EVALUATING THE USE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF BITMOJI CLASSROOMS WITHIN ONLINE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

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The concept of Bitmoji classrooms was developed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, so teachers could deliver content in a fun and engaging way within their online classrooms. Since Bitmoji classrooms are a new idea, there is little known about them. It is important to learn more about Bitmoji classrooms due to the surge of their popularity at the time. Within a matter of months, more than 500,000 members joined a Bitmoji classroom Facebook group that shared ideas, images, and completed Bitmoji classrooms. This research found that most teachers used Bitmoji classrooms for three main purposes: to provide social/emotional support in the form of calming rooms; to promote one-time events particularly cultural holidays, and to support mandated curriculum. Students also found them fun and engaging. Bitmoji classrooms are easily reusable in future years, and they can be used as an assignment option for older students. As shown in the present study, Bitmoji classrooms are a way to engage students in learning during the pandemic; such a finding has potentially huge implications for school curriculum plans and emergency preparedness.

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Statement of Problem

Teaching elementary students during a worldwide pandemic was challenging. School districts were utilizing various distance learning models with no one model proving superior. Teachers were scrambling to engage students while designing online instruction to be meaningful and accessible. The overwhelming need to connect students with online curriculum fostered a space to be creative while adhering to the learning management software. Even though teachers were teaching virtually, there was still an emphasis on building relationships. Researchers have studied the use of avatars called Bitmojis in educational settings. For example, Bitmojis have represented college librarians on a university's library webpage; another research study entailed learners using Bitmojis to explore their own identities in a drama therapy class.

Winger (2020) claimed that a Bitmoji allows students to see a more personable and approachable instructor on their computer screen. In the Spring of 2020, a third-grade teacher, Allatesha Cain, recognized an opportunity to develop a tool that went beyond one avatar representing one person to produce an entire experience. Winger combined the popular social media tool, Bitmoji, with Google Slides to fashion what she called the 'Bitmoji classroom.' The new Bitmoji classroom transforms the online classroom experience to include walls, a floor, furniture, a whiteboard, a bookshelf filled with books, and links to students' online resources. While 570,000 members have joined this third-grade teacher's Facebook group, there is scant research on Bitmoji classrooms. This study investigated how teachers use Bitmoji classrooms as well as the benefits and challenges. Moreover, this study explored Bitmoji classrooms' sustainability and potential use once students return to the physical classroom.

Context

Widespread school closures during the global pandemic forced teachers to find new ways to connect with their students. The COVID19 virus created unprecedented times in almost every educational institution in the United States and abroad. Technology-based learning became the norm for many students (Castelo, 2020). Sreenivasan (2020) reports that Sal Khan from Khan Academy saw a 250 percent increase in his popular online learning website in post-pandemic times. Khan Academy was used to support gaps in student learning and meet instructors' needs to address those gaps. Few students escaped some form of online education in the 2020/2021 school year because of the potential spread of COVID19 in indoor spaces such as physical classrooms (Lieberman, 2020).

Despite the increased use of technology, some learners in the school district where this study was held never enrolled in their Google Classrooms. Many who did register participated minimally. While some students did not connect due to equity issues such as lack of a device, sharing a device between siblings, or no internet access, those excuses were no longer tolerated. Stakeholders, including politicians, community leaders, parents, educators, and students, complained. Once the school district in this case study announced in fall of 2020 that classes would be entirely online, they came prepared with stricter standards for attendance and participation. Students and educators were held more accountable than in the Spring of 2020. Part of student accountability falls upon the parent or guardian, but historically, engaging learners has been deemed the role of the teacher. Teaching in an online environment where students must be more self-reliant, some teachers have innovative ways to draw in students.

Integrating technology into every lesson was a requirement during these times of a pandemic. Valenza (2020) claims that teachers need strategies to personalize and enrich virtual learning. Once routines of using technology are established, and the unfamiliar becomes familiar, technology will play an even more significant part in future K12 lessons. School districts across the country were making considerable investments in software and hardware (Castelo, 2020). Many schools followed what some schools have already launched, one-to-one computing. Now that students have school-issued Chromebooks, the expectation of using them was even greater whether students learned from home or in a school building. With a device in every child's hands came the task of keeping students engaged in learning, rather than other activities found on the internet. Kent and Giles (2017, p. 9) stated that "successful use of technology in the classroom has the potential to engage students, promote conceptual comprehension, and develop spatial intelligence." Teachers needed to teach curriculum; they had to also attract students to the material, primarily in-home environments when supervision of learning may be lacking.

In 2020, the school district eventually provided all 86,000 students with their devices and internet connection. Until then, in the fall of 2020, needy students were prioritized for receiving school-issued devices. The lack of access to technology was a concern for the school district. Equitable learning is one of the district's initiatives to the community to eliminate gaps in education. The district conducted a parent survey to measure the need for technology for learners. Out of sixty percent (60%) of the respondents, ten percent (10%) of those needed at least one device in their home to be successful for online learning. With that data, the school district proceeded to purchase and distribute devices to those students in the district first. The district also addressed the lack of internet in some homes and collaborated with local carriers to provide free internet to those families and provide free wi-fi to visitors in the school parking lots.

According to the Reopening 2020 Draft Plan, the school district stated that teachers will move toward a more dynamic, interactive teaching approach. This new approach included hours of synchronous learning every weekday, interactive activities, and one-to-one device distribution to engage students in more real-time instruction. Students would engage with teachers from four to five hours daily through either Google Classroom or Google Meet. To prepare teachers for virtual teaching, the school district provided much professional development (PD) opportunities to teachers over the summer of 2020. The district required teachers to participate in at least twenty hours of PD; many teachers completed more.

For those educators who focused on technology training over the summer of 2020, many joined in Bitmoji classrooms. The Bitmoji mobile app was the fastest growing app in the United States among adults in 2017 (Puzier & Norton, 2020). A Bitmoji can be described as a personal emoji or avatar that looks like the person who designed it. Bitmojis offer fun cartoon characters that can speak when a recording is linked to it. Bitmojis can move about performing spins, waves, and even cartwheels when partnered with the SnapChat app.

Educators are finding many ways to use them, even at the university level. Puzier and Norton described how librarians at the University of Albany used Bitmojis to increase awareness of their services (2020). Sajnani, a professor and researcher in the Drama Therapy at New York University, motivated her students to explore identity by creating Bitmojis (Sajnani, Mayor, & Tillberg-Webb, 2020). Kerr and Faulkner (2020), professors at universities in Scotland, explain how their students who were studying prosthetics and orthotics became disengaged. After reflecting with some students, they discovered that students were frustrated with accessing schoolwork through as many as five clicks when they could access information with one click while using social media. The professors also learned that students overwhelming used SnapChat to communicate at all hours of the school day and weekends. In response, Kerr and Faulkner redesigned the distribution of some material using their Bitmojis within the SnapChat app, and engagement increased.

While creating a Bitmoji, one is asked questions such as hair color, body type, and facial structure to make the Bitmoji as close to its creator as possible. Once a personalized Bitmoji is designed, educators build engaging backgrounds using Google Slides (Ramin, 2020). Educators are not limited to what the location of their Bitmoji classroom can be. These backgrounds can comprise of libraries, classrooms, office space, or even unique settings such as outer space or a forest. The notion is that the Bitmoji classroom will create more engagement than the standard Google Classroom. Since being introduced in 2014 to schools, increasingly popular Google Classroom on Chromebooks has become a familiar ‘one-stop-shop' school for students and teachers (Fuentes & Grimes, 2020). Google Chromebooks are currently the number one selling device in K-12 communities in several countries. Bitmojis can transform a boring lesson that deters learning into an occasion that encourages participation.

The school district where this study took place provides a multitude of different technology for teachers and students to use. Teachers in the school district predominantly use Google Suite products such as Docs, Slides, Forms, Sheets, and Jamboard for instruction. Google Slides is the tool where Bitmoji classrooms are created, and it works seamlessly with the Bitmoji application. Typically, a Bitmoji classroom includes links to several internet resources, which renders Google Slides an ideal tool to use with its ease of publishing to the Web. Learning Google Slides is a straightforward transition from PowerPoint for teachers. Slides is PowerPoint with fewer offerings and easier publishing.

Unless a teacher has created a Bitmoji for personal use, becoming knowledgeable of Bitmojis will require a small investment of time. Online professional learning networks have vast examples of online creations of Bitmoji classrooms (Kirkland, 2020). On the Facebook group, *Bitmoji Craze for Educators*, teachers stated that they have lost track of many hours searching for images, creating their cartoon characters, and curating resources for their Bitmoji classrooms. Many teachers have become obsessed with them and are willing to share their Bitmoji classrooms that they have spent hours building (Gewertz, 2020). Hew and Brush (2007) state that time is a resource barrier for teachers, and there never seems to be enough time to preview websites and locate images and videos. Collinson and Cook (2001) agree; they found that teachers identified the lack of time as a significant barrier to learning among colleagues.

In addition, another obstacle for teachers is that they need technical support in creating engaging lessons and artifacts. Even though the twenty-first century has been touted as the century for learning technology (Gewertz, 2008), some teachers still exhibit fear and anxiety over using technology. Materechera (2017) found significant impediments to a successful inclusive classroom: time, class size, and insufficient training. Surprisingly, some school districts, especially smaller ones with fewer funds, expect teachers to develop themselves professionally. Even though the school district provided training in Bitmoji classrooms, as Hew and Brush stated, time to build them is lacking.

There are strategies to overcome these barriers, though. Hew and Brush (2007) provide advice on how to avoid these pitfalls. They suggest that educational institutions need a shared technology integration plan, a change in attitudes and beliefs, and to deliver professional development. A shared vision of how technology looks in a school district is key to its success, especially in times of online learning. The Office of Instructional Technology for the school district where this case study takes place values professional education and is committed to continuous learning to advance individual and organizational development to ensure the achievement of all students. The school district declares that all employees share responsibility for personal and organizational growth through professional development. They assert that professional development should be focused, varied, job-embedded, collaborative, and sustained over time.

Even when face-to-face school resumed, for many, it was not back to normal. Hybrid learning plans were already in place in some schools and were being considered for others. Hybrid schedules can take many different formats, and they can offer smaller classroom sizes that follow social distancing rules (Superville, 2020). The school district's hybrid plan entailed students attending face-to-face classes two days per week while attending two days online away from school. While half the students were learning from home, the other half participated in-person. The face-to-face classes remained heavily dependent on technology because teachers simultaneously taught both groups.

Even when students were learning at school, the material was still presented online while physically distanced from the teacher and other students. This new environment necessitated the continuance of online learning that was engaging. The need for Bitmoji classrooms did not end when students were back in school buildings. Allatesha Cain, the 3rd-grade teacher who developed the Bitmoji classrooms' concept, stated in an interview that there is a place for the Bitmoji classrooms during face-to-face instruction. Cain lists several advantages: whole group instruction, center time, interventions, differentiated learning materials, homework support, and independent review (A. Cain, personal communication, November 6, 2020). She sees a place for Bitmoji classrooms in all teaching environments.

To prepare for this study, I participated in six and a half hours of professional development through the school district during the summer of 2020 to learn how to create Bitmoji classrooms. I generated my own Bitmoji and several Bitmoji classrooms for one-time events to increase awareness of different topics. I view Bitmoji classrooms' potential to improve learning engagement but wonder if they are a passing trend or have a long-term impact on teaching and learning. To help understand this, I explored why other educators created their Bitmoji classrooms as I have.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of Bitmoji classrooms in an elementary school setting. There is minimally known about them. Simply put, once Bitmoji Google slides are used in a classroom setting, they are referred to as a Bitmoji classroom. Since the Bitmoji classroom is a new phenomenon in K12 education, I was interested in knowing how teachers use Bitmoji classrooms and for what purposes.

With the use of Bitmoji classrooms beginning during the 2020-2021 pandemic school year, there has been limited time to research their practice and benefits, if any. The lack of research posed a significant limitation when researching supportive material to guide this study. A search of ‘Bitmoji Classroom’ in Google Scholar provides only a few responses. Such findings demonstrated the lack of research (formal and informal) and knowledge on this topic.

This research's primary assumption was that most educators at the study site have developed Bitmoji classrooms due to several teachers promoting their Bitmoji classrooms to others. I found that many teachers at the school did not join in the Bitmoji craze due to varied reasons such as being time-consuming, having no interest, etc. There were other reasons why educators did not join this trend. Hurst, an assistant principal at a tech magnet school, tweeted in July of 2020 that she was disturbed by Bitmoji classrooms. She argued that they eliminated a human connection between teacher and student and asked her followers not to convince her of their greatness (Hurst, 2020). Her post garnered 466 likes. Almost two-hundred people responded; the comments were mixed. Supporters mentioned they bring engagement and function as an add-on to learning, not a replacement. Critics claim they are a gimmick that will fade away quickly.

First, I investigated why educators use Bitmoji classrooms? Are teachers developing Bitmoji classrooms as a replacement for the required curriculum added in Google Classrooms? Are teachers creating Bitmoji classrooms as informational pieces with directions or as special events? It was possible many teachers in the school were not using them.

Secondly, I investigated the potential benefits of teaching with Bitmoji classrooms. Do teachers observe more engagement in their students' learning when teaching with Bitmoji classrooms? Are students able to navigate learning material easier? Do Bitmoji classrooms create a sense of familiarity with the teacher and the physical classroom space? Fuentes and Grimes (2020) state that a Bitmoji can provide a sense of comfort and maintain a strong bond between teacher and student. It was feasible that some teachers who were teaching with Bitmoji classrooms saw no benefits but felt compelled to use them because their colleagues were. Or possibly, teachers felt obligated to create one because of participating in professional development.

Thirdly, I studied the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms once virtual learning ends. They require time to build, sometimes hours. Fuentes and Grimes (2020) concur. They state that building digital classrooms requires teacher preparation time and potentially structured learning opportunities. Even with the advantage of borrowing Bitmoji classrooms that were already made, the teachers must take the time to personalize them for their students and include the district's curriculum. Once Bitmoji classrooms' nuance fades, will teachers donate their free time to create such a tool? Will teachers continue to build and adjust multiple Bitmoji classrooms throughout the school year and in future years to come?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Advertising executive, Fred R. Barnard, created the saying *a picture is worth a thousand words* (dictionary.com). One such image is called the emoticon. Encyclopedia Britannica (2020) explains that Dr. Scott E. Fahlman suggested the emoticon at Carnegie Mellon University in 1982 after a fake story of a mercury spill. The fake account was meant to be a joke, but many took it seriously. To dispel confusion, Fahlman stated that jokes and nonjokes could be marked with a few short characters that are now identified as a smiling face :-) and the frowning face :-(. These emoticons morphed into what are now known as emojis.

