

Emergency Remote Teaching: Comparing asynchronous online activities with traditional classroom instruction

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Abstract

This paper offers a comparative examination of six classroom activities taught in a traditional face-to-face classroom and an asynchronous online course as an emergency remote teaching (ERT) situation. We embarked on this comparison process as part of a critical evaluation of our knowledge and action as teachers within a transition to ERT and to understand some implications for our educational setting, and potentially others. In this self-study qualitative research, the perspectives of two teachers are considered using teacher reflections and discussions, supported by student perspectives from written reflections and end-of-course surveys. We argue that though carefully considered online instruction can confer benefits, face-to-face instruction offers important social learning experiences in the context of the course described here. This paper offers suggestions for making asynchronous online courses more effective for students to learn and easier for teachers to manage. The findings may be meaningful for teachers in other settings comparing iterations of the same course and looking ahead to longer-term changes.

Keywords: CALL, emergency remote teaching, online learning, qualitative educational research

Introduction

In 2020, many educational settings shifted to emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition required flexibility in how teaching and learning practices were necessarily adapted. In this paper, we (the

two teacher-researchers and authors) explore the opportunity to compare and contrast activities performed in the traditional physical classroom before the pandemic with asynchronous online versions used during the crisis. We wanted to critically evaluate our knowledge and action as teachers as a result of the switch to ERT to learn “through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice” (Finlay, 2008). The six activity areas we focus on (regular classroom handouts, classroom media, find someone who, and paired interview activities, wall readings, media research, and presentations) are used on an intercultural education and English learning course.

Literature Review

The ERT experience has been daunting for many involved, including teachers, students, support staff, administrators, and parents. Specifically from a teacher’s perspective, Bailey & Lee (2020) noted challenges that included lack of familiarity with an ever-increasing arsenal of technology and fears of having to troubleshoot technical problems, both for students and teachers. However, the largest hurdle is likely the time and effort necessary for teachers to produce effective online materials (Price, 2021). Hodges et al. (2020) made the important distinction between ERT as a true emergency scenario as opposed to established online learning on university courses, often involving six to nine months of planning before implementation and often significantly revised over multiple semesters. Indeed, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), including online-only, is its genre of language education with established principles, best practices, and a large body of research (Farr & Murray, 2020; Levy & Stockwell, 2006). Just as considerable infrastructure can support effective face-to-face education, meaningful online learning often requires extensive expertise, access to resources, mentoring, and other supports (Hodges et al., 2020).

In addition to their teachers, students also face challenges. In a survey of 393 students at a Korean university, Shim and Lee (2020) found that students complained most frequently of network instability, dissatisfaction with the teacher and student interactions, and a reduced ability to concentrate. There were far fewer opportunities for students to engage in normal interaction with their peers (Edwards & Lane, 2021), and ERT classes were found among some students to be isolating (Nae, 2020). A lack of teamwork and collaboration with other students in educational settings, as well as reduced opportunities for social interaction, were additional concerns (Shim & Lee, 2020). In a Japanese educational context, Nae noted a tendency for students to be “more group

conscious ... less likely to request clarification, and more way of making mistakes because they fear embarrassment in front of the group” (2020, p. 206). Further student concerns included practical constraints inherent in online instruction, insufficient data sharing, poor assignment design, and teacher unpreparedness (Shim & Lee, 2020).

However, there were some advantages to ERT, noting that ERT cannot be equated to regular online learning. In part, because the teacher is not physically present to guide students, successful online instruction is often carefully planned (and optimally, tested) beforehand, frequently resulting in improved teaching pedagogy (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Assuming that the instruction is not simply a teacher-fronted lecture, the nature of online learning can also be conducive to student-centered learning (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Price, 2021). For many students there are the benefits of a comfortable and flexible learning environment (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Price, 2021; Shim & Lee, 2020), savings in time and money commuting (Price, 2021; Shim & Lee, 2020), and novel opportunities for meaningful interaction (Edwards & Lane, 2021). Shim and Lee (2020) found that some aspects of online learning such as one-on-one chat rooms were superior to traditional classrooms in that students could interact more freely with teachers and classmates in the absence of normal social pressures. Shim and Lee (2020) also found that, in contrast to some students who reported increased difficulty in concentrating, other students reported being better able to concentrate in their chosen study environment, working at their own pace. Another important consideration, particularly pertinent for language instruction, is that online interactions often allow students more time to think and prepare their answers (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020). Finally, Nae cited previous research in showing online instruction can have a “positive impact on learner motivation” and that it often “promotes active engagement” among learners (2020, p. 205).

For teachers too, online learning can confer some benefits. The use of learning management systems (LMSs) can enable easy and quick distribution of class content, straightforward methods of collecting student work, and effective provision of feedback (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Price, 2021). It is also possible to administer tests that can either be batch-graded electronically (Price, 2021), or graded manually online in a more efficacious manner than marking physical papers by hand. It should be noted, however, that previous research suggests that for online learning there is generally a greater commitment of time necessary for content creation, revision, and instruction compared to traditional classroom instruction (Shim & Lee, 2020).

