College Students' Attitudes Towards an App for Creating Videos in Online Introductory Spanish Classes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate college students' attitudes toward *Recap*® as part of their online language learning process. In creating the videos, students put into practice their Spanish language-learning skills. A 14-question student attitude survey was used to rate the students' perceptions of *Recap*® and how it related to their online language-learning process. The results revealed that students have positive attitudes toward the, students *Recap*® indicated that *Recap*® helped them to improve their language skills; and there was no significant gender difference in attitude toward the use of *Recap*®.

Keywords: Spanish, Recap®, online class, higher education, oral presentation, language learning, technology.

Background

Technological tools offer many possibilities to second language teachers and to the teaching of the four language skills (Carrió-Pastor, 2016). These include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teaching a second language and measuring language ability in an online environment are often more challenging than in traditional face-to-face classes, especially in improving speaking skills since students and teacher are not physically together. Body language and facial expression are important aspects of communication, and these are lost when visual contact is compromised.

Online courses in foreign languages must cover the same aspects of language learning as do face to face classes. Synchronous online communication tools, such as Skype, represent a convenient, low cost, increasingly common means of connecting two or more people across locations for social, professional, or educational purposes (Adinolfi & Astrid, 2017). However, they represent a few issues for students and teachers. One issue is that video chats are time-consuming for both the student and the instructor. Another is that students must coordinate availability among themselves for conversations. The video chat process increases the time commitment on the part of students for each chat activity. Students have an expectation of convenience and independence working when they take online courses, and video chats sometimes do not live up to this expectation. Finally, another concern of some educators regarding online courses is that students may not be doing the work themselves. Educators are

accustomed to seeing students face to face and thus become accustomed to recognizing the individuality of their student's work. In the online setting, the educator may not truly know the work of their students. *Recap®* seeks to address these limitations of online courses in the areas of speaking and interacting with others in the language the students are learning.

Apps are available in a variety of subjects which include: general early learning, math, astronomy, foreign language, literacy, study aids, art/creativity, geography, etc. (Shuler, Levine, & Ree, 2012). This dynamic app culture is growing fast in the education field and apps can be used to motivate student learning. *Recap®* is a question-led chat tool that uses student-created videos to facilitate oral production and interaction among students. Students can download *Recap®* to their smart phone to access class activities, record their own videos, listen to others' recorded videos, and provide comments. Research has suggested that technology-infused approaches to pronunciation instruction may encourage the production of more culturally authentic language (Lomicka & Lord, 2010). While using *Recap®*, the teacher can see the students' faces and hear their voices by means of the videos. Although students cannot interact in a true conversation, they can however use the videos recorded on *Recap®* to comment on their own and other students' videos. This enables the teacher to evaluate the students' progress in mastering the four language skills.

Research Questions

1. What are student attitudes toward using *Recap®* in online elementary Spanish classes?
2. What are student attitudes toward the effectiveness of *Recap®* in improving their Spanish language skills?
3. Is there any difference between female and male students' attitudes toward *Recap®*?

Method

Participants

The participants were 69 undergraduate students who were enrolled in elementary Spanish 101 online courses from the Rocky Mountain region during the 2018 Spring semester. Most of the participants were English speakers who had little or no prior knowledge of Spanish. The group consisted of 23 males and 46 females.

Materials

An online student attitude survey that consists of 14-items was used with Likert-scale questions. The first 10 questions asked students about the video-created tool itself, and the contribution of the video-created tool to their language learning. The remaining four open-ended questions asked about the students' experiences and recommendations using *Recap®*. The survey was linked to an online survey platform known as *Qualtrics®.*

Procedures

The researchers have obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct this study. Through the video-created app, students created five videos on five different topics during the semester, approximately one video every three weeks. Students read the topic questions in Spanish and created a video of themselves responding in Spanish. Students then viewed their classmates' videos and responded by writing comments in Spanish to the videos. During the last week of classes, the students completed an online attitude survey about the video-created tool and about their learning experience.

