Hello, Class!: Virtual Learning Approaches Implementations

ABDON A. RAMOS
College of Teacher Education
Urdaneta City University, Philippines
abdonaoan@gmail.com

RYAN JAYSON V. DELOS REYES
ryanvdelosreyes@gmail.com

Abstract — Virtual Learning fosters an environment that focused on remote learning of the students. This generally refers to instructions in a virtual learning environment where teacher and learners are separated by time or space, or both. In this study, phenomenology is used which emphasizes experiential, lived aspects of a particular concept. The virtual learning is best described of its characteristics, objectives, content/activity, and evaluation. From this perspective, five approaches were determined namely: collaborative learning, student-centered instruction, variety of learning activities, psychologically safe environment, and constructive feedback. These approaches were identified from the classroom observations, interviews and focus group discussions to selected learners in the virtual learning. Also, the researcher determined that in preparing approaches for virtual learning implementations for the CTE students of Urdaneta City University, Philippines, the teacher must put into consideration the following variables: nature, needs, problems, and course concentration of the CTE students of Urdaneta City University. By establishing the enhanced approaches for virtual learning implementations, the researcher came to a point of such recommendations of creating and sustaining an orderly environment in the classroom, increasing meaningful academic learning and facilitates social and emotional growth, and decreasing negative behaviors and increases time spent academically engaged. And through this, the teacher would be able to introduce and effectively teach the course subject along the interest of the students.

Keywords — Virtual learning, collaborative learning, student-centered instruction, constructive feedback, psychologically safe environment, learning activities

I. Introduction

Universities and colleges find themselves amidst a transitional phase, especially in the online world, undergoing significant changes. The convergence of technology, political, social, and economic restructuring, coupled with the effects of globalization and advancements in information technologies, profoundly shapes the future landscape of student engagement, teaching methodologies, and learning paradigms. According to a UNESCO report, almost 1.3 billion students stayed at home (Collins & Steele, 2020). Many learning institutions have adopted different learning modalities, one of which is online learning (Desabayla, 2023).

The advancement of technology has had an influence on every area of our lives. Technology has become an essential component of our civilization, and its integration into education is consequently unavoidable. Most learning institutions, from elementary to college, have already begun to use technology in the teaching-learning process (Diaz, 2021).

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning emerges as a crucial educational modality, albeit requiring adept learning strategies to be effective. These strategies hinge on the capabilities and resources available to both students and their parents. Online learning encourages active participation, task completion, and collaborative goal achievement, necessitating facilitation by an educator. However, the implementation of online learning is not without its challenges. Students may encounter issues such as poor internet connectivity, learning difficulties, and financial constraints. Therefore, adequate support is essential to ensure students' success in online learning, encompassing provisions for internet access, necessary devices, financial assistance, and guidance from facilitators (Desabayla, 2023).

Within the realm of English language instruction, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) stands out as a dynamic and cutting-edge pedagogical approach in the academe. It leverages computer technologies and digital resources, namely the Internet, extensively to deliver, reinforce, and evaluate learning materials. Through CALL, many educators can create interactive and engaging learning experiences (Cambridge, 2020) that cater to diverse learner needs, fostering a more immersive and effective language acquisition process (Slimp & Bartels, 2019). However, despite its potential benefits, the implementation of CALL in English language teaching encounters various challenges familiar to other online educational initiatives. These challenges encompass aspects such as teacher training, ensuring adequate IT infrastructure, and managing investment budgets (Govindarajan & Srivastava, 2020).

Overcoming these hurdles requires strategic planning, ongoing professional development for educators, and sufficient resources to support the integration of CALL effectively into language learning curricula. It is where virtual learning plays a pivotal role in the immediate shift of classroom learning. Virtual learning environments offer a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between traditional classroom settings and online education, providing students with access to resources and interactive learning experiences regardless of physical location. Additionally, virtual learning allows for greater flexibility in scheduling and pacing, accommodating diverse learner needs and preferences.

Moreover, virtual learning environments facilitate collaboration and communication among students and instructors, fostering a sense of community and engagement that is often lacking in purely online courses. By leveraging virtual learning platforms, educators can create interactive and immersive learning experiences that promote active participation and knowledge retention. Furthermore, virtual learning environments enable educators to incorporate multimedia resources, simulations, and virtual reality experiences into their teaching, enhancing the overall learning experience and making abstract concepts more tangible and accessible.

