


Chapter 9

What Teachers Should and Shouldn't Do During Online Teaching: A Case Study in a University Setting

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has influenced teaching all across the globe. The massive use of online learning has created a problem with teachers because of the differences between face-to-face teaching and online teaching. In this chapter, a discussion on how traditional face-to-face teaching differs from online teaching will be shown. How education in Hong Kong is affected by COVID-19 is also summarized. Additionally, the result of a case study in a linguistics course in a university in Hong Kong will be shown to demonstrate the attitudes of students regarding online learning. The mixed-method case study, which consists of survey data of 100 students and semi-structured interviews of eight students, showed that students hold a general mixed feeling towards online learning because of its drawbacks, such as lack of interactions despite the convenience that online learning provides. This chapter ends with a list of suggestions for online teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The global education landscape and atmosphere have undergone huge changes since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China in late 2019. The pandemic spread over the globe rapidly and it has caused a worldwide closure of schools; the number went from around one million students in one country in February (0.1% of the total enrolled students world-wide) to over one billion students in 158 countries in May (66% of the total enrolled students world-wide) (UNESCO, 2020). Even though there were loosening of school closure in Asia and Australia in late 2019 (two hundred millions students affected, 12.8% of

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the students world-wide in November), lockdowns of individual cities have continued in various places (for example, London and California). The pandemic has created hurdles for traditional face-to-face teaching. In order to maintain social distance, teachers are forced to shift to online teaching via different platforms like *Zoom*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Google Classrooms*, *Blackboard Collaborate Ultra* etc. Even though these platforms provide more or less similar functions and user-experience to both teachers and students for the basic needs in any teaching practices and teachers only need to attend several workshops to familiarize with the functions and then they can perform online teaching with that specific tool, the changes to online teaching not only challenge the teaching skills but also the digital literacy of teachers (Gao and Zhang, 2020). However, besides the challenge to the teachers' digital literacy skills, the real challenge to teachers the ways to adapt to new teaching platforms (Khatoony and Nezhadmehr, 2020). Teachers across the globe question whether the traditional face-to-face teaching tactics could be successfully transferred onto the online platform; the answers to this question is obvious – No. Because of the fundamental differences between online teaching and face-to-face teaching, the traditional classroom strategies do not fit in the online teaching setting as a lot of the communications between teachers and students are limited (Gamliel and Davidovitz, 2005). Therefore, the more important thing for teachers to the question would be the keys to a successful online teaching - *What teachers should do and what teachers should not do during an online class?*

Even though the current pandemic situation may have been one of the worst in history, it is not true to say it is new in this decade, especially for Hongkongers. As Chik and Benson (2020) mentioned, during the SARS epidemic in 2003, “all schools were closed, and learning by distance and online was enforced. The school closure lasted for about a month but all families were expected to be able to homeschool their children via online resources” (p. 1), it is something that people in Hong Kong has experienced before. The differences here and then lay on the fact that, the ‘*online resource*’ at that time was limited to only downloading materials and watching videos via computers yet the same thing now refers to a real-time livestreaming lecture on laptops, tablets and even smartphones mostly due to the technological advancement in internet developments. The sudden shift from face-to-face teaching to a full online teaching bothered a number of teachers (Scull et al., 2020); however, given the pandemic has escalated rapidly, the number of literature of how COVID-19 affects education is limited. There are numerous studies researching how COVID-19 brings influence to different areas, for example, teacher training in Australia and Germany (König et al., 2020; Scull et. al., 2020), teacher's cognition in China (Gao & Zhang, 2020), world-wide multilingual communication (Piller et al., 2020) etc. However, there has been a lack of study on how COVID-19 changes the teaching practices in language classrooms in university setting. Along with the other chapters of this edited book, the chapter aims at providing insights for language education leaders and teachers on quality online education during and after this global pandemic. The current chapter is written hopefully to contribute in this research gap with the help of the results from a mixed-method case study in a university located in Hong Kong. Surveys and interviews were conducted in late 2020 with over 100 students in a linguistic course which was conducted online due to the pandemic. Detailed descriptions were collected from the students regarding their opinions on online learning with special focus on the online teaching tactics intentionally applied during the lectures by the author, for example, *focus-group discussion*, *mixed-model teaching* etc.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. First, an overview of education in Hong Kong during the COVID-19 period will be outlined followed by an overview of the differences between online and face-to-face teaching. Next, the mixed-method study will be discussed in full detail and the result of the

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