As communication continued to adapt to rapidly changing technology, the emoticons morphed into what are now known as emojis. While emojis can be described as a modern-day form of hieroglyphics, they are pertinent in online communications, mainly social media. Pardes (2018) explains that emojis first appeared on Japanese cell phones in the 1990s and claims they add an "emotional nuisance to an otherwise flat text." With just one small image, an emoji can say so much; it can speak across different languages from the young to the old. Moreover, Daniel and Camp (2018) define an emoji as a graphical symbol representing a face or an object. In a sign of their pervasive use, in 2015, the laughing emoji became the 'word' of the year in the Oxford dictionary. The history of the new word has evolved over time. Encyclopedia Britannica (2020), now an online encyclopedia, explains the Japanese *e* stands for pictures and *moji* stands for character. Once Apple developed the yellow-faced emojis, their popularity exploded throughout the world.

Naturally, with the expansion comes standards. Warren (2014) explains that the Unicode Consortium, a nonprofit organization, developed specifications for emojis to appear the same no matter what platform, program, or language is used. According to Unicode, Inc. (2019), the most frequently used emojis are the ‘face with tears of joy’ emoji and the ‘red heart.' In the twenty years since the inception of emojis, they grew not in differentiation but in number. Unicode, Inc. (2020) states that they will add approximately seventy new characters each year. Over the years, though, there have been questions about the diversity of emojis. Arrouas (2014) states that Apple recognized the lack of diversity in its emojis, so they vowed to provide a new set of diverse emojis in which they delivered. Apple produced emojis with different colors of skin, headdresses, and hairstyles. What has become clear over time is that users wanted more; they wanted emojis that looked lifelike but with a cartoon feel. Unicode (2020) explains that it is beyond the nonprofit organization's scope to create an emoji that represents "every aspect of human appearance regarding diversity" of emoji users. From this, a market for self-made emojis evolved.

While emojis still have a strong presence and usefulness in communications, primarily in text messages, other situations called for something extra. Along came the Bitmoji. Bitmojis offer users a unique way, a personalized way, to convey their messages. Lacoma and Beaton (2020) describe the short history of the Bitmoji stickers. Jacob ‘Ba’ Blackstock, a Canadian, started Bitstrips in 2007, a customizable comic strip application primarily used in education. With some time, Blackstock connected the need for personalized emojis to the cartoon characters in his Bitstrips application. In 2014, he developed the Bitmoji as an addition to his Bitstrips application. Snap, Inc., the parent company of the wildly popular application SnapChat, recognized the potential of Bitmoji to solve the problem that Unicode could not. In 2017, Snap, Inc. purchased Bitstrips and Bitmoji and dropped the Bitstrips portion of the deal to focus on the possibilities of the Bitmoji. No longer were users relegated to using emojis that did not meet the personalized human-like representations of themselves. In Apple’s 2017 annual report, Apple reported the Bitmoji mobile app as the most popular app (Earl, 2017). Users finally had a unique way to characterize a digital likeness of themselves. Appendix A offers a look at my personal Bitmoji.

How did Blackstock create an automated cartoon appearance that looks so much like a real person? Greenfield (2015) wrote that Blackstock has been drawing since he was a child. His obsession with drawing progressed to transforming everyday people into cartoon characters. As popularity for Bitstrips grew, Blackstock noticed users began using the characters to communicate. This was around the same time that interest in emojis grew exponentially. Blackstock connected Internet users wanting more from their emojis to the personalization of the characters in his Bitstrips. With eleven-million-dollars in funding, he developed the Bitmoji. "From his experience animating, Blackstock knew that animated characters have to look more expressive than human faces; everything is bolder" (Greenfield, 2015). He created a catalog of mouths, ears, eyebrows, noses, and more. Users may choose from different styles that best represent their features. Some Bitmoji results are incredibly similar to their owners, while others appear somewhat unfamiliar.

Users can locate the Bitmoji app store on mobile devices, typically featured as a Google Chrome extension. They have discovered that the Bitmoji phone app is better for animating one's Bitmoji than using the Google Chrome extension. The SnapChat app extends even more options, such as animating a Bitmoji. Completed Bitmojis are referred to as stickers. From there, one can use their Bitmoji stickers on social media sites, in texting, or through computer applications.

Bitmoji stickers often offer light-hearted attempts at humor; however, they actually are no joke. Bitmojis are free to build as whatever one's creativity will fashion. Nevertheless, professionally developed Bitmojis of one's favorite celebrity are not free. Bitmojis are not the only stickers available for sale. A messaging app used in several Asian countries called *Line* reports that it earns $20 million a month from sticker sales (Stern, 2016). Purchasing message app stickers is intensifying in Apple's iPhone app store. The market for independent artists to create and sell stickers is growing. Even celebrities have joined the messaging app craze. For $1.99, a user can purchase the *Ellen's Emoji Exploji* app starring Ellen DeGeneres provided by Warner Brothers. The App Store editors report that everyone needs the Ellen's Emoji sticker because only Ellen's stickers include an avocado in a top hat and a gif of Ellen doing the dab (accessed on iPhone app store September 23, 2020). Other celebrities have joined the enterprise of providing an emoji app for a cost, such as Jimmy Fallon called Jimojis and Ariana Grande called ARIMOJI.

Bitmoji is not the only animated cartoon character app that can be made into the likeness of oneself. The app Memoji appears to be the closest competitor to Bitmoji, while Avatoon and Facemoji have a smaller Internet presence. Samsung offers its version called AR Emoji. The market for avatar stickers that resemble real people continues to evolve.

Current Implications and Future Impact

For the young student, the concept of community and a sense of belonging is at the center of learning (Sapon-Shelvin, 2010) and is vital for social and emotional growth (Battistich et al., 1999). However, without face-to-face interaction in the physical classroom, developing that feeling of community in online environments is a difficult task. Figg, Crawford, Lu, and Lu (2020), stated that especially for young learners, a strong teacher presence is essential to online learning, just as it is in face-to-face education.

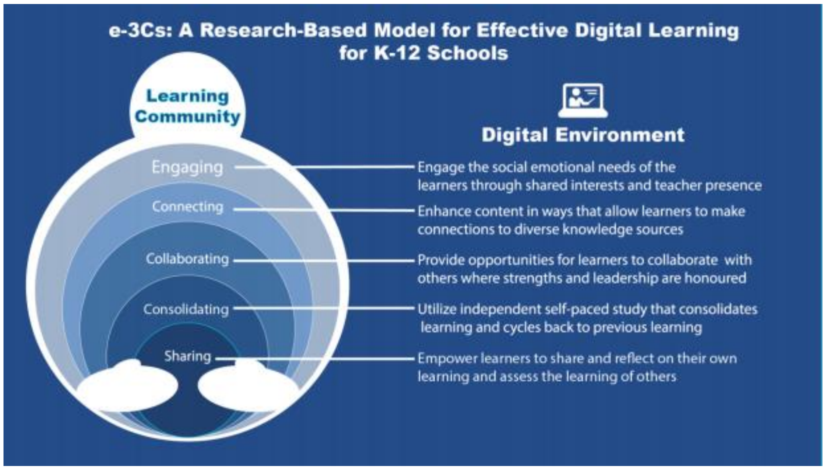
Within the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) introduce the concept of teaching presence in online learning which can be explained with three categories: (1) design and organization, (2) facilitating discourse, and (3)direct instruction for the purpose of meaningful educational outcomes. They went on to describe how teachers would need to redesign their course materials by repurposing their materials that would meet their students' online needs. As teachers redefine their roles as online educators versus face-to-face teaching, creating teacher presence using Bitmoji classroom appear to have never been attempted, at least, according to the existing research literature.

Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) describe what this could look like. They explain that online teacher presence can be developed by adjusting Power Point slides, lecture notes, videos, and other materials to online. One of those resources could be Bitmoji classrooms. They claim that most activities to establish teacher presence are completed before the course begins but can be modified as the course progresses. As educators improve their online teaching, Bitmoji classrooms could potentially create an even more potent sense of teacher presence than originally hypothesized and, accordingly, generate a greater degree of student satisfaction and perceived learning.

Students need activities that build upon their unique strengths, invite participation, and present content in various modalities frequently (Figg, Crawford, Lu, & Lu, 2020). Learners need to be engaged. The e-3Cs model for effective digital learning in K12 education illustrates how teacher presence and appropriate activities are the foundation to virtual learning environments (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

e-3Cs Research Model (Figg, Crawford, Lu, & Lu, 2020)



The greatest experience the learner should have within the learning community is “engaging." Figg, Crawford, Lu, and Lu (2020) explain that “engaging” is essential, encompassing all other elements in the model because engagement of the learner is an ongoing consideration of the teacher. “Many students associate technology with fun, play, and leisure, and have positive feelings about digital learning activities” (Figg, Crawford, Lu, & Lu, 2020, p. 26). The Bitmoji classroom, with its avatars and light-hearted approach to learning, can entice some learners to engage with the information more versus information presented in a standard Google Classroom. The next level of experiences in the e-3Cs model for effective digital learning in K12 education is “connecting.” As stated in Figg, Crawford, Lu, and Lu (2020), learning happens through building a network of various connections (Siemens, 2005) and through social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). In the digital classroom, multiple connections can be made: teacher-to-student, student-to-student, student-to-content (Farrell, Manion, & Rincon-Gallardo, 2017). The Bitmoji teacher can create a strong teacher presence in virtual classrooms to develop those essential teacher-to-student connections. They help recreate the physical classroom in the virtual world and allow teachers to establish a fun, personable likeliness of themselves.

Since remote learning started in the spring of 2020, Bitmojis have taken the education community by storm (Minero, 2020). With the Bitmoji app, teachers create a miniature version of themselves as a cartoon figure and use the avatar to connect to their students. The teacher mini-me assigns work, collects work, answers questions, and adds a little fun. Even though the avatars do not replace the live version of a classroom teacher, they provide some sense of connection to what a student used to have. Using Google Slides, teachers create a classroom that can imitate their physical classroom or a fictional one complete with a wall, floor, pictures, colorful rugs, a whiteboard, and a comfy chair in which the Bitmoji teacher to sit. Teachers built Bitmoji classrooms that included everything from cozy couches, tech tools, bookshelves, inspirational posters, twinkle lights, disco balls, and chandeliers (Pazur, 2020). Students can navigate the Bitmoji virtual classroom by clicking calendars, books on a bookshelf, or an assignment posted on the board. It is like being at school but in cartoon form.

The Bitmoji classroom can be more attractive which can be more engaging than a Google Classroom, especially for younger students. Not everyone agrees. Gewertz (2020) calls them a distracting educational fad and argues that educators should be focusing on creating practical lessons rather than creating 'cutesy' virtual classrooms. She also states that Bitmoji classrooms make an equity issue, as well. Students who suffer from the digital divide will continue to struggle because they do not have access to the Bitmoji classrooms as other students will.

Even though the Facebook group *Bitmoji Craze for Educators* amassed many members in just seven months, some have not succumbed to the craze, though. One teacher tweeted, "I don't think Bitmoji classrooms and quality curriculum are mutually exclusive” (Gewertz, 2020). She is not alone. Another teacher tweeted, “she was "incredibly disturbed" by the Bitmoji classroom phenomenon and viewed it as a "detour" from the work that matters most: helping students heal from coronavirus-related trauma” (Gewertz, 2020). A member of the *Bitmoji Craze for Educators* Facebook group posted that her supervisor stated Bitmoji classrooms are developmentally inappropriate (K. Campbell, personal communication, November 11, 2020).

Others complained that a Bitmoji is not a substitute teacher and cannot replace the real thing. The question remains, will the Bitmoji Classroom have a positive impact on the learning for students, or will they be a fad that made people feel good during a pandemic? See a screenshot of a Bitmoji classroom from my collection (Appendix B). You can also find the live version with talking Bitmojis of the school’s librarians and links to the nominated books.

Theoretical Perspective

Kearsley and Shneiderman (1998) describe that Engagement Theory concentrates on technology-based learning and could explain how students are engaged when interacting with Bitmoji classrooms. They explain engagement theory as a theory that has emerged from distance education environments. “The fundamental idea underlying engagement theory is that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks” (p. 20). A Bitmoji sticker can represent the real persona or a make-believe one in which the student interacts. Keeping students engaged in a technology-based learning environment can be challenging, though. Henrie, Halverson, and Graham (2015) state that “Instructional practices that encourage greater engagement are essential if we are to effectively use digital instructional technologies” (p. 36). Avatars such as Bitmojis that promote interaction with clickable resources can improve that engagement.

Notably, the use of avatars in education is gaining attention. Chen et al. (2012) state that avatars with empathetic faces increase students’ willingness to read more and complete exercises. They also established that users are taking social cues from avatars’ facial expressions and poses. Learners found the avatars to be helpful, credible, and entertaining. Avatars are not the only tool that garners an emotional response. When facilitating online learning, Sajnani, Mayor, and Tillberg-Webb (2020) found that modeling the use of emoticons as nonverbal cues early in the learning cycle helps facilitate the broader adoption of emotional cues in the online space. This study explores the idea that Bitmojis encourage young students to try more links, connect with their teachers, and stay engaged in activities.

Another theory to consider is self-determination when learners are self-motivated to explore, they can be exposed to more opportunities of learning. When considering Bitmoji classrooms, the self-determination theory on intrinsic motivation outweighs the behaviorist theory of external rewards' strengths. Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan stated, “When a behavior is self-determined, the regulatory process is choice, but when it is controlled, the regulatory process is compliance” (1991, p. 327). This statement has a powerful impact on the work with the youth of lower socio-economic status. Some educators practice control with poorly educated and low-income students by limiting student choice as a mechanism of compliance. Providing an alternative to Google Classroom in the form of a Bitmoji Classroom can offer an attractive option for lower socio-economic learners, if not all students.

“The theory focuses primarily on three such innate needs: the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (or self-determination)” (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991, p. 327). They explain that students become intrinsically motivated when they are interested and experience confidence in learning. Bitmoji classrooms can provide another option for learning and mastery because the cartoon themes are relatable to children. “Intrinsically motivated behaviors are engaged in for their own sake- for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from their performance” (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991, p. 328). The learner must be interested in the activity or the activity's outcome to be intrinsically motivated to attempt the task. The cartoon appearance may drive some learners to do more.

An additional theory to contemplate when discussing the sustainability of Bitmoji Classrooms is the collective teacher efficacy theory. What is lacking for many educators teaching online during the pandemic is confidence in how they are performing. District plans are constantly changing, and along with the policies and strategies too. Teachers who were not comfortable with software and hardware used for teaching online are overwhelmed and are frantically attempting to catch up to their peers. Bandura (2010, p. 1) explains self-efficacy as “a person’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance.” He further explains “self-efficacy determines how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave” (2010, p. 1). The stronger one’s self-efficacy is, the more likely they will persevere when faced with challenging tasks. Self-efficacy is especially important in these pandemic times because teachers need to feel confident in what they do to succeed. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) report that teacher self-efficacy affects teacher practices and student learning. In effect, when teachers are more confident about their practice, they perform better than their cohorts. Students of confident teachers perform better, as well.

