Online Teaching Strategies: Lessons Learned from the Transition to Virtual Classroom

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Abstract: This article presents a valuable collection of practical strategies for online teaching, inspired by an educator's personal experience transitioning to a virtual classroom. It acknowledges the significant challenges faced by both teachers and students during the sudden shift to remote learning. Emphasizing the importance of meticulous online class organization, the article explores essential elements such as modality, pacing, pedagogy, communication, and the dynamic roles of teachers and students. Notably, it underscores the critical role of comprehensive lesson planning in achieving successful online teaching outcomes. By crafting engaging, interactive lessons aligned with clear learning objectives and assessment strategies, educators can create an optimal virtual learning environment. The article further advocates for the implementation of reflexive methods in online teaching, encouraging educators to engage in regular self-reflection and evaluate student responses. Proactive adaptation to online teaching and learning is highlighted as a crucial factor, with technology serving as a valuable tool to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, the article delves into the advantages of online learning, such as nurturing digital skills and the flexibility and inclusivity offered by hybrid approaches. Despite the inherent difficulties, the author concludes on a positive note, asserting that educators can thrive in the online teaching landscape through the cultivation of the right mindset, proactive measures, and careful planning. By addressing organization, adaptability, technology integration, lesson planning, and reflexive methods, this comprehensive guide equips educators with practical insights to create a positive and engaging online learning experience for their students.

Keywords: Online Teaching, Virtual Classrooms, Online Class Organization, Proactive Adaptation, Reflexive Methods, Technology-Enhanced Learning

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed how education is approached, with remote learning becoming the norm. Higher education institutions have had to adapt quickly, shifting from face-to-face to online instruction using digital technologies for the entire student body. This sudden change has presented numerous challenges and opportunities for faculty members to develop and implement new teaching and learning strategies to ensure students receive the best education possible.

The International Tourism and Culture (ITC) course holds significant relevance in this context. Designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the tourism industry on a national and international scale, the course equips students with practical activities to apply theories and concepts, fostering inquiry, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. While primarily aimed at Tourism Management majors, the course is open to other university students as an elective. The language of instruction for the ITC course is English, thus it attracts regular international and exchange students, offering them a unique opportunity to engage in a multicultural classroom setting. This environment

allows students to gain insights into the culture, activities, and status of tourism in various countries, enabling them to contribute to tourism development in their own communities.

The ITC course has undergone necessary adaptations due to the shift to remote instruction. Utilizing synchronous and asynchronous learning platforms [1,2], the course combines real-time classes conducted via video conferencing tools such as Zoom [3,4] with flexible asynchronous classes that allow students to access video lectures at their convenience. This blended approach ensures that students can actively participate and engage with the course materials, regardless of their location or time constraints. Incorporating the course background into the broader discussion of the transition to remote instruction highlights the specific challenges and opportunities faced by educators in delivering the ITC course in an online format. The subsequent discussion will further explore the practical tips and guidance necessary to create an engaging and effective online learning experience for students in the ITC course and beyond.

2. Reflections on Online Class Implementation

2.1 Online Operation Plan

Before the online class, the educator engaged in various preparatory activities to ensure the session ran smoothly. Firstly, a detailed lesson plan was created, outlining the topics to be covered and the teaching methods to be used. This helped to organize thoughts and ensure all necessary content was addressed during the class. Secondly, all technology tools and software intended for use during the class, such as video conferencing and screen-sharing tools, were thoroughly tested. This allowed for the identification and resolution of any technical issues in advance. Thirdly, all necessary materials, including presentation slides and handouts were prepared and uploaded to the online platform for easy access during the class. Lastly, the class organization was reviewed and all pertinent links and information were shared with the participants well in advance. These preparatory activities instilled a sense of confidence and readiness, enabling the educator to effectively facilitate the online class.

To prepare for the online class, a comprehensive operation plan (see Table 1) was developed based on the book Learning Online: What Research Tells Us About Whether, When, and How [5]. This plan detailed the modality, pacing, pedagogy, professor, student roles, and online communication strategy. Its purpose was to ensure that the online class would be organized and efficient, with clear expectations and effective communication channels. The modality was carefully selected to align with the learning objectives and provide an engaging learning experience for students. The pacing was also considered, with a detailed schedule developed to ensure that all content was covered within the allotted time. Pedagogy played a vital role, in outlining the teaching methods to be employed to facilitate student learning and engagement. Furthermore, the professor and student roles were clearly defined to ensure all participants understood their responsibilities and expectations. The development of an online communication strategy was an essential component of the plan. It included establishing regular communication channels, such as online discussion forums and virtual office hours, to encourage student engagement and support. By preparing this comprehensive operation plan, a well-planned, and engaging online class was facilitated.

