Panini: NSU Studies in Language and Literature Vol 9: 53-76

Panopticism as a Solution to Student Inattentiveness in Online Classes

Afruza Khanom

Abstract

This study proposes the use of Panopticism to address inattentiveness, one of the major problems faced by teachers while taking classes in the sudden transition to the virtual classroom during the Covid-19 pandemic. This small-scale empirical study identifies a few of the reasons for demotivated and inattentive students in online classes and analyzes the possibility of Panopticism as a means of disciplining students from a distance. A survey was conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of questions that provided both quantitative and qualitative data. This was coupled with the researcher's own experience when discussing the data. The participants were a unique group of graduate students of a public university in Bangladesh, who had experienced the midway transition of a taught Masters course from being an offline one to an online one due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data analysis revealed the students' perspectives on their attentiveness in offline classes and the effect of visibility on their engagement in the online class. Findings suggest the possibility for using the Panoptic Effect as propounded by Foucault to increase student attentiveness in online classes.

Keywords: Foucault, Covid-19, attentiveness, qualitative, online class, internalization

Introduction

The Covid-19 situation has affected the globe on such a large scale that the world of education was forced into a virtual environment for which it was not at all prepared. An unprecedented challenge for academic institutions arose to rapidly adapt classroom teaching to the online learning environment (Bao, 2020). Educators and students alike now faced the disorienting effect created by an environment that lacked the control of the physical classroom. Teacher presence within the virtual classroom could not ensure attentiveness and class participation (Besser, Flett & Zeigler-Hill, 2020). The teacher who could previously navigate classroom instruction based on the student's immediate reactions and facial or bodily expressions was suddenly at a loss.

No matter what video conferencing platform was used for online education, the inattentiveness of students was clearly noticeable. The responses were limited to a numbered few, with most students switching off their video, citing troublesome connectivity and internet speeds. The controlled and familiar classroom environment became similar to rough, unknown terrain. To cope, the development of various skill sets have been emphasized to make the classroom a dialogic and interactive experience (Daspit & D' Souza, 2012). In reality, no step towards interactivity, especially in online classes, has the possibility of being properly enforced without the active participation of the students. So, it becomes necessary to concentrate on increasing students' willingness to respond and specifically be attentive in class. Kitto (2003) discusses how "technologically-mediated objectification of the student enables lecturers to act upon the actions of the student at-a-distance, and thus carries the effects of disciplinary power to them in new

ways" (p.11). In a similar strain, this paper focuses on Michel Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon as a positive mechanism to induce attentiveness during online class sessions, thereby encouraging self-discipline as a necessary skill for learning.

Theoretical Background: The Panopticon Effect

Initially contributing to the idea of disciplining prisoners, the concept of the Panopticon is a process applicable to any group of people that need to acquiesce to a specific type of behavior. Based on Michel Foucault's discussion of Panopticon in his book Discipline and Punish, my analysis of that particular section of his text proposes the use of the concept of Panopticism as a solution to student inattentiveness in online classes. The classroom should ensure not only presence, but also ensure positive engagement in all class activities. Now that vigilance teams have become redundant in the empty physical spaces of previously bustling schools and classrooms, disciplining from a distance has become a necessity that can be realized through the concept of the Panopticon. Jeremy Bentham devised the Panopticon, a design for the ideal prison in the mid-nineteenth century. Later the concept was popularized by Foucault in his book Discipline and Punish, which discussed how the Panopticon exerted its power through the nurturing of uncertainty that in turn modified behavior. As such, the principles underlying the design and intended effect of the Panopticon were found to easily be applied to various social institutions - in schools, factories, and other physical workplaces. Therefore, one possible solution for inattentiveness can be achieved by devising strategies based on an understanding of how the Panopticon works. Foucault (1995) describes Bentham's Panopticon as follows:

> "at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, apatient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible.… Visibility is a trap (Foucault, p. 200)

In the Panoptic scheme, the supervisor can constantly see the individual units but the inside of the tower cannot be seen; thus, the supervisor himself remains unseen. As a result, the uncertainty of presence makes the presence all the more pervasive and impacts the behavior of those being watched. The power is exerted through a psychological mechanism, namely internalization that is brought into effect by the uncertainty of thepresence of the unseen. Thus, the disciplining works from a distance without one having to be physically present. The forceful action usually related to the act of disciplining is removed yet the effect is much more profound. In the process, panopticism becomes more powerful than any corporeal punishment without resorting to extreme measures. In this passage, Foucault suggests this concept can be used and adapted to work not only in punishment but also in areas as diverse as psychology, medicine, production, and education. Foucault also observes that given this possible effectiveness, "The panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function" (p. 207).

