

EFL Online: A Review of Remote Teaching Technology in Response to COVID-19 at a Japanese University

D.M. Grimes-MacLellan, Dax Thomas (Eds.)

Valerie Zia Galichet-Honda, Philip Greenblatt, Nicholas DiNunzio,
Bram Barker, Jon Clarke, Thomas Webb, Winton White

Introduction

In spring 2020, as Covid-19 reached pandemic proportions, educational institutions at all levels across the globe shifted to “emergency remote teaching (ERT)” in efforts to ensure the health and safety of students and faculty while minimizing disruption to learning and maintaining curricular goals and timelines. For North America, the timing of the pandemic came toward the end of the academic year, requiring institutions to find quick, though perhaps temporary, solutions to cover the remaining weeks until a long summer vacation. At universities, campus dormitories closed, sending many students home and instruction shifted to ERT through final examinations of the spring semester. In Asia, and in Japan in particular, the situation differed substantially. The pandemic emerged shortly before the start of the academic year in April calling for quick action as well, but also a comprehensive approach to digital education from the outset that, to date, has lasted the entire academic year and will perhaps continue to some degree into the next one.

In our general education EFL program, which provides a year-long English Communication curriculum to approximately 1600 first-year undergraduate students, we faced the same challenges as many other institutions in transitioning from traditional classroom teaching to online delivery. In addition, we had also embarked on a new curriculum and textbook, and our university implemented a new learning management system (LMS) in spring 2020 which complicated matters considerably. The learning curves before us were suddenly multiple, and urgent.

Despite the challenges, our dedicated faculty and part-time teaching staff worked tirelessly to meet the needs of our students in numerous ways by adapting to new course requirements, curriculum delivery methods, and online platforms. Even more impressive was the initiative of several part-time instructors who explored and tested new applications or experimented with new ways of using already-familiar applications to promote student learning and engagement as well as to improve

the usability of our LMS and feedback mechanisms. What follows below is a collection of contributions from some of our instructors that discuss a variety of applications (Powtoon, Flipgrid, Google Classroom, Google Forms, YouTube, and Zoom) and the ways in which each was used to enhance ERT in our English Communication curriculum to create an enriched learning experience for our students despite the dire global circumstances.

The 3 C's of Powtoon

Valerie Zia Galichet-Honda
valhonda@ed.meijigakuin.ac.jp

Introduction

Students spend more time on YouTube and Instagram than on textbooks. Getting students' attention and motivating them while keeping their learning journey relevant and interesting is critically important, more so given the recent digitalization of learning and move to online class delivery. There are many exciting digital tools and applications available to help teachers share information both visually and with sound. Powtoon is a great example. This online platform offers easy creation of short animated video presentations that can be used to introduce any topic. In this article you will read about how it can be used to increase learning and engagement for students.

Preparation/Procedures

First, you'll need to sign up and create an account. The free version is a good start if you just prefer to test the tool before committing to it. Note that the maximum length of a video in the free version is three minutes.

If you decide to invest in a membership, you will find several plans available with clearly defined advantages for each, as well as prices. I have used the Education plan, at US\$70 for a yearly subscription, and I feel it is a reasonable plan. With this, you can create longer videos, and can access a larger pool of objects and characters. You will also find a wide choice of templates which you can customize as you wish, before starting from scratch (which is a lot more time consuming). An added feature is that you can also have students create their own animation. Although I have not tried this feature yet, it could be a great end of year team project.

How I Used Powtoon

One of the videos I made was solely for the purpose of relieving test pressure: the video

introduced students to their first evaluation. The target viewers were low-intermediate to intermediate level English Communication first-year students. Given the fact that it was their first evaluation, students felt nervous, so I decided to produce an animated video with the aim of relieving some “test anxiety.”

I chose a template with a “Mission Impossible” feel (Figure 1) which I then modified extensively. I started by slowing the speed at which the scenes unfolded. I was able to do that by splitting a long scene in two, and adding and designing an extra scene. I also rewrote all of the captions to make sure they matched my evaluation instructions. This in turn required adjusting information and objects to match the rhythm of the background music. The students were asked to watch the animated video and follow the instructions carefully, as well as respect the deadline. The video seems to have worked well: my classes reported they thought it was a great way to give them “test instructions.” It took me about two hours to produce a one minute 26 second video, but this was because I was still getting used to all the functions the platform had to offer. Since I’ll be able to use this video again in the future, I think the time investment was worth it.

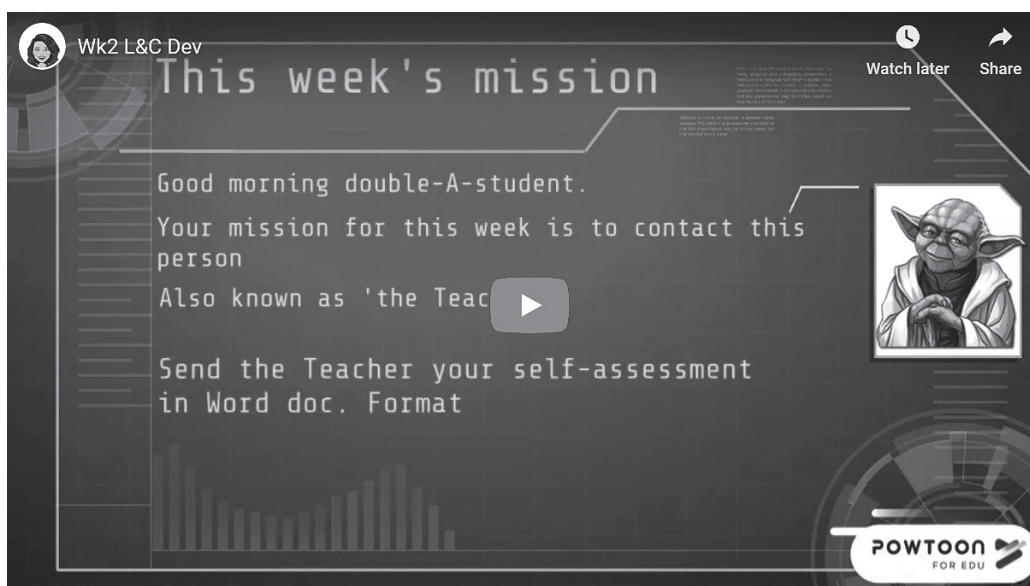


Figure 1: Screenshot of a Powtoon video

Usability/Accessibility

Powtoon offers a wide choice of objects and images. You can also import your own pictures and your own voice overs. In addition, it offers pre-recorded music, but you can also import your own

tunes if you wish. Other options include adding text, animating objects, and creating enter and exit effects. For example, if you want your object or text to reveal itself, to bounce in from the top or from the bottom, from the left side or right side of your screen, it is easy to do. Once your Powtoon is ready, you will be guided on how to export it. The platform gives you several options, YouTube being one of them. You will need to create your own channel in YouTube, and YouTube takes you through every step on how to set it up. After you have your YouTube Channel, you can upload all your Powtoons.

In your visibility settings on YouTube, make sure you select “unlisted,” which means only people with the link can access your animated video. It can take up to ten minutes for your video to upload though, so do not worry if you do not see it listed in your channel immediately. Best to leave your channel and log in a few minutes later. You can confirm the upload is complete that way. Then all you need to do is to post your video link on Manaba or any other learning management system (LMS) you are using.

