iatefl **LT**

# REMOTE TEACHING
# TEACHING ONLINE

*IATEFL, 2-3 The Foundry, Seager Road, Faversham, ME13 7FD, UK.*

## About this special edition of LT

Welcome to **LT**, the newsletter of the **IATEFL LTSIG**. This month we are happy to present to you this **special edition** with a focus on **remote teaching** (**teaching live online**), especially directed at those who are new to this type of teaching. We thought it timely, with so many teachers having to move their face-to-face classes online because of **the Covid-19 virus** sweeping the world.

There has suddenly been **an explosion of interest in online teaching** because so many schools are closing because of the pandemic. Whilst much of this is temporary, and we hope and trust things will return to normal soon, what is clear from the rush by so many to move their classes online, is that language teachers, schools, and organisations **need to be better prepared in case something similar happens in the future**. I predict there will be a longer lasting interest in teaching online once this crisis is over. It is also good practice for anyone who thinks they might find themselves having to do so, to learn how to do it well, in **a principled and sound way**. The good news is that **many of the skills required are those required of a face-to-face teacher**. However, teaching online is **not simply a case of trying to do the same as you normally would**, only over an internet connection. I recommend you read and learn from those who have lots of experience, and there is much to be learned in this edition of **LT**.

The bulk of the newsletter is taken up by interviews with **leading experts on teaching online**, who have been very generous with their time and knowledge. I am very grateful to **Carol Rainbow**, **Nick Bilsborough**, **Gavin Dudeney**, **Lindsay Clandfield**, **Ann Fox** and for agreeing to be interviewed at short notice, and I think you'll agree with me that their collected wisdom makes for **a unique insight into how best to approach the remote teaching of English**. I have collected a number of **useful links about online teaching in general**, including dynamic documents and curated collections that are being added to constantly.

Also in this edition is an interview by Phil Longwell with **Marion Odell** and **Helen Legge**, about their **experiences as teachers new to remote teaching**, and an article by **Abdulhameed Aldurayheem**, looking at **vocabulary retention using Twitter**.

On behalf of us all in the **LTSIG** Committee, I hope you find this special edition of **LT** useful. Please remember to write **if you would like to give us feedback** or **contribute an article**. You can contact me on graham.stanley@ltsig.org.uk.

**Graham Stanley,**
**LT** newsletter editor,
Mexico City, Mexico

## From the Co-ordinator: Moving online

It is certainly **challenging times** for all of us facing the impact of the **Covid-19 pandemic** and I hope you and yours are keeping safe.

As I write my Coordinator column I can't help but think that the world of education seems very different from what it was when I last wrote to you. In response to the present situation, face-to-face classes have been suspended - perhaps for the remainder of the academic year - and teaching is increasingly moving online. We are well aware that this transition presents significant challenges especially for those unfamiliar with online teaching. Many schools and teachers have been thrown in at the deep end trying their best to rise to the challenge and maintain continuity with their students. At the same time, we are amazed by the resources that experts and edtech companies, big and small, have now made available for free to facilitate this transition. Hats off to you all!

For decades the **LTSIG** has been advocating principled e-learning as an effective alternative to face-to-face teaching. Some believe that **the present crisis may signal a major paradigm shift to online education,** but I think we should approach these claims with caution. The rapid 'onlinification' models that have emerged as a response to the pandemic are significantly different from e-learning as we know it. **In normal circumstances, developing an online course involves systematic design, trial, implementation and review by a team** - academics, instructional designers, educational technologists and programmers. No reasonable comparison can be made when this is implemented in a quick, ad-hoc way to respond to a pandemic. There are of course varied degrees of familiarity with learning technologies and some educators might have found it easier than others to adjust. However, a good number of them have been forced to dive into uncharted waters and get ready to teach online overnight. I fear that **presenting e-learning as a quick fix for face-to-face teaching will not result in positive experiences for students and teachers**. If we are to sustain a good experience for all, institutions should realise that teachers may need more support than just a demonstration of the basics. At the same time, everyone (teachers, students and parents alike) may be facing more significant problems than logging into a computer to cover a syllabus. At a time like this, wouldn't it be better to stop worrying too much about the things that we can't do, focus on those that we can and be reassured that it is absolutely fine to **learn as we go along**?

