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AN OVERVIEW OF A LECTURER'S EXPERIENCE WITH  
ONLINE TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SABAH  
FOUNDATION (UCSF)

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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this article is to find out about a lecturer's experience teaching online at the University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF), and also to provide an overview of the respondent's experience. A qualitative method was implemented that consists of ten (10) semi-structured interview questions based on Creswell. (2012). There are ten (10) emerged categories (themes) from the findings. The respondent seems to be in favour for face-to-face classes since there are certain topics that could have been done better physically. Nonetheless, further, studies are needed to find more about the implications of online teaching that focuses on the state of Sabah, Malaysia.

**Keywords:**

Lecturer's Experience, Online Teaching, Tertiary Level, Autonomous learners, Limitations

## Introduction

Online teaching and learning have become a global norm among educators since the pandemic of COVID-19 hit the world in March 2020, and now (in the year of 2022) it has become endemic. As of the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2020, there were more than 5000 COVID-19 cases, and the number keep on increasing (Elengoe, 2020). Looking at the sector of higher education, especially in colleges and universities, online teaching is a thing that will continue to evolve. Education has the power to change (Khurram, 2021).

The purpose of this article is to basically look into the experience of a lecturer at University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF), Ms Noorashiqin Binti Ahmad who has been working as an English language lecturer for more than 16 years. An interview session was held to find out about her online teaching experience at UCSF. The interviewee had agreed to reveal her name and position in the write-ups of this article. Besides, she has been teaching in the subjects of English Language, Public Speaking, Communication, and Critical Thinking.

## Methodology

The interview questions were adopted and adapted from previous research done in 2014, by Helen Askeff Williams on the Interviews with Teachers and Learners. The focus of Williams's interview questions was ranged on the prospects of teachers and learners. However, in the case of this article, the focus is mainly to illustrate the understanding of one's online teaching experience. The chosen adapted interview questions are quite similar with the focus of trying to know about teachers' understanding of teaching. For that reason, the adopted questions were adapted in the context of online teaching. Hence, chosen to be the instrument of this study.

The adapted interview protocol was created and is based on a semi-structured interview by following Creswell (2012) as reference. The adopted and adapted questions are as follows:

1. Do you think that the students were able to achieve the outcome of your online lesson? Why?
2. How well did you see the performances of your students throughout the online lesson?
3. Do you think the students were able to think and follow the task(s) given online?
4. How responsible are you in facilitating the lesson to teach the students online?
5. In what way or ways do you know that the students have learned about what they were tasked with?
6. What are your expectations about your students' understanding or ideas given to them based on the objective(s) of your online lesson?
7. What's the purpose of your online lesson? Do you think that your students were able to apply the lesson given to them? For example, how, where, and when?
8. Do you think that your teaching and learning strategies could help your students to learn online?
9. Do you think that the online lessons you gave them were the expected lesson that they would want to learn?
10. Do you think there are others other than you who helped your students to learn online? Why?

Hence, the interview session was conducted to find out about the online teaching experience at tertiary level. The data analysis is included in the "Findings and Discussion chapter".

## Literature Review

The literature review in this article emphasise on online teaching experience.

### *Online Teaching*

In the study of Pandemagogy and Online Teaching: A Case for Online Teaching, the challenge lies in the limitation of internet access (Khurram, 2021). The study of COVID-online teaching states that there are some preparations that need to be considered in the system of teaching online such as the platforms, lectures, teaching aids, and facilities (Jabbar, 2022). Furthermore, the study of Online Teaching and Learning, mentions that it is imperative for us to identify the positivity and negativity of online teaching (Rommel, 2022).

### *Teaching Experience*

The study of Teachers' Experiences in Online Teaching and Learning Modality finds that power outages, inadequate internet access, computer technology malfunctions, imposing classroom management, a lack of preparation, and getting adjusted to a new personal work schedule were the participants' main challenges (Capacio et al., 2021). A study of Preservice Teachers' Online Teaching Experiences During COVID-19 finds that since preservice teachers could not see the student's learning processes, they had difficulty keeping the student's active involvement and choosing the right time to scaffold their learning. What is more, the study of Online Teaching Experience Sharing in Colleges and Universities; states that educators face a significant issue in figuring out how to guarantee the calibre of online instruction (Zhou, 2022).

## Findings And Discussion

The analysis of the data is based on "interpretive" research in describing the transcribed data that suits the situation (category) or themes (Creswell, 2012). The discussed categories are as follows:

### *Learning Outcomes*

In response to question one, "*Do you think that the students were able to achieve the outcome of your online lesson? Why?*" The interviewee stated that "*Yes. To some extent of course. The evidence comes from the assessments submitted by the students. The assessments were designed to cater the online method of learning to achieve the intended outcome, so some did quite well, some are average, and a number of them did not do well.*".