In addition to the above technical aspects, there are other important considerations when creating videos for EFL contexts. Here are my 3 C's when creating Powtoons for learners of English:

Be Clear: One point/topic/concept, one Powtoon

Ask yourself the following questions: What is your purpose? What do you want your viewers to remember from your animated video? Keep these two questions in mind while you write a script and create a kind of story. Make paragraphs as if you were narrating movie scenes. Also, remember that each slide or “scene” has a maximum length of 20 seconds. Decide whether you will add simple subtitles to your animation or not.

Be Concise: Match video length to language level

It's easy to get carried away with your story. Best to Keep It Short and Simple, (K.I.S.S rule). Personally, I found that videos that last between three and four minutes are the most effective for lower to intermediate levels, as students do watch them until the end and retain the information fairly easily. For higher level viewers, you can increase speech flow (in case of voice over), speed up your scenes, use more sophisticated vocabulary or extend the animation a couple of minutes. I would recommend a maximum of six minutes though. With my stronger classes, I noticed that their retention of information became patchy if videos ran over six minutes.

Be Creative: Turn your vision into an animated movie

Prepare images that you want to use for your Powtoon. Make a note of what image you would like to show in each paragraph. Having a main character or object that will appear throughout your story is a good idea to show continuity like a movie hero who helps with your messaging. Then start your Powtoon by building your story on the slides or “scenes” with main objects/characters. Finalize your video by adding details with extra objects, animating them, syncing to the music of your choice. You can play around with colors and text font to add special effects and make your video fun.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Powtoon is a free web-based platform that you can use to share information. It is versatile as you can use this tool to get students to perform different tasks such as shadowing exercises, review target language or vocabulary expansion. It is a perfect fit for flipped classroom methodology and adds great educational value. I found it very useful to save time during class: making a customized video for students to watch prior to or after class resulted in a lot less teacher talking time, leaving extra time for students to practice with each other during class. I also observed that students were more engaged outside class time, as about a third of students reported watching a given video three times over the course of a week.

With animated video explanations, instructors can express complicated ideas in a simple, memorable and concise manner. The settings can be customized to meet the level of your students, adapt the speed of speech, and add captions too, making it the perfect tool to support you in your teaching.

With this platform in an EFL context, you can:

- **Introduce** new concepts/topics
- **Practice** target language (spelling, grammar, vocabulary)
- **Develop** specific skills (listening, reading, critical thinking, problem-solving)
- **Review** old concepts/topics

This will help:

- **Foster** student motivation
- **Improve** student autonomy

Strengths

The platform is intuitive: the interface is user-friendly. You do not need any experience nor any knowledge or skills in storyboarding. The platform is also easy to integrate: videos can be exported and published on platforms such as YouTube and embedded in the Manaba Course News easily. In addition, the platform's support team is very quick in answering any questions you may have: on the three occasions that I contacted the support team by email, they answered my question within 24 hours.

Limitations

Before you begin, you should spend a little time watching tutorials on the platform to get yourself started. I found that the tricky part was understanding all the available functions and how to use them well. The video tutorials aren't long and are definitely worthwhile. Investing a little time in personal development will save you a lot of time later, and you will develop your IT skills further. Some of the skills I learned include how to select, place and move an object on the timeline, how to animate an object/character, how to add a voice-over, how to import pictures, how to publish and export your Powtoon once it is ready and many other things related to building your animation.

Conclusion

Powtoon is a great support tool. It boosts lessons, as well as one's own skills. It has helped me stay up to date with IT trends and connect better with the young people in class. My groups became more responsive and more "knowledgeable" thanks to video explainers. I found students were more likely to watch a video explainer than if I were to present the information myself. They remembered more than if they just read the information/explanation in a textbook. And there is an added plus: students seemed "impressed" that their teacher had created those videos. This increased their motivation due to the rapport created between students and the teacher's efforts to use the platform.

Overall, Powtoon allows you to deliver your message to your intended viewers in a pedagogic and relatable way. Thanks to this platform, you will think about and explore new approaches when teaching. Everyone gains from it: it's a win-win situation for all concerned.

Flipgrid: Multimodal Learning and Student Motivation in the Online Classroom

Philip Greenblatt

philip_greenblatt@yahoo.co.uk

Introduction

Flipgrid is a powerful online video-making resource that can be used by students for communicative interaction. Flipgrid was already being used by teachers to supplement in-class learning, however, it is especially useful in the online classroom. It is simple to use, relevant and motivating for students. This is because students are used to making and watching short videos in their daily lives. In addition, the ability to use non-linguistic modes when making videos allows students to express themselves in different ways. This also promotes student equalisation as students with lower linguistic ability can use other modes to support their verbal communication.

Preparation/Procedures

In this section I give brief instructions how to get started. For more detailed information, Flipgrid provides written and video guidance on their website and you can also find how-to videos on YouTube. To start using Flipgrid, simply go to www.flipgrid.com and sign-up for a free educator account. You can then set up your classes. For each of your classes make a new Group, which functions as your class homepage. To make your Group private, you can add your students by email address or student ID. Alternatively you can make the Group open to the public. Within each Group you can then make Topics. These are your discussion topics to which you can add written introductions. These topics can be scheduled to start and finish on set dates. You can also set a maximum time length for each video up to 10 minutes.

Each Group has a Join Code, which is a unique ID that you can set yourself or have Flipgrid generate. Students can then log into the Group by entering the Join Code along with their student ID or email address (depending on how you set up the Group). Once logged in, students can view all the topics that you have made available. To make a video, they simply click on a pink button labelled "Record a Response" within the Topic to start recording. All participants in the Group can view any of the videos. In addition, all participants can record video replies to any of the videos. These replies can also be viewed by all participants. As the teacher, you are able to privately grade students' videos. You can create a rubric for each topic and there is also a box to leave a feedback comment.

How I Used Flipgrid

I used Flipgrid with two speaking and listening university classes, an intermediate class and a

beginner class. In the intermediate class, each student made a 5-10-minute video presentation about their experiences while studying abroad. An introduction-body-conclusion structure was used and in the body section students added photographs to accompany their spoken audio. In previous years, students have used PowerPoint and presented at the front of class.

In the beginner class, students posted weekly question-and-answer videos based on common EFL topics from the course textbook. First, I recorded example question-and-answer videos each week. Then the students recorded a question video copying the questions along with my pronunciation and intonation. Finally, they replied to a classmate with original answers to the questions. We were able to look at linking words and word stress as well as casual English phrases such as “what’s up?” In an on-campus class, students would have worked in pairs and groups to ask and answer questions while seated together.

Usability/Accessibility

I used Flipgrid along with Manaba and Zoom, which enabled me to give directions and share instructions with students within familiar and established platforms. The students in my classes reported no problems signing up, making videos or replying to videos. The user interface is intuitive and modern. Students can either use the website or download an app onto their device. In addition, students can also make their videos using any other app and then upload it to Flipgrid.