The major effect of the Panopticon is to ensure the "automatic functioning of power" (p. 201). It dissociates "the see/being seen dyad" (p. 201) by a system where power is "visible and unverifiable" (p. 201). As Foucault explains, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (pp. 202-203). What this means is that the system works most effectively when the subject internalizes a consciousness of constant surveillance. Internalization makes a subject modify his/her actions according to a perception of ontological reality. The perception of one's position in space and time creates boundaries that cannot be broken. As a result, the subject subjugates one's self to circumstances that are beyond his/her control. Ironically, this subjugation is empowering in the sense that the subject is now fully aware of his/her own actions and considers the consequences of disruptive behavior.

Background of the Study

It is, indeed, a well-known fact that an effective classroom environment induces better retention, participation and response from students. As Rosegard and Wilson (2013) mention in their discussion on their study on students' attentiveness: arousal is often identified as the precursor to attention and when attention is inadequate or inappropriate, learning is negatively affected (in Posner & Peterson, 1990; Easterbrook, 1959; Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske, & Smilek, 2012). An enjoyable experience within the classroom imbued with a sense of community and satisfying self-actualization goals removes the inhibition students usually feel when called to participate in a topic discussion. Unfortunately, neither teacher nor students were prepared for the large-scale replacement of the

traditional classroom to the virtual ones necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to the Covid-19 situation, schools, colleges, and universities have had to emerge from the closed disciplinary enclosures they had become and move into the profoundly open online world. The distance the students experience in such a context, gives them a sense of freedom from the constraints of the physical classroom. But, this sudden surge of freedom has left most students without a positive direction towards completing their studies in a disciplined way. Without specific routines fixed by schedules that demanded physical presence and alertness, most students could not get themselves to self-regulate their activities. Furthermore, this shift to the online learning environment instilled a sense of distance between the instructor, themselves and their usual learning atmosphere.

The devastating effects on education systems all over the world brought on by lockdowns and social distancing called for as measures to protect populations against the pandemic, were partially overcome by technology that allowed distance learning. But the infrastructure for smooth functioning was rare, especially in countries where connectivity is disrupted, data plans are costly and necessary devices are lacking. Technology such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Discord, etc. came with a solution but could not fully offer a physical classroom environment. Educational systems all over the world were forced into continuous pedagogical experimentation. All aspects of teaching and learning were questioned as the whole education system was required to adopt and adapt online options for classes and exams at all levels. The quality of education was bound to suffer, mostly because learning had suddenly shifted wholly to the student's willingness to self-regulate behavior and organize study planning in the peer-deprived confines of their homes. The collective learning experience drastically changed. The availability of rich content is not enough. The pandemic situation at hand has taught

us how important classroom instruction is for motivation and learning. This realization brings us to a question that looms large - the question of how to increase student attentiveness in online classes.

Long before this jolted adoption of online classes in lieu of traditional ones, the effectiveness of online classes has been in discussion for quite some time, especially in the cases of distance learning programs. Such research has become all the more relevant ever since the beginning of the Covid-19 situation. For example, in a recent study using "Zoom Pro" as anonline teaching platform, Beckering and Ward (2020) emphasized, "Distraction from the class was also actively discouraged. Students were required to keep their desktop camera on and trained on their faces. The stated goal was increasing the feeling of belonging to the group (class), but it also allowed the instructor to call on students who appeared to be less than attentive"(89). They used attentiveness tracking inbuilt to the Zoom Pro system, which automatically recorded the necessary data. Zoom Pro allowed the generation of comprehensive meeting reports in Excel format with the headings - topic, join time, leave time, and the "attentiveness score." The percent of the time that the shared Zoom window is in focus without moving to another application is defined as attentiveness in this context (90).