Data Analysis

To answer research question one and two, students' responses to the first 10-item student attitude survey questions were analyzed using *Excel®.* For positive stated items, *strongly agreed* is scored as 5, *agree* is scored as 4, *undecided* is scored as 3, *disagree* is scored as 2, and *strongly disagree* is scored as 1. Means and standard deviations for these items were calculated and reported. In addition, students' comments in response to each open-ended question in the student attitude survey were categorized and reported. To answer research question three, a two-sample t-test was used to analyze the data.

Results

Research Question 1: Student Attitudes Towards Using *Recap®*

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 10 survey questions describing student's attitudes toward *Recap®*. Data shows that the overall mean is 3.77; meaning that students had mostly positive attitudes toward using *Recap®* to learn the Spanish language. Additionally, the overall standard deviation for the survey is 1.21, which shows a small variation in the data collected. The data also shows that survey questions #2. *Recap®* was easy to use (M = 4.30, SD = 0.91), survey question #4. *Recap®* helped me improve my speaking skills (M = 4.18, SD = 1.05), and survey question #1. *Recap®* met my expectations (M = 4.14, SD = 0.86) have the highest ranks across all questions. In contrast, survey questions #10. My classmates' oral presentations helped me improve my writing skills (M = 3.20, SD = 1.27), survey question #9. My classmates' oral presentations helped me improve my reading skills (M = 3.21, SD = 1.35), and survey question #5. *Recap®* helped me improve my reading skills. (M = 3.39, SD = 1.27) have the lowest ranks among all questions.

Table 1 Rank of Survey Items

Rank	Survey Question		Mean	SD
1	2.	*Recap®* was easy to use.	4.30	0.91
2	4.	*Recap®* helped me improve my speaking skills.	4.18	1.05
3	1.	*Recap®* met my expectations.	4.14	0.86
4	7.	My classmates' oral presentations helped me to improve my listening skills.	4.09	1.05
5	3.	*Recap®* helped me improve my listening skills.	3.88	1.18
5	8.	My classmates' oral presentations helped me improve my speaking skills.	3.88	1.10
7	6.	*Recap®* helped me improve my writing skills.	3.45	1.32
8	5.	*Recap®* helped me improve my reading skills.	3.39	1.27
9	9.	My classmates' oral presentations helped me improve my reading skills.	3.21	1.35
10	10.	My classmates' oral presentations helped me improve my writing skills.	3.20	1.27
Overall			**3.77**	**1.21**

Generally, students have a positive attitude toward using *Recap®* as well as a positive opinion about the effectiveness of *Recap®*. A majority of the students participating in the survey (84%) reported that *Recap®* met their expectations and *Recap®* was easy to use (See Figure 1).
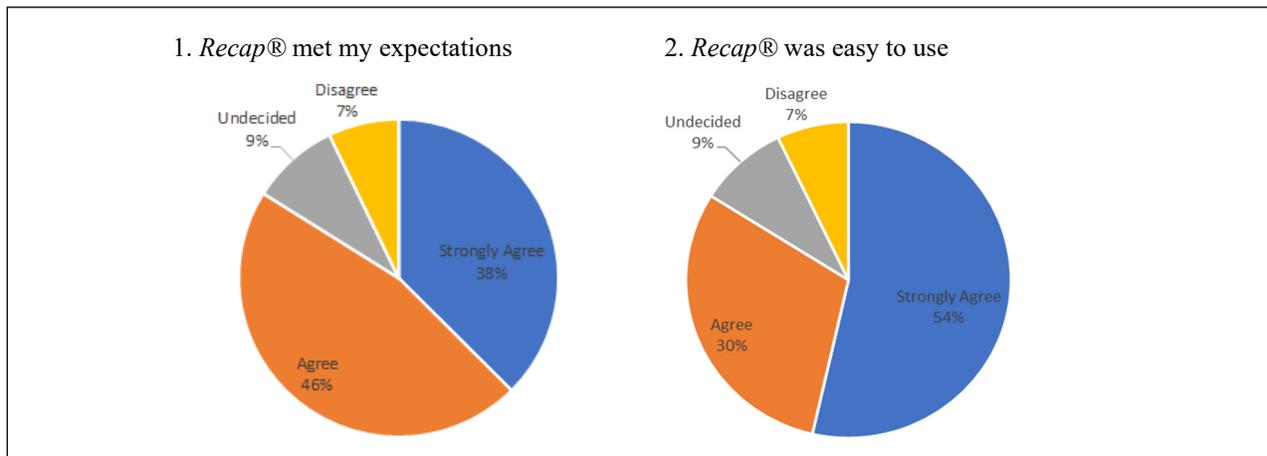

