

CLASS INTERRUPTED: COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

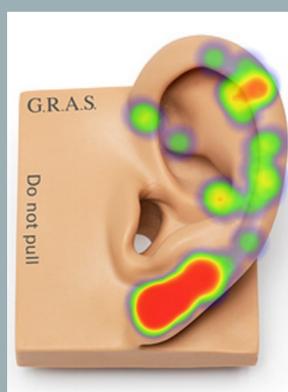
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SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING: SCIENCES & DISORDERS

Background

SPLH 568: Introduction to Audiologic Assessment and Rehabilitation is a junior-senior level course required for the Speech-Language-Hearing major. It serves as a survey of the field of audiology, including the prevention, detection, evaluation, and treatment of hearing loss and balance disorders in people of all ages. In recent semesters, the instructor has focused on the incorporation of case-based learning in the form of a hearing evaluation observation that is then used to collaboratively develop a treatment plan. The primary roadblock in facilitating these collaborative efforts has been the disconnection of the necessary course management software, electronic documents, paper documents, video services, and websites. The purpose of this course transformation was to create a seamless and intuitive learning system using TopHat to facilitate student participation, evaluation, and collaboration using common cases. A secondary outcome was the elimination of an expensive textbook in favor of other no-cost resources. This course was offered remotely for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic.

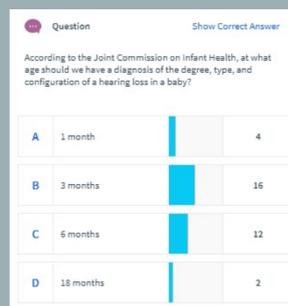
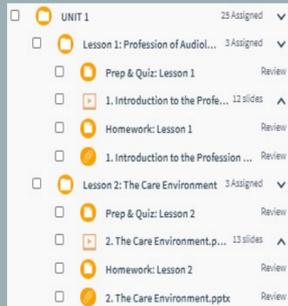
Issues to Address

1. Improve collaboration on group assignments
2. Seamless presentation of lectures, media, and polling
3. Increase participation in lecture discussions
4. Efficient and effective evaluation of student efforts
5. Reduction in course cost by eliminating unnecessary textbooks
6. Facilitation of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic



Implementation

1. The use of traditional lecture methods, such as PowerPoint-based lectures and in-class discussions, are dated and less engaging than desired. TopHat features such as live polling, participation questions, and integrated media were used to increase engagement in class, both in terms of interest and self-assessment.
2. TopHat question features were used to allow for student participation in multiple forms, including speaking, typing, interacting with an object, drawing, and voting. This inclusive practice supports many styles of student learning that are typically not well represented in traditional classrooms.
3. Organization of expected pre-class preparation (e.g., reading or watching resources, reviewing a lecture, completing an assignment) and post-class homework into lesson modules facilitated completion of preparation, streamlined grading, and scaffolded skills over the course of a lesson.
4. Use of no-cost resources for preparation and study eliminated the need for students to purchase a textbook, which resulted in lower overall cost of the course for students, and familiarizes students with open source resources that they are likely to encounter in their future career.



Student Learning

PARTICIPATION & INTERACTION

- Students participated in live polling and participation questions nearly 100% of the time. Students reported that this interactive element improved engagement during lecture, and the instant feedback was beneficial in their self-assessment.
- Students expressed appreciation for multiple modes of interaction, such as verbal or video responses, written responses, and objective questions.

REMOTE LEARNING

- Student participation in class activities was high despite the unexpected remote nature of the course.
- Students preferred significantly more written communication in the remote format, such as reminders about due dates and explanations of concepts. TopHat does not allow for mass communication, and Blackboard had to be used for class emails.
- Elimination of the textbook was favored financially by the students; however, high quality, no-cost resources were often difficult to find. Many students who purchased the textbook independently reported that it was an excellent resource for working through difficult content.
- Regular check-ins at the beginning of class to assess student well-being allowed for student expression of stress and informed instructors of need for support.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

- TopHat settings were not conducive to clear and easily accessible feedback on assignments, and the gradebook was inaccurate. Students and instructors were often frustrated and confused.

Reflections

TIME AND EFFORT – The development of a new course structure, compilation of non-textbook resources, and learning to use new course software was more time-consuming than anticipated. In the future, I will allot much more time for preparation, both prior to and during the semester.

COURSE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE – Despite initial excitement for TopHat, the learning platform did not meet expectations, particularly in terms of evaluation, grading, and communication. This led to student and instructor frustration, miscommunication, and significant time and effort directed at managing mishaps. Interactive lectures with streamlined media and polling, however, were successful and engaging, and weekly reports from TopHat helped instructors understand what content was understood by the students.

COURSE STRUCTURE – Inclusion of preparation and homework assignments within lesson modules was not intuitive for students within TopHat. In the future, I will return to separate areas within the course for assignment types.

STUDENT RESILIENCE – Despite the challenges faced during this course and the pandemic as a whole, students were remarkably resilient and participatory.