In conclusion, the transition to virtual learning represents a significant opportunity for universities and colleges to adapt to the changing landscape of education. By embracing virtual learning environments and integrating innovative pedagogical approaches such as CALL, institutions can enhance student engagement, promote active learning, and prepare students for success in an increasingly digital world. However, realizing the full potential of virtual learning requires strategic planning, investment in technology infrastructure, and ongoing professional development for educators. With careful planning and implementation, virtual learning has the power to revolutionize education and create more inclusive and accessible learning opportunities for students worldwide.

Virtual learning implementations entail numerous classroom approaches designed by educators to achieve an optimal online learning venture for their students. First, the instructors can use approaches that promote active engagement on their virtual platforms. For example, students can participate in various interactive activities and undertake college-based projects collaboratively. In this case, the virtual platforms allow group discussions, team-based projects, and real-life problems to be solved in real-time. Essentially, meaningful interactions between students necessarily take place, and the students' comprehension and retention of coursework materials are fostered. Another approach that educators can utilize through multimedia is recording videos, creating simulations, and establishing virtual laboratories. It allows the students to experience the physical events in the virtual classrooms and suit all the students due to their different learning styles and preferences. Another use of approaches is developing individual learning pathways.

II. Methodology

Research Site

The study took place at the College of Teacher Education, Urdaneta City University, Pangasinan, during the academic year 2021-2022. The university initiated online teaching at the onset of the 2021 semester as a mandatory measure to ensure continuity. All online courses were facilitated through iKonek, the UCU learning modality system (LMS) platform, and conducted via virtual classrooms. This shift to online instruction aimed to adapt to the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic while maintaining academic progress.

The study primarily focused on the Department of English Languages, where all courses were offered online. Students received comprehensive guidance on enrolling and participating in virtual classrooms. The university adopted a hybrid form of virtual learning, with classes meeting twice a week for 1.5 hours each session. On average, students enrolled in approximately 7 courses per semester. While students primarily attended classes from home or nearby cafeterias, most instructors conducted online lessons from the campus. Towards the end of the semester, many courses transitioned to physical classrooms on campus for review sessions and final assessments.

This hybrid approach to virtual learning provided flexibility and accessibility for both students and instructors, allowing for continued academic engagement despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. While the bulk of instruction occurred online, the integration of physical classroom sessions for certain activities ensured a balanced learning experience. This model facilitated interaction, collaboration, and academic support while leveraging the advantages of virtual platforms. Overall, the study underscored the adaptability of educational institutions in navigating unprecedented circumstances and highlighted the importance of innovative approaches to maintaining academic continuity.

Research Tools and Participants

The survey encompassed 45 second-year English-major students within the Department of English Language. Forty-five online questionnaires were distributed and subsequently utilized for data analysis. Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with these students, delving into their experiences with online learning and teaching, as well as the advantages and challenges they encountered.

This approach was chosen to explore the respondents' experiences in the online realm comprehensively. Depth interviews serve as a qualitative data collection method particularly suited for phenomena that cannot be directly observed or measured. Interviewers prompted participants to share their opinions, views, experiences, recollections, and feelings regarding the topic at hand. An interview guide developed by the researcher guided the discussions, with a focus on foreign students' experiences in asserting themselves in class and navigating the virtual learning environment.

This shift has influenced language usage, simplified communication while also fostering a reliance on technological platforms (Delos Reyes, 2020). As such, the study recognized the profound impact of technology on language and communication patterns, particularly within educational settings where online platforms are integral to learning.

In qualitative research, coding serves as a crucial step in organizing and analyzing data to identify patterns. These patterns aid in interpreting the data and formulating conclusions and recommendations. Data obtained from participants were meticulously coded and analyzed, following a process of reduction, description, and identification of key themes or essence, in line with Creswell's (2003) framework. Analysis was grounded in transcribed interviews and bolstered by additional analyses and corroborations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the collected data.

III. Results and Discussion

This area presents the description of the virtual learning, identifying the key issues and the solutions and approaches for virtual learning implementation.

Virtual Learning

The efficacy of a synchronous virtual classroom relies heavily on the active involvement and engagement of all participants, creating an environment conducive to learning and facilitating the achievement of educational objectives. Central to this is the promotion of regular interaction among learners, tutors, and course materials. Throughout virtual sessions, opportunities for dialogue between students and instructors, peer-to-peer exchanges, and engagement with the subject matter should be actively encouraged. To sustain this level of engagement, tutors should aim to prompt student participation every 3-5 minutes, employing a variety of activities ranging from collaborative tasks to hands-on experiences, thereby fostering an interactive learning environment. Furthermore, employing a combination of teaching strategies can enhance instruction effectiveness (Omwenga, 2003).