Even more potent than the individual efficacy of one teacher is the efficacy of a group of teachers. Hattie (2017) is known for his list of factors that influence student achievement. In it, he catalogs the amount of impact that different educational strategies have on student performance. While boredom, corporal punishment at home, and school suspension have a negative effect on student learning, many factors have a positive effect, such as student prior ability, student self-efficacy, and repeated reading programs. Hattie (2017) touted for many years that self-reported grades with its large effect size of 1.33 was the most influential factor on student achievement until he found that collective teacher efficacy surpassed self-reported grades with an incredible 1.57 effect size. In other words, confident teachers can accelerate student achievement one and a half times more than without collective teacher efficacy. This factor by far has the most considerable impact on student growth.

Collective teacher efficacy might be challenging to achieve in times when technology is the dominant component. Teachers, just like students, range in their technical abilities. While some teachers design and present professional development opportunities and provide tech support to their peers, others struggle with fundamental problem solving, such as refreshing their webpage or restarting their machines. While these are extremes, most educators fall in the middle. As education shifts away from face-to-face learning, some teachers feel a lack of control. They were not trained to teach online, and many are floundering. If Hattie's finding that collective teacher efficacy has the highest impact on student learning, how do a majority of educators come together to feel confident as a unit in an area that is continually changing with updates, new software, and technology failures?

Bandura states that "modeling is an indispensable act of learning" (1977, p. 5). In his Social Learning Theory, Bandura asserts that modeling is the most efficient and safe way to teach a new skill even when patterns can be established through other means. Roy (2020) offers ways to increase teacher confidence during distance learning. Her first strategy suggests identifying teachers on staff who are tech-savvy and ask them to model uses of educational technology. If less confident teachers see other teachers succeed, they are more likely to try and ask questions. Roy's second strategy recommends providing a space for teachers to take risks with supports in place. Professional development offered in small chunks can simultaneously build confidence and skill levels, too.

Instructional Design Implications: Cognitive Overload

Bitmoji classrooms are appealing because of their cartoon look, but users can become overwhelmed with what to look at first. Information within a Bitmoji classroom is not presented linearly. Determining what to visit first can be daunting. "A central challenge facing designers of multimedia instruction is the potential for cognitive overload – in which the learner's intended cognitive processing exceeds the learner's available cognitive capacity" (Mayer & Morena, 2003, p. 43).

Mayer and Morena claim when considering cognitive overload, three assumptions are made. The first being the dual-channel assumption, in which there is an auditory/verbal channel for auditory processing input and a visual/pictorial channel for processing visual information. The second assumption is the limited capacity assumption, which means only limited cognitive processing can occur on both auditory and visual channels. The third assumption is the active processing assumption, which includes paying attention, mentally organizing, and integrating presented material with existing knowledge.

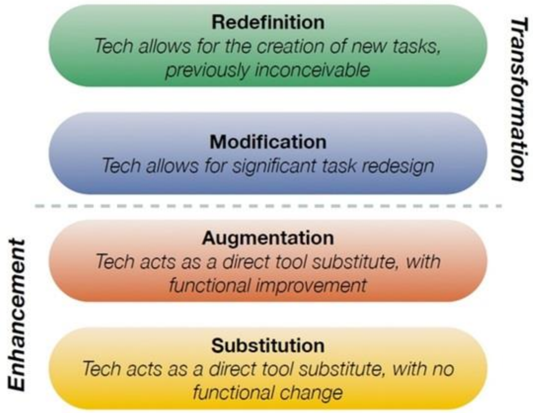
The main concern here is when the cognitive processing demands exceed the cognitive processing capacity. There are three kinds of cognitive demands: (1) essential, (2) incidental, and (3) representational holding (Mayer & Morena, 2003). Essential processing is for when the cognitive processing is attempting to make sense of the presented material. An example of cognitive overload for essential processing could occur if unfamiliar information is presented too quickly. An example could be if a video or audio begins to play automatically when the Bitmoji classroom is opened. Incidental processing is when making sense of the presented material is unnecessary but is set into motion because of how the learning has been designed.

An example could be when a Bitmoji avatar performs a cartwheel to draw attention or plays background music. Representational holding, the third type of cognitive demand, hopes to hold the mental representation in working memory. An example of this would be to keep a visual representation of a book cover in one's memory to process the book talk later.

Mayer and Morena (2003) suggest several solutions to manage overload for users that can apply to Bitmoji classrooms. One solution can be to narrate the verbal content so that low or non-readers can better understand what is occurring. A second solution is to present information in smaller chunks. Organize those visual objects in such a way as to present limited amounts of information. Mayer and Morena (2003) offer signaling as an option, too which gives cues to learners on how to select and organize material. In a Bitmoji classroom, the designer should provide signals to users on what they should choose first to help control cognitive demand. Aligning words and pictures in the Bitmoji classroom can also provide visual relief to viewers. Misaligned objects can confuse the order of visual signs. Lastly, Mayer and Morena suggest synchronizing corresponding visual and auditory materials. Users can become confused and eventually seek escape from uncoordinated events of visual and audio resources.

When considering the instructional design process of building Bitmoji classrooms, the SAMR model provides guidance on where Bitmoji classrooms stand. SAMR is a four-level, ladder-like model for selecting, using, and evaluating technology in a K12 setting (Hamilton, Rosenberg, & Akcaoglu, 2016). In 2010, Ruben Puentedura developed the SAMR model to guide educators in considering the application behind using different technology tools. According to Puentedura (2006), the SAMR model helps determine if the activity is teacher-driven or student-driven. The goal is to move up the ladder away from teacher-driven activities. SAMR stands for substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition, with substitution being the lowest level and redefinition being the highest (see Figure 2). The model encourages teachers to move up from the lower levels to more enhanced learning levels (Hamilton, Rosenberg, & Akcaoglu, 2016). Modification and redefinition offer new experiences for learners making the learning experience more meaningful.

Figure 2



SAMR Model

At the substitution level, the technology merely substitutes the analog learning with no change in functionality (Puentedura, 2014). In the substitution stage, a student could respond to questions in a Google form in contrast to writing answers on a worksheet. In the augmentation stage, technology is exchanged, and the task or tool changes positively. An example of augmentation could be a student who chooses to play a Kahoot game to answer the same questions from a worksheet. In the modification stage, the new technology provides a redesign of the task. For example, a student could choose to write their questions with multiple choice answers and chooses the correct answer in a Google form. In the redefinition stage, the student controls his learning experience and how his new knowledge will be presented. Examples of redefinition could be creating a cartoon, a movie, or a game demonstrating what she learned.

According to Schrock (2014), an award-winning leader in K12 education, the bottom two stages of substitution and augmentation are teacher-directed, while the top two steps of modification and redefinition are student-directed. The goal is for learning to become more student-directed to allow student ownership of learning. It is evident the Bitmoji classroom represents the modification stage in which the learning tasks have been redesigned, and the student has major control in what learning they pursue.

At the elementary level, teachers create the Bitmoji classrooms with students actively participating in the experience. The learner follows links to online activities. Those activities could include watching a video, reading an online book, or engaging in an online activity like an educational game. A slight concern is that the Bitmoji classrooms are teacher-driven while the student is possibly passively learning. With that, Bitmoji classrooms may waver near the augmentation level on the SAMR model. Pazur (2020) states that even though educators would like to think that Bitmoji classrooms are interactive, it is a collection of hyperlinks. Students may click on a link to listen to an author's reading and be transported to an online game; however, they are in control. Even though it appears on the surface that learners are not collaborating, creating, or communicating, teachers can offer opportunities to do so through the links found in the Bitmoji classroom.

It is implied that educators should focus on the modifying and redefining stage of the SAMR model stages when considering new technology because they impact learning more. Bitmoji classrooms do offer access to the same information that would have been presented in less engaging ways, such as a learning management system (LMS) like a Google Classroom. It is essential to recognize that its avatar style and cartoon backgrounds entice students to consider the presented information; however, they can be a launch point into more meaningful learning, but not final destinations (Pazur, 2020).

Conclusion to Literature Review

With these theories in mind, I hope to determine how many teachers at the study site are building and sharing Bitmoji classrooms. After popular summer professional development sessions on Bitmoji classrooms, it would be interesting to know how many teachers are implementing what they learned. Are teachers building Bitmoji classrooms to engage and motivate students, and are they receiving the results that they hoped? Are teachers sharing with and supporting others to develop collective teacher efficacy with the use of Bitmoji classrooms? Teschow (2020) claims that Bitmoji classrooms are time-consuming to create, even with other educators borrowing them from the Facebook group *Bitmoji Craze for Educators.* While the uses of Bitmoji classrooms evolve, it is essential to consider whether they will flourish.

With Bitmoji classrooms being so new to the education world, its uses are still being better understood. For instance, how can Bitmoji classrooms be used to progress learning during online and face-to-face learning? Educators call them Bitmoji classrooms, but can they be labeled as a classroom? Just what is a classroom? In response, Bitmoji classrooms can be developed with many aspects of the physical classroom in mind. They can include pre-tests to collect prior learning, engaging tools to present information, formative assessments along the way to check for understanding, opportunities for students to create and share learning, and finally, summative assessments from concluding a particular unit of study. Clearly, such aspects of the Bitmoji classroom sound and feel like a physical classroom to most educators. Or are they better suited for lower aspirations, such as providing information for a back-to-school night? I hope this study will tell us more.

Chapter 3: Methods

This study intended to review the use Bitmoji classrooms from the teachers' perspectives who create them and present them to their students. As K12 teachers embark upon the world of teaching online full time, the way they teach must change from how they taught in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Resources must be in electronic format to include instructional and informational material. Reviewing the use of Bitmoji classrooms can reveal perspectives from participants who are trying to engage online learners. More specifically, I intended to understand the purpose, benefits, and sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms.

Research Questions

RQ1: For what purposes do online elementary educators use Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ2: What benefits, if any, do online elementary educators perceive using Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ3: How do online elementary educators perceive their use of Bitmoji classrooms when returning to face-to-face learning?

Table 1

Concept table connecting research questions to data sources

Concept	Research Questions	Data Sources	Analysis Procedure
Purpose	RQ1: For what purposes do online elementary educators use Bitmoji classrooms?	• Teacher survey • Teacher interviews	• Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against survey data • Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against interview data
Benefits	RQ2: What benefits, if any, do online elementary educators perceive using Bitmoji classrooms?	• Teacher survey • Teacher interviews	• Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against survey data • Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against interview data
Sustainability	RQ3: How do online elementary educators perceive their use of Bitmoji classrooms when returning to face-to-face learning?	• Teacher survey • Teacher interviews	• Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against survey data • Thematic analysis, predetermined set of codes against interview data

Participants and Setting

Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002) explained that qualitative sampling is theoretical when selecting people, situations, or processes to explore emerging ideas and build a theory on data analysis. Multiple perspectives from elementary school teachers who utilize Bitmoji classrooms provided insight into implementing this new online communication tool for students. Participants included grade-level classroom teachers, special educators, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, Guidance Counselors, Physical Education (PE) teachers, Art teachers, Music teachers, French teachers, Library Media Teachers, and other teachers such as math and literacy support.

Online learning in the school district was delivered through a learning management system (LMS), Google Classroom. All Bitmoji classrooms were provided through students' Google Classrooms. All teachers at the school district used Google Classrooms to teach. On average, a student at the study site was enrolled in at least six Google Classrooms, their homeroom class, plus five cultural arts classes (i.e., Art, French, Library Media, Music, and Physical Education). Some students were enrolled in additional courses such as Special Education, Guidance Counselors, or ESOL. Students were exposed to a Bitmoji classroom in any of their Google Classrooms.

Qualitative sampling can involve small numbers of participants, while the amount of data gathered can be large with many hours of interviews (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). Per Fossey et al., no fixed minimum number of participants is necessary to conduct sound qualitative research; however, sufficient depth of information needs to be gathered to describe the studied phenomena. This study included one experimental group of approximately seventy-eight teachers located at one elementary school, the school, in the school district where this study was held. I investigated the use of Bitmoji classrooms by those 78 teachers within their 43 classes using the quantitative approach. As of the previous year, the school taught approximately 780 students; however, that number is lower in pandemic times.

The interview participants included two primary teachers as one kindergarten teacher and one second grade teacher: three intermediate teachers as one third grade teacher, one fourth grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, one cultural arts teacher (Physical Education), and one alternative teacher (Special Educator). With this method, I gained different approaches to education and how Bitmoji classrooms were used to fulfill their missions. The interviewees were chosen based on their participation in the survey and their varying degrees of Bitmoji classroom usage. I wanted to account for a wide range of uses of Bitmojis in online classrooms to best capture the breadth of the small sample size.

Study Design

This case study was exploratory in which to document the purpose and benefits of Bitmoji classrooms. Little is known or understood about Bitmoji classrooms due to their recent emergence on the K12 technology landscape. This research's primary goal was to discover the relevance and sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms and generate a hypothesis for further study. I used quantitative methods approach in the form of surveys to capture teacher impressions at one moment in time and qualitative methods in the form of teacher interviews. This study included only teachers since it takes place in pandemic e-learning and contact with students and parents is difficult and limited.

Table 2
Summary of Data

Type of data	Tool to collect data	Participants
Quantitative	Survey	(78) potential school-wide teachers and staff (39) respondents (27) respondents created Bitmoji classrooms (12) respondents did not create Bitmoji classrooms
Qualitative	Individual Video Interviews	(7) teachers (2) Primary (K-2) teacher (3) Intermediate (3-5) teacher (1) Cultural Arts (P.E.) teacher (1) Special Education teacher

Note: Type of data connected to data tool

For the quantitative portion of this research, I asked seventy-eight potential respondents found on the school's email distribution list to respond to the survey. I discovered through informal conversations with some recipients that they would not create an educational support tool for students because that was the responsibility of the classroom teachers. From the twelve survey respondents who did not create Bitmoji classrooms, when asked why, they provided a variety of answers. One educator mentioned that they preferred to provide authentic and realistic connections with photograph and real images. Another educator stated that since many of their students did not visit their Google classroom that the time and effort of building a Bitmoji classroom was not worthwhile. While another educator wrote that creating a Bitmoji classroom seemed more of a collaborative effort due to the time investment and that they did have a group to help with the work. Another claimed that "they are cute, but I think that other things are more effective to engage kids and teachers."

While I cannot develop generalizations from just one case study, the case study approach is an appropriate research method for this situation. This case study asked questions that can lead to future research of Bitmoji classrooms or other similar e-content packages. The practical, real-world application of this study made it well suited for applied research (Bickman, Rog, & Hedrick, 2009). This applied research provided an opportunity to review a technology tool and to gather perceptions from the participants who use it. Case study methodology, as explained by Baxter and Jack (2008), can inform professional practice.

Once the research is finalized, I intend to advise teachers of best practices when utilizing Bitmoji classrooms. Yin (2003) writes that case study methodology allows researchers to explore individuals through simple to complex interventions that support deconstruction and subsequent reconstruction of different phenomena. I took this concept of Bitmoji classrooms, break them down into subsections, and finally compile findings and suggestions. The study of relevant literature is meant to reveal recommendations that can drive the direction of the research.

