BRITISH COUNCIL

TeachingEnglish

British Council: TeachingEnglish

A podcast series for teachers of English

Episode 5: How can I teach online effectively?

Show notes

Episode overview

The last two years have seen a rush to teaching online, driven largely by the COVID-19 pandemic. But whilst some teachers had considerable experience teaching remotely, for others it was a completely new experience. In episode 5, we learn from Plan Ceibal (*Ceibal en Inglés*), an innovative English teaching project which uses videoconferencing technology to reach 80,000 children in over 550 primary schools across Uruguay. In the second part, digital learning specialist and lecturer in English language teacher Raquel Ribeiro shares her insights into how you can teach online more effectively, whatever your own experience and personal context.

In this episode

I believe that remote teaching can be possible in low resource contexts. I think that the pandemic showed us that this was possible.

Remote teaching is as effective as face-to-face teaching.

So instead of having everything on the screen, and projecting and preparing PowerPoints that are amazing, it's more productive and cognitively more challenging that the students get to copy the questions for a conversation.

If there is one thing we have all learned is that there is no ideal scenario for anything.

There is a natural curve of learning for dealing with technology.

When done well, online teaching can be an effective way to teach language, and it can help to reduce inequality in the classroom.

There is learning even in failure.

Classroom application

Think about how you could use the ideas in this episode in your own teaching.

Think about your own practice

- Are there any aspects of *Ceibal en Inglés* which you could integrate into your own online teaching?

- Are there ways that you could include your students more in the organisation and management of your online teaching?

- To what extent do you integrate 'offline' activities into your online teaching? Is there more that you could do?

- Are there any external tools (e.g. Google Classroom) which you could use in your online teaching?

Raquel's advice
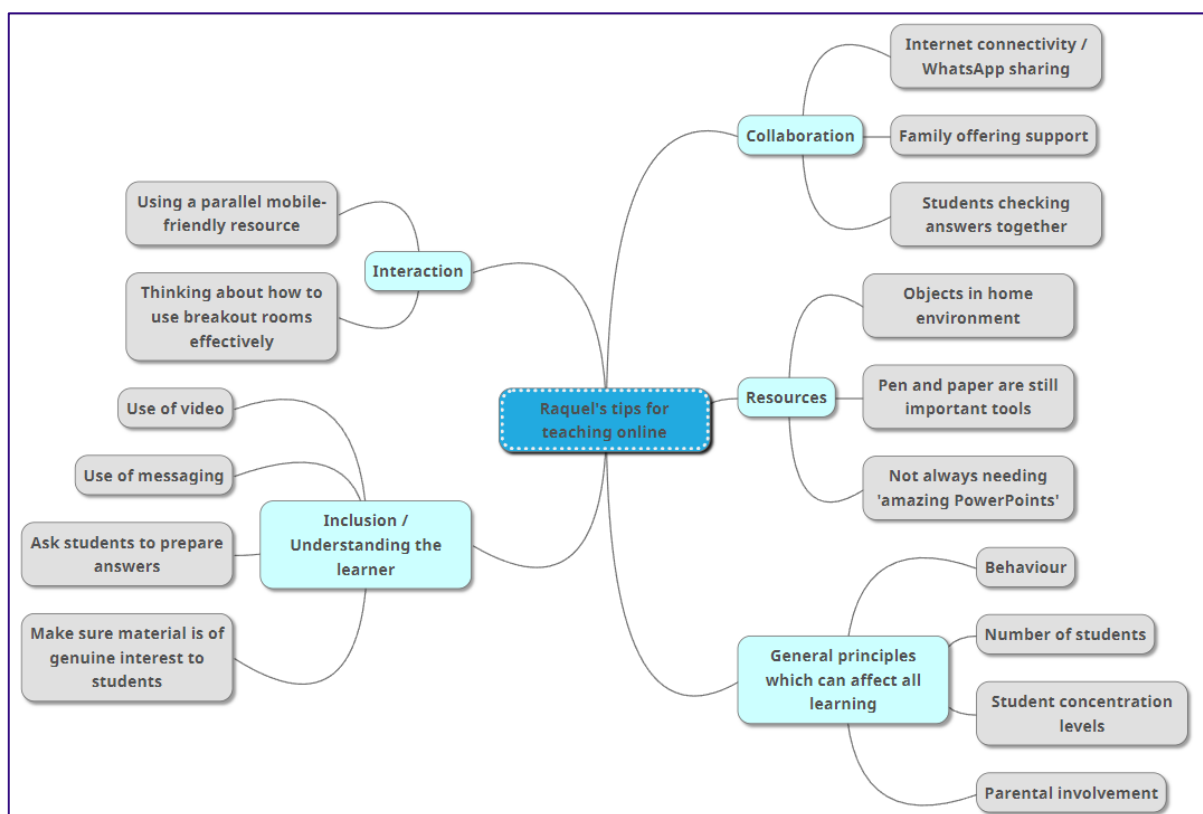
Ten More Tips for Teaching Online

Extract from *Teaching in Challenging Circumstances* (2021) by Chris Sowton

1. Ensure that whatever approach or system you use, it should be as inclusive as possible and there should be digital equity. Make sure as many students as possible have the opportunity to access the materials.

2. Teaching online is tiring. Teachers can mistakenly think that online teaching is easier than teaching face to face. Ensure that you take breaks between sessions, and also that you don't set your expectations too high.