This literature review has outlined some noted challenges and benefits encountered by students and teachers in experiences of ERT, pointing out a crucial distinction between ERT and carefully planned non-ERT online learning. This paper aims to contribute to this

body of research by focusing, in an educational self-study, on how specific face-to-face classroom activities have seen benefits or diminished value in the switch online, based on teacher and student perspectives. The paper examines the same course in both face-to-face and asynchronous online formats and provides evaluations of specific activities in each medium. Readers may find the results and discussion of relevance to their own experiences of ERT in using activities similar to those outlined in the paper, as well as looking to a post-ERT future and the continuation of some aspects of online instruction.

Research Questions

The specific research questions guiding this enquiry were the following:

- ① For each of the six-course activities examined, what were the benefits and drawbacks of face-to-face instruction according to teacher perspectives and interpretations from student data?
- ② For each of the six-course activities examined, what were the benefits and drawbacks of asynchronous online instruction according to teacher perspectives and interpretations from student data?

Methodology

In seeking answers to these questions, we adopted a self-study approach as we examined our practices, perceptions, and experiences of teaching and learning across the two-course iterations towards, ultimately, attempting to improve teaching and learning in the setting (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Self-study research tends to adopt qualitative data methods and is conducted by teachers triggered by some educational change or a desire to understand teachers' practices towards some positive educational change or understanding, i.e., face-to-face versus online versions of different learning activities (LaBoskey, 2004). Though there are methodological concerns around rigour (e.g., Loughran, 2010), self-study enables a systematic examination of practice and context (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), offering an important opportunity for professional development. While outcomes in this paper are based on our work as teachers in this setting, they are shared here as they may be “meaningful”, “useful”, and “trustworthy” for others to draw on in their own teaching practices (LaBoskey, 2004, p.

860). Therefore, the approach offers particular meaning to us as teachers conducting the research, but it may also be significant to teachers elsewhere in how meaning and knowledge are created and described (Hauge, 2021).

The two researcher-teachers were educated in the US and UK and had taught in the context for several years. We selected six activities and resources in use in both course iterations and discussed together our experiences and reflections using these activities and resources in short meetings following each face-to-face class or online grading period. Reflections were summarised in note form and consulted once again at the end of the course towards a consensus between the teachers. These discussions and reflections focused on perceptions of the quality of traditional classroom activities and the quality of our online adaptations.

In addition, to enable further critical reflection, we looked at student perspectives by comparing student data from the first face-to-face iteration of the course in autumn of 2019 with the autumn 2020 iteration of the asynchronous online course. There were 69 students enrolled in the original face-to-face course comprising only first-year students, the only students eligible to take the course at that time. In the autumn of 2020, there were a total of 85 students, comprising 64 first-year students and 21 second-year students.

We drew upon two sources of comparable data: 1. one of the weekly reflections required for each content unit; 2. end-of-course evaluations. Reflections for Class 6 from both years were downloaded, translated from Japanese to English where applicable (37 of 44 in 2019, 41/63 in 2020), and analyzed for content with analytical categories emergent from the student data around class activity, content, and tone. The analysis comprised multiple readings of all reflections, highlighting recurring themes, and counting occurrences. The end-of-course evaluations (see [Table 1](#)) are standard for every course at the institution and continue, largely unchanged, from year to year. Given that the online anonymous surveys link to a grade-bearing component (University Portfolio) of every course, there is a high rate of response. For the Fall 2019 course, the response rate was 84.3% and for Fall 2020 it was 82.4%. In the section below we report and compare relevant Likert-scale data from the university-issued reports.

The Course

The broad course aim is to develop intercultural perspectives towards “participation in and responsibility to communities at multiple levels from the local to the global” (Baker & Fang, 2021, p. 3). In course design, we focused on creating learning opportunities to build awareness among students of the value of non-essentialist cultural perspectives, thus

shifting from traditional fact-based handling of culture in learning around homogeneous national cultures. The role of reflection was critical for learning on the course, both in face-to-face and asynchronous online iterations, as students engaged with the content and then considered how their perspectives may have changed (Holliday, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

The first iteration of the course was in the autumn semester of 2019, comprising 15 weekly classes of 90 minutes. This face-to-face course was taught in a large, open classroom by the two authors/researchers and was attended by 69 students.

Since then, iterations of the course have all been entirely online via ERT delivery, available to students *On-Demand* (asynchronously). The face-to-face course already had an online presence in its use of the Moodle LMS, largely for homework activities. The asynchronous online course uses the same Moodle LMS to provide all learning resources during ERT. Having taught the same course in both face-to-face classroom and asynchronous online formats, we are provided an opportunity to reflect, evaluate, and identify what types of activities appear best suited to each condition, and consider implications moving the course forward.

Challenges with the Face-to-Face Course taught in Fall 2019

Based on the face-to-face iteration of a new course in 2019, we acknowledge some challenges due to uncertainty about how learning would be supported on the newly designed course and what students were expecting. Indeed, there turned out to be a mismatch between teacher and student expectations. To some extent, we anticipated leading students in communicative activities designed to support intercultural learning. We expected these activities to be conducted largely in English, but with the language support and scaffolding that English teachers can provide, helping students to develop their ideas and output. We also believed that students would choose this class because of an inherent interest in the topic matter.

