

## 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.

#### Key (terminology)

*CMC: The use of networked computers to communicate.*

*Synchronous e-learning: Online classes in which teachers and students communicate in real time.*

*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: A situation in which CMC is used to supplement face-to-face instruction.*

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
<p>Suggested answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learners and the teacher are not in the same room together (online classes)</li> <li>- The possibility of easily connecting teachers and students from all over the world</li> <li>- Online classes are more flexible to schedule and reschedule</li> <li>- The use of technology: Easier to share files and such in the online classroom. However, there are also more frequent</li> </ul>	<p>Suggested answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building rapport is essential at the start of the lesson</li> <li>- Frequent praise to encourage learners</li> <li>- Setting context at the start of the lesson</li> <li>- Error correction techniques (e.g. prompting to guide learners to self-correct) and elicitation techniques are similar</li> <li>- Important to remain calm if anything unexpected happens / Have a "Plan B"</li> </ul>

<p>technological problems in the online classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The teacher is less reliant on big movements and gestures when teaching online / Small gestures in the camera and tone of voice become more important</li> <li>- It is more difficult to ensure participation and to tell how your students are feeling in the online classroom</li> <li>- Learners are more willing to listen to each other in a face-to-face classroom</li> </ul>	<p>(i.e. an alternative activity if the planned activity needs to be changed)</p>
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## 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)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Both online and offline there is a tendency to fill the silence</li> <li>- Ask-pause-nominate</li> <li>- Quality teacher talking time (e.g. clear explanations) vs. unnecessary teacher talking time (e.g. lecturing at length)</li> </ul>
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### *Listening to each other (03:10)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Turn-taking different</i></li> <li>- <i>Learners may get frustrated when not speaking. Use the available technology as a possible solution:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Let others type their answer in the chat box</i></li> <li>○ <i>Let others answer the question while muting their microphone</i></li> <li>○ <i>Ask them to summarize what the other said</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### *Use of the board and other tools (04:15)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Use of pictures, IWB</i></li> <li>- <i>Distributing audio and video files easier and learners have more control over them (e.g. the possibility of listening to an audio again)</i></li> <li>- <i>Use of the chat box function / Moving the cursor to point</i></li> <li>-</li> </ul>
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### *Technical problems (04:53)*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Keep teaching while helping the learner with technical problems by using the chat function</i></li> </ul>
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*Other challenges (06:20)*

- Teaching multi-cultural classes can be a balancing act as learners may have different expectations (e.g. more or less error correction)

### 3. Necessary skills

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

The required skills are very similar for online and face-to-face teachers. The tech skills are more specific, but still fairly basic.

- Possess a repertoire of teaching techniques
- Self-management skills: You are unlikely to be micro-managed so you need time-management skills (i.e. make sure you are on time), organizing skills and decision-making skills
- Self-motivated: You are unlikely to get pressure from your manager though you will be expected to get the job done – possibly similar to being a freelancer
- Patience: Students may be late for their scheduled class/ Students may leave their seat and go away from their device/ Avoid filling the silence if there is no immediate response/ Technological problems may require time before solved
- Multi-tasking: Keep the class going while one learner has technical problems or when a learner joins the class late / Make sure everyone is participating
- Fixing the Internet connection / Using multiple browsers / Cleaning cookies in cache / DNS (Domain Name System): knowing how to connect to a server and how to clean it / DNS Routing: teacher's computer → server → student's computer

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

#### 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?

She asks many questions to show interest. They are underlined in the transcript below.

T= Teacher L= Learner

T: Hello, Willa.

L: Hello.

T: How are you?

L: I'm great.

T: That's wonderful to hear. Did you do anything fun today?

L: Yes.

T: What did you do?

L: Swim.

T: You swam?

T: And it's so cold. Didn't you get cold?

L: No.

T: Not? What else did you do? Did you go to school?

L: Yes.

T: What did you learn at school?

L: Flower school.

T: Ah flower school? Wow, that sounds really interesting.

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

Ample praise.

Gentle error correction.

Using gestures add exaggerated facial expressions.

Voice variety and modulation.

Smiling a lot.

Giving rewards and adding a competitive element.

T= Teacher L= Learner

T: All right. Let's go. So, what can you see in this picture?

L: Where is the duck?

T: Very good. So, what can you see in this picture? What is over here?

L: Bookcase

T: Very good. A bookcase.

L: A bookcase.

T: What's over here?

L: A desk.

T: Desk? Or a ... What?

L: A table.

T: Yeah. Very good. And what is this over here?

L: Book.

T: And this?

L: Socks

T: Very good. One sock.

T: So what we are going to do now. You will see a duck and tell me as quickly as you can where it is.

All right? Are you ready?

L: Ready.

T: Good.

T: All right. Let's set the timer. I'm going to give you... let me see... I'm going to give you one minute and thirty seconds. Make as many sentences as you can. Right. On your marks, get set and go. Oh-oh it's not there. OK, I'm going to draw one for you. There you go.

L: The duck is on on the table.

T: Very good.

L: The duck is...

T: be...be...

L: ... is between the book

T: The book and the...

L: Socks

T: Sock. Very good.

L: The book and sock is between the duck.

T: Very good job, Willa. But let's try that again. The duck is between the book and the sock.

L: The duck is between the book and the socks.

T: Very good.

T: All right, let's have a look over here. Where is it now?

L: The duck is under the table.

T: That's perfect. Where is it now?

L: The duck is behind behind the bookcase.

T: Yes. OK. Where is it now?

L: The duck is in the bookcase.

T: Yes. Ooh. You made it! That was so good.

T: It was really difficult but you did a great job. So let's do this one again. Nothing is over here. You have to use these items at the end and say where it is. So for example the duck is between the book and socks.

T: Very good. All right. You did a great job.

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?

If the lesson is longer it may be difficult for the learner to remain focused. One-to-one classes are often more intensive for both teacher and learner.

The exercises done in this lesson have all been controlled without an explicit reference to the real world. The teacher could establish a context by adding a communicative purpose. For example, the teacher could pretend she lost something like her keys or a toy and ask the learner to help them locate this. This also may lead to a slightly more spontaneous conversation (i.e. Do you sometimes lose things? What have you lost before? What do you do if you lose something?)

Also the learner was struggling with the proposition 'between' so a review would be necessary.

## 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?

Probably nobody really knows what is going to happen though big changes in education (and other fields) are expected. Opinions will vary here. The traditional classroom will probably not entirely disappear.

A possible way to frame the discussion is by referring to Ruben Puentedura's SAMR model for technology integration.

S= Substitution

A=Augmentation

M=Modification

R= Redefinition

This basically means that some technology is just a substitute for what is already happening while other technology can improve or even redefine what is possible.

Technology will continue to develop. The discussion could go into AI and the use of robots in the online and offline classroom. Possibilities of AI:

- Facial recognition and the consequent ability to draw conclusions related to emotional intelligence (pupils dilating, furrowed brows, etc.)

- Instant translators: maybe no-one needs to learn a language anymore
  - Projection of virtual images into the real world (turn the classroom into a forest or space station with avatars to interact with)
- When a learner mispronounces a sound, the A.I. teacher analyses the sound wave and works out exactly what was wrong with the position of the student's mouth. Then the AI teacher gives very accurate feedback.

## **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.