Figure 1. Student attitudes toward using *Recap®*

In the final section of the survey, four open-ended questions were presented to the students, three of which were intended to discover the attitudes of students toward using *Recap®*. These three questions were worded to identify what the students thought were the advantages of *Recap®* ("What did you like most about *Recap®*?"), the disadvantages ("What did you like least about *Recap®*?"), and any changes that they would make if they were an instructor using *Recap®* ("If you were the instructor, what suggestions would you make about using *Recap®*?"). The results of these questions revealed four common themes amongst the participants. The themes are presented in the order in which they were identified through the open-ended questions.

Advantages of *Recap®*

Each of the participants was asked to describe what they liked the most when using *Recap®*. Among the main features that students liked most were the easy interactive features provided by the app, such as connecting with the instructor and other students through comments and feedback and oral presentations using video and audio recordings. Phrases used in student comments included "providing comments, feedback, opinions", "providing comments for reflection", and "it was easy to comment". Another feature is that they described *Recap®* as a user-friendly *Recap®* that can be easily navigated on computers and cell phones. Students commented "easy accessibility", "fast-loading" and "free to download". Some students said that *Recap®* was fun to use because of its color scheme and layout. Examples of students' comments included "engaging color scheme" and "interesting layout".

Disadvantages of *Recap®*

When asked about weaknesses of *Recap®*, many students reported technical troubles with *Recap®*, such as difficulties downloading *Recap®*, difficulties navigating *Recap®* on cell phones or computers, difficulties recording audios and videos. Also, many students reported that *Recap®* would "freeze" or "glitch" sometimes, and because of *Recap®* inability to save previous work, many students had to redo their assignments or recordings. Some students commented "freezes/shuts down/glitches" and "inability to save work after logging out". Another main complaint about *Recap®* was *Recap®* lack of notifications. Some students found *Recap®* inability to provide reminders of upcoming assignments and projected as