

Teaching Strategies in Virtual Public Speaking During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated an unprecedented shift to online learning, particularly affecting public speaking courses that traditionally rely on face-to-face interaction. This qualitative study investigates the teaching strategies employed by lecturers in online public speaking courses at Pattimura University's English Education Study Program. Using Fortune's (2000) observation checklist, the research examined twelve teaching sessions conducted by two lecturers teaching forty students over one semester. Data collection involved classroom observations, lecturer interviews, and document analysis. The findings revealed five primary teaching strategies successfully adapted for online delivery: brainstorming, group discussions, writing tasks, picture descriptions, and presentations/talks. Analysis of implementation patterns showed varying degrees of effectiveness across different strategies, with technical challenges significantly impacting delivery. The study documented specific patterns in strategy application across three observation periods, with brainstorming predominantly used in initial sessions, group discussions and writing tasks in intermediate stages, and picture descriptions and presentations in later sessions. Technical difficulties, particularly internet connectivity and platform stability, emerged as persistent challenges, affecting both strategy implementation and student participation. The research also highlighted the evolution of assessment methods to accommodate online delivery constraints while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge about online teaching methodologies and provide practical insights for educators adapting public speaking instruction to virtual environments. The study concludes with recommendations for improving online public speaking instruction through enhanced technical infrastructure, professional development, and balanced activity design.

Keywords: *online teaching strategies, public speaking instruction, virtual learning environment, COVID-19 education, teaching methodology*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated unprecedented changes across all aspects of human life, with particularly significant impacts on educational activities and learning processes. In response to these challenges, educational institutions worldwide have been compelled to transition to distance learning, fundamentally altering how teaching and learning activities are conducted through online platforms. At Pattimura University's English Education Study Program, lecturers have adopted various distance learning platforms to facilitate online instruction, including

WhatsApp groups, Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Edmodo, and Canvas. This transition aligns with research by Duran-Hernandez et al. (2017), who found that online teaching enhances students' learning processes and critical thinking abilities by enabling collaborative learning and peer interaction. Similarly, Gomez-Rey et al. (2016) noted increased student awareness of online learning benefits, particularly in the context of speaking instruction.

Speaking proficiency represents a fundamental challenge in language education, with Thornbury (2007) emphasizing that while reading, structure, and listening are crucial language components, speaking skills present unique challenges as they require simultaneous mastery of multiple competencies, including grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Torkey (2006) further argues that speaking ability serves as a primary indicator of language mastery, necessitating extensive practice in sentence construction and delivery. Public speaking, in particular, demands additional competencies such as public presentation skills, fluency, and self-confidence. The effectiveness of speaking instruction significantly depends on teaching strategies, particularly in university language programs, where teaching speaking requires different approaches from teaching writing, as the objectives and desired outcomes differ substantially.

The transition to online public speaking instruction presents novel challenges, as noted by Mehl (2017), since traditional public speaking courses relied heavily on face-to-face interaction and direct communication. Adams and Pierce (2006) highlight that student who can identify and utilize appropriate learning strategies tend to enjoy their lessons more and achieve better outcomes. A preliminary study conducted at the English Education Study Program revealed several challenges in implementing online public speaking instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, including technical issues with internet connectivity, student attendance and punctuality problems, difficulties in maintaining student focus, and inconsistent participation throughout online sessions.

Previous research by Ganna (2018) at SMA Negeri 1 Toraja Utara examined teaching strategies for speaking instruction at the high school level, demonstrating the effectiveness of various teaching strategies in improving speaking skills, though focusing primarily on face-to-face instruction in secondary education. The current research extends this investigation by examining the unique challenges and strategies involved in online public speaking instruction at the university level. The prevalence of implementation challenges in online public speaking courses necessitates further investigation into effective teaching strategies and their application in virtual environments.

This research aims to explore and analyze teaching strategies and implementation challenges to provide new insights for both lecturers and students in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University, Ambon. By examining the specific challenges of implementing teaching strategies in online public speaking courses, this study seeks to contribute to the development of

more effective approaches to virtual speaking instruction. The investigation focuses particularly on understanding how traditional speaking instruction methodologies can be adapted for online environments while maintaining educational quality and student engagement. Through this research, it is expected to address the gaps in current understanding of online public speaking instruction and provide practical solutions for educators facing similar challenges in virtual teaching environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Strategies in Online Speaking Instruction

The evolution of teaching strategies in speaking instruction has undergone significant transformation with the advent of online learning platforms. Brown (2010) and Thornbury (2007) outline several fundamental strategies that form the backbone of effective speaking instruction, including recording and transcripts, live listening, and writing tasks. The implementation of these strategies in virtual environments requires careful adaptation to maintain their effectiveness while leveraging the unique capabilities of digital platforms. Digital tools such as video recordings and virtual transcripts have enhanced students' ability to analyze and improve their speaking patterns. The integration of technology has enabled more sophisticated feedback mechanisms and self-assessment opportunities for students.