In my experience, the simple interface meant that students concentrated on their overall performance. When using PowerPoint, students can get lost in the different technical options and can devote too much time to designing their slides and adding things like transitions. This takes away from time that could be spent honing content and practicing delivery. Another advantage of using Flipgrid is that the videos are automatically posted to the Group once the students have finished, thereby removing the extra step of students having to submit to a learning management system (LMS) or upload to Google Drive.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Multimodal

In addition to the linguistic mode, Flipgrid allows students to explore the visual (lighting, framing, camera angle), audio (volume, clarity), and gestural (facial expression, gesture) modes of communication. Students can review and edit their videos as much as they want. They can pause and continue recording at any point enabling them to edit and delete specific sections of video. Therefore, even if multimodal literacy is not an explicit part of the curriculum, during the editing process

students can adjust non-linguistic elements such as the framing and lighting of the shot, and the volume and clarity of their voice. In addition, they can add stickers, add text and use colour filters, which together with the ability to add photos and import video clips, allows students to add a creative touch to their final video. This affords learner equalisation in that students with lower language ability have the opportunity to record their videos in short manageable chunks and also edit and rerecord their videos multiple times until they feel ready to share. Moreover, students with weaker linguistic skills are given the chance to communicate their ideas and build a positive L2 identity using non-linguistic modes. It was noticeable that even in my beginner class, students carefully chose lighting and camera position. Other than making sure my example videos were well lit and framed, I did not prompt the students to do this. I did, however, encourage students by praising their use of multimodal elements in my feedback.

Relevancy, Identity and Motivation

Short videos are part of students' daily lives. Most messaging apps and social media platforms used on smartphones have video messaging and posting features. Many are based around this functionality and even Twitter is experimenting with video features. Students use videos not only to communicate with others, but also to consume content. This makes Flipgrid discussions relevant to students because it mimics how they communicate outside the classroom. As a result, this increases student motivation because they can express themselves in English in ways similar to what they are already doing in Japanese. This also opens avenues to express their identity in English on the Internet, which is globally available.

Another feature of Flipgrid that is shared with social media is the ability to comment and like videos. We now live in a comment culture. Any shared content is judged on the number of likes, comments and reactions it gets. How often is it shared? What buzz did it create? In my intermediate class, I asked the students to watch and comment on five or more of their classmate's videos, which ensured multiple reactions to each video. The students all gave very positive comments. The commenters invariably talked about how the content of the video related to their own experiences in a much more personal way than I had in my feedback, thereby, giving the video maker both validation and encouragement from their peers.

Limitations

In my classes, I found keeping track of which students had posted videos and which had replied difficult at times. You are able to download a .csv file with data on each student's participation that even includes an auto transcription of what they said in their videos, but it took some detective work

to figure out which students had not posted. An overview on the website showing which students had not posted as well as those who had would be welcome. Flipgrid introduced a comment feature in autumn 2020 that allows students to reply with text in addition to video. This is a welcome update as dealing with multiple video responses can be overwhelming. In a text-based forum, it is easy for the students to get an overview of all comments and individually reply to each one.

Conclusion

Flipgrid proved to be a valuable communicative resource during enforced online classes. It has a simple interface that was easy for the students to learn and use. Moreover, it may have actually been more relevant to students' lives than in-class communication because short video messages are how they send and consume content in their everyday lives. Furthermore, with the opportunity to explore non-linguistic modes, students had more ways to express their L2 identities and students with lower linguistic ability got the chance to use other modes to aid communication.

EFL Online: A Review of Remote Teaching Technology - Google Forms

Nicholas DiNunzio

nick.dinunzio@gmail.com

Introduction

Google has a wide variety of collaborative services nested in the Google Drive system which are well suited for online classes. These are documents, spreadsheets, forms and other programs that can help us write and edit files together in real-time. All of these products are available with a personal account for free, and easily accessible via links, which makes Google attractive for teachers working at multiple schools with different learning systems.

Of the file types available on Google Drive, I have found Google Forms to be the most versatile. Google's user interface is rather intuitive, so it doesn't take much time or practice for a teacher to learn how to create them quickly. Forms can also be edited in real-time. Furthermore, forms are easy to access and use for students whether on phone, tablet or computer. Forms can be used for class surveys, textbook answer sheets, quizzes and even homework collection. The teacher can see results as they come in, organized in bar or pie charts, and with one click, the teacher can create a spreadsheet to further analyze results.

Preparation/Procedures

In order to access Google Forms, you need to have a Google account. If you are already using Gmail, then you have access to the Google Drive system. Once you get into Google Drive, you will find Google Forms as one of the options available when you click the new file button. You can either create a blank form or choose from a wide variety of pre-made templates. The interface is relatively intuitive, so building a form from scratch does not take too much effort.

There are four general question types available. The first kind is text entry, either a short answer or a paragraph. The second is a multiple-choice question. There are three formats available: (a) a single multiple-choice question with all answers available on the screen, (b) a multiple-choice grid for a series of questions that all have the same kind of answer (for example, true/false), and (c) a dropdown question where answers are only visible when the students click on a box, which is useful for questions that have a large number of possible answers. The third type is a checkbox question. This is like multiple choice, except students can click on more than one answer. This also has a grid option. The last type is a (Likert) scale question, which also has a grid option available. Finally, there is an option to have students submit files to you through the form, but this service requires them to also have a Google account.

There are two ways to use a form: survey or quiz. A survey merely collects the responses, but with a little more preparation, teachers can make a quiz by changing the form settings. A quiz requires the teacher to input a correct answer and a point value for each question. Quizzes can either be automatically graded or graded by the teacher manually. Automatic grading works well for multiple-choice or checkboxes. For text answers, the students need to type the answer exactly as it's written in the answer key—extra spaces or incorrect capitalization are not recognized—though it is possible to input multiple acceptable answers. Manual review allows the teacher to use paragraph questions as well as give partial credit for short text answers. Of course, manual review takes much more time.

Questions can be supplemented through textboxes, and embedded images or videos. Because YouTube is a Google product, videos from that platform can be easily embedded in the form. Other forms of online video and audio can be linked through URLs in questions or textboxes, but unfortunately, students will then be taken to another webpage to view or listen, which adds an extra step to the process.

Usability/Accessibility

As mentioned above, for teachers working at multiple schools and with different learning management systems (LMSs), Google is attractive for its ease of access and use. A single form can be made, and reused at different institutions. A form can be sent directly to students' email accounts, or a link accessing it can be pasted onto an LMS news feed.

The user experience for Google products is not overwhelming. It does not take much time for a teacher to figure out how to easily create forms. Also, even students who have no experience with forms can quickly intuit how to complete and return it. Google Forms was designed for customer surveys at first, so they are easy to view and use on any device.

The ability to see class results in real-time as they are completed means that a form can be used during synchronous classes as well. For example, I often create forms as answer keys for textbook activities. The only input necessary are question numbers and answers. As the student responses come in, I can then make the decision whether to move on to the next section or give extra instruction. This real-time interaction brings the class a little closer to the ease of face-to-face instruction that both students and teachers miss in our current Covid-19 situation. Also, as mentioned earlier, it is possible for the teacher to edit a form during class. All the students need to do to access the corrected form is to refresh their screens.

Finally, with a little bit of spreadsheet fluency, it is easy to track student participation and organize information. Google Forms can export data to a Google Sheet, which is similar to an Excel file. The sheet is also updated in real-time as responses come in. With a class list, you can track whether students have submitted their forms with the `=countif` function, or, using the `=vlookup` function, you can track their scores on a separate grade sheet. These functions make Google Forms much more convenient during the grading process, but also allow the teacher to keep track of student engagement in a timely manner.

Capacity to Promote Learning

While there is not much unique to Google Forms from an educational perspective, its ease of creation, access and use eases up stress for both teachers and students. Used in conjunction with a textbook, the speed of viewing results allows for teachers to be more responsive in class, which helps us make the most of the short time available to interact with students. I have used Google Forms to do dictation exercises in class using a quiz with short text answers. Based on the errors that students make, which I can see as they submit results, I can determine whether the class is struggling with

vocabulary, grammar or phonology and adjust my instruction accordingly.