In a follow-up paper, Beckkering and Ward (2020) observe that "attentiveness tracking is no longer available in the video-conferencing software used" that they used to measure attentiveness. In response to targeted disruption of online sessions, we are informed: "the software provider introduced several security and privacy measures, which unfortunately included the removal of the attentiveness score we used" (7). Their analysis "demonstrates the benefit of not only attending class but paying attention while there." With the absence of an attentiveness tracker, which could partially substitute for visual

cues of the physical classroom, the teacher had no mechanism to assess and control the learning atmosphere. Of course, there is debate about how accurate these attentiveness trackers actually were.

B.S. Stern (2004) in examining the similarities and differences for one course, when offered in traditional face-to-face and online formats, reached several conclusions of which the one most relevant to this discussion is that "for students, a familiarity with their own learning styles and the desire and motivation to shoulder responsibility for online learning will be major factors in their success."Therefore, "shouldering responsibility" is an important factor on the part of the learner. No matter how much time an instructor spends developing material for online classes, nothing will be truly effective unless the student properly participates. The easier the accessibility, the more the students seem to slacken their efforts to retrieve and retain the information reflecting - "I'll access it when I need it"-type of attitude that is detrimental to disciplined and effective self-agency that could translate into attentiveness in the online class.

Purpose of the study

My interest in the problem of inattentiveness in online classes was aroused by the noticeable change in student attentiveness and presence in the transition from a traditional face-to-face classroom to a virtual platform. The intense, exciting, and favorable learning atmosphere of the physical classroom was no more. The Covid-19 situation forced us to a level of distancing and isolation never before imagined. The smiling, eager, and sometimes disgruntled (whenever exam dates were announced) faces of students and their attentive eyes that were a teacher's precious possessions were lost, so too were students that pushed their abilities to achieve a certain level of excellence in the eyes of their teachers and peers. The sudden

shift to online classes led to noticeable inattentiveness in students. In this paper, the application of the Panopticon effect has been considered as a positive mechanism that would encourage self-agency as a solution to the inattentiveness of students in online classes.

Despite the discussion of the Panopticon effect in Sociology (Lyon, 1993), Social Psychology (Spears & Lea, 1994; Smith, 2006), Behavioral Science (Strub, 1989), Public Health (Couch et al. 2020) and Business Management (Kien & Siong, 2008) etc. it has rarely been considered as having to play a role in the field of education. Olssen (2005) points out, "Foucault has had a major impact on the social sciences and a smaller, yet growing, impact on educational studies." He continues citing Marshall (1989) who states, "educationalists had little to say on the subject," adding that in a matter of years after Marshall's statement, "a veritable explosion of works influenced by Foucault" was published. He lists a number of researchers and then, citing Biesta, 1998; Popkewitz et al., 1998; Olssen, 1999; Gale 2001; Peters, 2001; Popkewitz et al., 2001; Varela, 2001; Edwards, 2003; Marshall, 2003; Baker and Hayning,2004; Edwards, 2004; Edwards and Nicoll, 2004; and Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004, he sums up with the observation that comparatively recent works have sought to expand the horizon, applying Foucault's approach to both substantive and methodological issues (Olssen, 2005).

Methodology

Participants

The participants were a group of graduate students from the English Department of a Public University in Bangladesh. The selected sample is unique because these students began a particular Masters's course in English Literature in an offline environment but when about 70% of the course was complete, the Covid-19 situation forced a transition to the online class

environment. Mentionable is the fact that similar class content was provided in offline and online lectures, i.e., PPT presentations, Video clips, Textbook references.

Data collection

Empirical data (qualitative and quantitative) was gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire specially designed to identify the learner's perspectives on visibility in the virtual classroom and how it would affect their attentiveness. Also, reflective observation from the direct experience of the educator cum researcher, was taken into account when considering the collected qualitative data. For, as Michael (2012) observes, reflective thinking has a well-established tradition in both facilitating informed and logical decisions about educational matters and in assessing the consequences of those decisions. In the tradition of Dewey (1933) and many others such as Schon (1987), Moon (2000), Greener (2009), this study also shares reflective insights on the teaching and learning experience.