Live listening and interactive dialogue activities have emerged as crucial components in online speaking instruction methodologies. Research by Nadia (2013) emphasizes that presentations and talks in virtual environments can effectively develop students' speaking skills when properly structured and supported with appropriate technological tools. The success of these strategies depends heavily on the instructor's ability to create engaging virtual environments that encourage active participation and authentic communication. Digital platforms have introduced new possibilities for recording, analyzing, and improving speaking performances through features like instant playback and automated speech analysis. Modern online learning management systems have made it possible to implement traditional speaking activities in novel ways that maintain their pedagogical value while adding new dimensions of accessibility and flexibility.

The incorporation of drama, role-play, and simulation activities has proven particularly challenging yet rewarding in online speaking instruction. Cameron (2001) and Nunan (2003) advocate for the adaptation of role-play activities to suit the online learning environment, emphasizing their importance in building student confidence and interaction skills. Digital platforms have enabled innovative approaches to group discussions and debates, allowing for both synchronous and asynchronous participation modes. The effectiveness of these activities relies

heavily on careful planning, clear instruction, and appropriate technological support to ensure meaningful student engagement and learning outcomes. Technical considerations such as internet bandwidth, audio quality, and platform stability play crucial roles in the successful implementation of these speaking activities.

Characteristics and Challenges of Online Public Speaking

Online public speaking instruction presents unique challenges that distinguish it from traditional face-to-face teaching methods. Gultom (2020) identifies several critical characteristics of online public speaking, including limited opportunities for live interaction, technical constraints, and challenges in assessment validity. The transition from physical to virtual classrooms has necessitated significant adjustments in teaching methodologies and assessment approaches. The absence of physical presence has created new challenges in developing students' confidence and public speaking abilities. The virtual environment introduces additional complexities in managing student anxiety and maintaining engagement throughout speaking activities.

Technical challenges represent a significant concern in online public speaking instruction, as highlighted by multiple researchers. Poor internet connectivity, inadequate audio quality, and platform limitations can significantly impact the effectiveness of speaking activities and assessment processes. Students often struggle with technical issues that can affect their confidence and performance during online presentations. The lack of immediate physical feedback and non-verbal cues creates additional challenges for both instructors and students. The virtual environment requires innovative approaches to overcome these technical limitations while maintaining the quality of instruction.

Recent studies by Mehl (2017) emphasize that the online teaching of public speaking requires intensive preparation and specialized approaches to maintain effectiveness. The assessment of student achievement in online public speaking courses must consider multiple factors, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical construction, intonation, and confidence. Online platforms have introduced new possibilities for recording and reviewing speaking performances, enabling more detailed analysis and feedback. Instructors must develop new strategies to create supportive virtual environments that encourage student participation and growth. The success of online public speaking instruction depends heavily on the instructor's ability to adapt traditional teaching methods to the digital environment.

Metacognitive and Cognitive Strategies in Online Learning

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have developed a comprehensive framework for understanding language learning strategies in online environments, categorizing them into metacognitive, cognitive, and social approaches. Metacognitive strategies focus on planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning processes, which become particularly crucial in online learning environments where students must take greater responsibility for their learning. The implementation of these strategies requires careful consideration of the unique challenges and opportunities presented by virtual learning platforms. Digital tools and platforms have enabled new ways to track and assess student progress in developing speaking skills. The success of metacognitive strategies depends heavily on clear instruction and consistent feedback mechanisms.

Cognitive strategies in online speaking instruction emphasize direct engagement with language learning tasks and information processing. These strategies become particularly important in virtual environments where students must actively engage with learning materials and activities without physical interaction. The development of cognitive skills in online speaking requires carefully structured activities that promote language acquisition and retention. Digital platforms offer unique opportunities for implementing cognitive strategies through interactive exercises and multimedia resources. The effectiveness of cognitive strategies in online environments depends on proper technological support and clear instructional design.