Furthermore, as a teacher working at schools using Manaba, Moodle and WebClass, it saves me time having to only master one system to create quizzes for multiple classes.

Strengths and Limitations

In summary, the strengths of Google Forms are their ease of use and the capacity to see results in real-time. Since Forms was created for Google's large volume of account holders, it was designed to be easily created with minimum confusion. Also given that Forms was intended for customer surveys, it is compatible with, and easy to access and fill out on any device. Of course, information gathered by businesses would be useless if it weren't easy to organize in a timely manner. These three aspects apply in online class preparation as well.

On the other hand, Google Forms was not created as an educational tool, but rather adapted for educational purposes. Quizzes are useful for questions that have a single answer, or limited number of answers, but more open questions cannot be automatically graded. The manual review process of Google Forms is slower than grading papers, and therefore doesn't really save much time. In addition, all of the more secure features require students to also have Google accounts, which has added strengths and weaknesses.

Conclusion

Online teaching, especially emergency remote teaching, highlights the value of face- to-face classroom instruction: the capacity for meaningful interaction between teachers and students. While there are many online tools that offer unique learning experiences for the students, each system requires time to master. This is true of LMSs as well, particularly for teachers at multiple schools. The more time students and teachers need to spend learning the system, the less time they have for focusing on the content of the class.

Google Forms offers teachers and students a tool that is not complex. Through its ease of use and the real-time nature of viewing its results, it allows for interactions in the synchronous class that come closer to the face-to-face experience. For teachers, it allows them to use the textbook in familiar ways. But more importantly, it allows students to get relevant and timely feedback, and maybe a little more of the individual attention they need in this stressful time.

Embedding YouTube Videos and Google Forms in Manaba Tests

Bram Barker

brambark@ed.meijigakuin.ac.jp

Introduction

Teachers can make their Manaba Tests more dynamic and engaging by incorporating embedded videos, via YouTube, and questions, via Google Forms. In this paper, I'll explain two different methods that I used to enhance my Manaba Tests, using these G Suite applications. I will also outline the advantages and disadvantages of each method, and suggest which situations each would be more suitable to use.

Procedures, Usability, and Suggestions

I used two different methods of embedding materials into Manaba Tests:

Method 1 entailed embedding a YouTube video above (or amongst) a set of questions that were created within Manaba. This could be considered more or less a “default” method, and is probably the simplest and most common way of embedding materials. For students, this simpler Method 1 is adequate for short video listening tests.

Method 2 differed from Method 1 in that the questions for the embedded video were not housed directly in Manaba itself. Instead, the questions were created in a Google Form, which was then embedded into the Manaba Test, separately from the YouTube video. Method 2 will provide better

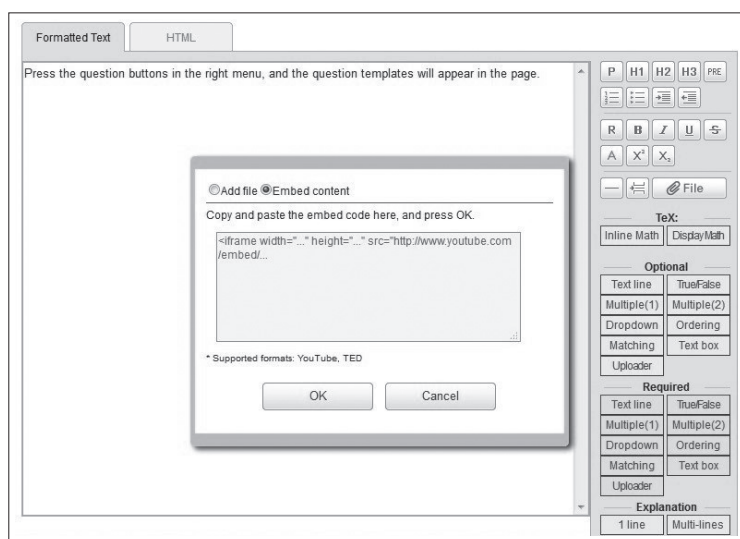


Figure 1: Embedding content in a Manaba test

usability for students, but requires slightly more work from the teacher. I discuss the pros and cons of this method below.

In general, to embed material into a Manaba Test, you first need to open an existing test in “Edit” mode, or click “Add Test” to create a new one. Then, click on the “File” button in the tool pane on the right of the page. Select the “Embed content” option from the pop-up box, and you will see the area where you can paste your embed code (Figure 1).

Method 1: Embedding YouTube

To copy embed code from YouTube, navigate to the video you would like to use, click on the “SHARE” button underneath that video, and choose the “EMBED” option (Figure 2).

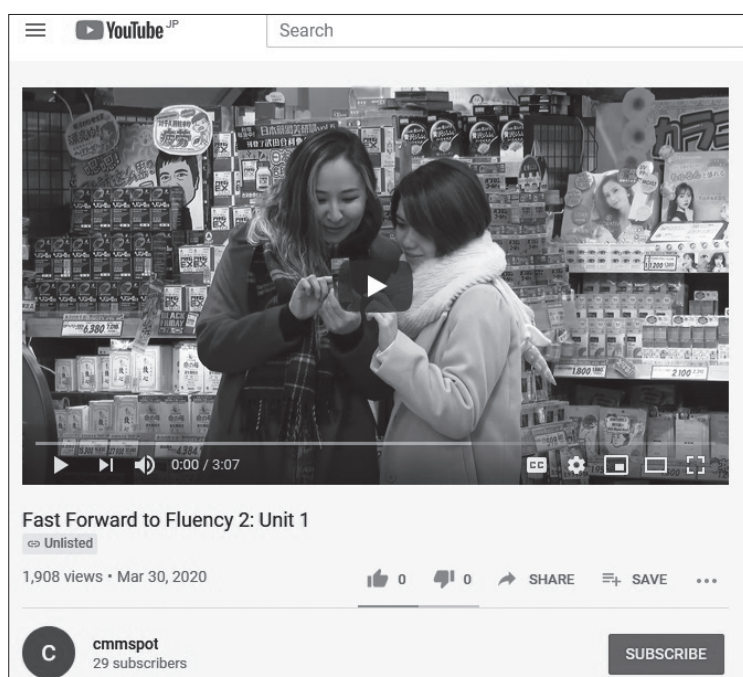


Figure 2: Navigating to the embed code on YouTube

A box will appear, with your embeddable code, as well as some other options which you can decide on. The embed code is a string of text and symbols, which begins with < and ends with >. You can single-click anywhere on that code to select all of it, and then copy it (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Copying the embed code on YouTube

Method 1 has various strengths and limitations. The obvious advantage of Method 1 is that the teacher only needs to utilize two applications: Manaba and YouTube. Also, the grade records are automatically collated by Manaba, and are readily accessible to students.

However, for longer Manaba Tests, some students complained about having to frequently scroll back and forth (up and down), between the video and the questions. This issue can be somewhat overcome by embedding the video multiple times, at regular intervals, in longer tests. However, this disrupts the flow of the video, and can be annoying for students when navigating through the video. This was resolved with Method 2 discussed further below.

Tip: YouTube embeds can also be set to begin playback at a particular time in a video. Thus, subsequent embeds of the same video throughout a Manaba Test, can be programmed to start playback at a point which is relevant to the nearby questions (Figure 4). The viewing experience will still be disrupted, and less student-controlled, but navigating the video will be slightly easier and less repetitive for students.