Hence, it can be said that through her online teaching experience that the learning outcomes was accommodated to achieve the intended learning outcome. It is not of course within 100% reach since there are only a few of the students who did not fulfil the expected outcomes. However, similar situation could also happen in face-to-face classes. There could be several factors that could help or fail the students in fulfilling the learning outcomes. Factors such as the metacognitive awareness and family support, could aid in the student learning outcomes (Khoirunnisa et al., 2022). Though, it was later found that there are numerous other characteristics that have a stronger connection to learning outcomes than metacognitive awareness and family support (Khoirunnisa et al., 2022). On the other hand, another study found that on the year of 2019–2020 academic year, fourth graders at SD Negeri Nongkosawit 02 can learn more effectively about energy source material when using YouTube as a learning resource, hence improving the learning outcomes from 35% to 85% (Retnasari, 2021). Nevertheless, further studies are needed in trying to find factors that could help students in achieving the learning outcomes from online pererspective.

### ***Students' Performance***

In response to question two, *“How well did you see the performances of your students throughout the online lesson?”* The interviewee stated that *“Their performance is affected when the full online mode started. A lot of students (as well as teachers) were having difficulty coping with the online mode, and a lot of communication heightened between teachers and students, but in the end, the work quality faltered because a lot of messages were lost in translation, I think. Many of the average students resorted to plagiarism, and the good ones did well enough only to get average. But these days, everyone is getting the hang of it (except those without good internet coverage)”*

The main concern in regards to students' performance is in their ability to cope with the online lessons. Some of the reasons could be due to students and teachers were not able to establish proper online communication platforms at the beginning of the pandemic COVID-19. Students and teachers were not fully ready to face the sudden change in educational mode. Only 36% of students had received training in using different online study methods prior to completing online exams, according to the statistics (Starc, 2020). Furthermore, it imposes a lack of personal interaction with teachers, lack of personal interaction with study partners, being left to one's own creativity, and lack of self-initiative and self-discipline (Starc, 2020). However, the student's performance in online learning is not without its benefits. Among the benefits of online learning are it saves time which led to lower costs, balancing work and family responsibilities the opportunity for time flexibility, and could "learned" self-discipline as well (Starc, 2020). Additionally, it was also discovered that students' preparation for online learning; as well as their perceptions of online learning and course readiness, could affect the performance of their online learning (Wei & Chou, 2020). In addition, another study also finds that the behaviour of students greatly affects their performance in the lesson (Brendan & Hiroaki, 2022).

### ***Online Tasks***

In response to question three, *“Do you think the students were able to think and follow the task(s) given online?”* The interviewee stated that *“Yes, but with a lot of guidance and communication by the lecturer. There has never been a time where I only had to make one announcement for an assessment, after posting the guidelines on the learning platforms, I would have to make supplementary announcements in the chat group and some students would always ask for extra clarifications.”*

Teaching online requires different approaches when comparing to face-to-face classes. As stated by the interviewee, it is important for educator to establish proper guidelines in guiding the students throughout the online lessons. The recent pandemic brought attention to the necessity for efficient active blended learning methodologies (le Vo, 2021). In responds to online tasks, for online learning to be effective, there must be opportunities for meaningful two-way communication between students and teachers (Zheng, 2022).

### ***Responsibility & Extra Hours***

In response to question four *“How responsible are you in facilitating the lesson to teach the students online?”* The interviewee stated that *“At first when the full online classes started, I would always answer any students' questions regardless of working hours. I thought, during the lockdown our morale and motivations are always low and it's hard to pick up momentum to complete our tasks. Students don't always have their peers to ask unlike the face-to-face*

*classes. So there will be students who ask me about quizzes at midnight and I would entertain. However, these days I have made clear guidelines with my students on how to contact me regarding the class, unless they have a personal problem committing to the class, only direct their questions in the chat group. This has helped me become more organized with my time and at the same time students communicate better with me.”*

From the transcription, it says that motivation plays a crucial role in keeping up the responsibility (momentum) of one’s effort to teach the students online. Spending extra hours has become a norm when teaching online regardless of working hours. Similarly, proper guidelines and instructions were given to better organise the online classes. A survey done in the Journal of Classics Teaching, Cambridge press, states that when it comes to online teaching, the lesson planning would take much longer than normal (Baddeley, 2021).

### ***Students’ Learning***

In response to question five *“In what way or ways do you know that the students have learned about what they were tasked with?”* The interviewee stated that *“Through the answers in their assessments and the course evaluation feedback. Usually they will note some reflections in their comments on the contents of the class and what can be improved in the future. So it does help me to check whether the syllabus design works well or needs re-evaluation.”*

The respondent mentioned that the students were able to cope with the online teaching as it would be reflected based on their evaluation feedback. The feedback also greatly helps the teacher to re-evaluate the syllabus design, improvising the needs of students learning. In online teaching, a study finds that teachers & students alike would encounter numerous challenges in their endeavour, but they could be overcome to some extent by utilising a variety of tactics, as well as efficient planning and organisation (Kamberi & Urlica, 2022).