[Table 1] Online Class Operation Plan

Online Class Operation Plan	
Modality	- Watching video lectures - Real-time classes using the Zoom platform
Pacing	- Watching the video lectures (asynchronous, accessible to students at any time during a given time) - Real-time classes (synchronous, based on the administrations' plotted class schedule)
Pedagogy	- Watching the video lecture Expository (information is presented in a specific order and lays out all the information to remember. - Online real-time classes via Zoom Practice (English communication skills - listening, speaking) Exploratory (step-by-step acquisition of knowledge, question and answer, seeking solutions, critical thinking)
Professor's Role	Active instruction (online and offline)
Student's Role	- Active participation (participating in class discussions, doing presentations, working with a team - Self-directed learning when watching video lectures and preparing for activities or presentations.
Online Communication Strategy	Professor: - Asynchronous (prepare a video recording for 45 minutes equivalent to 1 class meeting, upload a video a week before the lesson, upload videos on YouTube, manage LMS by uploading video links, posting weekly schedules or notices, create lesson activities, and giving links to an e-folder drop box, monitor students' participation, and attendance, manage electronic-based class record, respond to students' inquiries and concerns using LMS email and messaging, SMS, Kakaotalk and Kakaotalk group chats, respond to weekly lesson video lecture's comments, feedback and questions in the YouTube link). -Synchronous (marking of students' attendance at scheduled online class meetings, conducting classes, evaluating students' participation and presentations) Students: - Asynchronous (access materials from Learning Management System (LMS), ask questions using different communication mediums, study, and practice skills at any time that works for them - Synchronous (attend and participate in real-time classes)

The course operation table for the semester encompassed specific details that pertained to the organization and scheduling of the course. These details included crucial information such as the dates and times of synchronous classes, the topics that were covered in each class, the assignments or assessments scheduled for each week, and any other pertinent information related to the course schedule. By incorporating these specific elements into the table, the courses were effectively planned and managed ensuring a structured and cohesive learning experience for students.

2.2 Online Learning Management Strategy

As the International Tourism and Culture (ITC) course commenced, students from diverse backgrounds, including Chinese, Indians, Koreans, Myanmar, Sri Lankans, and Uzbeks brought excitement to the learning environment. The importance of creating an inclusive and engaging atmosphere for all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, was recognized. To achieve this, culture-related presentations were encouraged from students of various ethnicities, allowing them to share their experiences and opinions on tourism and its activities.

One memorable presentation was by a student from Sri Lanka, who showcased popular tourist destinations such as tea plantations, beaches, and places known for elephants, enlightening their peers about the role of these attractions in Sri Lankan tourism. Similarly, a student from Uzbekistan proudly highlighted their country's culturally rich and colorful train stations, while another student from China shared insights on a location with German influences and renowned beer production. These presentations provided valuable insights into different cultures, fostering a deeper understanding among students.

To assess learning, high-order thinking questions were introduced, encouraging students to apply critical thinking skills in describing their experiences, observations, and opinions about tourism. This approach moved beyond objective tests or quizzes and allowed students to reflect on their experiences and make connections with course material. Recorded online classes and weekly activities were provided to enhance comprehension. For instance, during a week focused on the environmental impact of tourism, students researched eco-tourism destinations and their practices. Current tourism news and discussions on responsible tourism prompted critical thinking and practical application of course concepts.

Active participation was promoted through various means. Students were encouraged to watch weekly presentation videos, share their learnings in the YouTube comment section, and seek clarification on any unclear points. Additional support was offered through email, messages, or Zoom for personalized guidance. This increased engagement and communication between students and enhanced the overall learning experience.

Practical advice extended beyond the course content, with "HOW TO" tips shared to maximize productivity and engagement. Step-by-step guides on utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) effectively, such as using online collaboration tools like Google Docs, were provided. Common technical issues encountered during online discussions were addressed, ensuring smooth participation. Table 2 offers valuable advice for students on utilizing ICT tools and managing homework and other class-related activities. Overall, the ITC course's online management strategy created an engaging and interactive learning experience. It expanded students' knowledge of international and national tourism operations while fostering critical inquiry, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. The emphasis on inclusivity, cultural understanding, and practical application of knowledge enriched the learning journey for all students.