Materials

These research questions are best answered using quantitative and qualitative methods research. Even though survey data were collected, it measured one time in place which did not qualify for statistical measurements. "Those who engage in such research argue that the use of both methods provides a more complete understanding of research problems than does the use of either approach alone" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 557). Open-ended questions using interviews and closed-ended questions using surveys will serve the research questions best. Using a combination of the two approaches meld together to create a picture of the current and future use of Bitmoji classrooms in an online elementary school setting.

Both survey and interview participants were recruited through the school's email distribution list. A request was sent through the school's email distribution list recruiting participants (See Appendix C). The mode of data collection entailed using email to send and receive surveys to teachers. Fraenkel and Wallen identified the advantages and disadvantages of data survey collection methods such as telephone, in-person, mail, and interviews (2009, p. 393). They did not address email specifically as a collection method, but in comparison, the advantages and disadvantages of using the telephone best matched those of using email. The benefits are collection time is short, the response rate is reasonable, and somewhat standardized responses. Whereas the phone allows follow-up questions, and the emailed survey does not; however, an emailed survey is ideal for group administration, which saves time and effort.

Using a quantitative approach, a survey of sixteen questions for teachers using short answer or multiple-choice questions explores the use and benefits of Bitmoji classrooms (See Appendix D). The data collected included necessary information such as their positions and with whom they shared their Bitmoji classrooms. Researchers who collect this kind of survey data need not to be concerned about why the characteristics exist, but merely to know that they exist. The survey also collects data on the reasons why teachers are creating Bitmoji classrooms. These data highlighted why Bitmoji classrooms have become so popular. This is important because knowing why teachers are creating Bitmoji classrooms established credibility for their use.

Fraenkel and Wallen stated, “The major purpose of surveys is to describe the characteristics of a population. In essence, what researchers want to find out is how the members of a population distribute themselves on one or more variables” (2009, p. 390). The unit of analysis will be individual teachers. The independent variable consisted of Bitmoji classrooms' administration, while the dependent variable was represented by the impact of Bitmoji classrooms on education. This survey was a cross-sectional survey that collected data at just one point in time but will be collected over several days and possibly several weeks.

While the survey gathered quantitative data, interviews were held to collect qualitative data. I gathered qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with the participants. Semi-structured interviews are utilized to facilitate a more focused exploration of a specific topic (Fossey et al., 2002). I used an interview guide with a list of questions and prompts to guide the interview that kept the discussion focused but flexible. Seven interviews were held with unique participants to include a range of different viewpoints.

More detailed information was gathered from educators using interview questions (see Appendix E). The interviews took place over Google Meet using questions written to dig deeper than the survey questions. Each teacher was recorded independently to ensure privacy and allowed participants to speak freely with no interruptions or hesitancy. This technique promoted richer discussions about the topic and allowed a deeper understanding of Bitmoji classrooms' use. The Google Meets was recorded with participants' permission. I used these recordings to identify and code recurrent themes.

During these semi-structured interviews, teachers elaborated on whether they chose pre-made Bitmoji classrooms available for reuse, developed them from scratch, or both. They explained how much time it took to build Bitmoji classrooms. Most importantly, participants were asked what benefits Bitmoji classrooms provide. Finally, teachers explained for how long their Bitmoji classrooms are useful to student use.

I established patterns and connections between the data collected from participants. Data analysis entailed the analytical approach, which typically involves two levels of analysis. Fossey et al. (2002, p. 728) describe how to analyze collected data best. First, recurrent themes will be "reviewed, identified, and coded within the data from each participant." Secondly, Fossey et al. (2002, p. 728) state using similar steps of identifying common themes and areas of divergence across participants. Finally, I connected identified themes in a meaningful way and developed a narrative of the participants' experiences.

Transferability

Once collected, this data will be used to drive instruction at the school district. At least two groups within the school district have been established to share ideas and Bitmoji classrooms with peers. To date, at least two official pieces of training have been presented within the school district, along with many personal one-on-one tutorials. The school district can use this data to decide on its promotion of future use and drive best practices in instructional design. If the data shows students receive benefits by accessing Bitmoji classrooms, the district can provide even more training. If the data shows that learning is not positively impacted, the school district could discourage their use and provide no additional training.

I will also share the results from this study with the Bitmoji classrooms' originator, Dr. Allatesha Cain. She could use the results to promote the use of Bitmoji classrooms and address critics of the tool. There have been concerns posted on various social media sites for teachers. These concerns describe a lack of time to build them and that they are not developmentally appropriate. Dr. Cain could potentially use the results of this research to dispel their negative critiques and validate their worth.

Data Collection

The school principal at the research site required a short synopsis of the study and a copy of the dissertation proposal. The school district's research panel required a review of the proposal approved by Indiana University and a formal application to conduct research. Once permission was granted from the principal and the district, the data collection began.

First, the survey was administered, and 39 teachers who work with students responded. The survey was delivered to potential respondents using a district-provided email service. Users had one week to respond to the survey and received a reminder email after four days. From the returned surveys, seven respondents from diverse teaching levels were identified as users of Bitmoji classrooms at different degrees. One teacher used Bitmoji classrooms only once; another used them over 100 times. These seven respondents moved forward to the interview stage of data collection.

Once the interviews were transcribed, a thematic analysis was conducted throughout the qualitative data by reading the transcripts and identifying patterns. First, the researcher had to become familiar with the data by reading the data several times. Then, initial codes were generated through open coding based on relevant or unique data from that familiarity. Once codes were created, they were organized into broader themes. Finally, the themes were reviewed and modified to fit the three research questions directly.

Initially, the survey questions were considered the primary source of data collection, yet once the qualitative data was collected through the interviews, it was discovered that the interview data provided insight never considered with the survey questions. These unique discoveries were distinctive enough to examine on an individual basis despite not fitting the identified themes.

Data and Analysis

A content analysis was used to analyze the interview data. All interviews were coded manually to support the themes of this research. The interviews were standard with open-ended questions in which the respondents were asked the same questions. Three significant themes support the research questions: (1) the reasons why online educators utilized or did not utilize Bitmoji classrooms; (2) the perceived benefits or not of using Bitmoji classrooms; and (3) if Bitmoji classrooms have a future in face-to-face elementary instruction.

Regarding the theme of purpose, research question number one asked why do online educators use Bitmoji Classrooms? One focus of this research was to discover the reasons educators created their Bitmoji Classrooms. This study explored if educators created them as a replacement for a learning management system such as Google Classroom, which this district chose. Elementary teachers did not have much experience, if any, in teaching students online. Many elementary students, especially the younger ones, may not readily respond to the unimaginative look of Google Classroom with its lack of color, cartoon figures, or movement that they find in other flashy educational software such as Brain Pop, First in Math, and Kahoot.

Another question this research addressed is if teachers used Bitmoji classrooms to organize an entire unit of study or organize their materials by subject. Teachers could be seeking a way to contain all the information from one unit of study or one subject in a single place since hiding materials in Google Classroom is not an option and it can lead to learner overload. Many LMSs allow teachers to hide and show different segments of their online classrooms; Google Classroom does not. The type topics feed in Google Classroom can become overwhelming and distracting as more items are added through the progression of the online course. Besides the organization of materials, this research asked if Bitmoji classrooms could be effective in teaching one-time events such as holidays. Holidays are readily taught in elementary schools because they provide an opportunity to teach history, culture, geography, and diversity. Hispanic Heritage Month is an example of how these can be combined if presented collectively to capture all four aspects. Finally, this research explored if Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool to support young learners, particularly in social-emotional health.

The second theme of this study is the possible benefits of utilizing Bitmoji classrooms. First and foremost, one could assume that Bitmoji classrooms engage the user, but is that assumption correct. Did students find them interesting enough to follow the links to discover what was on the other side? I wondered if students found the colors, the movements, and the cartoon-like characters engaging enough to follow the embedded links to information, games, and quizzes. Another question regarding benefits was if the Bitmoji classrooms caused online classroom materials to be more navigable?

Comparatively speaking, this research explored if the paths found in Bitmoji classrooms were easier to comprehend when compared to other learning management systems such as Google Classroom. Among the other questions of interest, this study was conducted to investigate was whether Bitmoji classrooms created a sense of familiarity with the physical classroom space, specifically during full-time online learning throughout the pandemic. Did young learners see a connection between a virtual classroom that included a Smartboard, students' desks, and a teacher's desk to the actual items in the physical space of a classroom? It is important to know if students made a connection between learning at home and learning at school. Many experiences at the physical location of school add to the educational experience such as the physical layout of a classroom and picture day. This research explores if the Bitmoji classroom modestly provided a sense of an authentic elementary educational experience.

The third and final theme of this research explores the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms. This study explored if Bitmoji classrooms have a future beyond the pandemic. Based on teachers' work in creating and altering Bitmoji classrooms for over a year, the researcher wanted to know if they were planning on using them once students returned to their physical classrooms. If they did plan to continue their use of Bitmoji classrooms beyond the pandemic, it was deemed important to determine if teachers felt they could reuse the ones they had already created. In addition, this study examined if teachers planned on creating more Bitmoji classrooms once in-person teaching had returned. Were Bitmoji classrooms a response to online teaching and learning during the pandemic, or is it an instructional tool that has the potential to have a longer lifespan than the pandemic?

Inductive coding was used to code all seven interviews. Common codes developed with an initial overview of the whole set of data. After breaking down the overall qualitative data set into smaller sets based on individual teacher interviews, each data set was analyzed more carefully. Each data set was read several times in order to become familiar with the text. It was found that each teacher's experience to be different; nevertheless, common themes emerged among them. Once familiarity with the text was accomplished, more codes were created. The text was reread to verify the assignment of new codes. At that time, codes were changed and added if needed. This process was repeated until all data sets had been coded. Finally, each line of coded data was reviewed to ensure the codes matched the data. See Appendix G for more details on coding.

The survey data supplemented the coded data of the interviews. While the seven interviews collected more in-depth data about Bitmoji classrooms, the 39 completed surveys provided a larger sample of Bitmoji classroom uses and experiences. As a result, it was relatively easy to administer, and the responses were quick to receive. Each survey respondent was offered a five-dollar gift card of their choice; the retailers were Amazon, Target, and Dunkin Donuts. In addition, each interviewee was offered a twenty-dollar gift card from the same vendors. All recipients accepted the gift cards except one survey respondent.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The primary purpose of this research was to understand the perceptions of online educators regarding their use of Bitmoji classrooms and the prospects of their continued use. The use of a qualitative approach is intended to help us understand and gain insight into this experience. This chapter discusses the analyses conducted in accordance with case study methodology and then details the results from these analyses from the standpoint of the main findings back to the research questions.

This analysis consists of data about Bitmoji classrooms collected using two different methods: (1) a staff survey and (2) interviews with individual teachers. Additionally, this chapter includes the demographics of both surveyed and interviewed teachers. The development of both survey and interview questions was built upon the literature review found in Chapter 2. The interview data was categorized, and coded themes were revealed. The survey results bolster these qualitative analyses for deeper insights.

Tables, graphs, and narrative text are used to summarize the quantitative data collected from the survey. In contrast, the prominent themes emanating from transcripts of teacher interviews are laid in a narrative format.

Sample

From seventy-eight potential participants, thirty-nine answered the survey. Of the thirty-nine respondents, twenty-seven utilized Bitmoji classrooms at some level during the academic school year of 2020-2021. From the survey results, seven participants who identified themselves as users of Bitmoji classrooms, albeit at varying degrees, accepted invitations to be interviewed. Appendix F indicates the demographics of the survey respondents. From the sample of thirty-nine survey participants, nineteen (49%) responded as classroom teachers while seven (18%)

responded as cultural arts teachers, which encompasses art, French, media, music, and physical education. The next most significant level of participation included three (8%) special education teachers and three (8%) Title 1 teachers. Of the thirty-nine respondents, twenty-seven (69%) indicated that they had used Bitmoji classrooms. The positions of the interviewed participants were as follows: one (1) special education teacher, one (1) Cultural Arts teacher who is a Physical Education teacher, one (1) kindergarten teacher, one (1) second-grade teacher, one (1) third-grade teacher, one (1) fourth grade teacher, and one (1) fifth-grade teacher.

Table 3
Description of survey respondents

# of survey respondents	% of survey respondents	Description of respondents
19	49%	Classroom teachers
7	18%	Cultural Arts teachers (Art, French, Library Media, Music, P.E.)
3	8%	Special Education teachers
3	8%	Title 1 teachers
7	17%	Mix of 5 different positions
39	100%	Total

When asked how these seven teachers learned how to create Bitmoji classrooms, all stated the Facebook Group *Bitmoji Craze for Educators* as their primary source for information. In fact, they mentioned it a total of fifteen times. The next most common source of learning how to build Bitmoji classrooms was a district-sponsored training mentioning it eight times. Of the seven teachers interviewed, the Bitmoji classrooms created ranged from one to approximately one hundred per teacher. For example, the kindergarten teacher who felt that a Bitmoji classroom was an expectation from administration created one while the special education teacher who provides specialized weekly lessons for individual students created approximately one hundred.

Table 4

Number of Bitmoji classrooms used (created and borrowed) during the school year 2020-2021

Teacher	# Of Bitmoji classrooms used
kindergarten	1
2nd grade	10+
3rd grade	25+
4th grade	4 or 5
5th grade	10+
Special Education	100+
Physical Education	64

When asked with whom the online educators shared their Bitmoji classrooms, the answer was an overwhelming 96% with their students. This immense amount of sharing with students demonstrates that the intended audience of the Bitmoji classrooms is the teachers' students. While over half of the teachers shared them with parents (59%) and colleagues (67%), it was interesting to note that a small percentage (i.e., 15%) shared them with the community at large. An even smaller number (i.e., 11%) of educators posted their creations to the Facebook group *Bitmoji Craze for Educators* the primary source of sharing Bitmoji classrooms. A possible reason for not posting their own Bitmoji classrooms is that the educators could have initially borrowed the majority of their Bitmoji classrooms from the Facebook group, and it would have been repetitive to repost the same Bitmoji classroom.

Research Questions

This chapter contains the results concluded to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: For what purposes do online elementary educators use Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ2: What benefits, if any, do online elementary educators perceive using Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ3: How do online elementary educators perceive their use of Bitmoji classrooms when returning to face-to-face learning?

Purpose

This research study first explored why online educators use Bitmoji classrooms as part of their online lessons. The survey offered predetermined choices based on my experience as an educator who has built Bitmoji classrooms for her online classes. Those choices included five primary options: (1) to provide learning of a culture surrounding a holiday; (2) as an encapsulated unit of study for students to use as their key source; (3) as a tool to support learning in other academic areas; (4) to provide resources for ongoing social and emotional support; or (5) as a replacement to the learning management system (LMS) such as Google Classroom. While these choices did not encompass all possible options, others were revealed during the interviews and will be highlighted in this section.

