of innovations are more aspirational than determined at this point.

Limitations

We recognize some limitations to this study. Despite casting a large net, our sample size represents only a fraction of Canadian second language teachers. It likely did not include the most demotivated, overworked, or stressed teachers who would not have had the time and energy to participate in the study. We included both public and private schools without differentiating, a decision that might have pointed to reasons for inequities in resource availability. We also discovered at least one question that was not understood by teachers in the way we had intended it. Furthermore, due to an administrative error, the French version of the survey asked two questions in the future tense that should have been worded in the past tense. Ironically, the focus group event itself epitomized teaching during the pandemic, with some technical issues (e.g., participants' cameras froze at certain points during the interviews) and a low turnout likely due to Zoom fatigue or the meeting taking place on a Saturday. We compensated by relying more on open-ended comments from the survey to elaborate on the results. Several of these limitations are

inherent to research, especially during the pandemic; our learning from this experience will inform our future research.

Future Research

Several possibilities emerge for future research. First, since the pandemic has not been declared over, a follow-up survey in the post-pandemic era would help to complete the picture of impact as well as enduring innovations. Lessons learned from this survey could be applied to strengthen the survey questions. Second, an analysis of policy guidelines from across Canada would inform claims as to the prevalence of certain practices raised by this study: hybrid/Hyflex/bimodal teaching, redeployment of second language teachers to other roles, etc. Third, a focus group or in-depth interviews with second language teachers across Canada could provide case studies of individual experiences, including second language teachers' digital literacy innovations. All of these would inform our overall understanding of the impact of the pandemic and the enduring innovations once COVID-19 becomes endemic.



CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

This research aimed to ascertain the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on second language teaching in Canada and to document innovations that may be emerging. At the time the study was conceptualized, some of us may have envisioned the report being produced post-pandemic. Alas, as we have passed the second anniversary of the declaration of the pandemic, we cannot yet conclude on the impact or the enduring innovations. However, based on our study of second language teaching in Canada from March 2020 through to the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year, we can conclude that the pandemic did indeed have an impact, perhaps most profoundly during the first wave, but also as in-person instruction returned with COVID-19 safety protocols.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted equity and access issues for Canadian second language teachers, students, and families, particularly during emergency remote teaching. Online teaching also brought digital literacy challenges to the surface, but some teachers and students emerged from the first wave with increased skills in those areas. Our findings underscore previous research into mental health challenges during the pandemic, but also provide a strong sense that teachers take student mental health challenges seriously and seek ways to mitigate the impact on learning. While it is too early to tell which innovations will endure, it seems that the digital literacy and technological knowledge acquired through online learning will remain part of the repertoire of teachers and students. As well, the awareness of challenges and the need for support in the areas surveyed and queried in the focus group will inform the work of CASLT and ministries of education moving forward. As such, we provide the following recommendations to those stakeholders.

Recommendations for CASLT

As a national organization for second language teachers, CASLT should:

1. Continue advocating for Canadian second language educators as equally competent and important teachers in their policy documents and promotional material. The teachers from our study felt marginalized due to the perceived and sometimes expressed lower status of their second language teaching. Both official and minority languages were relegated to this lower status.
2. Continue to provide technological leadership for Canadian second language educators to resolve inequitable access to training. Teachers reported various levels of comfort and available training regarding technology. As one focus group attendee suggested, “Make sure that those educators have access to those tools, strategies, and professional learning that are available out there.” This leadership could take the form of training, but also

of repositories of specific knowledge for teachers, such as the [blog post regarding digital applications in the second language classroom](#),² which we have written for CASLT.