The good news is that the LTSIG Committee, constantly resourceful and creative, is putting together a series of publications, webinars and recordings with advice and best practices on how to make this transition a better experience for teachers. This newsletter is part of this project and, to help the broader IATEFL community, it is being sent out to all members, not just the LTSIG. We would like it to reach as many language teachers as possible, especially those who are currently struggling to adjust to this new reality. So, feel free to share it with your own networks

and teacher communities along with other resources that e-learning experts have been generously contributing.

Will this sudden global shift to online learning result in more people embracing the potential of technology? Will it help teachers and students to develop their digital literacies or will it widen existing digital divides? Finally, **will technology continue to have a prominent role in education when the crisis is over or will it be something to resort to in emergency circumstances?** These are good questions for when this pandemic is behind us. Until then, we must all stick together, strengthen our communities, listen to good advice and support our students and each other rise up to the challenge.

Stay safe,

**Sophia Mavridi**

**IATEFL LTSIG Co-ordinator**

Another announcement I'd like to make is that we are launching a series of webinars on different aspects of 'How to teach English online': **LTSIG Fridays,** every Friday from 3pm - 4pm UK time.

I would like to reiterate the invitation to all our members to write for us in these two sections of the newsletter: **"My journey in Learning Technologies"**, where we will showcase members' experiences that have led them to becoming interested in learning technologies, and **"Tech it Easy"**, where we will post practical ideas using/integrating technology. If you are interested in sharing your ideas for these sections, you can contact me at vicky@ltsig.org.uk.

**Vicky Saumell,**
**LTSIG** Treasurer.
Buenos Aires,
Argentina

## Online Teaching and Learning

A collection of links to useful documents and advice

*There has suddenly been **an explosion of interest in online teaching and learning**, due to **Covid-19** preventing many schools and other educational organisations from opening. Here are some of what **LT** hopes is the most **useful list of advice and suggestions** of how to best transition to this form of teaching. Some of it is about the technology, but as LT readers know, the technology is only part of the picture, it's what you do with the technology (i.e. how you use it, the pedagogy) that is important. It's also important not to get overwhelmed. There is a lot of information and many links here, but try to keep things simple to start with, and remember to keep things student-centred and interactive.*

- **Advice and Resources to support language teachers in response to the Corona virus outbreak**. This is a dynamic document, compiled by **Joe Dale**, independent languages consultant in the UK and no stranger to LTSIG members. In this, Joe shares a wealth of resources, advice and links to other information about **getting started**; **tips for remote teaching**; **videoconferencing and other online tools**, etc. There are links to webinar recordings, podcasts and groups where teachers can go to find help. It's a treasure trove that keeps on growing.

- **The Challenges of Teaching Online**. This free online course from **FutureLearn** is a great place to start if you find yourself having to learn quickly how best to move your teaching online. As well as good practice, you will join a growing community of educators who are all in the same boat.

- The **British Council's TeachingEnglish website** is running a series of webinars to help teachers getting started with teaching online. You can join sessions such as **Teaching online - using your coursebook and ideas for breakout rooms**.

- **English UK**. A special page has been set up with links to information and webinars for ELT providers,including one on *moving classes online and using Zoom*.

- **Remote Learning: Building Community and Skill**s. There are some interesting activities on this page from **LangWitches**, including a 5-day plan. In particular, there is a useful focus on seeing this move to **learning remotely as an opportunit**y, rather than a setback.

- Do you work in **Higher Education**? If so, then **the online learning collective** may be the best place for you to start. This was initiated to help college and university educators **transition from face-to-face instruction to online and remote learning**.