Ethical considerations

Since the Course Teacher conducted the research herself, to retain the neutrality of the respondents and get uninhibited responses, no aspect of observation was revealed while the course was ongoing. The questionnaire was given to the students after the completion of the course to attain their unbiased opinion and perspectives.

Data Analysis

Survey results were recorded in Google Forms and an Excel spreadsheet was used to collect students' responses. The responses to the survey are presented in graphs and tables with percentages of respondents for each option displayed. The descriptive statistics provide summaries of the respondents' answers to each of the questions.

Findings

A total of 42 students responded by filling out the questionnaire and were considered respondents of the study. In response to whether they preferred offline or online classes and which type of class held their attention longer, 100 % (n 42) of the respondents indicated that they selected offline classes as their answer. As for attentiveness, 90% (n 38) indicated they were not fully attentive in online classes as opposed to a meager 10% (n 4) who claimed to be fully attentive (Figure 1).

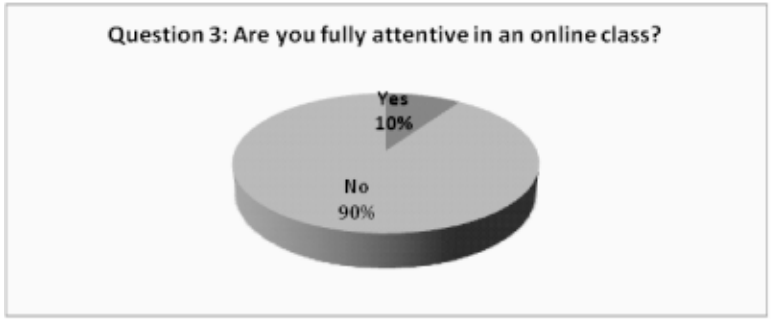

Figure 1

A follow up question (Question 3) asked for the selection of multiple reasons for such inattentiveness from a possible five individual options, and a sixth option (All the above) for selecting all the options given. In response, the 38 respondents who professed to being inattentive selected each reason to the following percentages: feel isolated from classmates: 57.89% (n 22); have the option to access class material on Google Classroom at a later time: 47.37% (n 18); teacher has less power over our presence in an online class: 36.84% (n 14); do not feel the need to impress teachers or peers through active participation: 31.58% (n 12); can easily disconnect and feel freer in time and space to do so: 52.63% (n 20) (Figure 2). [The number of respondents selecting the sixth option - 'All of the above' was integrated into

the total count for each option to ensure proper calculation of the percentage of respondents that selected that particular option].

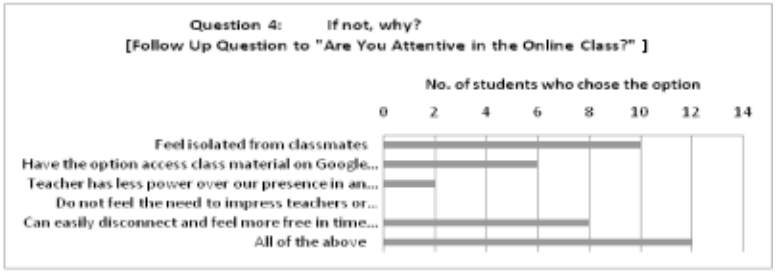

Figure 2

Analysis of the above results revealed how even though the teacher and course remained the same, the virtual classroom environment was unable to recreate the atmosphere of offline classes fully and was lacking the previously initiated strong student response and attentiveness due to the following reasons: students felt isolated, a propensity to delay positive classroom reactions due to availability of class material in an alternate online platform, lesser authority of the teacher, more power in their own hands and less need for self-actualization in online classrooms.

In answer to the Yes/ No question (ques.5) that followed: In an online class do you prefer to have your camera on? Of the respondents, 61.9% (n 26) preferred to have their videos on, while 38.1% (n 16) preferred the video off (Figure 3).