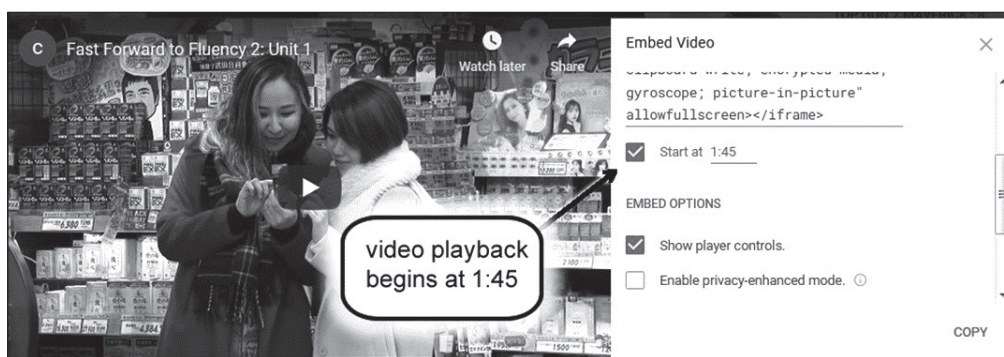


Figure 4: Adjusting playback start time on YouTube

Method 2: Embedding Google Forms

To copy embed code from Google Forms, you must be logged in to the account that created the form, or have received permission from the creator. Click on the “Send” button at the top of the Form editing page (Figure 5).

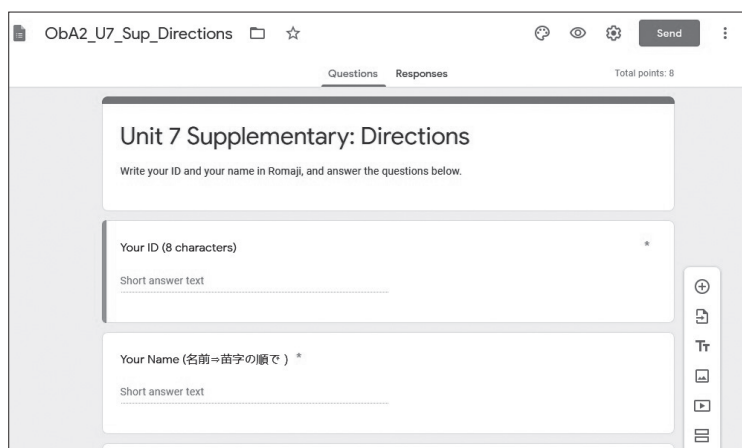


Figure 5: Navigating to the embed code on Google Forms.

Choose the embed symbol (which looks like this < >) and the code will appear for you to copy (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Copying the embed code on Google Forms.

When you have pasted the embed code into the “Embed content” box in Manaba, press “OK,” and the process is complete. You can press the “Preview” button at the bottom of the Manaba Test editing page, to check that the embedding process worked.

The main strength in Method 2 is that an embedded Google Form has a scroll function on the

right-hand side. This means that users can remain static on the actual Manaba Test page, while they scroll through a long list of questions on an embedded Google Form (Figure 7). Students do not have to move up to the top of the Manaba Test page to watch the video, then back down again to answer the questions, which was a problem associated with Method 1. The video, separately embedded, remains stationary above the Google Form, so students can be constantly viewing it, and can maintain complete control over continuous playback.

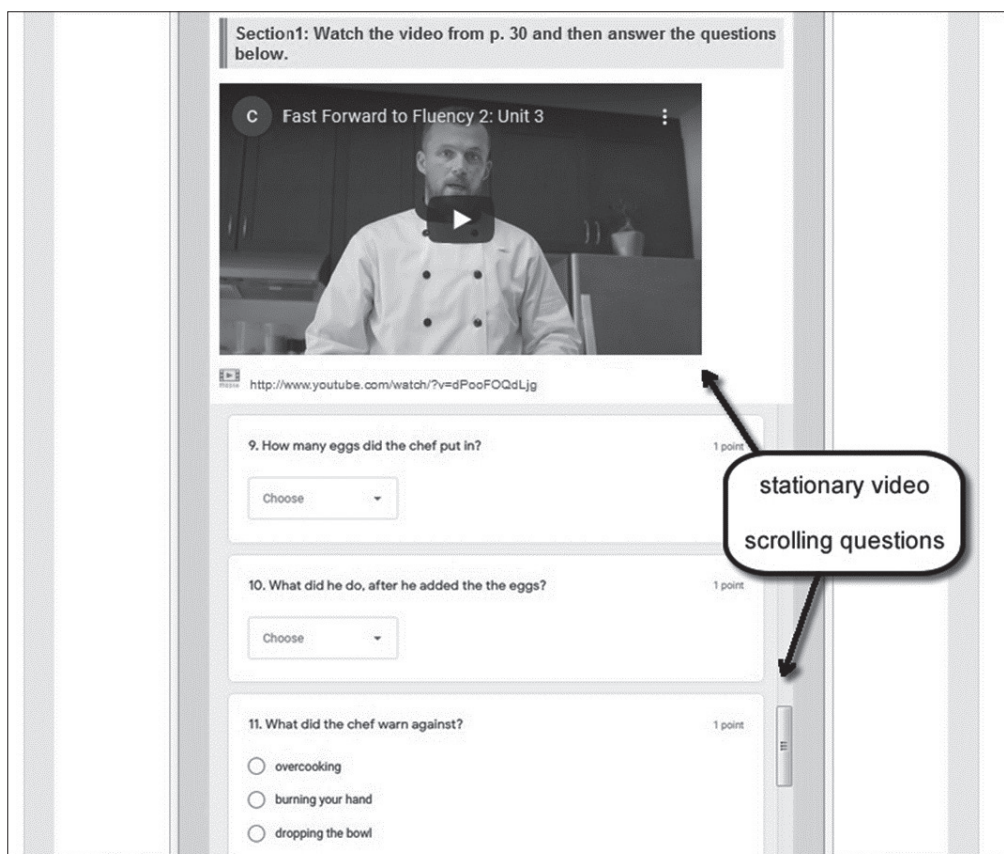


Figure 7: A Google Form embedded in Manaba.

Also, Google Forms offers a choice of instant, automated feedback options to students, which are not all currently available in Manaba (Figure 8). Teachers can leave text feedback, website links, and YouTube video links, including direct links to the precise location on a video where the answer can be found (using the technique in the "TIP" above).

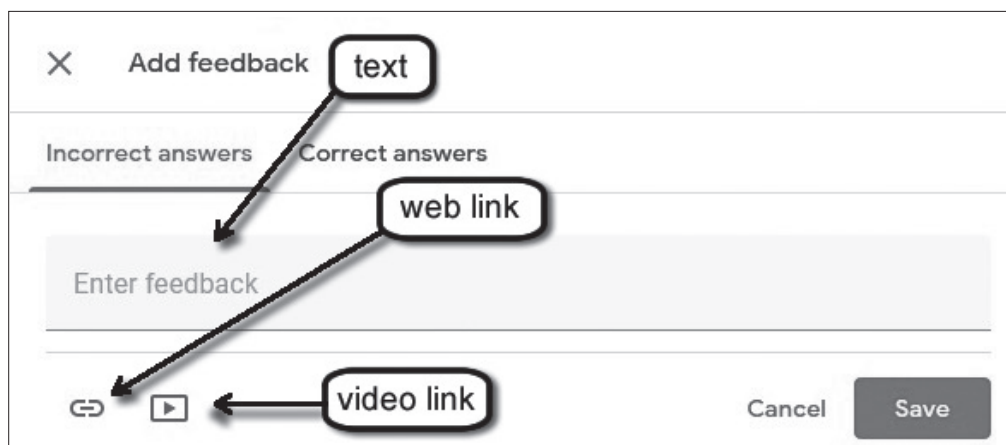


Figure 8: Feedback options on a Google Form.