- **Problems with remote teaching because of connectivity**? If so, then this may be just what you are looking for: **Videoconferencing alternatives: How low-bandwidth teaching will save us all**.
- **UNESCO** has a number of different initiatives to help schools support students and teachers hit by closures.
- **E-learning response to Covid19**. E-learning expert **Stephen Downes** has a guide for anyone **creating an online course or conference** that has some very useful information in it, although not specific to language education. The crowd-sourced resources are all **free**; **in the cloud**; **don't involve apps**.; and **don't require a credit card to register**. This is useful for anyone who wants **a good overview of the technology available to support online learning**.
- **Tony Bates** has published his useful **Advice to those about to teach online because of the corona-virus**. This includes: **get professional advice and help before you start**; **get the right technology**; **get organised**; **avoid long lectures**; **watch the student workload**.
- **Kathleen Morris** has published some useful **Resources for Teaching Online due to School Closures**. In this blog post, you'll find the following discussed: **synchronous vs asynchronous**; **example timetables**: **structured vs a to do list**; **how to plan an online lesson**; **examples of how video is weaved into the day**; and many more.
- The **LTSIG**'s **Vicky Saumell** is collecting **resources and links for online teaching and learning on Pinterest**.
- TEFL teacher, trainer, writer and manager, **Sandy Millin** is blogging about her experience of moving classes online, with posts such as **Ideas for adapting group lessons to working on Zoom**.
- If you are **remote teaching a language via videoconferencing**, then here are some ideas on **how to keep students engaged and motivated** based on what has been learned over the least seven years on the **Remote Teaching** project in Uruguay. There's also a **Remote Teaching Facebook group** for teachers if you want to join a community.
- **Best practice for language teaching online** - another list of resources and good advice.
- **Macmillan** also has an interesting **series of webinars for ELT teachers** moving their classes online
- **Nile** is offering a free course, **Take your Teaching Online**.
- **Russell Stannard** has some very good resources available, especially his **Youtube tutorials for making the most of Zoom**.

## The LT Interviews

### What to consider when teaching remotely

Interview with **Carol Rainbow** by **Graham Stanley**

*Carol Rainbow lives in Oxfordshire in the UK and has taught all ages from pre-school through primary and secondary schools, university and adults. When computers arrived on the educational scene she soon became absolutely hooked on what they could offer for education, quickly became an ICT Coordinator and went on to become an ICT Consultant for Oxfordshire LA working with teachers to make sure ICT plays a key role in enhancing pupil education in Oxfordshire schools. Currently Carol teaches teachers from all over the world how to teach online for The Consultants-E.*
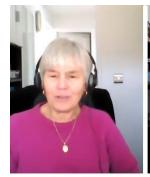
**LT:** Carol, what do you think are the key factors teachers need to keep in mind when teaching online, especially at this particular time when we are seeing a lot of people moving their classes or teaching online because of the Covid-19 crisis?

**CR:** Well I think the key is to remember that all their well-honed teaching skills are still needed in the online classroom. People seem to think it's something vastly different, but the teaching skills aren't, the teaching skills are exactly the same. It's the delivery technique that is different and if people can be relaxed and keep that in perspective, delivering online is not so frightening.  I know for some people, it's a huge thought change, but it's not that bad when you come to do it. If you imagine having a conversation with your best friend on Skype, it's not so far different from that.

So, one of the key things I think is that when you're in a synchronous situation using, for example Zoom; Wiz IQ; Adobe Connect; Blackboard Collaborate; Big Blue Button; any of the  other hundred tools you can name, you need to make the most of the speaking opportunities.