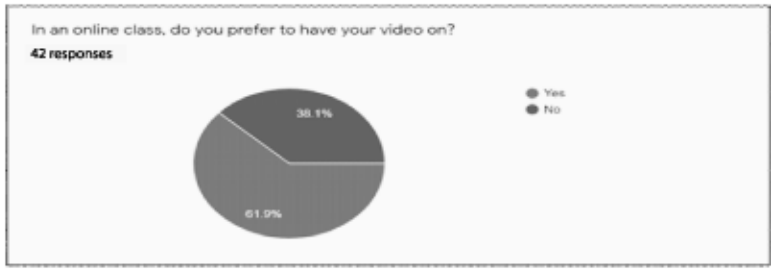

Figure 3

The follow-up question for those who were unwilling to have their video on mainly cited socio-economic reasons for their reluctance. Representative responses are given in Box 1.

Box 1

Reasons for unwillingness to have video on

1. "We are not used to it. We feel kind of uncomfortable and shy"
2. "Unexpected person may appear before my camera. Slow network connection"
3. "Sometimes my surrounding is not suitable"
4. "I can do another thing/work closing my video camera off"
5. "Unprepared moments, disorganized room, feel discomfort"
6. "Low internet speed,"
7. "Being with the family sometimes it is tough to maintain proper environment, arrange a separate room is not possible so it is difficult to keep the camera on being among others"
8. "Getting ready for online class is too bothersome"
9. "As I share my room with my friends, I feel insecure when video is on. They may move casually which may disturb others"
10. "Since we are supposed to do online classes sitting in an informal place most of the cases, it's not all-time in our favour to present us in front of teachers"

The next question presented four different situations of the camera being on or off and students were asked to select which situation would keep them more attentive (Figure 4). The response of 19% (n 8) indicated that they would be less attentive with their videos on while the teacher's video was off.

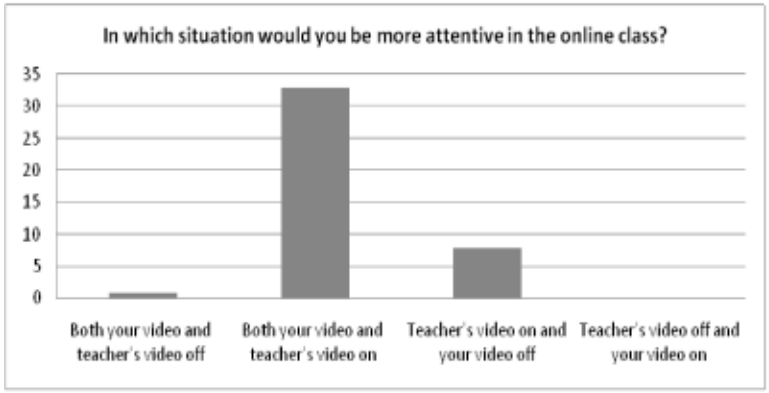

Figure 4

However, 79% (n 33) were willing to have their video on provided the teacher's video was on too. 2% (n 1) was under the notion that it would be better for them if the video for both teacher and student were off. Interestingly and relevant to this study, none of the respondents even considered the option of having their video on if the teacher's video was off (Figure 3). The psychological impact of the uncertainty of being seen without being able to see is tremendously apparent here. This is the specific cue that would suggest the Panopticon's effectiveness to modify student behavior in an online classroom.

An open-ended follow-up question for the response to question 7 asking why the particular respondent chose that particular option, revealed the effect of visibility on behavior and specifically on attentiveness. As mentioned before, of the four options, "both your video and your teacher's video on" and "teacher's video on and your video off" were most selected. A few of the responses for those two options and relevant to the research topicare given below with illustrative verbatim quotes chosen for typicality and clarity.

Box 2

Box 2 For -Both your video and your teacher's video on

1. "we can keep our attention if we feel the teacher is observing us"
2. "the teacher would know if the students are actually present or not"
3. "though it is difficult to keep the video on, it is important"
4. "students will be careful knowing the teacher is watching them"
5. "we can feel the pressure and be attentive in class"
6. "It'll help to hold the attention more and there'll also be the possibility for face to face interaction.
7. "As teacher can see students through video so students will try to give full attention in lecture."
8. "That's how students can feel the pressure and be attentive"

The representative quotes mentioned above (Box 2) clearly indicate that the students' main concern was their visibility to the teacher, which would force modifications in their behavior. The responses (Box 3) further revealed an interesting

array of reasons for wanting their cameras off. Answers varied from disorganized rooms, interrupting family members, personal shyness, unwillingness to get presentable for class, low internet speeds, etc. But since socio-economic data was not part of the questionnaire, those answers were not specifically brought into account in relation to the research.

