

The Synchronous Online Environment: Impact on Instructor's Empathy

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Abstract : The COVID-19 pandemic affected all facets of life, including pedagogical strategies and perceptual experiences for both instructors and students. While there have also been many challenges and advantages to the online teaching and learning environment, when students' cameras are on, the daily experiences of students' lives have been magnified during synchronous online instruction and have served to humanize them in the classroom. This means that students' everyday experiences, now often on display on ZOOM, allow instructors to see the realities of students. They include children running, spouses walking by parents cooking or sitting on the sofa following the lecture, students at their place of employment or driving from work, or having their classroom engagement interrupted by a delivery. Students' backgrounds and spaces create unique dynamics during synchronous instruction, which offers a holistic view of them outside academia. This research explores whether witnessing students' daily experiences leads to empathy from their instructors and whether it results in a greater understanding of students' challenges and circumstances. Ultimately, it will amplify instructors' stance on the advantages of students having their cameras on during synchronous online classes to develop a connection with the instructor and a more cohesive classroom environment.

Keywords : instructor's empathy, synchronous class, asynchronous class, online environment

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