3. Don't use too many platforms, programs / apps, or websites. Use a small number of good ones which both you and your students are comfortable with.

4. Synchronous sessions should not be directly sequential – i.e. each session should be standalone. Students should still be able to learn something and participate effectively even if they missed previous sessions. This may not be an issue if you are able to record synchronous sessions, which students can watch or listen to later in their own time.

5. Synchronous sessions should be interactive and contain a wider range of different tasks and activities – just like a classroom lesson. They should not just be lectures. Students should do tasks in real time, either by themselves or with partners. On some online platforms, students may be able to work in their own online groups (e.g. 'breakout rooms' in online conferencing services), which you can drop into. If this is not possible, students may be able to communicate directly with each other through an instant messaging app or speak on another device.

6. Synchronous sessions can also have an offline component, to allow students to have a break from the screen. You could set short tasks such as:

   • practise the language that you have just learned with a family member

   • write a summary in your book

   • read a story in the textbook

   • draw a picture for the next activity

7. When running synchronous sessions, you should be in control of the audio. You need to be able to mute people, otherwise lots of people may be speaking at once (which may be confusing), and some students may be in very loud locations where there is a lot of ambient noise (which makes it difficult for others to hear). However, let students decide if they want to use their video or not. That should be their decision. If the bandwidth is okay, it's better if you can use the video for yourself so they can all see and hear you.

8. If you use an open link, be careful about people from outside joining in. As a safety measure, where possible, do not put the session link on an open platform (e.g. in a social media post), but rather send it directly to participants, e.g. via email or instant message, or tell them face to face, if this is possible.

9. If providing asynchronous materials, it should not just be an 'information dump'. Think carefully about what materials you want students to use, and how they are going to use them. Think quality, not quantity.

10. When teaching online, it's important not to forget the human element – you need to humanize online teaching. You are still their teacher, and need to show interest, kindness and understanding; you are not a speaking avatar. Be flexible and patient, and appreciate the difficulties which your students might be experiencing in their daily lives.

Social media

Please share your views about this episode, and the series, on social media using the hashtag #TEBC. Let us know your thoughts, reflections, comments and whether you have been able to use any of the ideas in your teaching.

Detailed notes

Use these notes to find out more about the contents of Episode 5.

Phrase	Explanation and Further Information
Field Report: Ceibal en Inglés	
Ceibal en Inglés	Click here to find out more about this programme.
Connectivity	A generic term for connecting devices to each other in order to transfer data back and forth.
Remote teaching	Remote teaching occurs outside of a physical classroom. Instructors are separated from their learners in time and distance. Remote teaching is typically facilitated through technology, such as video conferencing software, discussion boards or learning management systems. This type of teaching may be synchronous, where students watch instructors deliver their lectures live, or asynchronous, where students watch lecture recordings at a later point in time.
CPD	CPD = Continuous Professional Development. CPD refers to any activity, formal or informal, that helps you develop your skills and knowledge, and enhances your professional practice.
Interview with Raquel Ribeiro	
Raquel Ribeiro	Find out more about Raquel on this blog by Cambridge University Press.
Google Innovator	Click here to discover more about this initiative.
Remote teaching in Brazil	You can read an article about this topic by clicking here.

WhatsApp	Click on the link to read an interesting Teaching English article entitled WhatsApp and English teaching-learning.
Google Classroom	According to Google Classroom, "Classroom is a free service for schools, non-profits and anyone with a personal Google Account. Classroom makes it easy for learners and instructors to connect – inside and outside of schools. Classroom saves time and paper and makes it easy to create classes, distribute assignments, communicate and stay organised."
Integrating offline with online teaching	Read this interesting blog comparing offline and online teaching.
Using cameras	Strategies to Encourage Students to Turn Their Cameras On – an interesting and thought-provoking blog on Edutopia.

Useful links

- Innovations in Education: Remote teaching – a British Council publication with lessons learnt from the Ceibal en Inglés programme

- A very interesting webinar entitled "The hybrid classroom: dilemmas, choices and solutions"

- Remote teaching tips – a free British Council publication

- English Teaching Talks - Integrating ICT

- Remote teaching guidance

Glossary

The following words at the B2, C1 and C2 level (according to the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#)) are used in this episode.

B2 words

academic
acquire
additional
aspect
aspects
assist
barrier
chart
clothing
commitment
communicative
comparison
concentration
concern
consideration
context
contexts
continuous
contribute
council
curve
data
device
devices
disabilities
distant
educational
effective
effectively
elements
emotional
episode
episodes
evolution

failure
feature
features
fellow
flexible
focus
force
genuine
get to
going through
google
got to
heard of
highly
host
ideal
implement
inspiring
interactive
involvement
learner
learners
look at
looking at
major
majority
make the most of
management
media
memorable
microphone
monitor
motivated
naturally
necessarily

neighbouring
networks
observed
outskirts
overcome
passionate
practical
preserve
process
productive
publication
react
reflections
relevant
remote
researchers
resource
resources
rural
shortage
specific
steady
strategies
struggling
sudden
technical
to do with
try out
vividly
volunteer

C1 words

acknowledge
adaptations
catering for

collaborate
collaborating
collaboration
component
components
diversity
duration
embrace
engage
evolve
evolving
focuses
inclusion
inclusive
innovative
keep track
made it
make it
mode
monitoring
overwhelmed
perspective
premises
related to

C2 words

core
engage in
faraway
inequality
lecturing
parallel
practitioner
resilience
scenario