Teaching Online: Bridging the Online Barrier

1. Before listening to the audio interview

In this section we focus on online teaching as delivering lessons to learners in online classes. This can mean teaching one-to-one or group classes varying in size.

Look at the terms and match them with the definitions.

CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication)	A situation in which CMC is used to supplement face-to-face instruction.
Synchronous e-learning	The use of networked computers to communicate.
Asynchronous e-learning	A type of online learning in which communication is delayed, such as when learners and tutors are posting on message boards.
Blended learning	Online classes in which teachers and students communicate in real time.

What do you think are the differences between teaching online and in a face-to-face classroom setting? Can you think of any similarities?

Differences	Similarities

2. During the audio interview

Now listen to the podcast and make notes under the following headings. Compare them with your partner.

Teacher Talking Time (01:44)

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Listening to each other (03:10)

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Use of the board and other tools (04:15)

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Technical problems (04:53)

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Other challenges (06:20)

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3. Necessary skills

a. What are in your opinion the necessary skills to be an effective online teacher?

b. Have a look at the requirements listed in the job ad below. Did you come up with similar answers? How are these skills different when teaching a face-to-face classroom?

Wanted: Online Teachers

Necessary skills:

- Self-management skills

- Self-motivated

- Patience

- Multi-tasking

- Basic tech skills:

    – Using multiple browsers

    – Cleaning cookies in cache

    – Knowing your Internet speed

    – DNS: knowing how to connect to a server and how to clean it

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4. Video: Teaching young learners online

Read the teacher testimonials on engaging young learners online.

Engaging younger learners can be particularly challenging, you know. Physically engaging activities such as games and jumping can't be done. But you can set up a competition between you and the learner. This really keeps them motivated. And in the end the learner wins of course!

You need to keep the child engaged during the whole lesson. The platform we are using has a camera in the corner. Your body language needs to be within the screen. Facial expressions and gestures become important. I like to compare it with acting on camera versus acting on stage. A film actor focuses on facial expressions while a stage actor may go for grand gestures to engage the audience. This continuous non-verbal communication is draining I can guarantee you!

Finishing the lesson is very important as if the child misses the cue they may be looking at a black screen not realizing the lesson has already finished. So I wave into the screen with an exaggerated expression and wait till the kid waves back.

You have to be positive and smile all the time. I give ample praise. My favorite one is the two thumbs up right into the camera!

I would say that there are fewer classroom management issues than in a face-to-face setting. The parents are often there with them. Students sometimes just leave and that is an issue. We may then need to communicate with the parents. Controlling how they behave is difficult. Sometimes I mute their microphone which is the online equivalent of going to stand in a corner.

Now watch 0:00 – 00:47. The teacher is very upbeat, encouraging and positive. How does she keep the conversation going?

Now watch 01:06 – 04:38. What else does the teacher do to maintain this positive atmosphere?

Now watch the rest of the video. The lesson is 20 minutes long. Is this the right length for this lesson? Why/ why not?' How can the teacher extend the learning from this lesson into the next lesson?

5. Food for thought

How do you think teaching online will evolve? Will the "bricks and mortar" classroom soon be a thing of the past?

6. Further learning

If you want to learn more about this topic, look at these resources:

Conrad, R.M., & Donaldson J.A. (2004). *Engaging the online learner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley.

Costa, D. (July 2018) 'Cisco Webex Meeting Center: a window for e-learning'. *Modern English Teacher*, Volume 27, pp. 67-69.

Hockley, N. (May 2015). 'Five things you always wanted to know about teaching online (but were afraid to ask)'. *English Teaching Professional*, Issue 98, p. 61.

Meldrum, N. & Clandfield, L. (2016). *One-to-one: Methodology - Advantages and disadvantages for students.* Available at: http://www.onestopenglish.com/business/teaching-approaches/teaching-one-to-one/methodology/one-to-one-methodology-advantages-and-disadvantages-for-students/144655.article. (Accessed December 2018).

Saumell, V. (April 2016). 'Principles for meaningful technology integration'. *Modern English Teacher*, Volume 25, pp. 15-17.