From the interviews, essential projections for the future of Bitmoji classrooms were realized. First, it is important to note that the administration expected all teachers to provide an introductory Bitmoji classroom for the opening day of the elementary school where this research study was held; although, it was learned through this study that all teachers did not create one. This particular Bitmoji classroom included generic information such as school hours, contact information, and links to educational state standards. It did not include any curriculum. When asked why she created a Bitmoji classroom, the kindergarten teacher who built only this required one reflected back and stated, "I feel like administrators persuaded us in some way that everybody should have a Bitmoji classroom." Other teachers went beyond this initial Bitmoji classroom to support the curriculum and social/emotional learning as detailed below.

Promotes One-time Events Such as Holidays

While eighty-eight percent (88%) of the surveyed respondents agreed and strongly agreed, four of the seven educators interviewed detailed their use of Bitmoji classrooms for holidays. They shared Bitmoji classrooms with their students for many religious holidays in addition to heritage months. For example, during 2020-2021, when the pandemic kept most students home, students received Bitmoji classrooms during Hispanic Heritage Month from the middle of September to the middle of October, Black History Month in February, and Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May. In addition, this school year of 2021-2022 has been expanded to include Native American Heritage Month in November for a Bitmoji classroom.

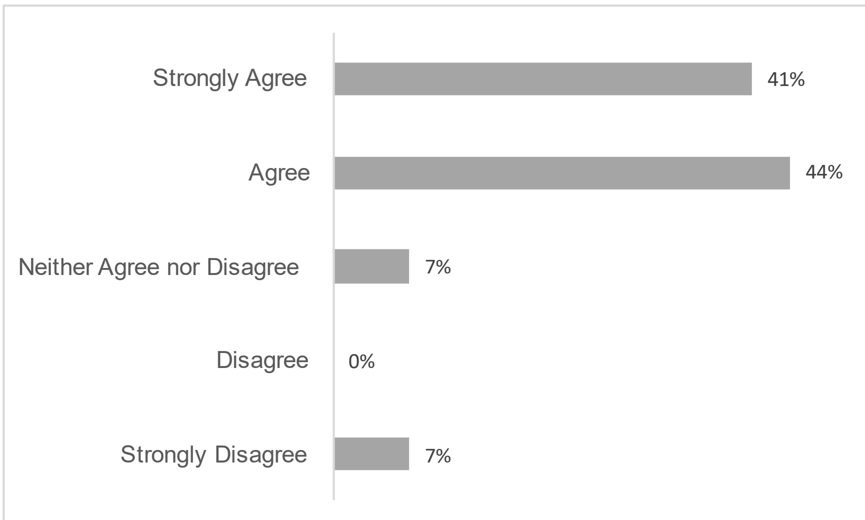
The students where this case study took place speak twenty-one different languages. At the same time, 17% of the student population at the study site is English Language Learners (ELL), which does not fully encompass the school's diversity. See Table 5 for the breakdown of ethnicities of the study site.

Table 5
Ethnicity of study site at the time of study

Black/African American	43%
Hispanic	23%
White	14%
Asian	11%
Multi-Racial	08%

According to the survey results, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 44% agreed (i.e., 85% total) that Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool to promote holidays. This use of Bitmoji classrooms exceeded all others.

Figure 3
Appropriate tool to promote an event like a holiday



This survey finding correlates the strongest with interview comments about culture and the holidays that surround them. For example, the second-grade teacher stated that she had used a Bitmoji classroom for every holiday since the beginning of Winter break; however, she was quick to point out that the Bitmoji classrooms on holidays did not substitute for an official lesson but for flex time or students who have completed their assigned lessons. Examples of holiday Bitmoji classrooms that this 2nd-grade teacher provided her students were: Presidents' Day, St. Patrick's Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, Passover, Holi in Hinduism, Ramadan, and Eid.

The fifth-grade teacher also utilized holiday Bitmoji classrooms since they could supplement students learning of historical facts and information. As she put it, "They're nice because they [Bitmoji Classrooms] … have videos with facts and history of the holiday, and they would have storybooks that are popular for that which are usually links of people reading books out loud. So they act like a library and an information-gathering place." She used them for designated months of celebration like Black History Month and International Women's Month, too. This same fifth-grade teacher stated that she borrowed Earth Day and Kindness Day Bitmoji classrooms, which remained available to students for much longer than just one day on the premise that Earth Day and Kindness Day should be every day.

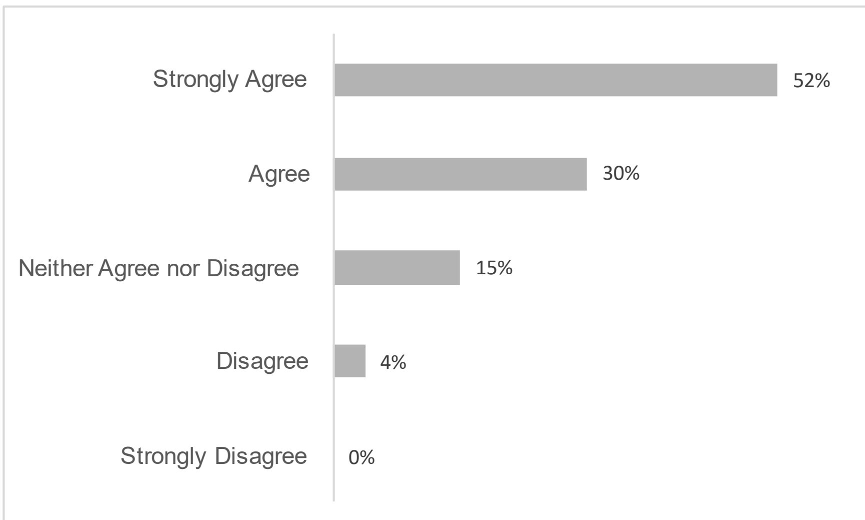
The fourth-grade teacher contributed insight to her use of Bitmoji classrooms for holidays, too. She noted that, "the holiday ones were very popular [with students] that I have used this year." This fourth-grade teacher provided Bitmoji classrooms based on Easter, Winter holidays, Valentine's Day, and Thanksgiving Day. She clarified that the Bitmoji classrooms she used with her students were usually linked to teaching and learning occurring in the classroom at the time.

The special educator who used more than 100 Bitmoji classrooms while teaching online during the pandemic created one Bitmoji classroom based on football season. This teacher is a fervent fan of the National Football League's (NFL) Washington Football Team until recently known as the Washington Redskins. She created a Bitmoji classroom based on her favorite football team and shared it when school began and updated it as the season progressed through December. Using her favorite football team was a way to connect with her students and allowed students to know something about her without sharing personal information. This special educator also mentioned using other holiday-themed Bitmoji classrooms such as Christmas and Dr. Martin Luther King Day but spoke of Christmas-themed Bitmoji classrooms more. She specifically discussed her Bitmoji classroom featuring the Grinch from *"The Grinch Who Stole Christmas."* She explained that her students enjoyed engaging with the Grinch Bitmoji classroom as much as she did making it.

Support Classroom Curriculum

Another purpose of Bitmoji classrooms explored in this research study was if Bitmoji classrooms were an appropriate tool to support academic subjects. According to the survey, 52% of respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed or a total 82% were positive that Bitmoji classrooms were an appropriate tool for ongoing support to academic subjects.

Figure 4
Appropriate Tool as Ongoing Support to Academic Subjects



In an interview, a second-grade teacher claimed, "Our math and ELA [Bitmoji] rooms support the curriculum [found in Google Classrooms created by the district], so it's like places where we'll put posters of our most recent anchor charts." The fifth-grade teacher stated that she included a bookshelf in her primary Bitmoji classroom, which included resources to support her curriculum.

Other examples of how teachers would utilize Bitmoji classrooms as ongoing support varied. A fourth-grade teacher discussed sharing entire Bitmoji classrooms found in the Facebook group with her students that would support her main subject areas. She mentioned that "It seems like the more content-driven ones were ready to go. Aside from the fact-checking any of the names or things like that, or the Bitmoji." Whenever the fourth-grade teacher borrowed other Bitmoji classrooms that were not directly connected to the curriculum, she would download and modify them to where she wanted or needed them. The special educator used interactive tools within Bitmoji classrooms to teach. For example, she showed how her math lesson worked with one particular student. "He had to tell me how many; he had to read the numbers and tell me how many hundreds; how many tens; and how many ones. Because he's having trouble identifying. And when we get down to 2, I say how many tens are in 720, and he told me 2." The special educator demonstrated how the student is to type the answer directly onto a virtual whiteboard in the Bitmoji classroom, or if the student is unable to type the number, the special education teacher can type it for them.

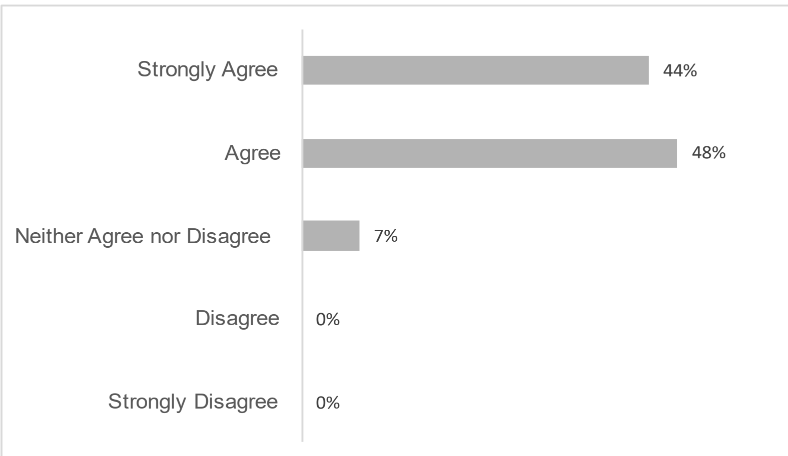
As self-determination theory explains, students become intrinsically motivated when they are interested and experience confidence in learning. When the 4^{th} grade teacher was asked about her students' motivation in using the Bitmoji classrooms, she observed that, "students got a kick out seeing my Bitmoji pop up in different places in the Bitmoji classrooms." She explained that her students had experience with Bitmojis prior to Bitmoji classrooms because of Snapchat, so they felt a sense of confidence within the learning because of their familiarity with the tool. In contrast, the 5^{th} grade teacher claimed that her students were motivated to participate in the learning of Bitmoji classrooms because of their desire to build their own. Their passive learning using Bitmoji classrooms lead to their active learning of building Bitmoji classroom content for personal and educational reasons. In addition, the P.E. teacher reported that students became more involved in class when their Bitmojis became mischievous. She noted their Bitmojis would be off-task or doing silly things like throwing snowballs, and students would report the Bitmojis to the teachers and motivated them to do better than the Bitmojis.

Provides Social-Emotional Support Such as a Calming Room

One more significant reason why online educators used Bitmoji classrooms during the pandemic was that they found them to be an appropriate tool as ongoing support to social/emotional health of their students and their parents. According to survey results, 44% of teachers strongly agreed, while 48% agreed or about 92% total were positive that they are a powerful support tool for social/emotional health.

Figure 5

Appropriate Tool as Ongoing Support for Social/Emotional Health



The district's professional development course taught during the summer called them 'calming rooms.' They were Bitmoji classrooms, but instead of a curriculum that met state or national standards, it included resources to provide calmness or mindfulness during stressful times. The training suggested several items for a virtual calming room such as running water like waterfalls or streams, soft music, meditation, yoga, and brain exercises like puzzles.

When asked, the second-grade teacher described her calming room as "...so you can make use of all those great calming videos of the music, if they're feeling overwhelmed, or if they need a break, they can go to the calming room." Online educators, including guidance counselors, created Bitmoji classrooms with the intent that students who needed breaks from pandemic stress, just not school-related, could visit a calming room to become refreshed. What teachers did not expect was that parents visited their students' calming rooms, as well. "I have heard my parents say sometimes I go into the calming room. We know it's there, and we go in and play one of the relaxing piano videos," proclaimed the second-grade teacher.

A special education student can bring on additional stress for parents. The special education teacher who was interviewed for this research created a Bitmoji calming room just for the parents of her students. She included music, among other calming resources, and provided it through her Google Classroom for the parents to access if needed. According to some parents, her Bitmoji classroom has alleviated the stress of online learning during the pandemic.

A fifth-grade teacher in this study made a calming room, too. She determined that a calming room for her students needed to be personal, made by her and not borrowed from the Facebook group, so she designed her own. Employing such an approach, students would know that she cared for them on a deeper level by choosing the emotional supports included in the Bitmoji classroom; connections were made when students would seek out calming resources that their teacher specifically chose for them. The fourth-grade teacher created one for her students, too. Her students became so intrigued with Bitmoji classrooms that, as described later, they began exploring their creation for their use.

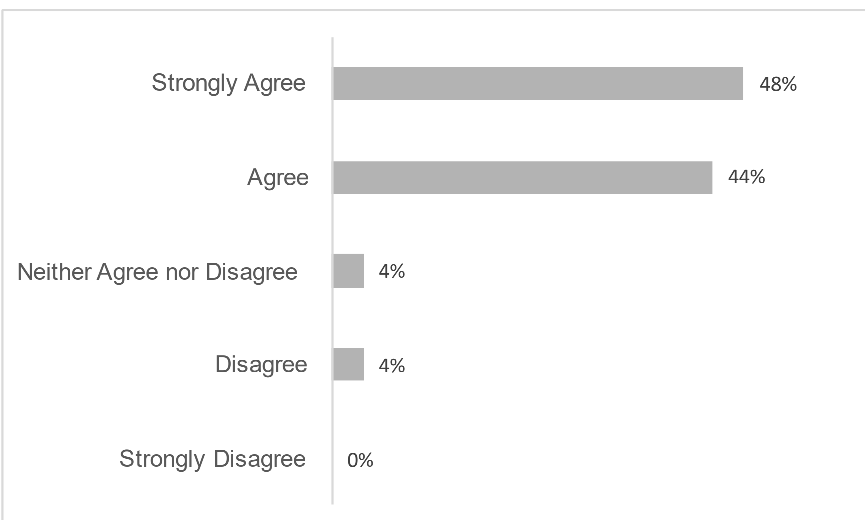
Benefits

This research study then explored the perceived benefits, if any, of using Bitmoji classrooms by online educators. The survey questions explored the following four options: (1) engage learners; (2) navigate classroom materials easier; (3) add a layer of fun to the learning process; and (4) foster a sense of community and create a sense of familiarity. While all benefits, knowing and unknowing to the researcher, were not included in the survey, more benefits were realized in the interviews.