a problem. Additionally, the presentation of videos without support in English language and the requirement of entering an access PIN every time when the student needed to log-in into *Recap®* were viewed as significant difficulties. Examples of students' comments included "it required PIN every time used with no 'remember me' option" and "lack of English transcripts or subtitles".
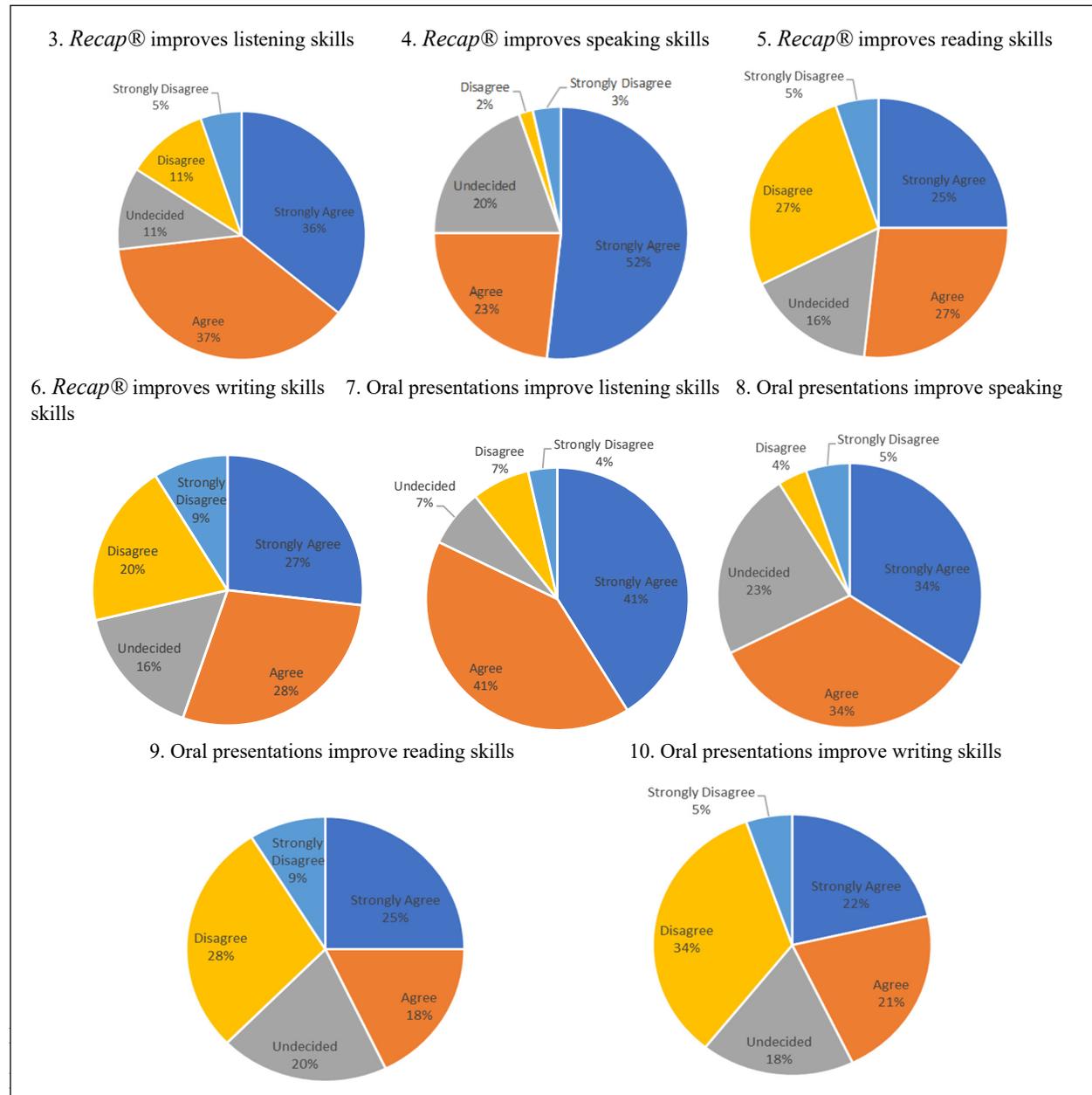
Changes on the *Recap App®*

More than half of the students participating in the survey said that they won't use *Recap®* differently. However, some students suggested changing assignment question structure and to decrease the number of repetitive questions in *Recap®* assignments. In addition, since *Recap®* has some technical problems, many students suggested providing a "backup" method to submit assignments and projects, such as using Canvas (a learning management system). Some of the main features students wanted to add to *Recap®* are "an assignment and project reminder" feature as well as a "conversation" feature where students have the opportunity to "chat" with each other to practice their speaking and listening skills. Other students stated that they would use *Recap®* differently by providing more specific instructions regarding assignment and oral presentations. Interestingly, on the one hand, some students wanted to eliminate the commenting on other students' assignment and projects requirement and found it to be an impractical requirement. On the other hand, some students wanted to use the "comment" feature more and asked to enforce a minimum number of sentences per comment.

Research Question 2: *Recap®'s* Impact on Students' Spanish Language Skills

For research question 2 "What are student attitudes toward the effectiveness of *Recap®* in improving their Spanish language skills?", as illustrated in Figure 2, we can see that over 50% of the participating students either "strongly agree" or "agree" that *Recap®* improved their Spanish language skills in all four areas, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Also, 82% of students reported that watching or listening to their classmates' oral presentation improved their listening skills while 68% reported that watching or listening to their classmates' oral presentation improved their speaking skills. However, only 43% of students reported that their classmates' oral presentations improved their reading and writing skills.