Student expectations, gleaned in 2019 from end-of-course survey data as well as student coursework, indicated that many of these students had also chosen the class because they were interested in additional English language study (Authors, 2021). Eight of the 69 participants in that first year were international students. Our class, along with a TOEIC class, were the first English courses available to them in the institution. Other students may have expected a country-focused and fact-based survey lecture course with a different country or national culture highlighted each week. One can see how such students might have been surprised to find themselves in a class asking for analysis of

self-perceptions and views towards others if they had been expecting a non-critical presentation of national cultures.

Not only did a sizable number of students report selecting our course for English exposure, but they also came from widely varying levels of proficiency and there were differences in past experiences using English, from minimal to extensive. Leading activities in English in a class of students with diverse experiences was going to be problematic. Another challenge was the large size of the class and the relatively small number of class sessions: we had 69 students meeting once a week whereas a typical English class in the institution has around 28 students meeting twice weekly. It was difficult to keep track of students for attendance purposes, recognize students for class management purposes, and direct students in communicative activities.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, we felt that we achieved a measure of success in providing intercultural learning opportunities as we reported in our 2021 paper (Authors), based on analysis of students' reflections, coursework, and feedback. Nevertheless, given the challenges of large class size, varied level of English proficiency and experience, and varied reasons for selecting the course, we were not altogether displeased at the idea of transforming the course into a fully online offering. We perceived the online format offered some advantages to work with a large number of students, particularly in the context of social distancing in a pandemic.

The Transition Online

To our benefit, we had already been using the Moodle learning management system (LMS) to structure some of the regular class sessions as well as the weekly reflections and all homework. Ironically, due to technology concerns such as limited wifi connectivity in the classroom and the difficulty of troubleshooting for large numbers of students in a single classroom setting, we had decided to limit the use of the LMS during face-to-face classes. With a fully online course, however, particularly an asynchronous one, it became much easier for us to facilitate online learning in such a way that connectivity issues could be minimized, and we could provide help to students experiencing difficulties (email, office visits, Microsoft Teams communication, communication through the LMS).

The original face-to-face course structure generally followed a format where students were introduced to a topic via a video, reading, or set of statistics and were then led in a series of activities to explore their understandings and viewpoints, and the perspectives of the students around them. With the class moving to an entirely

asynchronous online format, it became necessary to realize these activities in different ways. In some instances, for reasons to be discussed later, the activities may have worked more effectively in an online format than they had in the traditional classroom. For many of the activities, there are of course elements of collaborative, social learning (Bandura, 1977; Routman, 2005) that are unfortunately lost. Nonetheless, a shift online potentially affords a more personal and deeper engagement with content as well as deeper engagement in reflections, recognized as critical for learning in the pedagogical framing of the original course (Byram, 2008; Holliday, 2011; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Results

This section begins with the student data from end-of-course evaluations and then reflections. We then consolidate our perspectives with student data in examining each of the six activities.

End-of-Course Evaluations

The end-of-course evaluations provided comparable data for the 2019 and 2020 courses. Hodges et al. (2020) cautioned against such evaluations as a blunt measure of two very different media (as opposed to content), fraught with confounding variables, and potentially unfair in an ERT situation. Acknowledging these limitations, we have nevertheless decided to use the data, not to make any definitive evaluations of our online course, but to better understand the different student perspectives from the courses and aid our processes of teaching reflection. Perhaps not surprisingly, in all but one category, the 2020 online course received lower evaluations. The outlier was *work required outside of class time*, a higher rating indicating that students perceived they had to do more homework and other assignments. This item is slightly problematic in that the asynchronous online class was supposed to be a weekly 90-minute class *plus* homework. Due to several complaints about the amount of online work in 2020, for the 2021 spring course, we made an introductory video explicitly stating that students could expect 2-3 hours of work per week.

Table 1

Selected End of Course Evaluation Items from Fall 2019 and Fall 2020

Evaluation Item	Likert-scale levels (5,4,3,2,1)	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Cohen' <i>s d</i>
1. Work outside class	2hrs+, 1.5hrs, 1hr, 30min, none	2.47	2.84	0.06
2. Student's own effort	worked really hard ← → no effort	4.31	4.10	0.02
3. Satisfaction with course	completely satisfied ← → dissatisfied	4.46	4.12	0.03
4. Understanding of content	fully understood ← → did not understand	4.49	4.04	0.03
5. Did interest in the subject matter increase?	increased greatly ← → did not increase	4.53	4.41	0.01
6. Did the teacher(s) encourage interaction inside and outside class?	very much so ← → not at all	4.46	3.76	0.05
7. Were the teachers responsive to students?	very much so ← → not at all	4.63	4.03	0.03

Note. Evaluation items translated from Japanese and abbreviated

The biggest difference in the evaluations was teacher engagement with students (items 6 and 7 above). Even in a face-to-face class of 69 students in 2019, it had been possible for the two of us to interact with students and make them feel valued in a way that online classes and email communication could just not achieve. We had expected that *understanding of content* in the 2020 course would be more highly evaluated given that we had had time to refine the course, clarify confusing directions, and develop support materials. As an asynchronous online course, students also had more time to consider class content and engage with it in their own space and time. It appears, however, that a physical presence can be very meaningful for many students. From the perspective of the teachers, it is certainly much easier to recognize a look of confusion in a traditional classroom.

