Tips and Activities for Creating a Communicative EFL Classroom Using Online Meeting Software

Today, teachers around the world are striving to make virtual English language learning engaging and motivating.

In this webinar, we will:

• examine several communicative EFL activities for instructional sessions conducted via video-based online meeting software
• explore practical ideas for fostering students’ confidence in their oral communication skills as they learn and practice online
• discuss how to develop contingency plans to prepare for times when technology may fail or malfunction
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Kelly has taught for fifteen years in places such as Los Angeles, Japan, and Spain. She was an English Language Fellow in Burma. Kelly then served as the first-ever Fellow in Djibouti, where she mentored teachers at a teacher training college. Kelly is currently a Virtual English Language Specialist, conducting online training for teachers in Senegal. She holds master’s degrees in Education and Public Policy.
Tips and Activities for Creating a Communicative EFL Classroom Using Online Meeting Software
Today’s Schedule

• Introduction to OMS and Communicative Classrooms
• Warm-Up
• Benefits/Challenges of Using OMS for CC
• Strategies for Creating a Successful Communicative Virtual Classroom
• Guided Practice: Communicative Activities
• Adaptations for Your Classroom
• Contingency Plans
• Final Reflections
Goals of Today’s Webinar

To learn *what* OMS are

To learn *why* using OMS and technology is useful in English teaching

To learn *how* to use OMS with communicative teaching
Introduction

Online Meeting Software and Communicative Classrooms
What Are Online Meeting Software?

OMS are tools used for conducting classes on the internet.
OMS can be installed on your smartphone, laptop, or computer.
OMS allows students to access lessons and learning materials ANYWHERE!
OMS allows students to study English while becoming proficient in useful technology.
Online Meeting Software Summary

OMS

- Can be installed: smartphone, laptop, computer
- Allows students to access lessons and learning materials wherever they are!
- Allows students to study English, while becoming proficient in technology.
SHARE

Have you used any OMS?
If so, which ones?
What is a Communicative EFL Classroom?

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that require communication. The teacher sets up situations that students encounter in real life, and students communicate about these topics.
What Might a Communicative Lesson Look Like?

Students practice giving directions to their neighborhood market by using prepositions and adjectives.

One student describes their favorite dessert, but they do not know the ingredients! With a partner, they discuss the flavors to determine the ingredients.
So, Communicative Classrooms Can Be Summed Up By...

Communicate!

Communicate!

Communicate!
In the chat box, please list a “real world activity” that you have used for a communicative activity.

Examples:

- Asking Questions
- Shopping
What would a **virtual Communicative Classroom** *look like?*
An example using Zoom.

1) Teacher posts a grammar lesson on Reported Speech on Zoom Whiteboard. Teacher reviews grammar lesson with students, virtually.

2) Following, in the Zoom Meeting Room, teacher instructs students to spend 2 minutes finding an article on a current event, from an English language online news site. Students have eight minutes to read article.

3) Next, teacher places students in Zoom subgroups of 3 people. In subgroup, each student uses four minutes to describe their article, using reported speech. Other students take notes.

4) Lastly, back in the Zoom Meeting Room, teacher chooses random students to describe one of the articles that they learned about in their subgroup.
Warm-up

In the chat box, please write one word that describes your feelings about creating a Communicative Virtual Classroom with OMS.

Confused

Intrigued

Hesitant

Perplexed

Curious
Challenges of Using OMS for Communicative Learning
Internet Connectivity

Some students may have a poor or inconsistent internet connection.
Digital Literacy

Some students may not be knowledgeable in how to use technology, apps, etc.
Some students may feel unmotivated or bored because they are not in class with peers but are online at home (alone).
Please share other challenges of using OMS for communicative learning.
Benefits of Using OMS for Communicative Learning
Accessible Anytime, Anywhere!

No more missing class! Students can attend class anytime, anywhere! Just turn on the phone or computer. 😊
Suits a Variety of Learning Styles!

Some students are visual learners, some learn through audio. Most prefer using technology, not paper and pencils. All are possible in virtual learning!
Modern Education for a Modern World

Most students will use technology in their future job, and most will do virtual work. We are preparing students to use technology and do virtual work.
What are other benefits of using OMS for communicative learning?
Best Strategies for Creating a Communicative Classroom in an OMS
Strategy 1

Allow for activities to be done asynchronously, so students can complete them anytime, even if they lose internet connection.

* This strategy solves the challenge of unpredictable internet connection.
Strategy 2

Make learning interactive - use pair-work, group work; students work with peers online.

* This strategy solves the challenge of students feeling isolated online.
Strategy 3

Use physical movement! Kinesthetic learners will benefit from this, and it helps students be active.

* This strategy helps solves the challenge of students feeling inactive/unmotivated.
Strategy 4

Require students to use camera and microphone in activities. This generates interest and excitement.