Box 3

For -Teacher's video on and your video off

1. "I can do something else if the camera is off"
2. " Students can turn off their video while their teacher's are giving lectures. But The teachers always need to turn on their video"
3. "Students should turn off their cameras because it seriously hampers concentration"
4. "I selected teacher video on and my video off section cause I cannot hold my full concentration without seeing mentor's face"

The final question was an open-ended one that asked for any additional comments that the respondent would like to put forth. Most did not want to add anything further and most of the responses were not relevant to the topic in question. A few of the relevant responses are given below (Box 4).

Box 4

Additional Comments

1. "If my camera is on, I am uncertain who can see me"
2. "I think offline classes are far better way to engage students in studies but online classes provide the opportunity to attend class from any places and students get the privilege to listen the recorded version repeatedly"
3. "For online class, instructors should have well equipment and should have enough technical knowledge. Besides that, a teacher must have good command/ preparation in his/her subject matter as it is more important, especially for online class where students have much more scope to deviate him/her self"
4. "Online classes lessen friendly bonding between teachers and students. Students feel detached from learning better things"
5. "I think after finishing the class, the given class can be provided to the students so that theycan use it whenever they need.
6. "Teachers should provide class materials one or two days before the class"

The results show that the self-discipline needed in the case of such a scenario was absent in most students. A careful inspection of the comments made it clear that the students' perception of the online class is that in which the teacher's role is more important than their own. This unawareness of the need for discipline on their part is why Panopticism has been offered as a solution to the problem of inattentiveness.

Discussion

The physical classroom was a space where a skilled teacher could hold on to a student's attention by changing the discussion based on visual cues used to assess the attentiveness of a class. These visual cues i.e. yawning, shuffling, drowsiness, facial expressions and bodily gestures were read as indicators of attentiveness. A skilled teacher could ensure the effectiveness of delivery and reception of the knowledge dispersed by making the class as interactive or lecture-based as necessary for that particular group of students according to their needs at that particular moment. The virtual environment disrupted this.

As noticed in the study, the fluidity of the time and space of the online virtual environment was considered a space of excessive freedom on the part of the student. Therefore, in the case of less motivated students, there was a lack of timely attendance in class, a lack of positive competitiveness to do better, self-actualization needs were lower, connectivity issues were raised as excuses - all which could previously easily be addressed and overcome in the physical classroom. Interestingly, the students' varied responses when defending their choice of answers revealed that most were unaware of their mode of action necessary for attentiveness.

The virtual classroom posed a problem for many students. The close-up images of faces in applications such as "Zoom" and "Google Classroom" suddenly put the spotlight on anyone who attempted to respond in class. This feature was

disconcerting for many. So, citing technical difficulties such as poor connectivity, or unpresentable home spaces, they would shut off their cameras resulting in a sort of blindness on the part of the teacher who could now no longer assess the attentiveness of the class. Furthermore, many students misused this freedom in space and time to the extent that they professed to going to sleep while still in class by leaving the camera off once their attendance was verified. Some even shifted to other social media platforms. Once the camera was off, they would use multiple tabs or other devices to move from the ongoing class to some other platform that interested them more. Thus, revealing a tendency on the part of those students to avoid a deeper commitment to engagement in online classes.

The advantage of the flexibility of the technology at hand enhanced by offering recordings of the class and the shared screen content, instead of being a boon, became a curse as students stopped taking classnotes and became too relaxed in denial of their active role as a student. This would not have been possible in a traditional classroom. For the effectiveness of the online class, it is essential that the student be self-motivated to properly use all the resources available properly and remain attentive in class. Seemingly, too much flexibility, leads to a lack of a disciplined approach towards learning.