Furthermore, creating content on Google Forms allows teachers to use, store, recycle, and share their materials outside of Manaba, on the more ubiquitous G Suite platform.

A disadvantage of Method 2 is that teachers need to learn a third application, Google Forms. Also, students' scores will not automatically be collected and stored on Manaba. This needs to be done manually, by the teacher.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Video has become a common component of university curriculum, and YouTube is the leading online video provider. Embedding YouTube content in a Manaba Tests allows teachers to easily create assignments around videos. Embedding Google Forms can allow better usability and more feedback options for students than Manaba alone can.

Conclusion

Embedded YouTube videos and Google Forms can enhance Manaba Tests for both students and teachers. Different combinations of embedded materials can be used to different effect, as outlined in the two methods I've described. For short video listening tests, I recommend using Method 1. For longer video listening tests, Method 2 will be better for students. Teachers should take into account the strengths and limitations of each method, to provide the best learning environment for their particular situation.

Providing Feedback in Google Classroom

Jon Clarke

jkclarke@ed.meijigakuin.ac.jp

Introduction

The process of providing feedback to learners on their work is universal to the concept of teaching. The premise being that without feedback how can learners know their mistakes and therefore how to improve. In the classroom every move by a teacher is in essence part of the feedback system as it responds to the individual or the group, the work in hand or the ambiance of the class. Whilst providing feedback on work in an online environment can lack the immediacy and spontaneity of the classroom, its necessity remains unaltered. If anything, it is enhanced as it can be the only mechanism through which students receive individualised communication while they are learning.

For teachers working online, Google classroom provides a useful collection of tools within an accessible course management system that integrates with documents and files existing in the Google Drive environment. Within the Google Classroom system are a number of tools designed to enable structured and unstructured feedback directly to students on their submitted work. Structured feedback can be provided through integrated rubrics which are generated by the teacher and attached to assignment tasks. I will introduce two feedback systems and explain how to implement them efficiently and effectively.

How I used Feedback in Google Classroom

Rubrics: Creation, Implementation & Suggestions

An assessment rubric provides a system for teachers to fairly assess student work against pre-conceived criteria and also a set of achievement objectives for the student to work toward. It is possible in Google Classroom when creating an assignment to apply a marking rubric. The rubric can be created from scratch, imported from Google Sheets or any previous rubric used in the current course or any other course within the users account can be recycled. When a rubric is incorporated in an assignment, the rubric criteria are clearly laid out on the student's assignment page below the assignment task and also are shown on their grade results page.

Creating a Rubric is a simple process of entering a variety of criteria, called 'Criteria' and setting a series of point values and descending levels with descriptors for each level. You can have any number of levels to a Criterion and the points for a level can be of any value. This is useful for

assessing areas that have different weightings of significance, e.g. (e.g. *Content has 8 levels with points from 1 - 20 vs Punctuation which has 3 levels from 1 - 4*). Save when you are finished, you can continue to edit a rubric at any point, but once work has been marked with it the point values are no longer editable. When marking the student's work online the rubric will be visible in the right-hand column as a scoring system. The total value of the score is displayed at the top making it easy to keep track of the assignments final grade. When the marked work is returned to the student, with the Return button, the students see their submitted work with the rubric and their grades for each of the criteria printed below.

If you reuse a previously used rubric then a new copy is automatically created for that assignment so that any edits or changes you make do not affect the original. You can also export a rubric to Google Sheets. This is useful if you want to share the rubric with other teachers or use it in a different course.

When marking with a rubric, bear in mind that the overall assignment point value does not automatically adjust to reflect the value of the rubric, and has to be manually changed in the assignment if you do not want it converted to a value out of 100, i.e. a percentage.

Whilst you can edit the rubric in Google Sheets, be cautious not to make significant changes to the document, for example adding line breaks or tabs, or it will fail to upload again later. If you are editing descriptors in Sheets, be particularly careful to avoid adding a line break within a cell to wrap the text as this will cause upload failure later. If you have a beloved Rubric that you want to use in Google Classroom it is easier to recreate it as a new rubric rather than struggle to format your existing one to match.

Comment Banks: Creation, Implementation and Suggestions

An assignment submission completed online, when checked, will open in a Google Doc within which it is very simple to comment and correct students' writing.

First, ensure that the *Comment Mode* is set to *Suggesting* using the drop menu at the top right. Any direct editing in the students' work, deletions or insertions, are shown in green, with deleted text crossed out rather than deleted. A comment on the change is then added on the right of the text page. Comments can be made anywhere in the text or on a specific item by selecting and clicking the + sign that then appears. Doing this puts a yellow highlight over any selected text so students can easily identify where comments have been made.

Not surprisingly, some mistakes are very common, especially when looking at language use. It would be tiresome to write “Wrong verb tense used” or “Article missing” repeatedly across many submissions. That is where the Comment Bank is very useful. The Comment Bank is where you can store your comments or create a range of comments to use when necessary. Your Comment Bank is universal, if made in one course it is available in all others. When you start typing a comment the phrases in your Comment Bank that use the typed word will be called up for you to select from. In addition, the Comment Bank Icon gives you access to your whole Comment Bank for adding, editing or removing comments. This is useful for setting up comments that you anticipate using regularly and structuring them for ease of access. For example, I adopted abbreviations for common errors to speed up the process of calling up the correct comment, e.g. Art (Article), Sp (Spelling). Any comment made during marking can also be added to the Comment Bank.

The effort put into annotating a student's work is wasted energy if the student is not even aware the annotations have been made. A limitation of this platform is that when a student checks their grade in the Google Classroom there is nothing to indicate that comments have been left on the original submission. It is necessary for the student to open their assignment document again in order to view the comments. My workaround to this has been to leave a message in their Private Comments, which is emailed directly to them, to check their assignment for detailed comments and corrections.

As a final note, when a student opens an assignment, reads your comment and clicks Resolved because they want to correct their mistake, the system automatically sends you an email. Within that email is an option to no longer receive emails generated by the assignment, which can be useful to prevent a flood of unnecessary mail.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Marking Rubrics, Comments, and Comment Banks are all useful tools for making the assessment and feedback on a student's work more efficient. They also provide a means for students to quickly see and receive your feedback. If the writing is part of a larger editing process then students can make the necessary changes before resubmitting. If you want students to give feedback to each other they can share the document and provide suggestions on language or content. Marking rubrics are not, of course, reserved only for written work and can be equally applied to speaking tasks and video presentations which have been submitted through a Google Classroom assignment.

Conclusion

Applying rubrics and comment banks is an efficient system for managing work submitted online. The feedback system can become more personal and more adaptable as it is easy to adjust a rubric to make it specific to assignment tasks rather than falling back on a previously established form that doesn't accurately reflect the learning objectives and outcomes of the assignment. Whilst comments create an immediate window into a student's work, these come at a time cost on the part of the teacher as marking online does not lend itself to the rapid skimming and checking that may be sufficient for some writing tasks. Teachers need to ensure that they manage their work load and that the energy they put into providing feedback is reciprocated by the students through their reflection and consideration of that feedback toward either a resubmission or improvement of their future writing.

