

Enhancing multimodal communication and student interaction in synchronous online teaching

Jose Belda-Medina

Abstract

Synchronous online teaching and distance learning have become necessary in higher education throughout the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Henriksen et al., 2020; Ng, 2020; Satar & Wigham, 2020). While some teachers were well trained to face this multifaceted challenge from a technological and pedagogical perspective, others tried to quickly adapt their content materials as well as teaching and assessments methods to a brave new digital environment with different levels of success (Mhlanga & Moloji, 2020; Motala & Menon, 2020). The present research was aimed to analyse multimodal communication and enhance student interaction through different ICTs in live online sessions. For this purpose, 90 teacher candidates enrolled in the subject Applied Linguistics at a higher education institution in Spain were first randomly assigned in different teams to create collaboratively 20 infographics based on different language teaching methods (Audiolingual, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, etc.). Then, all the teams presented on-line their infographic, and required their classmates to complete just-in-time three multimedia activities based on each language method, which had previously been designed through different digital tools (Educaplay, Nearpod, Quizalize, etc.). Finally, the teacher candidates discussed the self-perceived benefits (attention, participation, interaction) and limitations (connectivity, distraction, privacy) of live online teaching. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through a pre-post-test, including two scales about student interaction and satisfaction, an on-line quiz about language teaching methods, project presentations, and a semi-structured debate. The research findings revealed a high level of satisfaction as regards multimodal communication (written, verbal, visual, gestural) and online student interaction among participants thanks to the oral multimedia presentations, but the teacher candidates complained about the poor digital quality of the learning materials in general and lack of peer-to-peer interaction in synchronous online teaching. This presentation will focus on the different methodologies employed and the student perceptions of their online activities and engagement.

Keywords: online; synchronous; multimodal; teaching; interaction

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