3. Continue to provide accessible, digital resources for Canadian second language educators. Most of the teachers from our study struggled to locate accessible digital resources for their teaching subjects. CASLT should provide a repository similar to the one for technical support, but also permit free access as a perk of CASLT membership as teachers were often dismayed to find a subscription fee attached to retrieved resources. One teacher in the focus group requested “low-tech, high efficacy strategies to go back to” and emphasized “in particular, for the oral communication component” for future emergencies (i.e., school closures). As some school jurisdictions are reluctant to pay for subscriptions, CASLT should use its bargaining strength to negotiate a member-only rate or access to those digital resources teachers found most useful during the pandemic.
4. Continue taking on a leadership role for mental health initiatives. Given that health and wellness were themes that will need to be addressed moving out of the pandemic, CASLT should continue to take a leadership role in the concrete and explicit promotion of health and wellness for second language teachers and students through its publications, events, and other initiatives. Specifically, CASLT should provide its members with practical mental health resources, accessible at no cost.

Recommendations for Educational Leadership

Recognizing the direct influence that school districts, school leaders, and ministries of education have on Canadian second language educators, educational leaders should:

1. Prioritize digital literacy for Canadian second language educators by allocating more professional development opportunities.
2. Provide increased funding for digital resources (e.g., online textbooks, novels, short stories, periodicals, etc.) so that second language teachers and students are not required to pay out of pocket to access those necessary materials.
3. Promote the benefits of second and additional languages in their promotional material by communicating directly with school districts, administrations, teachers, students, and parents.
4. Actively research the characteristics of alternate forms of teaching — such as hybrid/Hyflex/bimodal — to ensure that they are beneficial and do not impose an unnecessary burden on either second language teachers or their students and share this information.
5. Evaluate the response to second language online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Find ways to mitigate future student and teacher attrition from these programs that may have resulted from the marginalization that second language teachers reported.

2 <https://www.caslt.org/en/blog-app-use-pandemic/>

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APPENDICES

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Second Language Teachers and Their Practice

We want to know how the pandemic has affected L2 teachers and their teaching practices.

- What challenges did you encounter during the pandemic?
- What support did you receive?
- What new teaching practices did you adopt?

Share your experiences in our survey. It's open to teachers of **all languages at all levels**.

[Complete the Survey](#)

Learn more about [the study](#).

Incentives for Survey Participants

Complete the survey and enter to win:

- One of twenty \$10 gift cards (your choice of Starbucks, Tim Hortons, or Indigo Books & Music)
- A grand prize of your choice of five CASLT publications plus a bundle of CASLT swag

Save the Date

Stay tuned for more information about a focus group event on November 6. Focus group participants will learn the results of this survey, discuss their own experiences, and share innovative teaching practices that they have used or developed.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

The online survey is part of a research project. Participation is voluntary. Your responses will be anonymous unless you opt to share additional details about your teaching practices with the CASLT team and/or you choose to enter a prize draw. As part of the survey, we will ask you for a description of your teaching assignment (level, language taught) as well as your years of experience as a teacher. There are no risks to participate in this research. The benefit of participating in this study is that you will have the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to an understanding of the enduring innovations. The results of this study will be used to inform CASLT how it can better support second language teachers in Canada through new projects and initiatives.

Please note: We are using SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform with servers located in the USA. As such, it is subject to U.S. laws, the U.S. Patriot Act in particular, which allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. If you choose to participate in the survey, your responses to the

survey questions will be stored and accessed in the USA. Survey responses, however, cannot be linked to your computer. All data are encrypted and stored directly on SurveyMonkey's servers. Researcher access to the survey data is password-protected and the transmission is encrypted.

The data from these surveys will be compiled and reported on in aggregate. Raw data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Attendance at the focus group event will constitute your consent for your contributions to be considered as research data. The focus group session and breakout room discussions will be recorded and transcribed, but individuals will be identified using pseudonyms. Due to the nature of focus groups, individual contributions remain part of the data even if you choose to leave the focus group early; however, all participants will be encouraged to conduct themselves professionally with regards to what they hear at the focus group event. Participation is voluntary and you can leave the event at any time. Participants have a chance to win five CASLT publications of their choice. There are no risks to participate in this research. The benefit of participating in this study is that you will have the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to an understanding of the enduring innovations. The results of this study will be used to better inform how CASLT can support second language teachers in Canada through new projects and initiatives.