Since 2020, online learning has been defined as a distinct learning environment that contrasts sharply with face-to-face instruction, lacking physical classrooms and instead relying on web-based technologies. This approach allows for flexible learning beyond traditional constraints of time, location, and pace, typically facilitated through Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), such as Moodle and Blackboard. Recent research has focused on identifying and understanding the factors that influence, refine, or impact students' academic performance within this evolving online landscape (Hodges et al., 2020; Bao, 2020).

In synchronous virtual classrooms, active learner engagement is crucial for creating a rewarding educational experience and achieving educational goals. Establishing a positive learning environment characterized by frequent interaction and participation is essential. Tutors must make deliberate efforts to encourage student engagement through various methods, including group discussions, individual tasks, and interactive sessions. Moreover, the synchronous virtual classroom offers unique opportunities for collaborative learning and the exploration of diverse perspectives. By leveraging technology, instructors can facilitate group activities, discussions, and projects that encourage collaboration and critical thinking. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community among learners, promoting active participation and knowledge sharing.

However, challenges may arise in maintaining student engagement and participation in the virtual classroom, particularly amidst distractions and competing priorities. Tutors must employ strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as setting clear expectations, providing timely feedback, and offering support resources. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment can enhance student motivation and engagement, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes.

Key Issues and Solutions

Identifying and addressing pivotal challenges in virtual learning is essential for enhancing its efficacy. One significant issue is equitable access to technology and reliable internet connectivity, particularly among disadvantaged students. Solutions may involve providing subsidized or loaned devices, expanding broadband access in underserved areas, and offering technical support to bridge the digital divide. Moreover, fostering student engagement and motivation poses a significant challenge in virtual settings. Implementing interactive learning tools, cultivating a sense of community through online forums and group projects, and incorporating multimedia content can help sustain student interest and commitment to learning.

Effective communication between instructors and students is paramount for facilitating learning in virtual environments. Establishing clear guidelines for online interactions, offering multiple communication channels, and scheduling regular check-ins can mitigate communication barriers. Additionally, addressing the need for diverse assessment methods and timely feedback is essential. Embracing alternative assessment approaches such as project-based assessments and leveraging technology for automated grading can provide comprehensive insights into student progress. By systematically addressing these key issues and implementing tailored solutions, virtual learning can be optimized to cater to the diverse needs of learners and promote meaningful educational experiences.

The use of technology in blended learning courses has shown minimal but significant gains in student achievement, particularly when technology provides cognitive assistance or enhances student interaction. This highlights the importance of online learning resources and effective learning environments where students can test and explore knowledge through hands-on activities involving simulation (Napoles et al., 2023). However, challenges persist, with poor internet connection cited as a major obstacle for students in online learning (Balahadia, 2022). Additionally, over a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, online schooling has become challenging for many Filipino students, leading to learning delays and impacting their well-being (Gonzales, 2021).

The challenges brought about by the pandemic are exacerbated in slum areas and far-flung villages where students lack access to online tools. As recommended by UNICEF, governments must prioritize reopening schools for in-person learning and provide a comprehensive recovery response for students. In the absence of physical school reopening, parents can only do so much to help students cope with the difficulties of online learning at home. Collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, and communities are needed to address the multifaceted challenges of virtual learning and ensure equitable access to quality education for all students. By prioritizing student well-being and leveraging technology effectively, virtual learning can be transformed into a powerful tool for fostering inclusive and meaningful educational experiences.

In the landscape of virtual classrooms, several key issues persist, challenging the efficacy of remote learning experiences. One prominent issue is the digital divide, where disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity hinder students' ability to fully engage in online learning. Students from underserved communities may lack access to necessary devices and reliable internet connections, exacerbating educational inequalities. Additionally, maintaining student engagement and motivation in virtual classrooms presents a significant challenge. The absence of face-to-face interaction, coupled with potential distractions in home environments, can lead to disengagement and reduced participation. Educators also face challenges in effectively assessing student learning and providing timely feedback in virtual settings, as traditional assessment methods may not seamlessly translate to online platforms.