[Table 2] Tips for Students on How to Use ICT, do Homework, and Do Other Class-related Activities

"HOW TO" tips for students
(Using ICT, doing homework, and other class-related activities).
* Something extra that will help facilitate productivity and engagement for students
▪ Browsing the internet for schoolwork   ▪ Using computers and smartphones for communication with other students

- ▪ Doing individual homework using technology
- ▪ Using Zoom (how to enter, how to create a meeting room, how to show a presentation, how to send a message on the chat box)
- ▪ Downloading, uploading, or browsing material from the school's website
- ▪ Chatting online (politely with the professor)
- ▪ Posting work on the school's website
- ▪ Posting work on the YouTube channel
- ▪ Share school-related materials with other students
- ▪ Downloading, uploading, or browsing material from the school website
- ▪ Checking the school's website for an announcement
- ▪ Using email to communicate with teachers and submit homework or other schoolwork
- ▪ Using chat groups formally to communicate with professors and classmates

With the incorporation of these supplementary tips, students were able to cultivate a sense of self-assurance and proficiency in their online learning endeavors. They developed effective study habits and gained a comprehensive grasp of technology utilization, enhancing their overall efficiency and active participation in virtual classrooms. This heightened level of proficiency held the potential for significant academic achievements and a more favorable and enriching educational journey.

2.3 Online Class Organization and Management

A fundamental aspect of effective online teaching is the organization and management of the virtual classroom. After teaching an online class, it was crucial to reflect on the experiences and identify areas for improvement. A valuable resource for online class organization and management was a comprehensive guide, referred to as "Table 3." Table 3 served as a valuable resource for online class organization and management. It outlined a timeline for various activities and tasks that needed to be completed throughout the semester. The table provided a breakdown of the tasks that should have been accomplished during the first week of the semester and subsequent weeks. It included reminders that needed to be communicated to students to ensure an organized online class environment.

With the guidelines presented in Table 3, the teaching process could be streamlined, enhancing the learning experience for students. The comprehensive guide enabled educators to stay on track with essential tasks, such as uploading course materials, scheduling assessments, and providing timely feedback. It also served as a reminder of important communication points that needed to be conveyed to students, ensuring that they had clear instructions and expectations.

[Table 3] Online Class Organization and Management

ONLINE CLASS ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT	
Time	**Tasks**
1st Week of the Semester	- Posting Week 1 Schedule (information about the class operation mode and schedule) - Providing information for the Zoom link - Reminding students to familiarize themselves with how Zoom works (Entering the Zoom room, using the chat box, raising the hand icon, focusing the camera on your face, and unmuting your microphone. Some reminders for students to have an organized online class:

	- Choose a suitable learning environment. Avoid attending class in public spaces like cafes, game rooms, or study rooms. Instead, find a quiet and comfortable place to focus and participate in class discussions without distractions. - Display identification upon entering the online classroom. Use their student ID number and a nickname as permanent identification to check attendance and earn participation points. - Listen to the class orientation carefully to have common ground and better understand the class requirements, professor, and expectations. If you have any questions, there will be a Q&A session during the first online class.
Regular tasks every week	
A week before each online class	- Creation and scheduling of weekly Zoom meetings for remote classes. - Uploading weekly videos on YouTube - Creation of weekly notice in LMS - Sending SMS about the new uploaded weekly schedule - Uploading video links in LMS - Provide an alternative link if the uploaded video link in LMS does not work.
1 hour to the last 5 minutes before the online class	- Reminding students about the day's online class through Kakaotalk - Giving the Zoom link (if, in case the student forgot) - Setting up (checking the link, testing microphone, camera, lighting, and positioning of the laptop - Reviewing the class plan - Open the link, Weekly remote classes using Zoom (1 hour 15 minutes)
During online class	- Acknowledge the presence of each student - Remind them to display their identification and proper camera focus - Mark student's attendance - Review the week's lesson's recorded video content to open the class lesson - Present and discuss the lesson - Listen to students' presentations - Give feedback on students' presentations - Interact with students during class discussions. - Allow students to ask questions and give suggestions about activities *Note: I record every online class and upload it as an unlisted video to YouTube. This allows students to struggle to keep up with the class to review the lessons. I invite students to review the lessons by giving them the link. Several students have reached out via email and have provided feedback that they gained a better understanding of the lessons.*
Immediately after the online class	- Finalizing students' attendance - Recording students' participation - Uploading the recorded online class on YouTube - Giving students the video link through our Kakaogroup chat for review or for those who missed the class.
Throughout the semester	- Open communication with students using different platforms (LMS email and messaging, email, SMS, Zoom, group chat anytime between 9:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M. - Immediate delivery of the response except when I am in class.