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

- Roswita Dressler, Researcher, at rahdress@ucalgary.ca
- Kim Giese, CASLT Projects and Professional Development Coordinator, at projects@caslt.org

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at 403 220-6289, 403 220-8640, or cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

The CASLT team



Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)
101-2197 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, ON K1H 7X3
projects@caslt.org | www.caslt.org

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You are receiving this email because you are a CASLT member, partner or stakeholder.



The image shows a Facebook post from the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT). The post is dated 8 October 2021 and features a background image of a classroom with students raising their hands. The text of the post asks language teachers about their experiences during the pandemic and provides a link to a survey. A large red and black text overlay reads 'Participate in a New CASLT Research Project: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Second Language Teachers and Their Practice'. At the bottom, there is a teal banner with the CASLT logo and name, and a 'Learn more' button.

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers - CASLT
8 October 2021 · 🌐

Language teachers: we want to know how the pandemic has affected you and your teaching practices.

- 🖨️ What challenges did you encounter during the pandemic?
- 👉 What support did you receive?
- 📚 What new teaching practices did you adopt?

The survey is open to teachers of ALL languages at ALL levels. Learn more and participate: <https://www.caslt.org/en/projects/study-impact-covid-12>

Participate in a New CASLT Research Project
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Second Language Teachers and Their Practice

 Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers - CASLT
Charitable organisation

Learn more

Invitation: Focus Group on Language Teaching During the Pandemic

Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on L2 Teachers and Their Practice

How has the pandemic impacted you and your teaching practices? Take part in this focus group to:

- Discover the preliminary [survey](#) results;
- Discuss your own experiences with other Canadian language teachers;
- Share the innovative ideas and teaching practices you used.

The event is open to teachers of **all languages** at **all levels**.

Date: Saturday, November 6, 2021

Time: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EDT

[Register for the Focus Group](#)

Learn more about [the study](#).

Note: By attending the focus group, you consent for your contributions to be considered as research data. See the full details below.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

CASLT invites you to take part in a focus group event on Canadian L2 teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are interested in the challenges you have faced as well as any enduring innovations in second language teaching practice that may be emerging as a result. As a participant, you will learn of the preliminary results of the survey, discuss your own experiences with other attendees, and share innovative teaching practices that you have used or developed.

This event is part of a research project and will take place in a Zoom videoconferencing room. You must pre-register for the event. Attendance at the event will constitute your consent for your contributions to be considered as research data. The focus group session and breakout rooms will be recorded and transcribed, but individuals will be identified using pseudonyms. Due to the nature of focus groups, individual contributions remain

part of the data even if you choose to leave the focus group early; however, all participants will be encouraged to conduct themselves professionally with regards to what they hear at the focus group event. Participation is voluntary and you can leave the event at any time.

Participants have a chance to win five CASLT publications of their choice. There are no risks to participate in this research. The benefit of participating in this study is that you will have the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to an understanding of the enduring innovations. The results of this study will be used to better inform how CASLT can support second language teachers in Canada through new projects and initiatives.

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

- Roswita Dressler, Researcher, at rahdress@ucalgary.ca
- Kim Giese, CASLT Projects and Professional Development Coordinator, at projects@caslt.org

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at 403 220-6289, 403 220-8640, or cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

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Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)
101-2197 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, ON K1H 7X3
projects@caslt.org | www.caslt.org

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Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Second Language Teachers and Their Practice

Introduction

Informed Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Telephone, and Email:

Dr. Roswita Dressler, Werklund School of Education,
403 220-6641, rahdress@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Second Language Teachers and Their Practice

Sponsor: Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)

Thank you for your interest in completing this survey. This survey is part of a research project, so please take time to read this first question carefully. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you please free to contact Roswita Dressler, Researcher, at rahdress@ucalgary.ca or Kim Giese, CASLT Projects and Professional Development Coordinator, at projects@caslt.org. The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

We are investigating Canadian second language teachers' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and are interested in the challenges they have faced as well as any enduring innovations in second language teaching practice that may be emerging as a result.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to complete this online survey. The survey will take 15–20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be anonymous unless you opt to share additional details about your teaching practices with the CASLT team and/or you choose to enter a prize draw for:

- One of twenty \$10 gift cards to your choice of Starbucks, Tim Hortons, or Indigo Books & Music
- A grand prize of five CASLT publications of your choice plus a bundle of CASLT swag.