Reflections

We decided to compare the reflections of *Class 6 – Family* since this class included

three of the common activities we examine: a classroom handout, a paired interview activity, and a wall reading assignment. The classroom handout was a 333-word simple English reading. The paired interview activity had students seeking responses to eight questions and five Likert-scale items about personal values. The wall reading activity asked students to read about eight different family circumstances and complete blanks in the accompanying grid. The completion rate for Class 6 reflections in 2019 was 64% (44/69), slightly lower than usual, and for 2020 it was 74% (63/85), about average. Students in both years were assigned to complete an online reflection, responding to the prompt in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Class 6 Reflection

Please write a reflection about Class 6. If writing in English, please write about 50 words. | クラス6について振り返ってみましょう。日本語で書く場合は、約100字で書いてください。

When writing your reflection, you can use the following questions for reference: | 振り返りを書く時、下記の質問を参考にしてもかまいません:

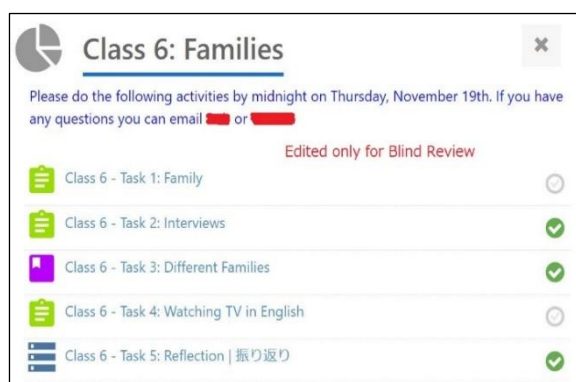
What did you learn? | 何を学びましたか。

What was interesting? | 何に興味を持ちましたか。

Why was the unit important? | なぜこのユニットが重要なのでしょうか。

Figure 2

Class 6 Online



Class 6: Families

Please do the following activities by midnight on Thursday, November 19th. If you have any questions you can email [redacted] or [redacted]

Edited only for Blind Review

Class 6 - Task 1: Family	<input type="radio"/>
Class 6 - Task 2: Interviews	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Class 6 - Task 3: Different Families	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Class 6 - Task 4: Watching TV in English	<input type="radio"/>
Class 6 - Task 5: Reflection 振り返り	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

Reflections from both years showed critical engagement with the content. The average word count (translated in the case of Japanese submissions) was marginally greater for the 2020 reflections (55 words) than for the 2019 reflections (49 words). It appears to the instructors that there may have been slightly more breadth to the 2020 reflections. A possible explanation is that the very clear signposting of an online class (see Figure 2) may have enabled students to better grasp the different components of the class than the sometimes haphazard way of signposting in a traditional classroom. Teachers in face-to-face classrooms frequently write the day's agenda on the whiteboard (as we did), but that lasts only the duration of the class. Online signposting provided both a visual reminder of the class activities as well as easy access for review. It is important to note, however, that despite efforts to present content and activities similarly, there were undoubtedly differences and students' perceptions and memories as recalled in their reflections will necessarily vary. It should also be mentioned that reflection completion rates varied between the two semesters, a higher proportion of active students completing the assignments in 2020 as all online activities contributed to *attendance*.

Six Activities

Below, we discuss the six activity types that were transformed from synchronous classroom consumption to an asynchronous online format. We further discuss the advantages and drawbacks of each online activity-based both on our perceptions as teachers and on the data provided by students.

Regular Classroom Handouts

Classroom handouts often include readings or data sets, questions that can help facilitate comprehension of content, as well as exercises to be completed in pairs, groups, or among the entire class. For many teachers who have been forced to go online, paper-based activities provide benefits that often go unheralded: they do not require a power supply or internet connection, do not suffer from sudden shutdowns or malfunctions and do not require passwords to access. Papers are also incredibly versatile, accepting input anywhere on the page, in any language, and in any format. Another frequently overlooked advantage is that they are generally very easy to navigate. There's little hunting for how to proceed to the next section, how to go back to review previous material, or how to access supplemental information sometimes provided in text boxes. There is a front and a back and there are fairly consistent norms for the arrangement of content (See [Appendix A, Traditional paper handout](#)).

There are, nevertheless, advantages to an online format. Students can receive immediate feedback as to whether their answers are correct or incorrect, hints for answering correctly (e.g. *Starts with a 'V'* for the 27.7% in [Appendix A, Online handout](#)), allowances for variability in spelling or L2 input, and additional information after completion (e.g., to clarify points in the learning content, and encourage further thought around a topic area). In updating this activity with newer data, however, we have spent several hours configuring settings to allow for multiple attempts, to enable credit for spelling differences or Japanese answers, to provide hints, and to give additional information upon completion. By contrast, a teacher in a regular classroom setting can quite easily provide all the above with no additional work. A regular classroom setting also allows for pair and group collaboration in accomplishing these tasks, a vital component of social learning (Bandura, 1977). In large classes such as our first course of 69 students, we must accept that online delivery might facilitate a greater amount of individualized feedback for more students. Conversely, with a teacher roaming the classroom, it is possible to provide feedback that transcends correct or incorrect, hints,

and other programmable general information. However, student numbers and time constraints necessarily influence the number of students who can receive such individualized attention.

Through the careful creation of what would otherwise be a normal classroom handout, it is possible to create engaging and meaningful content for students. The content may even be more appealing in its use of color and automatic feedback. However, given the vast amount of time necessary to prepare online content with the features described above, and the reality that most feedback will be general, we prefer the classroom setting with printed handouts, social learning, and teachers present to mediate the learning experience.

Student data from Class 6 reflections did not support our position. Of the 43 reflections submitted in the 2019 face-to-face class, not one specifically referenced the reading handout nor the content of the handout. By contrast, 17 of 63 reflections from the 2020 asynchronous online class referenced information from the handout. It should be noted that we added pictures to the digital handout as well as five multiple-choice comprehension questions at the end. Even so, we believe the difference in apparent impact is too great to be attributed to these modifications alone. The nature of an online reading enabled instantaneous L1 machine translation for those who desired it, allowed students as much time as required to read, and also gave the activity prominence and equal weighting in its online posting (Figure 2). In contrast, we suspect that students in the face-to-face class may have viewed the handout as a relatively unimportant warm-up activity for the main event.

Classroom Media

Short videos comprise a lot of the content for this class, including a video to challenge individual assumptions about and perspectives towards individuals in their relationship with national identities, and another video that explores the use of English as a global language. Student coursework, reflections, and survey data indicate that many students have appreciated these videos. There is certainly a benefit to the shared experience of watching a video together in the classroom. However, with large numbers of students of exceptionally varied language abilities (in English and Japanese), watching videos as a class can be problematic. When watching videos independently, many students benefit from the ability to pause and replay videos and choose the language of subtitles and interactive transcripts, where available.

For readings as well, some students require much more time to comprehend the

material. A benefit of having an online reading is that students are more easily able to use translation software, when necessary, to assist in their comprehension. Some teachers of English language classes may prefer printed texts as these are more difficult for students to translate via machine translation, though it is now easily possible with translation apps on smartphones. Given that our course is primarily *not* a language-focused class, we are not so concerned with students translating materials. We are trying to provide our translations so that the nuance of the content is not lost. We do have in mind that many of our students have chosen this course for the English language input and we, therefore, try to level our English language and provide scaffolding such that eager students can make sense of the English input without resorting to translation.

Particularly for students of varied language proficiency and different backgrounds, it is important to give them the time they need to comprehend the media content. When watching videos independently, students can opt to use subtitles and interactive transcripts where available. Readings can be perused in English or other languages as appropriate. For these reasons, we believe that the online versions of classroom media are more effective to content consumed in the traditional classroom.

Find Someone Who and Paired Interview Activities

Find Someone Who... (FSW) activities are a staple of the communicative classroom. Benefits include repetitive practice with multiple partners on topics that can be meaningful to students ([See Appendix B, Paper FSW](#)). These scaffolded interactions with different partners can also be enjoyable for students. Through the use of a quiz activity with an HTML template, we were able to accurately replicate the classroom activity as pictured in [Appendix B \(Online FSW\)](#). There were, however, a couple of challenges that arose. The first was when students accidentally deleted the HTML template, a problem that cannot be remedied by reattempting the quiz as successive attempts are set to build on one another to assist students in completing the task over multiple attempts. It was therefore necessary for the teacher to either delete the attempt or paste the HTML code back in for the student. The more common problem, however, was for students whose text editor had been changed from the default. After two iterations of this course, we finally set up an FAQ section to which students can refer. We still get emails about these problems, but we can easily reply with a link to the solution.

The Paired Interview activities were another common feature of our course and were useful in the facilitation of scaffolded discussion on the topic content, as well as repetition with multiple partners. The same challenges with missing HTML occurred in

the interview activities and students are directed to contact the teacher if they are not able to access the content.

For both activity types, the online version was *satisfactory* in a pandemic experience. However, an important part of the course is the interaction that takes place among students. Our course is one of the very few interdepartmental courses in the institution and we take every opportunity to encourage students to speak with classmates they do not know, particularly students from other departments. Data from student reflections and end-of-course surveys indicate that many students appreciated the opportunity to interact with those outside their usual circles (Authors, 2021). In the absence of a physical classroom, students were left to question friends and relatives already known to them. One student wrote in his reflection from Week 7, "I want you to stop activities that require the cooperation of others, such as Task2. Because I live alone and have no friends." We engaged with this student over email and in person, especially as this student appeared to be alienated. We then altered the directions for these activities to encourage those without a ready-speaking partner to talk with teachers or other students at our institution's self-access facility (available online during the pandemic), and we provided hyperlinks to the facility's services. Given our online platform, it might have been possible to facilitate groupings for students to interview each other online. However, given the large class size, the asynchronous format, the necessity of deadlines, and teacher course loads, among other concerns, this option was not feasible. Our sentiment is that online versions of these activities are workable, but the ideal is having students safely interacting with one another inside a classroom where partners are readily available and willing, and teachers are present to facilitate and encourage interaction.

The content review of the student reflections supports our interpretation. Despite doing the same interview activity with five other people (the only difference being print vs. online), in the 2019 class of 69 students, 11 of 44 reflections positively remarked on their interactions with other students using language such as "it was good to know everyone's thoughts", "[I was able to] deepen communication", and that it was "enjoyable to get to know other people". Conversely, in the asynchronous online class of 85 students, only six of 63 reflections commented on the same activity, one of which was from the student who had "no friends" to interview. There is certainly a possibility that some students in the 2020 online course may have *invented* interview data as we had no way of ascertaining the validity. Nevertheless, for interactive assignments such as FSWs and paired interviews, the physical presence of students in a classroom appears to have been much more conducive to positive, enjoyable, and meaningful communication with multiple partners.

