Creating Vokis – online animated characters that speak

Topic

Online animation

Learning outcomes

- Practise speaking skills and pronunciation
- Practice using language for pair work (It's your turn, etc)
- Develop familiarisation with online tools

Age group and level

Aged 9-12 (CEFR A1+)

Time

60-70 minutes

Materials

1. Access to one computer per pair of learners – each computer needs to have:
   a. an internet connection
   b. a headset with microphone

Ideally, a computer attached to a data projector for demonstrating the activity to the class and reviewing

Introduction

Vokis are great for practising speaking skills with learners of all ages. Creating an animated character and giving it a voice is really fun to do and breaks down the inhibitions that learners often have when faced with recording themselves speaking in English.

Procedure

Bedore class	• Create a free Voki account: www.voki.com

	• Create a Voki for yourself. This is a simple process and there are instructions you can follow on the Voki site.
	• When you record your Voki's voice, unashamedly exaggerate what your character has to say. This will help your learners to focus on and imitate the aspects of pronunciation you are interested in them reproducing.
	• I usually use this simple model the first time I create a Voki for a class:
	⎯ *My name is ...* (think of a name that fits the character you've created).
	⎯ *They call me .... because ...* (think of a reason – you can leave this line out with lower-level classes).
	⎯ *I love ...* (think of something your character loves doing).
	⎯ *I hate ...* (think of something your character hates doing).
	• Log in to your Voki account and have it ready to use before class.
1. Whole class demonstration of creating a Voki (20 mins)	• Ask a learner to be a volunteer so you can demonstrate the steps involved in creating a Voki. Encourage everyone in the class to shout out their preferences as your volunteer chooses and customises the Voki character and selects its clothing and bling (accessories). This gets everyone involved and helps them remember the steps.
	• Model language you'll want learners to use when they make their own Voki:
	⎯ Choose that one!
	⎯ That one's better.
	⎯ No, I prefer that one.
	⎯ It's my turn.
	⎯ Click on the …
	⎯ Now save!
	• Now comes the process of giving the character a voice. Get your volunteer to click on the microphone image on the Voki page.
	• If you are using the simple language model I suggested above, before doing the recording get your learners to agree on the character's name, the reason for his/her name and what s/he loves and hates doing.
	• Your volunteer should click on record.
	• give the audio file a title. This step is very important, and you should insist that the learners remember it, because if they don't, they will lose their recording. If there's something you don't like with the recording, click on cancel and you can repeat the process again.

	Get your volunteer to select a background for the character and a player (the frame it appears in).
	• The last step in creating your Voki is to click on publish. Again, this is very important because this is when you save all the work you've done up to now, and without it the Voki will be lost.
	• If you have a class blog or wiki, you can choose to embed your character into a post. In the My Voki section of the site, make sure that your latest Voki is the one that is visible on the left of the page. Choose where you want to embed your Voki, e.g. Blogger, WordPress, etc., and click on get code.
	• Paste the code into the HTML section of your post, click on publish and your Voki will appear on your site.
2. Useful language (10 minutes)	• Make a musical drill with the language you want the children to use. Mime the meaning as you chant. E.g. — Choose that one! — That one's better. — No, I prefer that one. — It's my turn. — Click on the … — Now save! • Get them to write their phrases in their notebooks and nominate individuals to say a phrase. This is really valuable language that they need to know and have fresh in their minds because it will be a great temptation for them to revert to their first language in the excitement of creating their Vokis. **Note:** If you're short of time prioritise the spoken element rather than the written one.
Learners create their own Voki (30 mins)	• Put the learners into pairs sharing a computer • Give them your log in details – that way you'll have all their Voki characters in the same place to review together at the end of the class. • Monitor their work and remind them, if necessary, of the language you modelled. • When your learners have finished their Vokis, review them in a whole-class session. Get learners to comment on each other's Vokis and vote for the one they like best.

	Note: Now you have a handy record of their speaking skills to measure their progress during the course and for assessment purposes!
3. Voting (10 minutes)	• When your learners have finished their Vokis, review them in a whole-class session. This could be done in a following class. • Get learners to comment on each other's Vokis and vote for the one they like best. **Note:** Now you have a handy record of their speaking skills to measure their progress during the course and for assessment purposes!
Troubleshooting	• If you can't record your Voki, check that the headset is correctly connected and that the sound has not been muted on the computer. • If the Voki site doesn't accept your login or keeps reverting to it, reboot the computer.
Additional support	This tutorial demonstrates how to make a Voki: https://youtu.be/FunBew6S4Bk?si=UDdxxCCrceHO-n2C

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