* This helps students build digital literacy skills; students feel excitement seeing peers.
SHARE

Tell us about your experience using these strategies or others in virtual communicative practice!
Activities

Communicative Activities Using OMS
Activity 1

Virtual Bring Me
Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Bring Me

- Nominate a student to choose a letter from the alphabet.

- The items that students will need to find starts with that letter.

Example: Find as many things that you can that start with the letter “E”.
Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Bring Me

- Students will have 1 minute to find the items.
- They will share their items by turning on their camera/audio. 
  *Example: I have a...*
- The student with the most items starting with that letter, wins.
SHARE

Which strategies were present in this activity?
● Students are encouraged to turn on camera/audio
● Interactive
● Uses physical movement
Activity 2

Virtual Gift Activity
Dialogue

A: Here this is for you, (say name). It’s a ______!

B: Thank you for the ________, (say name).
Guided communicative activity 2: Virtual Gift Activity

- Nominate two students and ask them to turn on camera/audio.
- Student A mimes giving an object to Student B.
- Student B mimes receiving the object and thanks Student A.
Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Gift Activity

Example:

Student A: Here this is for you (mimes an object). It’s a seashell!

Student B: Thank you for the seashell, (name of Student A).

Note: This activity can be used to review articles a/the.
Which strategies were present in this activity?
- Encourages students to turn on camera/audio
- Uses physical movement
- Interactive
Activity 3

Story Spine
# Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Story Spine

## The Story Spine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Story Spine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Structure</strong></th>
<th><strong>Function</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once upon a time...</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>The world of the story is introduced and the main character’s routine is established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But, one day...</td>
<td>The Event</td>
<td>The main character breaks the routine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of that...</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>There are dire consequences for having broken the routine. It is unclear if the main character will come out alright in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of that...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of that...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until finally...</td>
<td>The Climax</td>
<td>The main character embarks upon success or failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And, ever since then...</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>The main character succeeds or fails, and a new routine is established.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Story Spine

- Show the Story Spine table and explain that students will be telling a story, using past tenses.

- Student A says a sentence, starting with the Story Spine sentence starters: 
  
  *Once upon a time...*
Guided Communicative Activity: Virtual Story Spine

- Student A nominates Student B to say the next sentence with the next sentence starter: *Every day....*

- Students continue to nominate each other until the last sentence starter: *And ever, since then....*
Guided Communicative Activity:
Virtual Story Spine

Example:

**Student A:** *Once upon a time, there was a frog, and his name was Happy.*

**Student B:** *Every day, the frog visited his friend Sunshine, the fish.*
Which strategies were present in this activity?
- Encourages students to turn on camera/audio
- Interactive
- Can be done asynchronously
How could you adapt these activities to be best suited to your classes/teaching context?
Contingency Plans

Look at technology fails and SHARE how YOU would deal with it!
The Issue:

• In a group activity, one student does not understand how to use the OMS, so they are unmotivated and unengaged. All other group members do understand the OMS.

• What do you do?
Possible Contingency Plans

Peer Teaching

• Students who understand the concept or skill hold a “Peer Teaching” session to help their peers understand skills or concepts.

• Allow different students to be “Peer Teachers” each month, so all have a chance to show their ability in a skill they are good at.

Benefits

• Builds Leadership Skills
• Builds Confidence
• Increases Digital Literacy
• Lowers Student Anxiety
The Issue:

• During a class session over an OMS, one student’s little brother is jumping in front of the camera, singing, waving and making noise. It is disruptive to all.

• *What do you do?*
Possible Contingency Plans

Reinforce Rules

• Gently remind class that online class IS professional class. No disruptions or visitors are allowed, per usual.
• If behavior continues, tell student they must exit the session or else be disconnected. Any missed work is their responsibility.
• Later, gently counsel student on other places where they can go online for class: library, grandparent’s house, outside, etc.

Benefits

• Personal Responsibility
• Consideration for Others
The Issue:

• A student tells you they are very worried because they cannot afford a phone with data. They cannot access the internet for virtual work.

• What do you do?
Possible Contingency Plans

Peer Groups or Offline Work

- Group students in cohorts. In groups, students can contact one another for help and receive the lesson, instructions, schedule, etc., if they don’t have internet.

- Send lessons via offline methods such as text. Via text you can send documents, instructions, lessons, etc.

Benefits

- Collaborative Skills
- Creative Solution-Finding
- More Access to Education
Summary

• There are different ways of using OMS.

• Challenges are real, BUT...

• Using strategies can help you create a communicative EFL classroom.
References

References


References

   Extracted from: https://elearningindustry.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-online-learning

    Extracted from: https://elearningindustry.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-online-learning

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Reflection Questions

1. Did you learn anything new related to this topic of fostering communication in the online classroom? If so, please describe.

2. What tools or supplies will be helpful for you in your teaching context?

3. How can I best support my students in using OMS effectively?