All the reading, extended reading, listening, writing shouldn't be done in the virtual classroom. They should be done in a virtual learning environment (VLE),  such as Moodle, Edmodo, Schoology, etc. There are lots of those as well, but the short amount of time you spend in something like Zoom, should be devoted to speaking. So, it's really making sure that you've got your flipped classroom idea sorted, so that the reading,

writing and all the rest of it, is done outside the classroom. And then you can make the most of the speaking opportunities while you are together.

**LT**:  That is very good advice. In particular, that's the kind of advice that someone who isn't used to teaching online would need. I imagine their first reaction would be to try and teach online the way they teach face to face. And as you say, some of the skills that a teacher already has are very important, are just as valid, but then the dynamics are different. Is that what you've seen in your teacher training, to help them teach online?.

**CR**: I think it's a shock to people at first, just how much is possible in the online classroom, how many different sorts of activities you can bring into play, what a lovely variety you can have. That, and the fact that you can do pair-work, and small group work so easily and much more effectively than in the classroom. That's because, where you've got two students doing a speaking exercise, talking about a sticky question, discussing ranking tasks and things like that, they're not interrupted by the rest of the class. They can have their own private little area in something that we call breakout rooms and breakout rooms are easy to use. But once again, that is a point where some teachers think they can't cope with that, and they seem to think it's difficult, whereas, in fact, it's splitting people into groups and sending them off into little tiny rooms to work together for five or six minutes before bringing them back and gathering their answers.



**LT**:  It's very typical for what a teacher would do in the face to face classroom as well, the kind of group work that, in order to do effectively in a face-to-face setting, you would monitor. So, referring to that, how do you monitor online with breakout rooms?

**CR**: Once you've created your breakout rooms, in something like Adobe Connect or Zoom, the teacher can see a nice clear set of rooms in front of them and they see a button to click on so they can join. They can then pop in and out of each room with the click of a button. As soon as they get into a breakout room, they see a leave button, which means they can leave it again. So, they can pop in and out of each room. Students can actually call a teacher in for help if they need support or help. But of course, most of the monitoring is done when they come back to the main room and people present their work, whatever they've done. They might have been asked to come to a decision about a ranking task, in which case each pair should have their own answers and be able to justify them. They might have been discussing the sticky question, in which case they could come back with a shared, agreed answer. They might have been practising a dialogue so they can come back and perform their little dialogue. They could have been doing a roleplay or they might come back and do a role play. There will be evidence of what they've been doing when they come back to the main room, and that's of course when

correction is much easier as well, because the teacher can pick up on the really good points and make a list of issues which need to be addressed in another lesson.

**LT:** Excellent. You mentioned sticky questions a couple of times Now, what does that mean and how would you use it when teaching online?

**CR:** So, if you teach children it might be something like *Should school uniforms be abolished? Should drugs be made legal? Would you tell anybody if your best friend was stealing from the supermarket? What if they were given what they stole to an orphanage?* Those sorts of things where there's no good, right or wrong answer. They will need to have a fixed amount of time to do the task and come back. Otherwise, they can spend too much time talking about everything under the sun and wasting time because the teacher is not there with them.

**LT:** So how much time is best for a breakout room? You mentioned a number of minutes there. Is that typical for a breakout room activity?

**CR:** Yes, I think that depends on the age of your learners. If you have, for example, a group of teachers, they will chat away about pedagogy for 20 minutes, and that's not a problem. If you've got a group of teenagers discussing whether it's right or wrong to steal from a supermarket, I think 5 minutes is going to be plenty.



**LT:** Of course. That brings me to another question which you've already touched upon. What other things need to be taken into account? Clearly one thing is the age of the students when teaching online? It's obvious with adults that they should be able to take responsibility for their own learning and should be able to turn up with everything working etc. but what about younger learners or even older learners?

**CR:** Wow, where do I start? For beginner online learners, whatever the age, I think I'd be very inclined to do a previous drop in session, half an hour or so, depending on the size of the group. This would be half an hour before you start teaching where they can come in and test their sound, try the camera. And just for them to understand that it is 'a face to face' online situation. Because otherwise you can lose half your first lesson. just getting everybody's microphone working. So, I think I try to do a drop-in session beforehand for all my groups.