Using Zoom in Meiji Gakuin English Clinic Sessions

Thomas Webb

hawaiian@ed.meijigakuin.ac.jp

Introduction

In the Meiji Gakuin English Clinic, we have learned to use the Zoom application for our private language sessions. Zoom itself has proven to be an effective tool for online teaching, useful for both group and private lessons. Similar to Google Hangouts/Meets and Skype, it has some additional features that make it particularly useful for online communication. With some training and experience, teachers can use it quite effectively, and can use Zoom classes as supplements to their classroom lessons, or as lessons in themselves. Perhaps because of their familiarity with video tools related to social media, students tend to adapt quickly to Zoom, and they appear to like its direct access to teachers. In the English Clinic private sessions, lasting from 20 to 40 minutes, students choose topics to focus on improving their speaking and other language skills, and teachers use a variety of multimedia materials to make the classes more interesting.

Preparation/Procedures

When preparing for Zoom classes, there are a number of factors to consider, including the type and size of class, the students' levels of language proficiency, and relevant Zoom features. In the larger English Communication (EC1) classes at Meiji Gakuin, for example, where students use assigned texts and follow a set syllabus, Zoom features like the Breakout Room, the White Board, and the Annotation bar could be very useful. The Breakout Room allows students to be divided into small

discussion groups, where they can do pair work, prepare class reports, or just get to know their classmates in a more intimate setting. Lessons can be written on the Zoom White Board, much as on a classroom board. The Annotation feature can be used to write on texts and other materials displayed on-screen, using a variety of annotation tools such as freehand writing, and shape stamping.

In our English Clinic sessions, students often bring their own materials, which can also be displayed on-screen. Using the Annotation feature, teachers can edit and correct students' writing structure, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The White Board can be used just as it is in the larger classes. Teachers can also allow students to use this Annotation feature, so that they can write on their own materials as well. I recently did this with a student preparing to study abroad. She brought in a variety of school materials, which we displayed on screen. I gave her the ability to use the Annotation feature, and she was able to point out things she was worried about, and could work with me in editing and correcting her writing.

It helps in preparation for these private sessions if students message teachers in advance, to specify their desired discussion topics. Students can be notified that this is a class rule, and that they should follow it. It is important, as their interests vary, from having serious scholastic questions to discussing their hobbies, travels, jobs, and other general topics. Knowing the topic ahead of time allows teachers to make tentative class plans and to be able to choose additional materials. As an example, teachers can make lists of on-topic vocabulary that students may not know, find links to related articles, and search multimedia websites like YouTube for interesting videos. Having the topic in advance also saves time, as focused discussions can begin immediately, something that is especially important in shorter sessions.

Usability/Accessibility

Zoom technology is adaptable, and once one feels comfortable with it, classes can be run fairly smoothly. Some students take to online classes quickly, others are hesitant and take longer. Getting students to relax and open up is important, and discretion should be used by teachers in doing this. In our English Clinic sessions, students have the opportunity to interact with teachers, one-on-one, and to ask a lot of questions. They seem to enjoy this accessibility and are often quite eager to talk about all kinds of subjects. I think the immediacy of private classes, and not having the fear of other students listening in, allows them the chance to relax and be themselves. As they take our Clinic classes by choice, most of our students show a lot of initiative, have specific things they want to talk about, and aren't so shy. Moreover, they bring all manner of materials and topics to class. To facilitate their learning and to make the classes more interesting, we often integrate our discussions with outside

media materials from a variety of websites. Video sources like YouTube, language/ESL sites, any related cultural, historical pages, etc., have been useful and fun. I had a student recently who was interested in history, so I found some relevant history sites and YouTube documentaries that the student seemed to enjoy.

With students who join our sessions on a semi-regular basis, we often set class objectives to help them develop all of their language abilities, especially speaking and writing. If they have come to the sessions before, it helps to reference materials from previous classes to emphasize certain points, and to demonstrate to them that they are making progress. They often have requests to work on what they consider their weak points, such as academic writing, which they hope to use in other classes, or for study abroad. In these private sessions, there is time to work on these things, without the disruptions of the classroom. These private sessions can also be done live at school, of course, when this again becomes feasible. When that isn't possible, for whatever reason, these online sessions are quite good, too. As some have pointed out, these online sessions aren't limited by geography. I've had students who were living in Vietnam, China, and other countries, yet were still able to join the class.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Students can use Zoom to practice with teachers, with other students, and to interact with students abroad. It is quite useful for conversation practice, for question and answer sessions, to sharpen students' abilities to express themselves in English, and for a number of other related tasks. Once students know how to use Zoom, they can do all sorts of things. They can set up their own chat rooms, start language clubs, communicate with friends abroad, use it in conjunction with outside media sites, and more. Some of them show a lot of initiative and are very creative in how they use the technology. Students sometimes use Zoom meetings for school club practice, to make club plans, even to do group cooking. Most of our students have a lot of experience with all kinds of social media, and seem comfortable using this new tool, too. We often emphasize that having Zoom experience can benefit them later in life. Doing job interviews, company teleconferencing, and various kinds of online study, as well as making international contacts would all be easier with Zoom. Many of our students play musical instruments, and perhaps they'll be able to use Zoom for that, having online jam sessions and performances. There are all sorts of possibilities with this technology, if one is creative enough.

Strengths/Limitations

As with all tools and technologies, Zoom does have its limitations. Particularly with larger language classes, students will say they prefer live contact in the classroom. This is understandable, as classroom communication is easier, and perhaps a more relaxing way to talk with teachers.

Classrooms also allow teachers more freedom, such as the ability to walk around to speak with individual students. Speaking with each student in those larger online classes can be a real challenge. For the private language sessions, I think the classroom meetings are probably best, too. Teachers and students can relax more, and it's easier to share materials and information. In the online classes, if students are receptive, we can have some good conversations. If they are very shy, or nervous about the camera, the online classes can be challenging and awkward for teachers.

There are times when, for a variety of reasons, Zoom classes are preferable to the classroom, or are the only option. While they do lack the spontaneity of in-person classes, they can still be very effective. Using Zoom features like the White Board or Breakout Rooms, teachers can come close to the classroom experience. It takes a while for teachers and students to adapt to Zoom, patience being a definite virtue when conducting them. My advice to anyone teaching these classes is to take it slow at first. Give the students time to relax and to feel comfortable in this new online environment. Some students have trouble with it, but many of them seem open to this technology, and seem able to adapt to it. I think teachers must be as easygoing and patient as possible, and not be too demanding towards students. These classes can be stressful for teachers, but I imagine they are even more so for students. Try to make the classes fun, and play with the technologies. Be creative, and figure out what works best for you. Just take a deep breath, and look at it as a new adventure. Try to convey that sense of adventure to the students. Overall, Zoom technology is good, and classes can be fun.