Without having the physical structure of the Panopticon, the mechanisms used in a virtual classroom, if used strategically, can have the same if not a more strong effect on students who in turn self-discipline themselves into being attentive without any direct impulse from the teacher. For example, whilst sharing a screen or simply lecturing, if the teacher keeps his/her own camera off yet makes it imperative for all students to keep their cameras on, the Panopticon Effect will become operative. Despite not being able to see the teacher, the teacher's possible presence becomes overwhelmingly real for the student. The students' feeling of being closely watched and the uncertainty of

whether they are indeed being watched keeps them alert. None of the students in the study were willing to keep their video on if the teacher's video was off. This supports Foucault's idea of the pressure of self-regulation by the power exerted by the uncertain and disconcerting atmosphere of being watched but not being able to verify the observer's presence. To some extent, this would relieve the sense of excessive freedom felt in time and space during an online class.

But since students are habituated to the visibility of teacher presence, the effectiveness of the Panopticon Effect must be reinforced by other instructional approaches. There have to be signs to reinforce the uncertainty of being watched. For example, if students get complacent and even one student switches off his camera, the others will inevitably follow suit. As a countermeasure, the teacher must give notice of her presence from time to time by calling on students who seem distracted and asking them to respond. Another possible action is to randomly call out the attendance of 5/6 students at a time instead of sequentially and singularly at the beginning or end of a class. That would constantly keep the students alert. As the students take it upon themselves to remain alert and attentive, the teacher is relieved of the stress of having to deal with inattentive students who would otherwise require some sort of verbal disciplining. Random questioning of the topic discussed could also contribute to increasing the attentiveness of the class. Such steps reinforce the power of Panopticism by retaining the initial sense of uncertainty that the Panopticon's power is based upon.

One other possibility for increasing students' interest to remain attentive in class that must be considered, is the allotting of marks for being present and staying present till the end of class with the camera on for the whole time. Thus, enabling the Panopticon Effect to do what it can do without interruption. Consequently, the Panopticon appears as a positive discipline-mechanism that improves "the exercise of power by making it

lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come" (Foucault, p.209). However, failure to do this properly could disrupt the congenial learning atmosphere and possibly result in resistance.

This solution may be considered by many as intrusive technology, as the imperative to keep on cameras may be embarrassing for some who do not like to lose the private atmosphere of their homes. Nevertheless, of course, such a complaint can hardly hold ground for a generation who is growing up with social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Tiktok and constantly exposing their most private thoughts to an ever-widening audience. If students can self-regulate their behavior and consider the consequences of their actions, they will truly benefit by developing self-management skills such as time management, organizational skills, academic integrity, etc. These skills will enable them to flourish in an increasingly demanding world. Being able to adapt positively to any upcoming situation is a demand of the times.

Instead of expecting the teacher to put in all the extra effort to adapt classes to the online pedagogy that the Covid-19 situation has necessitated, it is time for the students to shoulder their part of the responsibility by realizing that no learning can be brought into effect without their intense willpower to learn. It is interesting to note that there never was in any given age before this time, so much easy access to educational material. Videos, presentations, lectures are all available yet, at the same time, there is simultaneously so much to distract students from their purpose, and unfortunately, they are being distracted. Therefore proper class management has become essential.

Limitations of the Study

This study used a single questionnaire administered to a single group of students. Further, qualitative and quantitative data gathered from a larger number of participants through face-

to-face interviews and a second questionnaire which would have also brought into account the socio-economic background and other associated factors and further reveal learners' perception of the online class environment which could be integrated to check the feasibility of the proposition. Unfortunately, time constraints and the overall COVID-19 situation complicated such an initiative.

Conclusion

The reality is that students are to be made aware of their responsibility as learners to participate and engage properly in the online classroom in order to make it effective. To raise this awareness, there has to be a system in place putting into use the Panopticon Effect for the online class setting. A platform that is devised with the principles of the Panopticon can give the teacher more control over the virtual teaching environment and instill a sense of community and accomplishment within the student. The last year has been demoralizing for many as the sudden entry into online classes has destabilized the teaching-learning experience on such a large scale. Even when we have learned to cope with the pandemic, its positive and negative effects will remain, especially on the education system. The online presence of teachers will increase as a necessary development in an age ruled by technology, so we must find ways to develop strategies in the face of the challenge of making our classes more effective. We must equip our students with skills, from time management to self-motivated learning, which will determine positive action that will enable them to tackle the problems of their own futures. Panopticism has the possibility to be used as a powerful and positive mechanism to monitor and modify students' behavior in the virtual classroom and encourage self-regulatory behavior.