Students Find Bitmoji Classrooms Fun to Use (Passive Learning)

The most significant benefit that online educators perceived while using Bitmoji classrooms was adding a layer of fun to the learning process. This factor was the most agreed upon out of all considered characteristics in this research study. Teachers primarily saw Bitmoji classrooms as a fun way to present curriculum to students. According to survey results, 48% of teachers strongly agreed, while 44% agreed that they are fun for a total of 92%. Confusing though, the interviews did not provide any support to this benefit. Not one interviewed educator mentioned that Bitmoji classrooms provided a layer of fun to the learning process for their students.

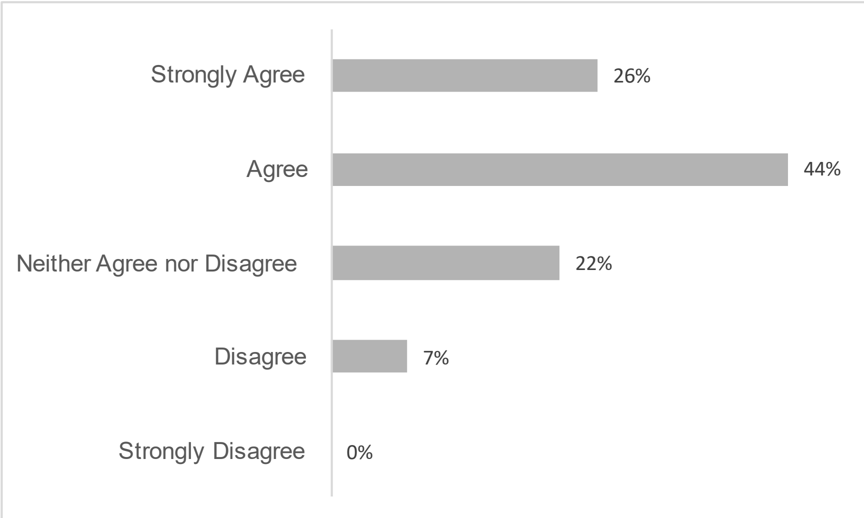
Figure 6
Adds Layer of Fun to Learning Process



Students Find Viewing Bitmoji Classrooms Engaging (Passive Learning)

Not surprisingly, the survey found that 26% of the respondents strongly agreed and another 44% agreed (i.e., 70% were positive) that Bitmoji classrooms engage students in the learning process.

Figure 7
Engage Students in Learning Process



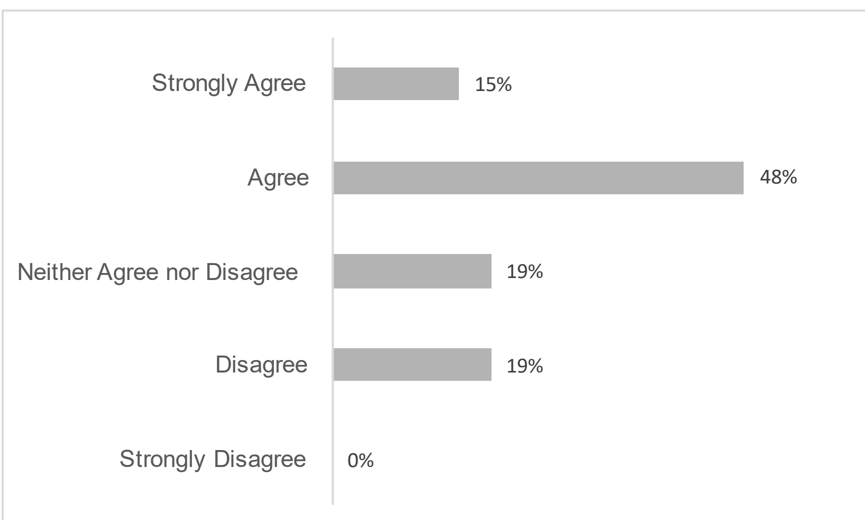
The kindergarten teacher who built only the required one at the beginning of the year expressed that they look inviting and are colorful for the students. She used a cactus theme with icons and bold print, which she thought would attract students. The second-grade teacher claimed that even though they were time-consuming to build, they engaged her students, especially the holiday-themed ones. The fifth-grade teacher cautioned that her Bitmoji classrooms were engaging for some but not others. As a result, she added a layer to her Bitmoji classroom. She was previously a first-grade teacher who used 'Elf on a Shelf' to spark interest in the classroom. The premise of 'Elf on the Shelf' is that a toy elf is moved from day to day throughout a physical space of a home or classroom during Christmas time. Inspired by this, the fifth-grade teacher added an 'Elf on the Shelf' to her Bitmoji classroom to engage her students. As a result, the fifth-grade teacher found that students stayed longer in the Bitmoji classroom, even though it was most likely to search for the Elf instead of educational resources.

The special educator had the most success when discussing the engagement of her students with their Bitmoji classrooms. She reported that her students would arrive in online classes asking what her Bitmoji classroom would look like this week. The special educator stated that student anticipation got her excited about making new ones every week. She further noted that watching them click through their assignments and learning how to navigate the materials justified her time and effort in making them.

Fosters a Sense of Community Among Learners

Two final aspects on benefits that emerged from the research were a sense of community among learners and similarity to face-to-face physical classroom. According to the results, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Bitmoji classrooms did both. It is essential to consider whether learners who are isolated at home feel a sense of belonging to their classroom and their peers within it. Interestingly enough, none of the seven educators who were interviewed mentioned a sense of community during their interviews.

Figure 8
Fosters A Sense of Community of Learners

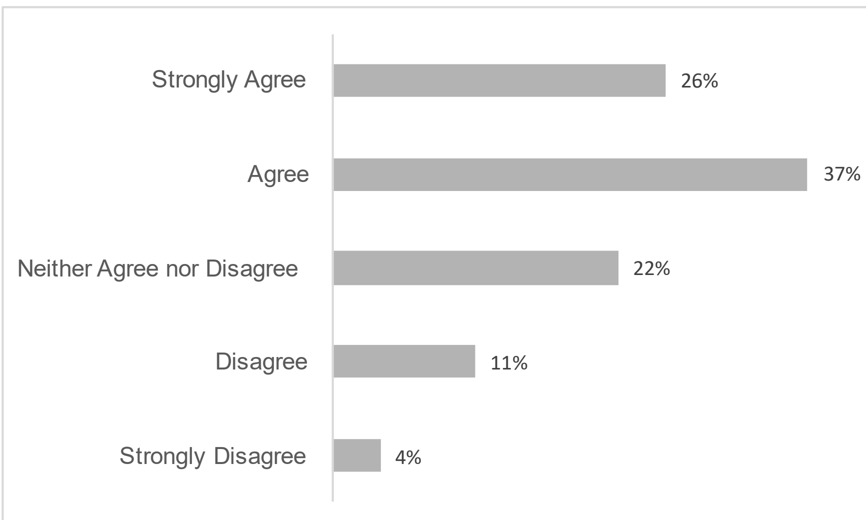


Creates a Sense of Familiarity to Face-to-Face Classrooms

The online educators interviewed for this research study discussed how Bitmoji classrooms resembled face-to-face classrooms. This is a significant consideration when discussing online education, specifically during a pandemic. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students may have never attended a physical school, and their visions of what the space looks like are unknown and might be confusing. This research explored whether educators considered if their Bitmoji classroom could resemble what their physical classroom space would look like and the routines that happen there. With virtual items such as a SMART Board, books on a bookcase, and a teacher's reading chair, standard learning routines could be established that remind students of a classroom in a school building.

Figure 9

Create a Sense of Familiarity to Face-to-Face Classroom



The fifth-grade teacher mentioned that her Bitmoji classroom offered subjects such as Math, Reading, Social Studies, and Science that matched what they would be studying in the physical classroom. These subjects in the primary Bitmoji classroom would lead students to additional Bitmoji sub-rooms. She felt that Bitmoji classrooms had a school look to them. She continued to say that it was necessary, especially when all students were virtual at the beginning of the school year. This is compared to later in the school year when the school was in a hybrid mode which meant not all students were attending face-to-face school. The face-to-face students were attending only a few days per week. The fifth-grade teacher said, "when we were purely virtual, it was just to try to make that connection to make it look like a real school." She argued that this was essential because students were voicing their need to be physically back in school and how they wished they could be with her in person. "I liked it looking like me in a classroom for familiarity with the students; they can click on different subjects to go to another room and have that school look to it, which you might not need if you're in person. Other rooms are like things that I have done with Bitmojis with virtual activities, maybe an escape room, or a holiday activity where they have a choice board where it takes them to different slides, and where they can be interactive."

Another activity of every school year that online learners missed during the pandemic was when the photographer arrived to take students' photos and class photos. A derivative of Bitmoji classrooms filled this need for one 5th grade class. While Snapchat's Bitmoji app and personal cell phones were not allowed by students for instructional purposes, the software application, Pixton, produced similar results to Bitmojis. The fifth-grade teacher instructed her students to create Bitmoji-like cartoon characters using Pixton and submit them to the teacher. The teacher stated that, "It was fun to give them some free exploration time; there is Pixton, a free kid-friendly Bitmoji. So, we made a class picture, and they got a kick out of that." The teacher placed all the students' Pixtons on a slide to represent a class photo. This learning experience provided those students with a lifelong memory of their 5th-grade class, which can create a sense of familiarity. Everyone is in the same predicament, and there is empathy created within that space.

The fourth-grade teacher mentioned that routine is essential to create when teaching in-person and virtually. Learners need to know what is coming next. Predictability reduces anxiety, and there is much anxiety while learning online. Bitmoji classrooms have the potential to develop patterns and reduce stress. As she noted "Having things to be more familiar with as far as the environment for the students to see something the same every day helps build that routine." Bitmoji classrooms were essential for her students to build those skills, so there would be less anxiety and more acceptance of expectations when they returned to the building.

Sustainability

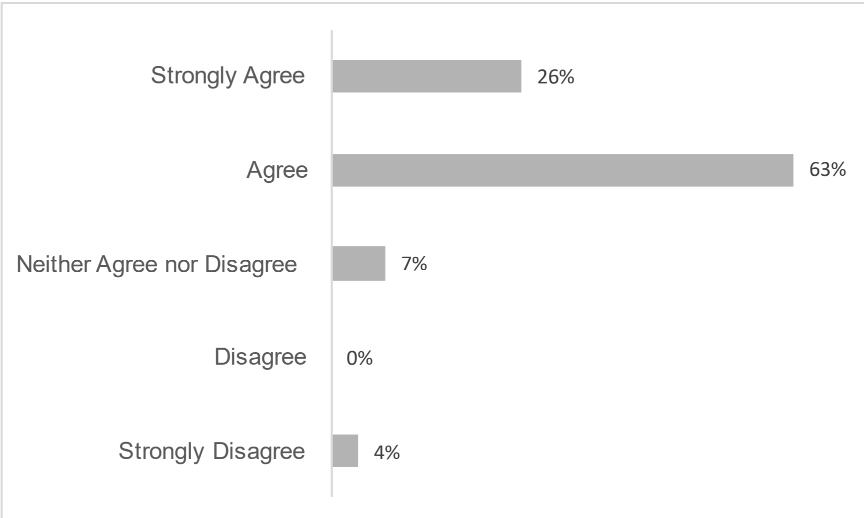
The conclusion of this research asks whether Bitmoji classrooms will endure the return to face-to-face teaching and learning. The findings of this research study indicate that they will most likely not remain in the same capacity as they were introduced during the pandemic, but they may remain relevant in education. The sharing of Bitmoji classrooms has slowed on the Facebook group, and members have begun to ask questions unrelated to Bitmoji classrooms, which may signal those educators have moved on. This chapter will explore the current thoughts about the use of Bitmoji classrooms and their future possibilities.

Reusable for Future Classes

According to the survey results, 63% of respondents agree and another 26% of respondents strongly agree (i.e., 89% total) that Bitmoji classrooms are reusable from year to year. In an interview, the fourth-grade teacher mentioned that she intends on reusing her Bitmoji classrooms next year when teaching in person. The second-grade teacher noted the following when asked if she planned on reusing her Bitmoji classrooms, "For sure, we've seen each version of our math room, for each math unit, we just know it stays mostly the same, or they may reorder it, we can see what's in the room, and just edit it a little bit." The third-grade teacher also plans on using them again because she feels that Bitmoji classrooms are a valuable tool to gather resources for her students.

Figure 10

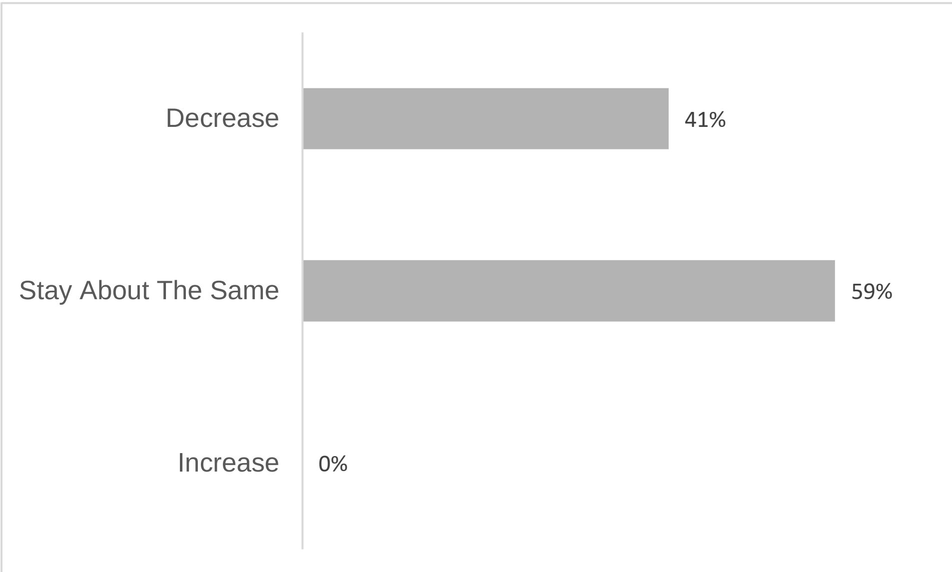
Reusable for Several Years



Frequency in Use with the Return to Face-to-Face Learning

Just because 89% of online educators said that Bitmoji classrooms are reusable does not mean they will reuse them. According to the survey results, 59% of the respondents indicated that the frequency in which they used Bitmoji classrooms would stay about the same when school returns to in-person instruction, while 41% of the respondents said their use of them would decrease. Even teachers who have not joined in the momentum of Bitmoji classrooms see a use for them in the future. The special educator who utilized them the most with building at least 100 for her students during the year of online and virtual learning proclaimed that, "Yes, I want to use them for more independent assignments. So, let's say I have three students in my room at the same time, and I'm working with one, I can have another one in the Bitmoji classroom doing an independent assignment. So yes, I do plan on using this once we return to the building."

