

Reflection on my time as an online student

My week as an online language learner in eight words: surprisingly easy, occasionally frustrating, impressively concise, intermittently confusing. If I had to guess, I'd say that my experience is fairly common for online students.

Surprisingly easy: I was surprised to see how easy it was to learn basic skills such as the conjugation of *ser* and the gender of adjectives using the slides, modeled examples, and interactive quizzes. This form of presentation was much more effective than I thought it would be. I think I could easily reformat my Power Points and activities to replicate this experience, especially if students have access to the tutorial videos from the textbook.

Occasionally frustrating: Group work turned out to be the biggest source of frustration for me. In the previous unit, my partner and I had been able to work largely autonomously on our slides and contributions and we only had to coordinate insofar as we had to create a shared document to put together our Power Point presentation. Having to work synchronously with another person was a bit frustrating at first. Once the logistics of the pair work were settled, however, I thought it was a great way to get to know another person from the class and the time passed very quickly. Depending on the parameters of the class and where the students were located, I might assign pairs rather than allow students to choose. This might be a way to reduce the anxiety surrounding finding a partner.

Impressively concise: I was impressed by how concise the instructional materials were. It only took four or five slides or a couple of YouTube videos to teach grammar points or cultural topics. I think it is important to replicate this format because many online students have work and family obligations and need to learn the material with few distractions and little extraneously information.

Intermittently confusing: There were a few points during the week when I wasn't sure what we were supposed to be doing or where I was supposed to post certain information. That said, I eventually figured it out. I think this is an important take away from this course. It is important to provide very clear instructions for our students, but I also came to recognize that we can have faith in the fact that the students will complete the exercise, even if it isn't exactly how we imagined it.

In transitioning my face-to-face activities to the online environment, the greatest challenge was finding the right platform for students to complete activities and interact with each other. My plan is to find alternatives to only using the discussion board, such as using Google docs to make vocabulary lists or using Edpuzzle to embed questions into YouTube videos. I found the sample activities from the Stanley book to be very helpful and I will probably draw off of those examples for my future lesson plans.

In considering the participation rubric, I remain skeptical of the category rubric approach. One reason for this skepticism stems from the subjective language that often parades as objective

analysis in rubrics. It is incredibly difficult to decide when something becomes “usually” rather than “almost always.” The other reason is that I think it is important to distinguish between assessing the quality of the work that students are doing and assessing participation. Many rubrics make qualitative judgements about the students’ discussion board comments as part of their participation. For me, the quality of the comment is better assessed in their grade for the activity. With those considerations in mind, I chose to design my participation rubric to purely evaluate whether or not the students participated in the online forums.