To address these key issues, proactive solutions must be implemented to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of virtual classrooms. Bridging the digital divide requires concerted efforts to provide equitable access to technology and internet connectivity for all students. This may involve initiatives such as providing subsidized devices, internet access vouchers, or mobile hotspots to students in need.

Additionally, promoting digital literacy and offering training programs for educators and students on navigating virtual learning environments can empower individuals to effectively utilize technology tools for learning. Moreover, fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment in virtual classrooms is essential. Educators can leverage interactive teaching strategies, collaborative learning activities, and multimedia resources to enhance student engagement and promote active participation. Furthermore, implementing diverse assessment methods, such as project-based assessments and online quizzes, coupled with personalized feedback mechanisms, can help ensure accurate assessment and meaningful learning outcomes in virtual classrooms.

Approaches for Virtual Learning Implementation

The essence of virtual learning is encapsulated by its defining characteristics, objectives, content/activity, and evaluation methods. In light of this, a study delineated five distinct approaches: collaborative learning, student-centered instruction, diverse learning activities, fostering a psychologically safe environment, and providing constructive feedback. These approaches were gleaned from classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions involving select learners engaged in virtual learning.

Additionally, the research emphasized the significance of considering various factors such as the nature, needs, problems, and course concentration specific to the CTE students at Urdaneta City University, Philippines, in crafting tailored approaches for virtual learning implementations.

In crafting enhanced approaches for virtual learning, the study underscores the importance of fostering an orderly environment conducive to learning, promoting meaningful academic engagement, and nurturing social and emotional growth among students. Central to this endeavor is the reduction of negative behaviors and the optimization of time spent actively engaged in

academic pursuits. By prioritizing these elements, educators can cultivate an environment wherein students thrive intellectually and emotionally within the virtual classroom setting. However, E-learning will not replace the classroom setting, but rather enhance it, taking advantage of new content and delivery technologies to enable learning.

According to Delos Reyes (2020), Technology integration refers to the incorporation of technology tools across various educational subjects, enabling students to apply computer and technology skills to learning and problem-solving tasks. It is aimed at enhancing and supporting the educational environment, a crucial aspect in modern education, particularly within the curriculum.

Curriculum integration with technology entails utilizing technology as a tool to augment learning within specific subject areas or across interdisciplinary contexts. Successful integration occurs when students can effectively utilize technology tools to access, analyze, synthesize information, and present their findings to authentic audiences. Technology should seamlessly blend into the classroom environment, becoming as accessible as other classroom resources, with the primary focus remaining on achieving curriculum outcomes rather than solely on technology.

The integration of technology into the educational system alongside a standard curriculum empowers students and facilitates advanced learning across a wide array of topics. However, this integration necessitates infrastructure, ongoing maintenance, and repair, crucial factors influencing the successful implementation of technology-enhanced curricula. Additionally, the integration of information and communication technology is closely monitored and evaluated, reflecting the current educational climate emphasizing accountability, outcome-based education, and standardized assessment. While teachers acknowledge the importance of technology in the learning process, some perceive it as a challenge, both for learners and themselves.

Good natural and artificial light were essential and helped improve students' productivity and learning process when performing academic work, leading to a better learning experience. The color of the wall should be bright to boost learners' motivation and behavior. Private space might help students avoid noise disturbance while studying and taking online classes. Giving students a well-ventilated and insulated room where they can take online lessons could help them improve their academic performance (Napoles, et al., 2023).

Moreover, the recommendations put forth by the researcher serve as a blueprint for optimizing virtual learning experiences, ensuring that they are not only academically enriching but also supportive of students' holistic development. Through strategic implementation of these recommendations, educators can harness the full potential of virtual learning platforms to foster a nurturing and conducive educational environment for CTE students, ultimately enhancing their academic achievement and overall well-being.

The emergence of virtual learning as a prominent educational modality in recent years necessitates comprehensive exploration to understand its impact, efficacy, and potential for

optimizing learning outcomes. This research seeks to investigate the multifaceted aspects of virtual learning, including its pedagogical approaches, technological infrastructure, and socio-cultural implications. By examining virtual learning environments from a holistic perspective, this study aims to identify effective strategies for enhancing student engagement, promoting collaborative learning, and facilitating academic achievement in online settings. Additionally, this research endeavors to assess the challenges and opportunities associated with virtual learning, addressing issues such as digital equity, teacher preparedness, and the integration of emerging technologies. Through rigorous empirical analysis and qualitative inquiry, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of virtual education and inform educational policymakers, administrators, and practitioners about best practices for leveraging virtual learning platforms to foster inclusive and effective learning experiences.