Works Cited

Bao, W. (2020). COVID-19 and online teaching in higher education: a case study of Peking University. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 2*(2), 113-5.

Bekkering, E., & Ward, T. (2020). Class Participation and Student Performance: A Tale of Two Courses. *Information Systems Education Journal,18*(6),86-98.

Bekkering, E., & Ward, T. (2020). Class Participation and Student Performance: A Follow-up Study. Proceedings of the EDSIG Conference, ISSN: 2473-4901, Virtual Conference, 6 (5375).

Besser, Avi, Flett, Gordon L., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (Oct 19, 2020). Adaptability to a sudden transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: Understanding the challenges for students. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000198 ISSN

Couch, D. L., Robinson, P., & Komesaroff, P. A. (2020).COVID-19-Extending Surveillance and the Panopticon. Journal of bioethical inquiry, 17(4), 809-814. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-020-10036-5

Daspit, J. J., & D'Souza, D. E. (2012). Using the Community of Inquiry framework to introduce wiki environments in blended-learning pedagogies: Evidence from a business capstone course. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 11* (4), 666-683. doi:10.5465/amle.2010.0154

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline & Punish* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1920).

Kien, S. S., & Siong, N. B. (2008). Business process reengineering, empowerment and work monitoring: An empirical analysis through the Panopticon. *Business Process Management Journal, 14*(5), 609-628. https://doi.org/10.1108/ 14637150810903020

Kitto, S. (2003). Translating an Electronic Panopticon: Educational Technology and the Re-articulation of lecturer-student relations in online learning. *Information, Communication & Society, 6*(1), 1-23.

Lyon, D. (1993). An Electronic Panopticon? A Sociological Critique of Surveillance Theory. *The Sociological Review, 41*(4), 653-678. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1993.tb00896.x

Michael, K. (2012). Virtual Classroom: reflections of online learning. *Campus-Wide Information Systems, 29*(3), 156-165. DOI: 10.1108/10650741211243175

Olssen, M. (2005). Foucault, Educational Research and Autonomy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 37*(3), 365-386.

Platt, C. A., Raile, A.N.W., & Yu,N. (2014). Virtually the Same?: Student Perceptions of the Equivalence of Online Classes to Face-to-Face Classes. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching,10*(3).

Rosegard, E., & Wilson, J. (2013). Capturing Students' Attention: An Empirical Study. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,13*(5), 1-20.

Spears, R., & Lea, M. (1994). Panacea or Panopticon?: The Hidden Power. *Computer-Mediated Communication, Communication Research, 21*(4), 427-459. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365094021004001

Stern, B.S. (2004). A Comparison of Online and Face-To-Face Instruction in an Undergraduate Foundations of American Education Course. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 4*(2), 196-213.

Strub, H. (1989). The theory of Panoptical control: Bentham's Panopticon and Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 25*(1), 40-59.https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(198901)25:1<40::AID-JHBS2300250104>3.0.CO;2-W

Appendix: Questionnaire on 'Visibility and Attentiveness in Online Classes'

Demographic Data
Name: Gender: Institution: Program: Email:
Please answer the following questions. **[The answers should reflect your own unbiased opinion and experience.]**
1. Which class type do you prefer? a. Offline b. Online
2. Which class type holds your attention longer? a. Offline b. Online
3. Are you fully attentive in online classes? a. Yes b. No
4. If not, why? Tick the answers below that apply: a. Feel isolated from classmates b. Have the option to access class material on Google Classroom at a later time c. Teacher has less power over our presence in an online classroom d. Do not feel the need to impress teacher or classmates through active participation e. Can easily disconnect and feel more freedom in time and space to do so f. All of the above.
5. In an online class, do you prefer to have your video on? a. Yes b. No
6. If you answered "no" to the previous question, cite your reason.
7. Before you select an answer for the following question, carefully think of being in each different situation in an online class and answer to the best of your capacity. In which situation would you be more attentive? a. Both your video and your teacher's video off b. Both your video and your teacher's video on c. The teacher's video on and your video off d. The teacher's video off and your video on
8. Which answer did you select for the previous question? Cite the reason of your choice.
9. Do you want to add any additional comments? If so, please do below.

Dr. Afruza Khanom is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet.