

## **Carpe Diem**

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31 May 2020

The Covid 19 pandemic has wrought many demands of us not the least among them the need to relook at the way we work.

That came sharply into focus the day the government announced the Movement Control Order (MCO), the principal weapon, it hopes, will finally neutralize spread of the deadly coronavirus.

The question for us at The Language House: How to continue operating in a new world discouraging close proximity inevitable in a traditional brick-and-mortar classroom?

The answer undoubtedly called for a quick switch to online instruction. Remote learning, as it sometimes is referred to, isn't an entirely new concept. But to many, it was an option resorted to only because physical distances or other challenges work against classroom instruction.

Fortunately, help was at hand. Quick phone calls and it was agreed that Adrian and Felicia, the more IT savvy among our teaching staff, would make the immediate switch to instructing our international students online.

We loaned laptops to students to work with within the confines of their homes. In the first weeks of the MCO, Adrian and Felicia explored Skype, Google hangout and Google classrooms. When bandwidth became an issue, we switched to WhatsApp.

We checked technology that could be used for virtual classroom sessions. Our team took to Zoom and quickly mastered its intricacies.

We learned from Paun Cher Nee from the local office of Cambridge University Press that CUP was working to support teachers and students cope with their new work environment. CUP's [World of Better Learning Blog](#) provided useful pointers to teaching online.

Microsoft and its education partner Fedelis Sdn Bhd conducted online learning courses and held an e-forum for educators and managers. Their events attended by more than 100 participants were assuring. We were certainly not alone in looking for networking and learning opportunities.

Ten weeks into the MCO, we can safely say that we are well placed to face that new reality or what government officials call the "new normal."

There certainly are advantages to online learning. Language teachers can measure up to the new normal by learning the technological skills to operate virtual classroom platforms and adopt best practices teaching online.

Like many educational institutions, we have been handed the opportunity to revisit our traditional approach to teaching. Should our teaching model be Blended learning (part face-to-face and part online), or totally Online? How do we integrate the best parts of online learning into the curriculum? How do we work out the asynchronous (location independent learning) and the synchronous (live online) parts in online learning?

At the time of writing, we still do not know when schools will reopen with adequate distancing and hygiene measures in place. What is clear from the experiences of teachers and students over the last few months is that online learning is here to stay. The only question is how much of this learning will be online.

As some might say, where there's a crisis there is also opportunity.

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