3. Lessons Learned from Online Teaching Experiences

In response to the evolving education landscape, educators are compelled to adapt their teaching strategies to the online environment and proactively embrace these changes. The sudden transition to online teaching has presented both challenges and opportunities. Through the experience of developing and implementing online courses, valuable insights have been gained, which have greatly enhanced teaching abilities and facilitated the creation of engaging learning experiences for students. To

encapsulate the important lessons learned, the mnemonic TEACH was employed, highlighting key areas of focus: The importance of a comprehensive operation plan, Evaluating students' communication and digital literacy skills, Acquiring diverse knowledge and skills for online teaching, effective Communication strategies, and Harnessing technology. This systematic approach provides a comprehensive perspective on the essential components required for effective online teaching and learning, which are further expounded upon below.

3.1 The Importance of a Comprehensive Operation Plan

Developing a comprehensive operation plan is crucial in the online teaching experience. This plan covers various aspects, including the online class operation plan, technology use, and content organization. Lesson planning plays a critical role in online teaching, ensuring clear learning objectives and outcomes and engaging students throughout the class. A detailed lesson plan allows for organized delivery of content and creates a practical learning experience for students.

The comprehensive operation plan serves as a guiding framework to align the use of technology tools and software with the goal of creating a well-structured online learning environment. This alignment maximizes student engagement and facilitates seamless access to course materials. Incorporating tools like video conferencing, screen-sharing, and multimedia resources such as videos, podcasts, and interactive simulations enhances engagement and promotes active learning. Preparing and uploading necessary materials like presentation slides and handouts to the online platform ensures easy access for students, facilitating a smooth learning experience.

A helpful resource for developing a well-rounded plan is the book "Learning Online: What Research Tells Us About Whether, When, and How." It provides valuable guidance on modality, pacing, pedagogy, professor and student roles, and online communication strategies. By incorporating these elements into the operation plan, online teaching becomes more systematic and seamless. This deliberate preparation improves the organization and effectiveness of online teaching, creating an environment conducive to learning and fostering student engagement. A well-developed operation plan helps educators navigate the online teaching landscape with confidence, providing students with a positive and engaging learning experience.

3.2 Evaluating Students' Communication and Digital Literacy Levels

Evaluating students' communication and digital literacy levels is an essential aspect of online teaching. Assessing their competencies in these areas ensures that students can actively participate in online discussions, collaborate effectively with their peers, and utilize various online and multimedia tools. Educators in the online classroom have the responsibility to ensure that students possess the necessary skills to succeed in this digital environment.

In order to assess students' communication and digital literacy levels, an evaluation process was conducted during the initial meeting, wherein students were given the opportunity to introduce themselves. This allowed for gathering information about their abilities and identifying any areas where additional support may be required. By understanding individual strengths and areas for improvement, lessons could be tailored to specific needs and targeted support provided to students who struggled with certain communication or digital literacy skills.

It is important to be mindful that students from non-English speaking backgrounds may encounter challenges in comprehending essential concepts presented in English. To cater to the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, several strategies were implemented to enhance their comprehension of essential concepts presented in English. First, Hangeul's translations of complex English words were incorporated into slides, providing students with visual support and aiding their

understanding of the content. Recorded lectures were also made available for review, allowing students to revisit the material at their own pace and reinforce their learning. In addition, an inclusive approach was adopted to encourage active participation and engagement. Students who felt more comfortable speaking in Hangeul were encouraged to do so, while students who are bilingual helps and assists in translating the information into English. This collaborative approach not only facilitated effective communication but also fostered a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

To address any potential communication apprehension, students were given the opportunity to refer to their scripts during presentations. This accommodation provided them with a sense of comfort and confidence, enabling them to effectively convey their ideas without the fear of language barriers hindering their communication.

By implementing these strategies, the educational experience of students from non-English speaking backgrounds was enhanced, allowing them to overcome language barriers and actively participate in the learning process.