I think I would want an alternative communication system too. That might be email, it might be Facebook Messenger, it might be Whatsapp, but if you're teaching children you've got to be very

careful because no teacher would want to find children's phone numbers on their own phone. That would be a definite no no. So, Whatsapp for above the age of 18 is brilliant. You can send everyone a quick message for example, saying "OK technical hitch over, let's meet in 5 minutes", etc. Or more likely, a reminder that our class is in 5 minutes. For young learners under the age of 18, I think possibly emails.to everybody would work, with the link to the online class.

**LT:** Yes, good idea. With all you have mentioned online, how do teachers train for that? How did they get ready apart from, of course, taking a course with you?

**CR:** Well, for me, the way I learned was, I tried everything I was going to do out on my daughter. Teachers, if they're all in the same boat, then it should be very easy to find a colleague who needs to practise and learn the same skills. So, I'd say, prepare your lesson. take into account that this part of the lesson is mostly communicative skills and try it out with another teacher for the first couple of times. If they try it out on you so you see it from a student's point of view, you know what your students are going to see, and you know. So if there's a group of three or four teachers that want to work together to try things out and practise with each other.



**LT:** Excellent. What about sharing resources and materials with students?

**CR:** Yes, of course. So, in any of the virtual classrooms, teachers can share their presentations. In some, you can share videos, but you may need to give students the links if their connectivity is not great. You can share pictures, which of course will inspire conversation discussion. You can annotate pictures if you use annotation tools. You can share word documents, Google Docs, virtually everything you might want. Using realia is a good idea. You can hold objects up to the camera and share them. In fact, anything you do is your usual classroom lesson you can bring together and share in a virtual classroom, not that I'd recommend using long texts by any means, or lengthy listening activities. Ideally, audios should be done out of the virtual room, but almost anything to inspire conversation, discussion etc can be shared in the virtual classroom.

**LT:** How do teachers best prepare for teaching live online?

**CR:** It's all about preparing to make the most of that time live with the students. So, make sure that everything is working beforehand, make sure that you're prepared, that you have a plan ready, that you're able to make the most of the time. Not trying to do long reading texts or writing online is a good idea. That can be done off-line in the Virtual Learning environment (VLE). So

that's important. Mostly, I'd recommend concentrating on spoken discussion activities, ranking activities, ethical questions, sticky questions, sticky statements.



*Thanks to Carol Rainbow for sharing her time and knowledge. Carol works for the TCE and can be contacted at carol.rainbow@theconsultants-e.com.*



*Do you have something to share with LTSIG members?*

*Want to suggest a topic for the next interview?*

*Know someone LT should interview?*

*Send an email to graham.stanley@ltsig.org.uk*

### Remote teaching and drama

Interview with **Nick Bilsborough** by **Graham Stanley**

*Nick Bilbrough is a teacher trainer, and an author of books for language teachers. He has an MA in Drama in Education from the University of Central England and 25 years' experience in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. He is the Founder and Coordinator of **the Hands Up project**, which began as an online storytelling project for children in Palestine, allowing them to connect to the world with volunteer teachers. Nick says he is "consistently blown away by the enthusiasm, the energy and the drive to reach out by Palestinian and Syrian children."*

**LT**: Nick, maybe we can start with you telling us more about **the Hands Up project**.

**NB:** So, I'm a teacher, teacher trainer and writer of materials for language teachers, and for the last five years I've been running **the Hands Up project**, which has been a UK registered charity for three years now. We work mostly with young people in Gaza, and in the West Bank. We also used to work in refugee camps for Syrian children in Jordan. We are now working with around, 500 Kids a week. It's really difficult to say how many kids. I did an estimate a couple of years ago and we have grown a lot since then.