Conclusion

While most people were unfamiliar with Zoom until quite recently, it has proved invaluable as a means for teaching and communication. Many teachers have used Skype and similar apps in smaller settings, but as a large-scale method of teaching, Zoom has been revolutionary. It can be challenging to use, especially when teaching large groups of students, but it has some useful features that can provide a good class experience. When used for smaller sessions, as in the Meiji Gakuin English Clinic, it can be quite effective. Students are able to interact with teachers in a private setting, and can focus on their material, free from classroom distractions. While perhaps not as ideal as being in a real classroom, Zoom sessions do offer things classrooms cannot, such as long-distance learning; a chance for students to meet while off-campus; and as a means of connecting to multimedia sources. Once students have mastered Zoom technology, they can experiment with it, have fun with it, and using their initiative, independence, and creativity, can communicate with others. Teachers can use it to supplement classroom work, for distance learning, as a link to other media platforms, and in cases when the classroom option isn't available. Zoom has much to offer, and is more than just a classroom substitute. It is a useful tool valuable in itself. In just a short period of time, it has established itself as

an essential part of the world. It has been very useful for us at Meiji Gakuin, and has made our English Clinic classes possible. It is a good tool, and one that I hope we can continue to use.

Classroom Simulation with Zoom: Screen Sharing and Breakout Rooms

Winton White

yuichituba@gmail.com

Introduction

Never before has technology been more important in education. The rise of COVID-19 has drastically affected the world's economy and forced people around the globe to think of different ways to conduct business. The education system is no different. Educational institutions, private schools, and freelance teachers have had to seek out different options and be creative in how they adapt to this crisis. The internet has been a crucial tool in allowing us to keep some modes of education open to students.

Incorporating technologies into the classroom setting is not a new phenomenon. However, now with the virus circumstances, we have added motivation to use video conference software so we can hold lessons remotely. Apps such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Teams, and even FaceTime have helped teachers to continue educating their students during this pandemic. I would like to focus on Zoom and how I took advantage of its screen sharing and breakout room functions for teaching language.

Preparation/Procedures

Before starting a lesson with Zoom, you will want to set up your webcam so it's facing you for other viewers to see your face. When you open Zoom, you will see on your computer that the functions are laid out below the camera view. There are buttons that allow you to view the participants, open the group chat window, share your screen, and so forth. If you click on Participants, the students' names will be visible. The chat window is useful for sending quick messages, URL links, and files for students to download. I have also found it useful when asking the class a question and for everybody to type in their answers. Next to the chat window are Share Screen, Record, and Breakout Rooms.

Tip: If you don't see the Breakout Rooms button (which happened to me during a class), you will have to go to your Zoom account in your browser, go to Settings on the left, then under "In Meeting

(Advanced),” toggle the “Breakout room” setting to “on.” Now you’re set to take advantage of breakout rooms.

Usability/Accessibility

Zoom is quite user-friendly. Even for those who aren’t as comfortable with computers, its basic functions are fairly intuitive. The mute and video buttons for both yourself and your students are easy to access. Sometimes you’ll have students forgetting to mute themselves so you’ll have to point out where that is located. There are some extended functions such as the Emoticons, White Board, Raise Hand, as well as virtual backgrounds that some students have had difficulty finding. They’re useful tools, but aren’t necessarily required. Zoom goes well with other platforms when using the Share Screen function. However, sharing video may have its challenges, which I will go over in the next section.

Capacity to Promote Learning

Share Screen and Breakout Rooms are the two functions I’ve used that I’ve found very helpful during my English Communication classes. With Share Screen, you have the option of sharing a specific window from your computer or your entire computer screen to all participants. When you enable screen sharing, every participant’s computer screen will have full view of what you share, including your cursor. This is useful when you’re going through the textbook together and you want to type text, highlight, or circle a specific part of the page. I can immediately let students know where I would like for them to begin reading. The textbook I share in my classes at another school is hosted with software that I downloaded with permission from the publisher. At the very least, you can show a physical textbook over camera to point at a specific part of the page, which I do often.

You can also share a video player if you want to incorporate videos in your lesson. Of course, always be sure to check the copyright regulations in advance on any materials you want to share over Zoom. This goes for both textbooks and movies. I have tried screen sharing a DVD that came with a textbook but Zoom blocked the DVD I tried to play during a class. YouTube videos can be shared without any trouble, as can audio and video files that are on your computer already. When you push Share Screen, be sure to click the “share computer sound” box before sharing your screen. What I’ve been doing instead of trying to show movie clips during the lesson, is to assign students to watch a YouTube video on their own time as a part of their homework assignment.

The second function on Zoom that I’ve been using is the breakout room. Although it’s not the same as in-person lessons, being able to digitally split the class into multiple groups allows for the

classroom experience of group activity. Not only that, this feature offers students a way to have direct communication with one another during remote learning. Students have often mentioned how they've enjoyed breakout room sessions because they were able to talk with their fellow classmates.

I'm currently trying a new activity with my students where I'm having them do group presentations. I explained to them beforehand to choose a topic and decide on how to split the roles of scriptwriter, creator of visual aid, and speaker. Then I had them go into breakout rooms for preparation. I always choose the option that automatically and randomly assigns students to breakout rooms just to expedite the process. The following week, they will do their group presentation in the main room with one student screen sharing their visual aid (PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, or a collection of picture files) while the group members read what they have prepared.

Strengths/Limitations

Zoom is quite flexible with how you can easily share your screens and maneuver through breakout rooms. As the host of the session, you're able to freely move from one breakout room to another to check up on how each group is doing. Also, having the option of being able to move one participant to another room has been helpful. I've used this when a student temporarily loses their internet connection and reconnects back into the session. I will see that they're back in the main room and can bring them back to their original breakout room. Temporary dropouts can happen on a regular basis due to internet instability and this is one of the few drawbacks when doing breakout rooms. Other issues in the breakout room are when one student's screen freezes, lag due to internet connection, students not having a camera or mic, and as a teacher, not being able to view all the students at once.

Conclusion

Whether you're a private tutor, elementary school teacher, or a university professor, video conferencing software is beneficial for both you and your students. There are plenty of video conferencing web applications that are available now. Although Zoom may seem to be no different than other apps, I believe its functionality and ease of use are what has made it such a popular platform around the world.

Final Note

The platforms and applications discussed above were generated in the context of ERT in an English Communication program at a Japanese university and reflect the instructors' motivations to provide a positive and meaningful learning experience to students despite difficult and limiting circumstances. Pre-Covid 19, our program was run in a traditional classroom-based environment with few technological features, but due to necessity, what we now see emerging is new energy to experiment with different technologies and develop online activities and tasks for students that enhance EFL learning. If there can be any positive outcomes to this devastating pandemic, it is perhaps the digital transformation that we are now witnessing at Japanese universities along with other sectors of society.

For students, especially first-year students, this has surely been an unsettling year with regard to finding their place in university life. At the same time, as some contributors pointed out, contemporary students are digital natives saturated in various forms of social media so in some ways our shift to online learning environments has brought teaching closer to students' lives and experiences. Moreover, it has also broadened the ways in which students can contribute to and demonstrate their learning. Some encouraging outcomes that have been anecdotally observed by many of our instructors during ERT have been higher levels of motivation and engagement, increased retention of learning points, and a greater ability to approach different aspects of their studies autonomously.

The challenges, and sometimes chaos, of our past year of ERT have been unparalleled, but it has also been an opportunity to explore new approaches and come away with new insights and knowledge. With news of several promising Covid-19 vaccines on the horizon at the time of this writing, we can probably expect to return to classroom teaching sometime in the next academic year. However, our time online has enabled us to expand our teaching repertoire and consider possibilities beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom that will henceforth undoubtedly have lasting impact as we continue to develop our curriculum.

D.M. Grimes-MacLellan
Dax Thomas