Wall Readings

Wall Readings are another common component of our communicative classroom. These are essentially a set of texts placed on walls around the classroom with students meandering about them and completing their handouts. Part of the appeal of wall readings is having students getting out of their seats as a movement in the classroom is shown to increase student attention and lead to better learning outcomes (Liu et al., 2017). The irony in the digital era, however, is that in the face-to-face iteration of the course, many students immediately took photos of readings and sent them to a social networking site for shared consumption such that there was little actual movement after all. This issue is particularly apparent in large classes. When we eventually return to face-to-face teaching, we may choose to alter the requirements of this task, expressly forbidding pictures. In the meantime, however, it seems only natural to place the readings in different sections online and have students complete a digital worksheet with drag and drop answers enabling immediate feedback ([Appendix C](#)). Though it is time-consuming to set up the digital worksheets, it is not necessary to post different readings around the room and make sure that no crowds are forming.

Analysis of the Class 6 reflection data suggests that there is not a large difference in impact on students. For the 2019 class of 69 students, 16 of 44 reflections referenced topics pertaining to this activity or referenced the activity itself. For the 2020 class of 85 students, 17 of 63 student reflections did so. It might at first appear that the physical wall readings of 2019 had a slightly larger impact than the virtual ones of 2020. It is important to note, however, that the four content activities in this lesson covered similar material from different angles and, since many student reflections were broad, it was often impossible to attribute student sentiments to a single activity.

Our verdict for Wall Reading activities, in the absence of a *No Photos* rule, is that the online version is more effective. If students are collaboratively taking pictures of different readings and using social media to quickly share such that there is little need for movement to find the answers, then we believe the printing and posting of different readings around the room become redundant. We may just as well post them online from the start. If, however, we do enforce a *No Photos* rule, then the traditional Wall Reading activity is likely to work as designed.

Media Research

The Media Research assignments ([Appendix D](#)) were unique in that they were

assigned entirely online in both the face-to-face and online iterations of the course. Many years ago, when the authors were students, any sort of media research would have generally entailed television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and other print media. In the current era, however, the internet (and various platforms on the internet) are undoubtedly the largest and most influential source of media for our students. It only made sense, then, that we asked students to find an article on the current topic via the internet, read it, respond critically to some questions, and provide the hyperlink such that the teachers could see the original. The Media Research assignments are currently set such that only the teachers have access, but this may change in future iterations of the course. At the current time, it is difficult to foresee a situation in which media research would be better suited to an offline format.

Presentations

The class presentations in the first face-to-face iteration of the course were problematic for several reasons. The goal of the presentations had been for students to display critical thinking in their understanding of culture. We had asked pairs of students to work together to research a particular country, including basic demographic information, but focusing on problematic stereotypes and how their perceptions had been shifted on the course following reflections. Students were assigned to display and present the resultant digital posters in a class poster session utilizing a Moodle LMS database as opposed to traditionally printed posters. Concerns regarding the content of the presentations included some students taking an essentialist approach, exactly the sort of outcome we had been hoping to avoid in the pedagogical course framing. Unpreparedness to present to other students in English was another issue. Both these concerns might have been partially addressed by clearer assignment guidelines, models, practice in giving presentations, and additional common classroom interventions. We recognized, however, that the format of the project itself left too many questions unanswered, particularly on a course with limited contact hours and little affordance for individualized instruction, either in the face-to-face course or in the online version.

We, therefore, decided to change the presentation structure to a short 1–2-minute video, asking students to present something about the course that may have caused them to reconsider their beliefs ([link to student example](#)). Students were advised to use a free version of Spark Video (described by Lane, 2019), an online video creation tool with a simple interface, available in numerous languages, that helps to facilitate easy video production. These videos, produced individually by students, were easily shared via an

LMS forum and enabled students to engage with culture more critically in their own videos and learn the perspectives of their classmates through the forum and a follow-up assignment. The online video assignment worked effectively in the current ERT format. This is not to say that other carefully scaffolded project assignments could not work well in a classroom setting, but the necessary scaffolding for less proficient students, large class size, and limited-time make for formidable barriers. The video presentation enabled students to demonstrate critical engagement with the course content and share their insights with other students.

Discussion

The research questions sought to clarify the benefits and drawbacks of both face-to-face and asynchronous online activities as examined in teacher perspectives and students' data in this self-study research (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). As teachers, we acknowledge that online versions of classroom handouts can afford color pictures, instantaneous and interactive feedback, and easy machine translation. Nevertheless, we stated a clear preference for a physical classroom handout that does not require hours of programming or troubleshooting and allows more nuanced interaction with students beyond pre-programmed hints and feedback. The student reflection data (17 references in 2020 versus none in 2019) suggest that we may be wrong and that the time and energy necessary for putting together interactive materials online could very well be worthwhile.

Regarding classroom media, we reflected that the online affordances of consuming at one's own pace, ease of review, ease of translation, and access to transcripts made online delivery more effective. The same was true for media research. That is not to say that these activities should not necessarily be pursued in a face-to-face class but based on our research, an online delivery (assuming student access to devices) is more effective for the affordances it provides. However, the student data accessible to us did not provide any indication of student preference, a limitation on the findings.