### ***Expectation & Plagiarism***

In response to question six *“What are your expectations about your students’ understanding or ideas given to them based on the objective(s) of your online lesson?”* The interview stated that *“I would expect them to always use their ability to gather information first rather than copy and pasting from sources that are not reliable. Sometimes students do know what to copy and paste, however, most would take the first thing they found on the internet instead.”*

The issue of plagiarism has become crucial throughout teaching online. Plagiarism severely undermines the academic process in many ways, it stops students from developing creativity and critical analytical skills and can negatively impact teacher-student relationships (Gaikwad, 2022). Copying and pasting the information about what the students had first found on the internet is something that the teacher has no control over. The expectation would of course be for students to take their own responsibility in gathering reliable information, and to cite the sources properly.

### ***Becoming Autonomous Learners***

In response to question seven *“What’s the purpose of your online lesson? Do you think that your students were able to apply the lesson given to them? For example, how, where, and when?”* The interview stated that *“The purpose of the online lesson has always been about the learning outcome. And of course, how the learning outcome caters to the programme outcome.”*

*English classes of course are applied immediately in other classes in their current semester and in the future, but ultimately, by learning in my class I hope it would shape them to be autonomous learners.”*

The lesson objectives are aligned to the outcome of teaching online in teaching the English language whilst applying it throughout the online classes. Furthermore, it is with the hope that the students would be able to apply what they have learned and eventually become autonomous learners. In addition, self-motivation (passion and willingness) was said to be the main element influencing autonomous learners to study the English language. (Indah et al., 2021). Aside from the students, teachers (especially those who have a long period of teaching experience) have used a variety of ways to express their professional identity as professional autonomous learners in teaching (Rachmajanti et al., 2021). Hence, teachers and students can both become autonomous learners in the context of online lessons.

### ***Teaching Strategies Are Effective To Some Extent***

In response to question eight “Do you think that your teaching and learning strategies could help your students to learn online?” The interview stated that “I believe so. Although there are certain topics or intended outcomes that are better done face-to-face. For example, class activities where students have to discuss, play games to build teamwork, and learn non-verbal communication skills, etc.”

It is with utmost certainty that the applied teaching strategies helped in teaching online. However, the respondent mentioned that there are several specified topics that could be done better in face-to-face classes. The mentioned examples focused on activities where the students have to do discussion, and gamification activities that involve teamwork, and non-verbal communication. These activities are indeed difficult to be taught online. Although the teacher could send a video showing by showing the examples, it is not similar as it lacks presence and the students might not be able to observe or understand the lesson properly.

### ***Online Lessons & Its Limitation***

In response to question nine “Do you think that the online lessons you gave them were the expected lesson that they would want to learn?” The interview stated that “Not entirely. Like I said, there are topics I believe that are better done physically.”.

The respondent mentioned that the intended lessons were not like what she had expected. She further responds that face-to-face classes are better compared to when teaching online. From the transcription, it can be interpreted that the teacher prefers face-to-face classes compared to online classes. This could be due to the limitation of the Sabah state, where the students are having difficulty getting internet access. Difficulty in accessing the internet could happen in urban areas, and it is much more difficult to access the internet in rural areas. If it is in a situation where online and physical classes could be done, a hybrid lesson could be implemented to teach students face-to-face and online (blended learning).

### ***Students Receiving Outside Help***

In response to question ten “Do you think there are others other than you who helped your students to learn online? Why?” The interview stated that “Yes of course. There are those who are lucky enough who always have people like their peers and seniors (be it in the class, family,

*or from other institutions) that they refer to that would help point them to either the right way, but often times it went off track than what is expected.”*

The respondent had stated that the students were receiving outside help when it comes to online lessons. However, seeking outside help could side-track the students from doing the intended task given to them. Receiving help from someone or people who are not in the field of the study could result in differences in understanding. This is because the said help does not have proper knowledge causing the students to have obtained misleading guidance and information.

### Conclusion

From the transcription and data discussion, it can be said that there are basically ten categories that could best describe the experience of the respondent. The categories are: (1) learning outcomes, (2) students' performance, (3) online tasks, (4) responsibility & extra hours, (5) students' learning, (6) expectation & plagiarism, (7) becoming autonomous learners, (8) teaching strategies are effective to some extent, (9) online lessons & its limitations, and (10) students receiving outside help. These ten categories are the overview of the experience of a lecturer teaching at the University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF). There are definitely pros and cons when it comes to online teaching, the respondent however seems to prefer for the classes (on certain topics) to be held face-to-face, rather than online. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to find more about the implications of teaching online, especially in Sabah, Malaysia.

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