In addition to the Likert-type survey questions, each of the participants was also asked to describe how *Recap®* impacted their Spanish language skills ("How did using *Recap®* affect your language skills?"). Almost all students reported an improvement in their Spanish language skills. Due to the ability to practice speaking and listening to other classmates using *Recap®*, students were able to improve their speaking skills, which enhanced their Spanish vocabularies and increased their confidence in speaking Spanish as a second language. Students stated "ability to listen to other classmates speaking and learn from them" and "increases confidence in speaking". Also, since *Recap®* provided the option of listening to other classmates with various accents and one-on-one feedback, many students reported improvement in their listening skills. Some students wrote: "Ability to listen to other classmates speaking and learn from them". Improvement in other language skills, such as pronunciation, writing and sentence construction, and grammar and Spanish conjugation was also noticed by students using *Recap®*.

3. *Recap®* improves listening skills

4. *Recap®* improves speaking skills

5. *Recap®* improves reading skills

6. *Recap®* improves writing skills

7. Oral presentations improve listening skills

8. Oral presentations improve speaking skills

9. Oral presentations improve reading skills

10. Oral presentations improve writing skills

For research question 3 "Is there any difference between female and male students' attitudes toward *Recap®*?", when comparing male and female students' attitudes toward *Recap®* in the class, there is no significant difference in attitude toward *Recap®*, as shown in Table 2 and Table 3 below. Therefore, it can be concluded that male students (M = 4.23) and female students (M = 3.67) have similar attitudes toward using *Recap®* as well as their opinions about its effectiveness on language learning.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics Comparing Female and Male Students

Attitude Score Descriptive Statistics				
Group	Mean	Variance	Minimum	Maximum
Male	4.23	0.65	2.80	5.00
Female	3.67	0.72	1.5	5.00

Table 3 Two Sample T-Test

Two Sample t-test					
Variable	DF	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval	
Gender	13.712	1.970	0.069	-0.050	1.167

Educational Implications

In this study we gathered, organized, and analyzed data which demonstrate that apps can improve the process of language learning. It was also demonstrated that students had a positive opinion of *Recap®* use and effectiveness in their own learning. Technology in the classroom opens up additional opportunities for learning than are traditionally recognized. Although our study only dealt with language learning, it is evident that apps can be effective and enjoyable in other areas of learning.

This study may offer several implications for second language teaching. In addition to providing an overview of how to effectively cover the four aspects of language teaching, the results of this study could aid language instructors in a variety of classroom settings. Those settings may include face to face, hybrid, and online classes.

Recap® need not be limited to language courses, since it is adaptable to different areas of study. Any online or hybrid course could benefit from the audio and video features and the opportunities for students' oral presentations.

Our study results were in line with other research results indicating positivity between using apps as an aid in various types of classes and language learning. According to Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme (2010) and Berns et al. (2015), technology apps in general aid students in the language learning process, and the use of mobile apps in language learning helps learners practice listening and speaking and is effective in improving these skills. In addition, a mixed study showed that integrating technology in language instruction resulted in a noticeable improvement in the students' oral communication skills and that the students had a positive attitude towards the integration (Kırkgöz, 2011). Furthermore, a case study conducted at a Japanese university showed that students reported that recording themselves improved their language verbal skills by increasing their word count and becoming more fluent and confident when speaking English (Gromik, 2012). All the foregoing data support the results of previous studies which demonstrate how technology can be used to improve language learning.

According to Davis (2015), providing opportunities for the asynchronous and synchronous communication between learners on the course is an important part for creating a sense of presence and building a learning community in an online course. Our study showed that *Recap®* helped students to create a 'class presence' among themselves, as they watched each other's videos and participated in making and reading each other's comments about the videos. Regarding gender, our study results indicated that there was no observable difference in attitudes toward *Recap®* between males and females.

In this study, only *Recap®* was considered, but there are many educational apps available. For future research, comparison of two or more of similar apps on language learning would be useful. Especially for the language teachers to integrate apps into their face to face classrooms or online courses. Additionally, our sample was somewhat limited in size; a study with a larger sample size, a longer-term study, or a study in which data are collected from various studies over time, would yield stronger data to determine effectiveness.

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