Figure 11
Intentions of Future Use



No educators responded that their use of Bitmoji classrooms would increase. Despite the results from the previous graph showing that 89% of online educators said that Bitmoji classrooms are reusable, only 59% are considering using them again as an instructional tool. The remaining 30% of online educators who said they are reusable are not planning to reuse. The 4th-grade teacher revealed a new way of thinking about designing instruction. She said when asked if Bitmoji classrooms had a future in education, "Maybe the bells and whistles that people put in, my Bitmoji spinning, or I'm in the middle of a hurricane [will dissipate]. I've seen people do things like a Hollywood sign, maybe that could be a fad, but I think the notion of organizing materials in a way is not going away." This long-time educator who is a Nationally Board-Certified Teacher (NBCT) sees Bitmoji classrooms as an innovative way to compile information, indicating a change in future instructional design. Even though the advantages of using Bitmoji classrooms have been established in this study, there are reasons not to use them.

Time Constraint

While all seven interviewees agreed that there was some benefit of using Bitmoji classrooms with their students, five of them mentioned the time required to build them was a definite constraint of sustaining their use. One could argue that the Facebook group that shares Bitmoji classrooms is a solution to the sizable time investment in building original Bitmoji classrooms; however, teachers discussed how the borrowed files were not classroom ready. In addition, teachers in the district where this research study was held mentioned the school district's requirements when creating products that students will use.

One such stipulation is that YouTube is not to be used by students during instruction. Links within borrowed Bitmoji classrooms tend to lead learners directly to YouTube because many school districts allow student access. When asked about her time invested in developing Bitmoji classrooms for her students, the second-grade teacher responded, "that mostly depends on our county's YouTube policy. Many counties allow students to click directly on YouTube links, but our county does not. So, there’s a lot of converting, so I’m converting the link to a video, downloading it, then uploading it in, so it’s a lot of processing time.”

When addressing the district's policy on restricted student access to YouTube, the second-grade teacher continued, "If I'm editing, and depending on the number of links, it can take anywhere from an hour to four, if there's a whole lot of links that I need to convert. I'd like to continue, but if it's much like traditional timing, and access to technology, I feel like it's too much of a time burden to continue it." Creating kid-friendly access to YouTube links entails converting every link from the borrowed Bitmoji classroom to a downloadable file, downloading each file, then uploading that file back to the borrowed Bitmoji classroom. Teachers explained that the process could take a considerable amount of time depending on the number of links. A typical Bitmoji classroom can have ten to twenty unique links. Therefore, spending hours preparing a teaching tool does not justify the one time that students will use it. The second-grade teacher continued, "I think if I had more time to create them, I would create whole classrooms for units, but right now, there isn't the time."

When asked about the time constraint of editing borrowed Bitmoji classrooms, the fifth-grade teacher mentioned that changing the links to kid-approved files was not the only thing to consider, but a teacher had to keep in mind the grade level, too. When this 5th-grade teacher finds links in borrowed Bitmoji classrooms as either too young or too old for her students, she would need to curate age-appropriate links. That process can sometimes take hours to find videos on the related topic that meets her students' age level and an appropriate length. Videos need to be long enough to provide the needed information, but not too long that the students lose interest.

The kindergarten teacher who built the obligatory one at the beginning of the year reflected back when discussing her future use of Bitmoji classrooms, “I'm not sure I would do that. It depends on how much time I have next year." When pressed further, she admitted that she most likely would not have time. Nevertheless, the kindergarten teacher divulged, "I think there's a good possibility that some teachers will still use them because they can be super creative. They like the different ways they can individualize them in their classrooms. They may have more time than I do."

Older Students Find Creating Bitmoji Classrooms Engaging (Active Learning)

There is evidence that holds promise for the future of Bitmoji classrooms. Through the interviews in this case study, the researcher discovered two aspects of Bitmoji classrooms that were surprising. This research focused on student usability of this instructional design tool as a passive user as it was intended when developed in March of 2020; however, it was discovered that older elementary students in fourth and fifth grades at the research site, in fact, became more engaged in the tool as active users by building their own Bitmoji classrooms. After several months of interacting with Bitmoji classrooms as viewers, these learners began inquiring how to build them versus viewing them. Not only were students interested in building Bitmoji classrooms as an alternative assignment, but they were also interested in creating them for personal use. "This has also made them want to make their own. So, in times when we've had free time, I've sent them backgrounds, and they've made some bedrooms, or they've made their house, and they've learned, they ask how they get it to go back to the first page. That was just for fun, but when we did a project, later, it was a nonfiction writing piece, they were able to use what they learned from that to link back to the table of contents in the Google Slides in their writing project," recounted the 5th-grade teacher.

The students of the fourth-grade teacher enjoyed their teacher's calming room but found it too generic. They wanted to create their own calming rooms to meet their specific needs. "They have even taken an interest in creating their room even if it does not include a Bitmoji but creating a room with different clickable things in it. Their calming center, I had a few students work on that. Things they would enjoy having if they needed that time and space." It was an unexpected discovery that nine and ten-year-old's were interested in using a tool originally intended for teacher use and that they created a personalized instructional tool to self-soothe. These students became instructional designers for an educational tool that served their own social and emotional well-being.

Students saw tools that teachers used as reserved for teachers in the past. With Bitmoji classrooms, students as young as 4th and 5th grade could see Bitmoji classrooms not only as a teaching tool but as accessible to them. Students could use a tool seemingly reserved for teachers to demonstrate their learning or for personal use, which transfers the power of learning from the instructor to the learner. Taking ownership of their learning is a unique experience for students.

Teachers Find Creating Bitmoji Classrooms Engaging

Another unexpected finding from the interview data was that some teachers found the act of building Bitmoji classrooms fun. It became a hobby for several teachers. This idea was not addressed in the research questions and hence not considered in the survey; however, this surprising discovery is important because it shows that if teachers find creating Bitmoji classrooms enjoyable, this could lead to sustainability.

The fourth-grade teacher had this to say about creating Bitmoji classrooms. "It was more fun for me to design it the way I wanted to instead of going to a copy machine and making a copy of something." She found them 'therapeutic.' The fourth-grade teacher also shared several Bitmoji classrooms with her sister, who homeschools her children, so she was unaware of the Bitmoji classroom craze. Her sister was "amazed at how they looked."

The second-grade teacher stated, "it's engaging for kids, but it's also engaging for you as an educator." She felt that it was a way to work but also decompress at the same time. This teacher expressed how she felt a sense of completion when finishing a Bitmoji classroom for her students.

The Special Education teacher who created more than 100 Bitmoji classrooms to include a Bitmoji Classroom of her favorite NFL football team said, "I just think it's fun; sometimes I have my Bitmoji dancing across the room. I just enjoy making them." In addition, she explained that when she talks on the phone with friends for hours, she curates items for future Bitmoji classrooms as a pastime.

Finally, the Physical Education (P.E.) teacher expressed the most excitement about building Bitmoji classrooms. She noted that, "The fact that my coworker and I could get online together to create these Google Slides and enjoy making these funny scenes and make our Bitmojis being up to no good, they're throwing snowballs and whatever else, makes it that I'm okay with P.E. being like this for right now." Thus, it appears that the actual construction of Bitmoji classrooms was not only engaging for the teachers but also possibly served as social/emotional support for them.

Figure 12
Summary of Research Findings

Purpose

- Promotes one time events
- Supports Curriculum
- Provides Social/Emotional Support

Benefits

- Fun for students
- Engaging for students
- Foster sense of community
- Creates sense of familiarity to classroom

Sustainibility

- Reusable for future years
- Frequency of use when return to face-to-face
- Time Constraint
- Older students create
- Engaging for teachers to build

Chapter 5: Implications and Conclusions

School districts utilize various distant learning models with no one model proving superior. During the pandemic, teachers scrambled to engage students while designing online instruction to be meaningful and accessible. Teaching elementary students during a worldwide pandemic was incredibly challenging. The overwhelming need to connect students with online curriculum fostered a space to be creative. Bitmoji classrooms became a phenomenon during this time to do just that. The purpose of this case study was to understand the perceptions of online educators regarding their use of Bitmoji classrooms during the pandemic and the prospects of their continued use post pandemic as in person educators. Included in this chapter are reiterations of the significant results.

RQ1: For what purposes do online elementary educators use Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ2: What benefits, if any, do online elementary educators perceive using Bitmoji classrooms?

RQ3: How do online elementary educators perceive their use of Bitmoji classrooms when returning to face-to-face learning?

Purpose of Using Bitmoji Classrooms

This research identified four major purposes for using Bitmoji classrooms in an elementary school setting. Those four are: to provide ongoing social/emotional support for students, families, and educators to help alleviate stress; to promote a holiday in culturally responsive classrooms; to reinforce classroom curriculum; and to act as a collection of classroom curriculum materials.

Provides Social/Emotional Support

Ninety-two percent (92%) of survey respondents agreed and strongly agreed that Bitmoji classrooms were an appropriate tool for ongoing social/emotional support**.** The surveyed participants of this case study perceived this benefit as the most prominent at 92% who agreed and strongly agreed. The educators at the research site found that students benefit from the calming rooms, but some parents reported that they benefited from the use of the calming rooms as well.

Promote One Time Events Like Holidays

Eighty-five percent (85%) of survey respondents agreed and strongly agreed that Bitmoji classrooms were an appropriate tool to promote holidays. We are a nation of immigrants, past and present. Because of that, our country has abundant celebrations and traditions, some being just one day per year to an entire month. Some are religious, while others are cultural. While Black History Month has a long-standing history of recognition, others such as Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month are becoming more popular. A more culturally responsive classroom is necessary to broaden all students' viewpoints and create a school-wide environment that feels welcoming to everyone.

Supports Curriculum

Eighty-two percent (82%) of survey respondents agreed and strongly agreed that Bitmoji classrooms were an appropriate tool to teach a unit of study and use as ongoing support to academic subjects. The pandemic forced the K-12 community to revolutionize teaching and learning delivery methods. While teachers at this elementary school study site did not use Bitmoji classrooms to teach a unit of study in its entirety, they felt that they could. The interviews did not support the responses from the surveys, however. This consideration was mentioned by only one teacher in interviews, even though all seven educators were asked about it.

Benefits for Using Bitmoji Classrooms

This research identified two major benefits for using Bitmoji classrooms in an elementary school setting. Those two are: adds a layer of fun to the learning process and engages students. While this case study identified two other findings as fostering a sense of community and creating a sense of familiarity to the physical classroom, they were not in the majority.

Fun for students

Ninety-two percent (92%) agreed and strongly agreed that Bitmoji classrooms can add a layer of fun to the learning process. To get students excited about online learning, teachers had to become creative with delivering content. From the benefits investigated in this study, educators claimed that the fun factor of Bitmoji classrooms exceeded all other benefits. During the stress of pandemic learning, students and teachers alike needed some enjoyment in their school day, and Bitmoji classrooms were able to provide that.

Engages students

Seventy percent (70%) agreed and strongly agreed that students who viewed Bitmoji classrooms found them to be engaging. When compared to Google Classroom, Bitmoji classrooms looked more inviting and colorful for students. Another way Bitmoji classrooms engaged students was that they could be drastically different from the previous one.

Sustainability of Using Bitmoji Classroom

This research identified three main ideas in relation to the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms in an elementary school setting. Those three are: intentions of future use; reusability; and student created versus teacher created Bitmoji classrooms.

Frequency of future use

When asked about their future intentions of using Bitmoji classrooms, the survey respondents in this study indicated that fifty-nine percent (59%) would remain the same usage rate. At the same time, none said they would increase their use. Once this research is finalized, members of the Bitmoji Facebook group will be polled regarding their current usage rate based on post pandemic teaching.

Reusability in future years

When asked about the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms, in the survey eighty-nine (89%) of elementary educators agreed and strongly agreed that they are reusable for several years beyond their original use. Teachers explained how a Bitmoji classroom provided additional teaching support for which students could rely upon.

Older Student Create

A consideration for the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms is one that I never considered before gathering data; it was realized in the interviews of two teachers of older students. Students in this study showed a keen interest in making Bitmoji classrooms. It began as creating them for personal use; for example, students built personalized calming rooms in response to stress due to the pandemic and online learning. Afterward, once students became more proficient in the construction of Bitmoji classrooms, teachers began offering them as a choice assignment. The 4th-grade and 5th-grade teachers in this study claimed their students showed interest and ability in creating them, at least for personal reasons.

Engaging for teachers

Another consideration for sustainability discovered during the interview phase of data collection was finding that some teachers enjoyed creating Bitmoji classrooms. Despite the immense time commitment in developing Bitmoji classrooms, it was fun for several teachers. These teachers mentioned how it became a low stress activity for them if there was no time limit.

A concern for future use

A concern for current and future use of Bitmoji classrooms that has not been mentioned is copyright infringement. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, many publishing companies temporarily modified their guidelines while schools closed across the country. Reading stories online, either live or recorded was momentarily allowable. Creating unlisted links on YouTube and sharing those links in a closed platform such as Bitmoji classrooms deemed the exception.

Keeping with copyright law, all those virtual bookshelves within the walls of Bitmoji classrooms filled with content created by teachers should be removed. This could greatly impact the use of Bitmoji classrooms. Teachers must credit for any copyright materials used; the possibility of that happening widespread is unlikely.

Implications

As shown in the present study, the Bitmoji classroom was a way to engage students in learning during the pandemic; such a finding has potentially huge implications for school curriculum plans and emergency preparedness. What happens to K-12 school learning in the future when unplanned events lead schools to go online again? Just as in the recent past, Bitmoji classrooms could be used by small and large districts alike to foster online learning. However, schools should not wait for an unplanned event such as a snow day to incorporate Bitmoji classrooms once again. Clearly, Bitmoji classrooms can have an important role in supporting learning during in person school in situations as well

Bitmoji classrooms are a fun and engaging way to support curriculum. They can be used as a student center and for older students as a choice for assignment completion. This research found that calming rooms made a positive impact on students, parents, and students. Trauma caused by the pandemic or other calamities has created stress on students and parents. Students who are stressed struggle to learn; parents who are stressed struggle to parent. Bitmoji classrooms used as calming rooms could also be utilized extensively through the guidance department and resource rooms for students who need an opportunity to calm themselves, enabling them to return to their classrooms with minimal learning loss from out-of-school suspensions. The results of this study in an elementary school setting can apply to other levels of education, too. For instance, Bitmoji classrooms in particular calming rooms can be used in middle schools, high schools, and alternative schools.

In the school district where this case study was conducted, the results will be shared with the administration of the school where the study was held including the guidance counselors, team leads, supervisor of media learning services for the school district, and the district's office of instructional technology who coordinates training for all employees. Those leaders can emphasize the importance of continuing the use of Bitmoji classrooms when schools are open and closed. Remedial training can be offered for educators who used them during the pandemic but have not since. In addition, initial training can be provided for those educators who did not previously participate or for new employees of the school or district.

Bitmoji classrooms should continue to be used to celebrate and recognize students' cultural experiences. This study found that teachers overwhelmingly felt that Bitmoji classrooms were best used in to build culturally responsive classrooms. The school district where this case study was held is a diverse one; however, these specific Bitmoji classrooms could have a huge impact on those school districts that are not diverse. Educators could use these fun and engaging resources to teach students about other cultures in a noninvasive and unthreatening way.

