Communicating in the Digital Classroom

Comparing experiences online and face-to-face
Research Context, Questions and Method
Wall Street English Study Cycle
Communication in the Digital Classroom

Physical communicative Classroom vs Virtual Classroom

[Diagram showing the difference between multi-channel and mono-channel communication in physical and virtual classrooms.]
Growth of WSE Digital Classroom 2017-2018

Average 35% Encs. online (China)

Average star rating 4.8/5
Research Questions
Comparing WSE Online and In-person Encounters

1. What are the differences in opportunities for language practice and communication?

2. How does the quality of teacher feedback and assessment compare?

3. How does teacher-student communication compare?
Hypotheses

1. a. Students have less opportunity for speaking practice in online classes.
   b. Students have less opportunity for spontaneous communication in online classes.

2. It is more difficult for online teachers to accurately grade student progress.

3. It is more difficult for students to understand online teachers.
## Survey – September 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Distribution method</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online teachers</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>150 (approx.)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2F teachers (Beijing)</td>
<td>Email and WeChat</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (Beijing)</td>
<td>WeChat</td>
<td>10,000 (approx.)</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. What are the differences in opportunities for language practice and communication?
Teacher perception of opportunities for practising unit language

Students get sufficient opportunity to practice the unit language in the Encounters.

- **Strongly Disagree**
  - Online: 1.9%
  - In-person: 2.9%

- **Disagree**
  - Online: 7.5%
  - In-person: 5.9%

- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
  - Online: 34.0%
  - In-person: 29.4%

- **Agree**
  - Online: 43.4%
  - In-person: 47.1%

- **Strongly Agree**
  - Online: 13.2%
  - In-person: 14.7%
Teacher perception of opportunities for unstructured communication

Students get sufficient opportunity for unstructured communication with other students in the Encounters (Group Encounters)

- **Online**
  - Strongly Disagree: 3.8%
  - Disagree: 15.1%
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 50.9%
  - Agree: 22.6%
  - Strongly Agree: 7.5%

- **In-person**
  - Strongly Disagree: 5.9%
  - Disagree: 17.6%
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 26.5%
  - Agree: 38.2%
  - Strongly Agree: 11.8%
Student perception of opportunities for practising the unit language

Which type of Encounter gives you more opportunity to practice the language you learned in the unit?

- Face-to-face: 54.9%
- Both give me the same: 41.2%
- Online: 3.9%
Student perception of opportunities for spontaneous communication

Which type of Encounter gives you more opportunity to talk freely with other students?

- Face-to-face: 75.3%
- Both give me the same: 23.3%
- Online: 1.4%
Expressed importance of spontaneous communication for students

It is important to be able to talk freely with other students during the Encounter.
Which type of Encounters do students prefer?

Which type of Encounters do you usually enjoy more?

- Face-to-face: 60.8%
- Both are equally enjoyable: 36.3%
- Online: 2.9%
Why do students prefer in-person Encounters?

Why do they prefer face-to-face?

- Speaking/communication
- Personalisation
- Learning
- No technological issues
- Connection with teacher
- Easier to understand teacher
- Teacher feedback
- More accurate scoring
- Understand teacher
Why do students choose to take classes online?

When you decide to do an online Encounter (rather than come into the centre), what most influences your decision? Choose one answer only.

- Better availability: 46.3%
- More convenient: 44.2%
- Other (not specified): 4.2%
- Staff Suggestion: 2.0%
- Other (experience range of teachers): 1.1%
- Get Higher Score: 1.1%
- Better availability: 46.3%
2. How does the quality of feedback and assessment compare?
Average Encounter Scores Jun-Aug 2018

Online Encs: 2% average higher (than In-person Encs)
Do you consider face-to-face and online Encounters to be scored to the same standard?

- Yes, it doesn’t make a difference to my score if I take the Encounter online or face-to-face.
- No, I usually score a higher mark for face-to-face Encounters.
- No, I usually score a higher mark for online Encounters.
3. How does teacher-student communication compare?
Teacher perception of student understanding

It is easy for me to know whether students understand me during the class.

- Online:
  - Strongly Disagree: 0.0%
  - Disagree: 1.9%
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 15.1%
  - Agree: 45.3%
  - Strongly Agree: 37.7%

- In-person:
  - Strongly Disagree: 0.0%
  - Disagree: 0.0%
  - Neither Agree nor Disagree: 11.8%
  - Agree: 52.9%
  - Strongly Agree: 35.3%
Student experience of teacher communication

How well do you usually understand what your teacher is saying in online compared to face-to-face Encounters?

- It is easier to understand my teacher online. 2.0%
- It is the same online and face-to-face. 37.3%
- It is easier to understand my teacher face-to-face. 60.8%
Observations and recommendations
# 1. Language practice and communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Preliminary findings</th>
<th>Recommended action</th>
<th>Further research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the differences in opportunities for language practice and communication?</td>
<td>Less opportunity online</td>
<td>Review online teacher training</td>
<td>Research criteria for quality of practice/communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students recognise and place importance on this</td>
<td>Opportunities for intercultural communication</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online offers increased opportunity for classes</td>
<td>Review use of breakout rooms</td>
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1. Language practice and communication
## 2. Quality of feedback and assessment

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<tr>
<td>How does the quality of feedback and assessment compare?</td>
<td>Slightly easier to get a higher score online (not strong perception by students)</td>
<td>Teacher training</td>
<td>Research criteria for quality of feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Review of student data</td>
<td>Successful online strategies for feedback</td>
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<td>Classroom observation</td>
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3. Teacher – student communication

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does teacher-student communication compare?</td>
<td>More difficult online for students to understand teachers</td>
<td>Review online teacher training</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Communicate to students opportunity for exposure to different accents</td>
<td>Successful strategies for scaffolding online</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explore differences between teams (location)</td>
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