From the student data available to us, as well as our perceptions as teachers, wall readings do not appear to greatly differ in their effectiveness via online or face-to-face presentation. The one caveat is that, when doing a physical wall reading, it may be best to implement a no photo rule.

Interactive tasks such as FSW activities and paired interviews appear to be examples of where teachers and students agreed that face-to-face interaction is most effective. As teachers, we were able to observe the energy of interactions in face-to-face classes that

just did not materialize in an asynchronous online course. Student reflections also appeared to indicate that the FSW and paired interview activities were more meaningful than face-to-face activities. Finally, a comparison of the end-of-course evaluations seems to suggest that, in the asynchronous online course, there was insufficient interaction among students and with teachers, when compared with the face-to-face course. In the context of this course with these students, interactions were valued more in a face-to-face delivery as opposed to asynchronous online.

From the teacher's perspective, online student presentations in the form of a scaffolded video supported the project goals more effectively. Due to large numbers of students, limited time, and comparable ease of hosting presentations online as opposed to in-class, we will likely continue with a digital presentation even after teaching returns to something resembling a pre-pandemic classroom. A major benefit of these scaffolded videos is that students record their voices in short audio clips and review the clips for quality, necessarily re-recording when not satisfied. The program displays a prompt after 10 seconds imploring users to *keep it short* and cuts off entirely at the 30-second mark. Since clips are short and students are likely to view their efforts immediately after, practice is effectively built into the presentation, something that is not quite the same for traditional presentations. Further, good presentation skills are very different from the skills required for successful classroom interaction and we simply do not have time in our course curriculum to adequately address them.

There are several implications from this study that may be useful to other educators. Though the deliberate design of interactive online handouts may require considerable time and effort on the part of the teacher, the resulting materials are likely to be valued by students, even when classes return to something approaching normal. Media, too, is a natural fit for online delivery provided that students have access to devices. In the absence of space in the curriculum to specifically address presentation skills, a scaffolded video with a tool such as Spark Video might be very effective for both online and face-to-face classes. The research contributes some understanding around ERT (Hodges et al, 2020), particularly in the context of the increasing use of technology in learning and troubleshooting challenges (Bailey & Lee, 2020). While creating non-ERT online materials is time-consuming (Price, 2021; Shim & Lee, 2020), this research has shown some effective examples of ERT online material adaption. Some students may report frustration at fewer communication opportunities and some isolation in completing activities, in line with related research findings (Edwards & Lane, 2021; Nae, 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020); however, some positive learning outcomes were seen in how these activities were switched online, and some preference evident towards aspects of the ERT

over face-to-face.

Limitations

As with any self-study research, some limitations must be acknowledged, the most obvious of which may be generalizability. This study observed a specific course at a specific university during a particular moment of ERT in one context, based largely on the experiences of two teachers. We believe that our analysis of six activities in both face-to-face and asynchronous online modes of delivery can be of general benefit to teachers but as with such research, it is up to readers to formulate their views based on the findings presented here. Gaps in student data reflect the somewhat opportunistic, though nonetheless important, research in comparing the two-course iterations. Limitations notwithstanding, we believe that the detail provided in our findings and discussion offers useful insight to other educators in the field, reflecting on their transitions online and some longer-term educational implications.

Conclusion

In this self-study research paper, we have reflected on the ERT provision through an LMS in comparison with face-to-face instruction, focusing on 6 activity areas. While some of the activities we discussed appeared to work effectively in an online format, the course appeared also to lose some quality of learning compared to physical classes, particularly around social learning. On one hand, there appeared greater engagement with content and deeper reflections; on the other, students appeared to prefer the social learning opportunities and teacher support afforded by face-to-face learning experiences. Post-pandemic, it will be useful to draw together positive aspects of both online and face-to-face instruction, optimizing learning from both approaches. In a context of educational change brought about by the pandemic, such self-study research is useful for teachers in particular settings to reflect, examine, and understand how aspects of their teaching practices have changed, either positively or negatively, and to consider how improvements may be made on the back of any new understanding. Importantly, such research may also offer meaningful insight for teachers in other settings reflecting on the ERT and longer-term educational changes. Indeed, it would be useful for similar self-studies on synchronous and asynchronous teaching experiences to be shared to encourage

further teacher reflection towards educational improvements during this ongoing educational disruption.

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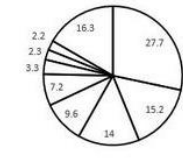
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Appendix A

Traditional classroom versus online handouts

1. Who lives in Japan? NAME: _____

The population of non-Japanese in Japan (approx. 2.9 million)



27.7%
15.2%
14.0%
9.6%
7.2%
3.3%
2.3%
2.2%
2.0%

Which countries or groups do you think these percentages represent?