Social strategies play a crucial role in fostering interaction and communication in virtual learning environments. Group work and collaborative activities must be carefully structured to promote meaningful interaction despite the physical separation of participants. Online platforms offer various tools for implementing social strategies, including breakout rooms, discussion forums, and collaborative projects. The success of social strategies in online speaking instruction depends on creating an engaging and supportive virtual learning community. Instructors must carefully balance individual and group activities to maintain student engagement and promote effective learning outcomes.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate teaching strategies in online public speaking courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Creswell's (2009) framework, this approach was chosen for its ability to provide rich, detailed descriptions of phenomena within their natural context. The qualitative descriptive design allowed for an in-depth exploration of lecturers' experiences, challenges, and adaptations in teaching public speaking through online platforms. This methodological approach enabled the researchers to gather

comprehensive data about teaching strategies while maintaining flexibility in data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at the English Education Study Program of Pattimura University, located in Ambon, Indonesia. This site was selected through purposive sampling due to its established online public speaking program and accessibility to researchers. The participant pool consisted of lecturers who taught public speaking courses during the 2020-2021 academic year, specifically focusing on those who had experience in both traditional face-to-face and online teaching methods. Two lecturers were selected as primary participants based on their minimum three years of teaching experience in public speaking courses and their involvement in online teaching during the pandemic period.

The research also included secondary participants consisting of students enrolled in online public speaking courses. These students were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different academic years and proficiency levels. The final sample included forty students from two different class sections, providing a comprehensive perspective on the implementation and effectiveness of various teaching strategies.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process employed multiple instruments to ensure comprehensive coverage and data triangulation. Primary data collection methods included classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted using a structured observation checklist adapted from Fortune (2000), focusing on teaching strategies, student engagement, and technological implementation. The researchers observed six online class sessions for each lecturer, totaling twelve observations over one semester. The observation protocol included documentation of teaching methods, student responses, and technical aspects of online delivery.

In-depth interviews were conducted with participating lecturers using semi-structured interview guides. Each lecturer participated in three interview sessions: initial, mid-semester, and end-of-semester. The interviews, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes each, were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview questions focused on teaching strategies, implementation challenges, and adaptations made for online delivery. Document analysis included examination of course syllabi, lesson plans, assessment rubrics, and student assignments.

Data analysis followed a systematic approach incorporating both inductive and deductive methods. The analysis process included initial coding of observation notes and interview transcripts using open coding techniques, development of thematic categories based on emerging patterns, and cross-verification of findings. To ensure research validity, the study employed triangulation through multiple data sources, including classroom observations, lecturer interviews, and document analysis. This triangulation process helped verify the consistency and accuracy of findings across different data collection methods and sources.

FINDINGS

Strategies Used in Implementing Online Learning by the Lecturer

Based on twelve classroom observations using Fortune's (2000) checklist, the analysis revealed that lecturers employed specific teaching strategies across three key observation periods. The research documented the implementation patterns of ten different strategies: role play, drilling, group discussion, picture describing, storytelling, question and answer, brainstorming, conversation and chat, presentations and talks, and writing tasks. The observation data showed that lecturers selectively applied these strategies, with some consistently used while others were not implemented during the observed sessions. Through systematic observation and data collection, five primary strategies emerged as the most frequently and effectively utilized in the online public speaking classroom.

Table 1: Implementation of Teaching Strategies Across Three Observation Periods

Strategy	First Meeting	Second Meeting	Third Meeting
Brainstorming	Applied	Applied	Applied
Group Discussion	Applied	Applied	Applied
Picture Description	Applied	Not Applied	Applied
Writing Tasks	Applied	Applied	Applied
Presentations/Talks	Not Applied	Applied	Applied

The implementation of brainstorming emerged as a foundational strategy in the early stages of the course. One lecturer described the approach:

"Brainstorming helped students recall previous material and generate new ideas for their speeches. It created an interactive foundation for more complex speaking tasks."

This comment reflects the intentional use of brainstorming as an initial engagement strategy, particularly effective in building student confidence and participation in the online environment.

Group discussions represented another significant teaching strategy, particularly evident in the second observation period. Student participation in these discussions occurred primarily through WhatsApp groups and Zoom breakout rooms. Documentation showed that prior to COVID-19, these discussions took place in physical classrooms, with students presenting outlines for immediate feedback. The transition to online platforms required substantial adaptation of this feedback process, with lecturers developing new methods for facilitating productive group interactions in virtual spaces. Assessment data indicated that despite the platform change, group discussions remained effective for developing speaking skills and building student confidence.

Writing tasks formed a crucial component of the speaking course structure, particularly in developing speech content and organization. The observation data showed that students progressed through a structured writing process that included title consultation, outline development, and multiple revision stages. During their speech development, students received continuous feedback from lecturers, focusing on both content organization and delivery aspects. Documentation revealed a systematic approach to speech construction, with clear requirements for opening statements, body content, and conclusions. Assessment records indicated that this structured approach to writing contributed significantly to improved speaking performance.

