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Synchronous or Asynchronous Online Learning | The COVID-19 Virus Has Led to the Widespread Adoption of Teaching English Language Skills Online

# Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Learning and Teaching

Synchronous or **asynchronous** online learning has become the new normal for English language teaching since the outbreak of covid 19 the virus has had a disruptive and profound impact on English language teaching with teachers and learners having to suspend in-person teaching and learning during the lockdowns from early 2020 to early 2022.

Table of Contents

During this period, many universities and colleges have switched to online instruction, using educational technology for synchronous or asynchronous methods to deliver content and assess learning. While this transition has been challenging for both teachers and learners, it has also opened up new opportunities for language learning and teaching.

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# Synchronous Online English Learning and Teaching

Synchronous online teaching is a type of [English teaching](#) that happens in real-time, via video conferencing using applications such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Synchronous teaching has its advantages and disadvantages for both students and teachers. For students, the main advantage is that they can get immediate feedback from their teacher. **Student Talking Time (STT)** in English [Speaking skills](#) classes is what students expect and Zoom breakout rooms, allow students to practice

their English skills in real-time. This is important because STT is a crucial component of English speaking skills classes.

## Challenges

However, synchronous teaching can also be quite challenging, as students need to be able to keep up with the pace of the lesson. For teachers, synchronous teaching allows them to connect with their students in real-time, which can be very rewarding. However, it can also be quite challenging to keep all students engaged in a synchronous lesson, as background noise, slow internet connection, and poor audio may be impediments to a good quality lesson, and engaging discussions.

Synchronous online teaching has its advantages and disadvantages for both students and teachers. The decision of whether or not to use synchronous online teaching, and to what extent, should be made based on the needs of both students and the teacher.

# Asynchronous Online English Learning and Teaching

Asynchronous [online English learning](#), on the other hand, does not happen in real-time but allows participants to access materials and complete activities on their own time. Some asynchronous activities include pre-recorded videos, forums, discussion boards, and email. Although asynchronous online English learning has some advantages, such as being more flexible and accessible, it also has some disadvantages.

For example, asynchronous online English learning can be less engaging than synchronous online English learning, and it can be difficult to provide timely feedback on asynchronous activities. There is little or no STT in asynchronous classes, which is the most significant disadvantage for English Speaking classes; How are you going to improve your speaking skills if you do not practice speaking in class? Ultimately, whether synchronous or asynchronous online English learning is used, and to what extent, depends on the needs of the students and teachers involved.

# Universities and Modes of Lesson Delivery

After the ending of COVID-19 mandates at the beginning of February 2022 in many countries, most universities are back to in-person lectures, which after two years of **online teaching** is still dominating the way of lesson delivery. While some technologies have been able to provide an effective learning experience for content delivery, in particular Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, and Blackboard, during the pandemic, the teaching format of in-person lectures and seminars still dominates in universities.

One of the reasons is that the classroom supports an interactive and highly personalized format that supports the development of a classroom character and sentiment and transformative learning experience. This, and the social aspect of university education are principles that the public has generally accepted the high cost of higher education.

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## Universities prefer in-person lessons

Also, most universities prefer traditional in-person classroom instructions for their own benefit. Possibly, the most important reason for this is the barriers to outside competition. Think of universities as a service provider that is protected by trade barriers from foreign competitors, for as long as the in-person delivery is mandatory lessons, universities protect themselves from competing with foreign universities. Once you have accepted and recognized online courses as a dominant lesson delivery, most local universities and colleges would not survive such competition and would lose that battle in the globalized world.



Image by Yan Krukov, Pexels

Also, in-person instruction allows schools to protect their most important resources: teachers and students. With in-person instructions, schools have full control over access to lecture classrooms and therefore control over their teaching services. As a result, schools can protect their content and teaching from external competitions, in particular, famous universities offering some of their online content for free.

Although it may appear more expensive, in-person lesson delivery is for most universities a more cost-effective approach. All these factors work together to make the in-person lecture and seminar format the dominant form of university teaching.

However, when universities switched to online teaching at the start of 2022, many students demanded lower prices justifying the lower quality of online lessons. Still, universities protected their fees by claiming that the quality of online and in-person is the same. If the quality is the same, why full and quick switch back to in-person lessons right after the end of the restrictions (for most universities)?

# Online Learning vs. Online Training

With the skills of navigating and using online learning platforms while taking online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, most students have acquired skills that employers look for in a new hire. The skills of being able to navigate and use online learning platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, or Blackboard for learning purposes can be used across different industries and organizations for training purposes, making students extremely equipped to succeed within today's corporate world.

In the corporate world, everything is electronic-from training, and interviews with prospective managers all the way up to submitting reports on projects completed successfully or recommendations about hiring more employees! For many companies, this greatly cuts the training cost when hiring employees right out of college.

# Teachers' Digital Skills

In the wake of Covid-19, many teachers were required to teach their lessons online. As mentioned earlier, this required English teachers to teach synchronous, asynchronous lessons, or a mix of both. Many English teachers had already been using various platforms and software in their classes before this pandemic such as **Kahoot** but on a small scale.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers quickly had to adapt and learn digital skills on how to use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, or Blackboard in order to deliver content, using computers only without having ever set foot outside their homes. Thanks to those mandatory synchronous & asynchronous classes teachers are now well-equipped and skilled to deliver their lessons in any mode at a moment's notice. More tech-savvy teachers are more able and efficient in teaching their students for the 21st-century economy.

# In Conclusion

The virus has had a disruptive and profound impact on English-language teaching, with teachers and learners having to suspend in-person teaching and learning for about two years. Most, if not all, universities and colleges have switched to online instruction, using synchronous or asynchronous methods to deliver content and assess learning. While this period was challenging for both teachers and learners, it has also opened up new opportunities for language teaching and learning.

Learning how to use technology for learning has expanded greatly. When left with only one choice of using technology to deliver lessons, we had no choice but to fully integrate technology with formal teaching and learning. After this, we as a society cannot fully go back to the old ways of teaching.

Thanks to the synchronous & asynchronous classes that became mandatory during the pandemic, online English teachers are now well-equipped with new teaching skills, that are essential in the industry and commerce.

These synchronous and asynchronous online teaching methods for language learning will continue to be useful even after the pandemic is over. All that video and digital content that was used for online learning is a new additional layer of knowledge that can be made available to students, in the form of supplementary materials for face-to-face classes or blended learning.

Now that we had two years of synchronous teaching and asynchronous teaching, most students (i.e. university students) and teachers have accepted and adopted them as an adequate alternative to face-to-face learning. Traditional education and traditional learning were always considered quality learning and the only place where students interact. However, many students have adopted new learning strategies when taking an online course, using online tools (i.e. recorded lectures), as learning outcomes from online lectures are a new learning process that is here to stay

**Readings**

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