Your participation is entirely voluntary.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

We will ask you for a description of your teaching assignment (level, language taught) as well as your years of experience as a teacher.

Are There Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There are no risks to participate in this research. The benefit of participating in this study is that you will have the opportunity to reflect on your teaching practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and contribute to an understanding of the enduring innovations. The results of this study will be used to inform CASLT how it can better support second language teachers in Canada through new projects and initiatives.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

We are using SurveyMonkey, an online survey platform with servers located in the USA. As such, it is subject to U.S. laws, the U.S. Patriot Act in particular, which allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. If you choose to participate in the survey, your responses to the survey questions will be stored and accessed in the USA. Survey responses, however, cannot be linked to your computer.

All data are encrypted and stored directly on SurveyMonkey's servers. Researcher access to the survey data is password-protected and the transmission is encrypted.

The data from these surveys will be compiled and reported on in aggregate. Raw data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

- Roswita Dressler at rahdress@ucalgary.ca
- Kim Giese at projects@caslt.org

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at 403 220-6289, 403 220-8640, or cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

Ce sondage est en anglais. [Cliquez ici pour accéder au sondage en français.](#)

* 1. Do you consent to be in this study?

- Yes
- No

Questions

Please provide details about your teaching assignment immediately prior to March 11th, 2020.

Note: For the purposes of this survey, the term “second language” encompasses official, additional, Indigenous, international, and heritage languages.

- * 2. Second language(s) taught (immediately prior to March 11th, 2020):

- English
- French
- German
- Indigenous language(s)
- Japanese
- Mandarin
- Spanish
- Other (please specify)

- * 3. Teaching level (immediately prior to March 11th, 2020):

- Grades K–3
- Grades 4–6
- Grades 7–9
- Grades 10–12
- Post-secondary
- Adult
- Other (please specify)

- * 4. Type of program (immediately prior to March 11th, 2020):

- Immersion (100%)
- Bilingual (partial immersion)
- Second language (language as school subject, K–12)
- Newcomer language instruction
- Adult continuing education
- Language school
- Other (please specify)

- * 5. Number of years of second language teaching experience

- * 6. Province/Territory:

- Alberta
- British Columbia
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Nova Scotia
- Ontario
- Prince Edward Island
- Quebec
- Saskatchewan
- Northwest Territories
- Nunavut
- Yukon

- * 7. Choose the description that best matches your situation during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020–June 2020) (choose all that apply):

- I continued to teach face-to-face as before.
- I lost my teaching assignment.
- My teaching assignment immediately transitioned online.
- My teaching assignment was temporarily halted then transitioned online.
- Other (please specify)

- * 8. Choose the description that best matches your situation during the 2020–2021 school year (September 2020–June 2021) (choose all that apply):

- I taught face-to-face with no pandemic safety measures (e.g., masks, spacing, sanitization).
- I taught face-to-face with pandemic safety measures (e.g., masks, spacing, sanitization).
- I taught online only.
- I taught online some weeks due to quarantines resulting from COVID-19 outbreaks in my school or classroom.
- I taught online some weeks due to provincial mandates.
- I lost my teaching assignment.
- Other (please specify)

APPENDIX D: SURVEY QUESTIONS

- * 9. Choose the description that best matches your situation during the 2021–2022 school year so far (choose all that apply):

- I will be teaching face-to-face with no pandemic safety measures (e.g., masks, spacing, sanitization).
- I will be teaching face-to-face with pandemic safety measures (e.g., masks, spacing, sanitization).
- I will be teaching a blend of online and face-to-face.
- I will be teaching online only.
- I do not currently have a teaching assignment.
- Other (please specify)

10. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following area (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did you as a language teacher experience with respect to equity and access to teaching?

11. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following area (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did your students and/or their families experience with respect to equity and access to learning?

12. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following area (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did you as a language teacher experience with respect to digital literacy?

13. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following area (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did your students and/or their families experience with respect to digital literacy?

14. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following area (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did you as a language teacher experience with respect to mental health?

15. Please comment on the challenges you encountered in the following areas (if any) between March 2020 and June 2021:

What challenges did your students and/or their families experience with respect to mental health?

* 16. Please indicate the extent to which you encountered any of the following challenges while teaching from March 2020 to June 2021:

	This challenge seldom or never arose	This challenge occurred once or was minor	This challenge occurred often or was significant
Increased workload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology learning with little support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsibility to oversee COVID-19 safety measures in my classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties hearing students due to masks or face shields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties being heard by students due to masks or face shields	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shortage of supply/substitute teachers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increased student absenteeism due to COVID-19 safety measures (quarantine or isolation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loss of use of classroom items even while face-to-face (e.g., furniture, manipulatives, shareable items)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

17. Please provide additional comments if you feel the challenges listed above do not adequately describe your situation:

18. Please indicate whether you received support in the following areas and the support you will need moving forward:

	I received this during March 2020– June 2021	I need this support moving forward (Sept. 2021 and after)	N/A
Release time to prepare for transitions to online teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technical support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional funding for my classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

19. Please provide additional comments if you feel the above areas of support do not adequately describe your situation:

APPENDIX D: SURVEY QUESTIONS

20. Please indicate your use of technology before, during, and potentially after the COVID-19 pandemic:

	I used this before March 2020	I used this between March 2020 and June 2021	I envision using this from Sept. 2021 and onward
Learning Management System (e.g., Google Classroom, D2L, Blackboard, Moodle)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Document sharing (e.g., Google Drive/ Google Docs, One Drive)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video conferencing (e.g., Google Meets, Zoom, Teams)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gamification (e.g., Kahoot!, Gimkit, Socrative, Quizlet)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video and/or voice recording and editing (e.g., FlipGrid, YouTube, Screencastify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)			
<input type="text"/>			

21. Considering your use of technology as well as other teaching practices or strategies you used or developed between March 2020 and June 2021, please share the practices or strategies you used or developed that you found successful.

Consent

22. Please indicate if you wish to:

- Enter the prize draw
- Share the innovative teaching practice(s) you described above with the CASLT Team, who may share them with teachers across Canada

23. Enter your email address if you selected one or both of the options above:

24. Thank you for participating in the survey. Do you have any feedback on the survey itself (e.g., the length, type of questions) or do you have anything else you would like to add?

End of Survey

Thank you! Your feedback will be used to inform CASLT how it can better support second language teachers in Canada through new projects and initiatives.

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

- Roswita Dressler at rahdress@ucalgary.ca
- Kim Giese at projects@caslt.org

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at 403 220-6289 or 403 220-8640; or email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

Discussion Point 1

Impact on Teachers

1. Introduce yourself: language you teach, province, years of experience, level you teach.
2. What impact did the pandemic have on your teaching assignment?
3. What were the 2–3 biggest challenges in your teaching, why and what did you do about them?

Discussion Point 2

Support for Teachers and Students

1. What supports did you receive?
2. What supports did you need, but did not receive?
3. What supports do you need as we come out of the pandemic?

Discussion Point 3

Enduring Innovations

1. What learning or innovations are you bringing with you from this pandemic into your future teaching?
2. What would you like to still add to your teaching repertoire from what you have heard others have done?
3. How can an organization like CASLT help you moving forward?



When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020, school buildings abruptly closed, teachers pivoted to emergency remote teaching, and second language instruction moved online. Second language teachers continued to face many pandemic-related challenges in the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 school years. This study reveals what these educators experienced during the pandemic, what innovations may have emerged, and how CASLT might support second language teachers as we move forward into a post-pandemic world.