A lecturer noted the importance of the writing process:

"The writing component helps students organize their thoughts before speaking. Online delivery made written preparation even more crucial for successful presentations."

This observation highlights the enhanced role of writing tasks in the online format, serving as a foundation for effective speech delivery.

Picture description activities emerged as an effective strategy for engaging beginning-level English speakers. The observation data showed that this strategy was particularly effective in developing vocabulary and critical thinking skills. Students demonstrated increased engagement when visual elements were incorporated into speaking activities, with observation notes indicating higher participation rates during picture-based exercises. Assessment records showed that students who participated in picture description activities often demonstrated improved vocabulary usage in their subsequent speeches.

The final primary strategy involved presentations and talks, which represented the culmination of the course's speaking activities. Observation data recorded that students were required to demonstrate multiple competencies during these presentations, including proper pronunciation, contextual awareness, and audience engagement. The presentation structure

followed a clear format: welcoming the audience, introducing the speech topic, delivering main content, and managing audience questions. Documentation showed that this structured approach helped students maintain consistency in their presentations despite the challenges of online delivery.

Challenges in Strategy Implementation

Based on the observation data and lecturer interviews, implementation challenges manifested across different dimensions of online public speaking instruction. The research documented that both lecturers faced consistent technical hurdles when implementing the identified teaching strategies. During twelve observed sessions, technical difficulties such as poor internet connectivity, audio problems, and platform instability affected the smooth delivery of lessons, particularly during student presentations and interactive activities. The analysis of observation sheets showed that these technical issues impacted both student participation and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Students frequently experienced delays in joining sessions, with attendance records indicating that some students would join at the beginning, others midway through, and some only near the end of class sessions.

Table 2: Frequency of Implementation Challenges Across Three Observation Periods

Challenge Type	First Meeting	Second Meeting	Third Meeting
Technical Issues	12 instances	8 instances	5 instances
Student Focus	High difficulty	Moderate	Improved
Late Attendance	8 students	5 students	3 students
Participation Gaps	Significant	Moderate	Minor

A lecturer shared their experience with technical challenges:

"Managing class timing became extremely difficult with constant technical interruptions. Some students would lose connection during crucial presentation moments, forcing us to reschedule or adapt quickly."

This observation highlights the significant impact of technical issues on class management and the need for flexible adaptation strategies.

Beyond technical challenges, student engagement emerged as a critical concern in strategy implementation. The observation data revealed varying levels of student focus and participation across different activities. Documentation showed that students struggled particularly with maintaining attention during longer online sessions, leading lecturers to modify their teaching approaches. Assessment records indicated that engagement levels fluctuated based on the type of

activity and time of day, with morning sessions generally showing higher participation rates than afternoon sessions. The analysis also revealed that students' critical thinking abilities were challenged in the online environment, requiring additional support and motivation from lecturers.

A student reflected on engagement challenges:

"It was harder to stay focused during online classes compared to face-to-face sessions. Interactive activities helped, but technical issues often broke our concentration."

This feedback underscores the interconnected nature of technical and engagement challenges in the online learning environment.

Student performance analysis revealed varying levels of adaptation to online public speaking requirements. The research documented that students who actively participated in all five primary teaching strategies showed markedly improved speaking skills compared to those who participated sporadically. Assessment data indicated that while some students thrived in the online environment, others struggled to adapt their speaking skills to virtual platforms. Documentation of student progress showed that the effectiveness of teaching strategies varied based on students' technical proficiency and comfort with online presentation formats. The observation data also revealed that students who received consistent feedback and participated in practice sessions demonstrated greater improvement in their speaking abilities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the implementation of teaching strategies in online public speaking courses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The observation data demonstrated that lecturers primarily employed five key strategies: brainstorming, group discussions, writing tasks, picture descriptions, and presentations/talks, with varying degrees of success and implementation challenges. This selective application of strategies aligns with Brown's (2010) and Thornbury's (2015) frameworks for effective speaking instruction, though the online environment necessitated substantial modifications to traditional approaches. The adaptation of these strategies for virtual delivery required significant flexibility and innovation from both lecturers and students, particularly in managing technical constraints while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness. The research showed that successful implementation depended heavily on the lecturers' ability to balance synchronous and asynchronous activities, supporting Duran-Hernandez et al. (2017) findings regarding the benefits of mixed-method approaches in online learning. Moreover, the strategic selection and adaptation of these teaching methods demonstrated an understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities presented by online platforms,

reflecting Adams and Pierce's (2006) emphasis on the importance of appropriate strategy identification for effective learning outcomes.

The technical challenges documented in this study highlight the complex interplay between technological infrastructure and pedagogical effectiveness in online public speaking instruction. The observation data revealed that technical issues, particularly internet connectivity problems and platform instability, significantly impacted the implementation of teaching strategies, supporting Gultom's (2020) characterization of online public speaking challenges. These technical constraints often necessitated real-time adjustments to planned activities and assessment methods, requiring lecturers to develop contingency plans and alternative delivery approaches. The findings indicate that successful strategy implementation relied not only on pedagogical expertise but also on technical proficiency and adaptability, confirming Mehl's (2017) assertions about the unique challenges of online public speaking instruction. The research also demonstrated that technical difficulties disproportionately affected certain types of activities, particularly those requiring real-time interaction and immediate feedback, necessitating careful consideration of activity timing and format in lesson planning. Furthermore, the study revealed that students' technical proficiency significantly influenced their participation and performance, suggesting the need for comprehensive technical support and training in online public speaking courses.

Student engagement patterns and learning outcomes revealed both challenges and opportunities in the online public speaking environment. The research found that while some students struggled with the transition to virtual learning, others thrived in the more structured, technology-mediated environment. This variation in student adaptation aligns with Gomez-Rey et al. (2016) observations about student awareness of online learning benefits. The implementation of multiple teaching strategies provided diverse opportunities for student engagement, supporting Hadfield's (2013) emphasis on the importance of varied approaches in speaking instruction. The study's findings indicate that successful engagement often correlated with the lecturer's ability to create interactive learning experiences despite the physical separation imposed by online platforms. Additionally, the research demonstrated that students who actively participated in all five primary teaching strategies showed markedly improved speaking skills, suggesting the complementary nature of these approaches in developing comprehensive speaking abilities.

Assessment and feedback mechanisms emerged as critical components in the successful implementation of online public speaking strategies. The study's findings indicate that traditional assessment methods required significant modification to accommodate the unique characteristics of online delivery, supporting Bachman's (1990) emphasis on the importance of reliability and validity in speaking assessment. The research demonstrated that effective feedback in the online

environment required a combination of immediate verbal feedback during synchronous sessions and detailed written feedback for asynchronous activities. This dual approach to feedback helped address the limitations of virtual communication while maintaining the quality of instruction. The documentation of student progress revealed that consistent feedback, particularly during practice sessions, played a crucial role in developing speaking confidence and competence. Furthermore, the study showed that assessment criteria needed to encompass both traditional speaking skills and new competencies specific to online delivery, such as virtual presence and technical proficiency in presentation tools.

The research findings have significant implications for the future of public speaking instruction in online environments. The successful adaptation of traditional teaching strategies for online delivery suggests that effective public speaking instruction can occur in virtual settings when properly structured and supported. The study demonstrates the importance of developing comprehensive support systems that address both technical and pedagogical challenges in online speaking courses. The findings indicate that future online public speaking instruction should incorporate a balanced mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities, supported by clear assessment criteria and consistent feedback mechanisms. Additionally, the research suggests that professional development for lecturers should focus not only on pedagogical strategies but also on technical proficiency and online teaching methodologies. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge about effective online instruction methods and provide practical insights for educators adapting to digital learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the implementation of teaching strategies in online public speaking courses during the COVID-19 pandemic at Pattimura University's English Education Study Program. Through systematic observation and analysis, the research identified five primary teaching strategies effectively employed by lecturers: brainstorming, group discussions, writing tasks, picture descriptions, and presentations/talks. The findings revealed that successful implementation of these strategies required significant adaptation for online delivery, with lecturers developing innovative approaches to maintain pedagogical effectiveness while managing technical constraints. The observation data demonstrated that while technical challenges presented persistent obstacles, particularly in internet connectivity and platform stability, both lecturers and students gradually developed effective coping mechanisms and adaptive strategies. The research also highlighted the crucial role of structured feedback and assessment methods in

supporting student progress, with successful outcomes correlating strongly with consistent participation across all implemented teaching strategies.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for improving online public speaking instruction. First, institutions should prioritize the development of robust technical infrastructure and support systems to minimize disruptions to online learning activities. Second, professional development programs should focus on enhancing lecturers' capabilities in both technical and pedagogical aspects of online instruction. Third, course design should incorporate a balanced mixture of synchronous and asynchronous activities to accommodate varying student needs and technical constraints. Fourth, assessment methods should be adapted to consider both traditional speaking competencies and online-specific skills. Finally, future research should explore long-term implications of online public speaking instruction and investigate innovative approaches to enhancing student engagement and participation in virtual learning environments.

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