Furthermore, this research endeavors to explore the role of virtual learning in addressing contemporary educational challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for flexible learning modalities. By investigating the experiences of students, educators, and administrators in virtual learning environments, this study aims to elucidate the potential of online education to overcome barriers to access, promote lifelong learning, and foster educational equity. Additionally, this research seeks to examine the intersection of virtual learning with emerging trends in educational technology, including artificial intelligence, gamification, and adaptive learning systems. By identifying innovative approaches and technological advancements in virtual learning, this study aims to inform the development of future-oriented educational policies and practices that harness the transformative potential of digital technologies. , this research endeavors to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of virtual learning and empower stakeholders to harness its benefits for the betterment of education globally.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, the success of synchronous virtual classrooms heavily relies on fostering active participation and engagement among participants, which in turn cultivates a conducive learning environment and facilitates the achievement of educational objectives. To sustain engagement, it is crucial for tutors to prompt student involvement every 3-5 minutes through a diverse range of activities, promoting dialogue between learners and instructors, peer-to-peer exchange, and interaction with course material. This continuous engagement not only optimizes learning outcomes but also fosters a dynamic exchange of ideas and knowledge among participants, enhancing the overall educational experience. Identifying key issues and implementing effective solutions are imperative for enhancing the efficacy of virtual learning. Addressing challenges such as equitable access to technology, fostering student engagement and motivation, ensuring effective communication, and diversifying assessment methods are essential steps in optimizing virtual learning experiences. By systematically addressing these issues and tailoring solutions to meet the specific needs of learners, educators can create an inclusive and

supportive virtual learning environment conducive to meaningful educational experiences. Furthermore, implementing enhanced approaches for virtual learning, including collaborative learning, student-centered instruction, diverse learning activities, and fostering a psychologically safe environment, can significantly contribute to students' academic achievement and holistic development. By prioritizing the creation of an orderly and engaging learning environment, educators can maximize the potential of virtual learning platforms to support students' intellectual growth and emotional well-being. Overall, strategic implementation of these recommendations can lead to the optimization of virtual learning experiences and ultimately enhance students' overall academic success and well-being.rom

REFERENCES

[1] Here are your references formatted in APA 7th edition style:

[2] Bao, W. (2020). COVID-19 and online teaching in higher education: A case study of Peking University. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 2*(2), 113-115.

[3] Balahadia, F. F. (2022). Challenges of information technology education student's online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected public colleges and universities in the Philippines. *International Journal of Computing Sciences Research, 6*, 877-892. https://doi.org/10.25147/ijcsr.2017.001.1.79

[4] Collins, A., & Steele, A. (2020, November 23). How the pandemic has changed education. *CNN*. Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/04/world/gallery/education-coronavirus-wellness/index.html

[5] Delos Reyes, R. J. (2020). Polymedia based instruction in purposive communication. *Puissant, 1*, 98-112.

[6] Desabayla, R. R. (2023). Students' perspectives on online education during COVID-19 pandemic: A case study. *Puissant, 4*, 841-852.

[7] Diaz, S. L. (2021). Emerging technologies in education: A reflection. *Dyaryo Bikol, 14*(11), 3.

[8] Garrison, D. R., & Cleveland-Innes, M. (2021). Facilitating social and cognitive presence in online learning: Interaction is not enough. *The American Journal of Distance Education, 35*(1), 1-9.

[9] Gonzales, I. (2021, October 6). The kids are not alright. *The Philippine Star*. Retrieved from https://www.philstar.com/business/2021/10/06/2132016/kids-are-not-alright

[10] Govindarajan, V., & Srivastava, A. (2020). What the shift to virtual learning could mean for the future of higher education. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from http://hbr.org/2020/03/what-the-shift-to-virtual-learning-could-mean-for-the-future-of-higher-education

[11] Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, A. (2020). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *Educause Review*.

[12] Napoles, M. R., Generol, A., & Ticmon, C. (2023). The effects of learning spaces at home on students' performance in the new normal. *Puissant, 4*, 801-821.

[13] Ranges, M. P., & Delos Reyes, R. J. V. (2024). Lost in translation: Connectedness, willingness to communicate, and display of agency in the classroom. *Puissant, 5*, 2074-2087.

[14] Slimp, M., & Bartels, R. (2019). *How the Internet of Things is changing our colleges, our classrooms, and our students*. London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield.