BEST**PRACTICE**2023

Julian Frattini
Embracing the Silence

Moving established, traditional courses to digital classrooms has been a particular challenge of the CoViD protocol. But not only the pandemic-induced necessity motivates the shift: flexibility and accessibility have become vital requirements for modern courses.

Challenge

One major challenge in an online classroom is students' engagement. Despite university guidelines, teachers have experienced students' aversion against turning on their camera during a lecture and against speaking up at all. This results in a very unidirectional interaction in which teachers receive little direct feedback about students perception of the course, particularly of their struggles.

Strategy

Instead of tediously encouraging students to turn on their cameras, we chose to embrace the silence and accommodate the new way of participating in online courses. For this, we redesigned our lecture slides with a three-step pattern:

1. **Introduction:** explaining the fundamentals of a new concept
2. **Examples**: visualizing the concept in context
3. **Quiz:** inviting to an ungraded, anonymous quiz about the concept

The result of these quizzes provides students with feedback about how well they have understood the current concepts and teachers with an overview of how well the class currently follows. Both the minimal effort which answering the quiz required and the anonymity of students answers drastically improved students engagement in the course.

Limitation

This strategy still has several limitations teachers need to be aware of before implementing it:

- Questions need to be single- or multiple-choice to allow instant, automatic feedback.
- Questions only assess the understanding of students, not higher-level thinking skills.
- Offering this kind of interaction is a commitment to a mostly silent course.

Accepting and communicating these limitations allows to employ this simple yet transformative technique to re-engage students in a way that is tailored to modern online lectures.

/ **The presentation is given in English**

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