27.7% _____

15.2% _____

14% _____

9.6% _____

7.2% _____

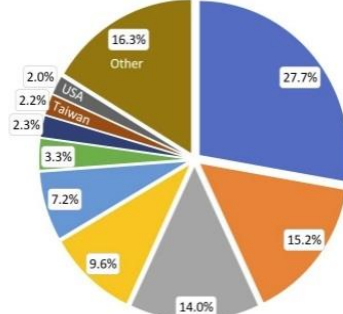
3.3% _____

2.3% _____

2.2% _____

2019 Statistics. "統計表一覧 政府統計の総合窓口 GL08020103".

The population of non-Japanese in Japan (approximately 2.9 million)



27.7%
15.2%
14.0%
9.6%
7.2%
3.3%
2.3%
2.2%
2.0%

2019 Statistics. "統計表一覧 政府統計の総合窓口 GL08020103". E-stat.Loop.jp

Which countries or groups do you think these percentages represent?

Question 1
Correct
Mark 1.00 out of 1.00
Flag question

A. 27.7%

Answer: China ✓

Question 2
Incorrect
Mark 0.00 out of 1.00
Flag question

B. 15.2%

Answer: Kosovo ✗

Question 3
Tries remaining: 2
Marked out of 1.00
Flag question

C. 14.0%

Answer: Philippines

Starts with a "V"

Try again

Traditional paper handout

Online handout

Appendix B

Find someone who... (FSW)

Find someone who...

		Who is it?	More Information
例	... studied in another country	Gareth	He studied in England and Mexico.
1	...started studying English before age 10		
2	...went to high school in Kumamoto		
3	...enjoyed studying English in high school		
4	...has taken a TOEIC test		
5	...studied in a high school with more than 1000 students		
6	...went to high school by bicycle		
7	...had a foreign English teacher at school		
8	...learnt a musical instrument in school		
9	...played sport in school		
10	...went to school with a non-Japanese student		
11	...prefers university to high school		
12	...prefers high school to university		
13	...enjoys studying English in the SILC		
14	...wants to be a teacher after university		
15	...wants to study a Masters		

Paper FSW

English Translation:

Don't have a speaking partner? Please join the Conversation Lounge (CL) or Skills Center. (Schedule) (How to access CL)

Try to find a different person to answer yes for each question.

Please also ask follow-up questions (補足質問) and write the answers under the heading "More Information".

話し相手がいらないですか? カンパゼーションラウンジ(CL)やスキルセンターに参加してください。 (スケジュール) (CLにアクセス方法)

Please find someone who ...

途中でやめる場合は、Next page (次のページ) をクリックすると保存できます。次回このページに戻って、続きから行ってください。

Format			
		Who is it?	More Information
例	... studied in another country	Gareth	He studied in England and Mexico.
1	...started studying English before age 10	Hanako	She...
2	...went to high school in Kumamoto		
3	...enjoyed studying English in high school		
4	...has taken a TOEIC test		
5	...studied in a high school with more than 1000 students		
6	...went to high school by bicycle		
7	...had a foreign English teacher at school		
8	...learnt a musical instrument in school		

Online FSW

Appendix C

Online Wall Reading

What is Family? #1



Rob is a 44-year-old English teacher who is originally from America. His wife Megumi is a 48-year-old homemaker from Toyama. They live in Kumamoto with their two children, Misa and Yoshi, who are in the sixth grade and first grade of elementary school. Both children do trampolining and swimming. Megumi does a lot of volunteer work at the kids' school.

◀ 3 / 8 ▶

What is Family? #1

Name(s)	How old are they?	Where do they live?	What do they do?	What is their relationship?	Do they have children?
Ellen Peter					
	43 43				
		Portsmouth, England			
			Office Worker		

Please fill in the information for the adults. 大人の情報を記入して下さい。

Yes	Single	35	46	54	Raleigh, NC, USA	Architect	
No	Single Mother	38	47		Melbourne, Australia	Job Center	Mari
	Single Father	43	48		Fukuoka	Accountant	
	Married	44	52		Psychologists	Kim & Tom	
	Long-term relationship	45	53		Teacher	Abdel & Julie	

Check

Appendix D

Media Research

New entry

海外の仕事についてのオンライン記事を見つけて、URLを記入して下さい。その国について、下記の空欄に記入して下さい。日本語でも、英語でも構いません。

国:

記事のURL:

次の質問に答えてください。

A. 記事はポジティブな内容ですか、ネガティブな内容ですか？ どうしてそう思いますか？

B. 固定観念が含まれていますか？

C. 記事から面白いことを3点見つけて、なぜ面白いか教えてください。

Path: p

English Translation:

Please find an online article about work in a foreign country and input the URL. Please write about the country in the blanks below. Japanese or English is fine.

Please answer the following questions:

- A. Is the article content positive or negative? Why do you think so?*
- B. Were there any stereotypes in the article?*
- C. Please note 3 things that you found interesting and why.*

Switzerland



記事のURL: [Work](#)

This article include both of negative and positive things. This article is written by a Japanese woman who works in Switzerland as a dealer of casino. She writes good and bad points of dealer in this article. For example, she gets more salary than average, but it's a little difficult to have family.

This article said "The best teachers to learn English is my friends". I think it's interesting because many people learn English at school or lecture.

And this article said jobs of a dealer included preventing fraud. I thought jobs of a dealer are dealing cards and tips, turning the roulette and so on. So I was surprised to know that.

Then this article said " It's important for your English skills to talk to foreign people actively. Don't be afraid of making a mistake". I got a courage because I'd like to talk with foreign people but I was afraid of making a mistake.

Finished Entry

Note: Only nine of 63 completed entries were written in English. We included this one for its accessibility to the reader.