3.3 Acquiring Diverse Knowledge and Skills for Online Teaching

Acquiring diverse knowledge and skills is imperative for effective online teaching. It became evident that expertise in the course content alone was insufficient. Additional skills such as intercultural communication, online classroom management, creativity, and technology proficiency proved to be essential for success. Developing intercultural communication competence was a crucial aspect of creating an inclusive learning environment that valued diverse perspectives and experiences. By gaining an understanding of students' cultural backgrounds and adapting teaching approaches to cater to their needs, collaboration and active participation in the online classroom were promoted.

Creativity and innovativeness played a significant role in online teaching. With the multitude of distractions and potential factors leading to disengagement, it was essential to find new ways to keep students engaged and motivated. Incorporating creative teaching methods and utilizing innovative tools and technologies such as Kahoot, Word Cloud, and Google Forms facilitated a more exciting and engaging learning experience. These approaches fostered active learning and sustained students' attention throughout the class.

Technical proficiency emerged as another critical aspect of online teaching. Navigating the various tools and platforms required to deliver an engaging and seamless online learning experience necessitated a solid understanding of technology. From creating and sharing course materials to conducting synchronous classes and grading assignments, technology permeated every aspect of online teaching. Enhancing technological proficiency enabled the streamlining of the teaching process, anticipation of and troubleshooting technical issues, and ensured a smooth and successful learning experience for students. As educators become technologically proficient, it is both an asset and a necessity for effective online teaching.

3.4 Communicating Effectively: Modeling Proper Online Communication

Effective online communication is crucial, and it starts with maintaining a conscious awareness of language choices during synchronous classes. An academic language that is appropriate and comprehensible to students should be utilized, with communication tailored to their level of understanding through the use of simple words and instructions for clarity. Short Message Service (SMS) messages through designated communication channels can further enhance information dissemination and reinforce important class discussions. In addition to language considerations, professionalism, and politeness should be exemplified in all forms of communication. This includes using courteous language, adopting a professional tone, and maintaining a professional appearance

during synchronous classes. Students should be encouraged to find conducive environments for attending class, such as quiet rooms with study tables to minimize distractions. Proper identification, including full names and online IDs, should be used when joining the class to promote a sense of professionalism.

Email communication plays a crucial role in online teaching, and proper email etiquette is essential for building professional relationships with students. Modeling the proper way of addressing students in emails, such as utilizing official signatures, appropriate salutations, and subject lines indicating the purpose of the email, fosters mutual respect and professionalism. This ensures effective and efficient communication between students and instructors. These strategies for effective online communication demonstrate the commitment to establishing a conducive learning environment characterized by professionalism, clarity, and mutual respect. By employing appropriate language, modeling professional behavior, and upholding proper email etiquette, the educational experience is enhanced, fostering positive and productive interactions within the online learning context.

3.5 Harnessing Technology

Harnessing technology is imperative in the virtual classroom. Video conferencing software, such as Zoom, has proven to be an invaluable tool for conducting synchronous classes, facilitating group discussions, and conducting one-on-one meetings with students. Virtual whiteboards and online polls further enhance collaborative learning and active student engagement. Learning management systems like Google Classroom and university-specific platforms, such as the Edward portal, enable the effective organization of course materials, the creation of assessments, and timely feedback on assignments. Additionally, video lectures as multimedia tools serve as valuable supplements to course materials, offering alternative methods of information delivery and promoting independent learning. By incorporating these diverse technologies, educators can establish an interactive and dynamic learning environment that fosters personalized feedback, encourages peer collaboration, and enhances the overall learning experience.

4. Conclusion

The transition to online teaching has brought about various challenges and opportunities for educators. By reflecting on the online teaching experiences and adapting to the changing educational landscape, the quality of online teaching could be enhanced and ensure a successful learning experience for students. This paper explored the importance of proactive adaptation [6,7,8], in online teaching. This involves the importance of a comprehensive operation plan, evaluating students' communication and digital literacy levels, acquiring diverse knowledge and skills for online teaching, communicating effectively, and harnessing technology to enhance learning. This paper has also addressed the unique challenges faced by students from non-English speaking backgrounds and provided strategies to address language barriers. By considering their needs and implementing inclusive approaches, we can ensure that all students can actively participate and comprehend the essential concepts presented in the online classroom.

Overall, by embracing the lessons learned and implementing the TEACH principles, we can navigate the complexities of online teaching and provide students with a high-quality education. As remote instruction continues to be an integral part of higher education, our collective efforts to enhance online teaching practices will contribute to the success and satisfaction of both educators and students in this new learning environment.

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