Implications for future research include how online teaching and learning, especially at the elementary level, can be developed and improved for teachers and students. Teachers will need more just-in-time support, as was presented with the vast Facebook support group of Bitmoji Classrooms. As found in this study, teachers require ample time to create engaging and interactive lessons. The use of online teaching and learning dramatically increased for all levels of K-12 education for the long-term pandemic. This study explored how Bitmoji classrooms, particularly at the elementary level, can deliver online supports for short-term educational needs and offer student agency with long-term results.

Recommendations

While this research identified several factors predicting the sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms, the current use levels (post pandemic) need to be established. A different sample or one that is much larger than a single school district could provide more information about the current level of use of Bitmoji classrooms. Such a larger scope or even wider diversity of students could inform educators if Bitmoji classrooms were a short-lived phenomenon for desperate times, or whether they actually have a place in education beyond the pandemic. A different population from the large, diverse elementary school could also provide insight on the current use of Bitmoji classrooms. Are middle schools, high schools, and alternative schools using them, as well? Or do the cute avatars apply mostly to younger learners.

As this case study was conducted at one place in time, a statistical approach was not used. For example, future research could encompass data collected before and after implementation of Bitmoji calming rooms on loss of learning time due. Another approach could entail some teachers using Bitmoji classrooms as a curriculum support while other teachers not using them.

A researcher could compare the test data between the two. These statistical approaches to Bitmoji classrooms could provide better insight to their impact on learning.

A limitation of this case study was no student perspective of Bitmoji classrooms. This study could be replicated and extended with data from both teacher and student perspective. Are what teachers reported about students' experiences with Bitmoji classrooms accurate? When teachers reported that students responded positively to Bitmoji calming rooms, would students relay the same experience? Another study focusing on students' perception could also uncover additional functionalities of Bitmoji classrooms as well the challenges and deficiencies.

Conclusion

While no one hopes for another pandemic as a reason to improve online elementary instruction, the present study offers indications of how online education can be honed for other reasons in the future. K-12 educators have learned a great deal about online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before this, students mainly at the higher grades had experienced distance learning with college classes, supplementary classes not available at the brick-and-mortar schools, advancement placement classes, and credit recovery. With the pandemic experience, schools are now considering how online education can be incorporated in different ways at all grade levels and discipline areas.

More preparation for online K-12 schools is necessary for a multitude of reasons. Those beloved snow days in which road conditions become unsafe may become an event of the past because learning can continue online. Likewise, the uncertainty of weather days that delay the last day of school can be rectified with online education. Weather days are not the only consideration for future online learning. Teacher workdays, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, parent-teacher conferences, outages at schools such as lack of heat, air conditioning, or electricity are examples of how learning could continue online without disruption. Another vital consideration is the ongoing nationwide shortage of classroom teachers, substitute teachers, support staff, and bus drivers. Online teaching and learning could intervene while the problem of school staff shortages becomes directly addressed.

Self-directed learning practiced within Bitmoji classrooms is evident in the transfer of learning from teacher-focus to learner-focus. In Bitmoji classrooms, students dictate their path of learning through teacher provided choices of videos, books, quizzes, games, exercises, and blogs, to name just a few learning resources and paths. When the 4th and 5th-grade teachers highlighted in this case study taught their students how to create their own Bitmoji classrooms for their personal social and emotional needs, students engaged in even more non-cognitive skills. By building their own Bitmoji classrooms, students set goals, made decisions on what resources to use, and reflected upon those decisions. Through student agency, an opportunity to practice and master many of those non-cognitive skills such as critical thinking, creativity, confidence, organization, and self-directed learning were made available to them.

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Appendix A: *Example of Bitmoji*

Appendix B: *Example of Bitmoji Classroom*

Description: Flowers spin when clicked. Each person speaks a greeting when clicked. When each book is selected, the user will be directed to a reading or special interest video.

Appendix C: *Recruitment Email*

Hello everyone,

I’m earning a doctorate degree in Instructional Technology from Indiana University. I’m working with my advisor, Dr. Curtis Bonk, to study the effects of Bitmoji classrooms on learning. Because they are a new phenomenon, there is little known about the impact they have on education.

To achieve this, I would like to explore how educators are using Bitmoji classrooms, specifically the purpose, benefits, and whether they have Belisário. If you’re not using them, I’d like to know that, too.

I will ask you to complete a short survey in a few days and begin small group discussions with a few. Please consider participating.

Elizabeth Van Pate
Doctoral Candidate
Instructional Systems Technology
Indiana University

Appendix D: *Survey Questions*

1. (Demographic) What is your position?
    a. Cultural Arts teacher (Art, Foreign Language, Media, Music, P.E.)
    b. ESOL
    c. Guidance Counselor
    d. Homeroom teacher
    e. Special Education teacher
    f. Teacher's Assistant
    g. Title 1 teacher
    h. Position not listed, please provide

2. (Demographic) Have you ever created a Bitmoji classroom?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I have not, but want to
    d. Not sure
    e. I have not, nor do I want to. Please specify the reason.

3. (Demographic) With whom did you share your Bitmoji classroom? Select all that apply.
    a. Administration
    b. Colleagues
    c. Community
    d. Parents
    e. Social Media group(s)
    f. Students
    g. Other not listed, please provide

4. (Purpose) Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool to promote an event like a holiday.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

5. (Purpose) Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool to teach a unit of study.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

6. (Purpose) Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool as ongoing support to academic subjects.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

7. (Purpose) Bitmoji classrooms are an appropriate tool as an ongoing support to social/emotional health.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

8. (Purpose) Bitmoji classrooms can be used as a substitute to a Learning Management System such as Google Classroom.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

9. (Benefit) Bitmoji classrooms engage my students in the learning process.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

10. (Benefit) Bitmoji classrooms allow my students to navigate classroom materials easier.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

11. (Benefit) Bitmoji classrooms add a layer of fun to the learning process for my students.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

12. (Benefit) Bitmoji classrooms foster a sense of a community of learners.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

13. (Benefit) Bitmoji classrooms create a sense of familiarity to the face-to-face classroom.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

14. (Sustainability) Bitmoji classrooms are reusable for several years.
    1. Strongly Disagree
    2. Disagree
    3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
    4. Agree
    5. Strongly Agree

15. (Sustainability) The frequency in which I use Bitmoji classrooms once school returns to in-person instruction will:
    1. Decrease
    2. Stay about the same
    3. Increase

16. (Sustainability) I intend to create more Bitmoji classrooms.
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Unsure

Appendix E: *Interview Questions*

Evaluating Bitmoji Classrooms: Interview Questions (Demographics, Purpose, Benefits, Sustainability)

1. (Demographic) What is your position?

2. (Demographics) How did you learn how to create a Bitmoji classroom? ie: attended district sponsored training, joined social media support group(s), taught myself through trial and error, trained by a colleague, watched online tutorials

3. (Demographic) Approximately how many Bitmoji classrooms have you created?

4. (Demographic) How long does it take on average to create a Bitmoji classroom?

5. (Demographic) With whom do you share your Bitmoji classrooms? Why?

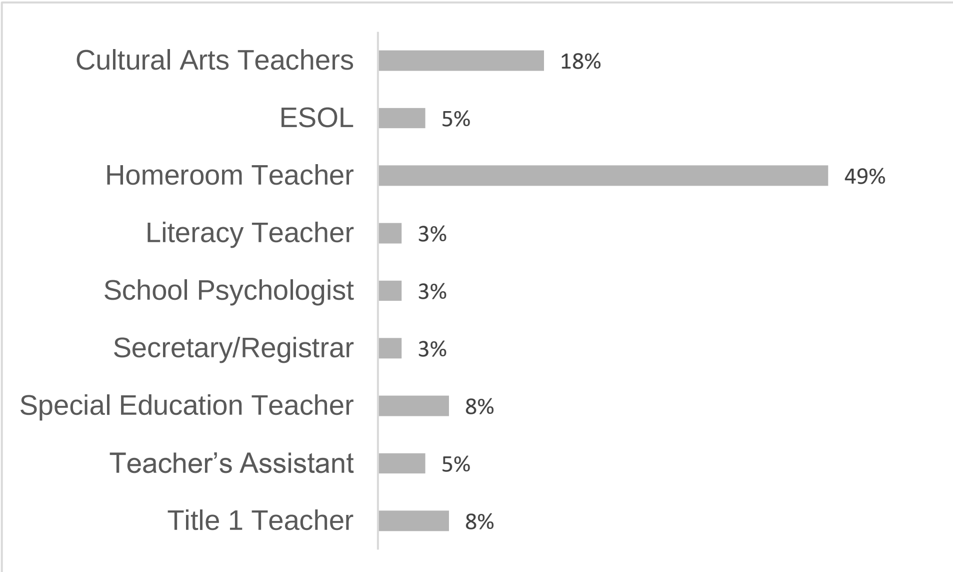
6. (Purpose) Why did you create Bitmoji Classrooms? ie: replace an entire Google classroom, ongoing support for other classrooms, promote a one-time event, motivate students, unit of study, etc.

7. (Benefits) What benefits can educators gain by using Bitmoji classrooms? ie: engage students more, navigate material easier, connect teacher with students, create a sense of familiarity, etc.

8. (Sustainability) Once we return to in-person school, do you see yourself still using Bitmoji classrooms? Why or why not?

9. (Sustainability) Do you see yourself using your current Bitmoji classrooms with future classes? Why or why not?

Appendix F: *School Positions of Respondents*



Note. Cultural Arts Teachers are defined as (Art, F, Media, French, Music, P.E.).

Appendix G: *Descriptors for Coding Interview Data*

Themes	Categories	Codes	Definition
Purpose	Why educators use	Replace LMS	Replaces LMS (Google Classroom)
		Curriculum Support	Supports classroom curriculum
		Parent Support	Provides parent information
		One time event	Promotes one-time events such as holiday
		Motivation	Motivates students to participate
		Subject Area	Covers entire Subject Area
		Unit of Study	Covers the entire unit of study
		Social/Emotional Support	Provides social/emotional support such as a calming room
		Other	Other purposes
Benefits	What users want	Student View	Students find viewing B.C.s engaging (passive learning)
		Student Create	Students find creating B.C.s engaging (active learning)
		Navigation	Students navigate materials within Bitmoji classrooms easier
		Fun for student	Students find Bitmoji Classrooms fun to use (passive learning)
		Connection	Students connect with teachers because of teachers' Bitmojis
		Familiarity	Creates a sense of familiarity with a cl
		Teacher Engagement	Teachers find creating Bitmoji Classrooms engaging
		Other	Other benefits
Sustainability	Challenges	Time	Building Bitmoji Classrooms takes too much time
		Approved	Need to edit links for district approval
		More	More Bitmoji Classrooms will be built in the future
		Reusability	Current Bitmoji Classrooms can be reused in future classes
		No More	No more Bitmoji Classrooms will be built in the future

Note: B.C.s stands for Bitmoji Classrooms for the sake of room in the table

Elizabeth Van Pate

Objective:

To utilize my knowledge and experiences in K-12 education to create an environment that fosters growth in both students and educators.

Education:

May 2022	Doctorate | Instructional Systems Technology	Indiana University
2004	Masters | Library and Information Science	Florida State University
1996	Masters | Management	Troy State University
1991	Bachelors | Marketing	University of West Florida

Research Experience:
Evaluating the use and sustainability of Bitmoji classrooms within online classrooms

Key Doctoral Coursework
Instructional Media Applications
Education Motivation
Learning & Cognition
Computer Mediated Learning
Emerging Learning Technologies
Assessment in Schools
Games and Learning

Publications: Edutopia, 02/09/2022, *The Benefits of Bringing a Book Vending Machine to Your School*
https://www.edutopia.org/article/benefits-bringing-book-vending-machine-your-school

Work Experience:

08/17 - Current Hebron Harman Elementary Hanover, MD Media Specialist

Plans and administers a large elementary school's library media program. Plans and provides instruction to students and training to staff. Manages library media center's budget, materials, facilities, and equipment. Supports the school library media program's mission and vision and communicates it to administrators, staff, students, parents, and the community. Teaches appropriate content to students using appropriate instructional strategies and methods that will increase student learning. Exhibits deep knowledge of a variety of teaching strategies, curricular areas, and stays current with trends, new ideas, and programs. Provides instruction that reflects multiple perspectives and multicultural education. Infuses technology into curriculum. Supports the district's vision for student success and the vision of the Digital Media office for transforming library media centers into innovative 21st Century environments. Analyzes the needs and interests of patrons of the school library media center and provides appropriate materials that meet the informational, research, educational, and recreational needs of users. Advises administrators and staff regarding fair use and copyright laws. Maintains knowledge and expertise in the features and content of online databases and other digital learning content. Assists teachers in locating appropriate resources to support classroom instruction. Serves as one of the technology experts at the school. Acquaints teachers and students with new ideas, programs, and trends in the instructional use of technology. Promotes the ethical use of media, digital citizenship, and online safety. Maintains current knowledge of content and organization of the district curriculum and recognizes relations among subject fields. Works collaboratively with teachers in a face-to-face or virtual environment to enhance and integrate curricular units and lessons to infuse media standards and/or digital media practices into the curriculum. Continually analyzes existing media space to move towards the creation of spaces that can be used for collaborative activities, content creation, presentations, and performances. Ensures the effective organization, circulation, and maintenance of resources. Supports staff and students in developing an appreciation of literature and reading to access information. Promotes literacy (including digital literacy) and the enjoyment of reading, viewing, and listening. Manages financial accounts and in accordance with financial procedures.

08/07- 08/17 Mancelona Public Schools Mancelona, MI District Media Specialist

Elementary, Middle and High School levels. Supported teachers and students with technology needs. Developed and maintained library collection, print and electronic. Fixed computer software and hardware issues. Demonstrated and modeled new technology to teachers and students. Provided professional development on technology tools at building and district levels. Collaborated with teachers on students' needs and reviewed standards to determine best fit of technology to lessons being taught. Developed curriculum and content for multiple middle and high school technology classes. Coached after-school Middle School Lego Robotics and High School Robotics competition team.

08/06- 08/07 East Columbus Middle School Columbus, GA Media Specialist

Developed collection of newer school media center. Purchased and managed budget of large purchases. Collaborated with teachers to co-teach research lessons. Developed library events such as special readings for holidays. Created and managed school's reading team and participated in district's competition. Managed textbook distribution.

Various Marketing and Management Experience prior to entering Education

Government Contractor: Office Administrator
Managed Human Resources for site location and oversaw budgets for military contracts

Newspaper Printing Press
Managed customer relations and sales for clients

Nationwide Nursing Placement Agency
Marketed services through sales and promotions

Professional Associations:

MASL (Maryland Associations of School Librarians)
AASL (American Association of School Librarians)

Awards:

Teacher of the Year for Mancelona Public Schools 2009