**LT**: You teach the kids remotely, is that right?

**NB:** What we do is use **Zoom** to connect to groups of children, usually in classes. We do sessions where we connect to a teacher in a school in Palestine for a 45-minute session, and we support that teacher by providing the teacher with opportunities for the children to interact with somebody outside their immediate environment. We encourage children and young people to perform things themselves, so often in a session they will, by providing the teacher with opportunities for the children to interact with somebody outside their immediate environment. We do a lot of things like story telling. I wrote a book for the British Council called Stories Alive and we use a lot of material from that in the sessions. Often in a session the children will sing a song, perform a play, or do a presentation about something. We work with quite large groups, sometimes up to 50 students in a group, although some of our groups are a lot smaller, and so we've kind of worked out a special way of working, because the group sizes tend to be quite large.

**LT**: Let me let me stop you there. Do you also teach the children?

**NB:** I always say to people that we're not really teaching in **the Hands up project**.

**LT**:  Is the reason that the students already have experienced teachers in the classroom?

**NB:** Yes, that's it. They use a course book called English for and the teachers tend to have quite good level of English. The teachers working with the students know the curriculum inside out as well. So the teachers work with the remote volunteers, deciding on what the session is going to be about, and perhaps saying to the remote volunteer, could we do a session on food, because we've got something in the course about that? The volunteer could tell a story about that or something related, so it's a type of team teaching.  People do it in different ways, but it tends to be that the remote volunteer is involved more in talking and listening rather than teaching.



**LT**: OK, so this is an opportunity for the children to use their English in some very interesting ways as well. You talked about how you encourage the use of drama. Could you speak a little bit more about that? How do you go about using drama online? That is quite unusual, to foster the use of drama online.

**NB:** I noticed from going to Palestine lots of times that drama was popular and had potential. The first time I went to Gaza, I went with Scott Thornbury and one of the first things that happened in the conference was that we were treated to an amazing performance of a play kids had created themselves, so on the way back to Jerusalem, Scott and I chatted about the idea of launching a playwriting competition in English for kids. Three years ago, we started that competition. The idea was that they had to make a 5-minute play, with five actors, and it had to be performed in English. They had to send us the script and the video of the play.

**LT**: What a wonderful idea.

**NB:** Yes, and we asked them to send us the script and the video of the play, but we quickly realised that people were making plays in a very high-tech way. The first year they were making plays, they had professional film directors coming in and helping them and also doing lots of editing of the film. We found that the kids didn't necessarily speak that much English. They just

managed to edit the film in a way that it made it look like they were doing that. So, from that the second year that we ran the competition, we got this idea for **remote theatre**. So, we think this is a kind of knew genre of theatre, remote theatre performed through Zoom. So, the plays are made and when they submit plays for the competition, and they have to film them, they can do it on a mobile phone. The rule is that they have to just do it all in one take, with no editing whatsoever. And they can't move the camera. You have to keep the camera completely still, and this means, of course, that it's better for language learning, because it means that they've got to know what they're going to say for the whole 5 minutes. They have to remember it and get it in their bodies in their minds. It's much, much more valuable than if they were edited. It also means that we've got lots of plays that can be performed remotely, and many of these plays have been performed at conferences around the world.



**LT**: And the reaction has been very positive, hasn't it?

**NB:** Yes, for instance, in 2018 at Westminster University , and at the Young Learner Conference in Chile. We did a performance from Gaza directly to all the people who are who were at the conference. Last week I was in the Ways with Words literature festival in the Lake District and we did live performances. So, it's a very unique form of theatre. because it involves certain techniques which are not present in other forms of theatre. For instance, you can get really close to the webcam and make eye contact with the audience. You can hide and disappear, and you can use puppets, and masks. Another nice thing about Zoom is the virtual background feature, so we're encouraging people to use a green screen, as long as they do it in real time, as long as they change the picture in real time. They can add interesting backgrounds to their pieces of theatre. Of course, that's thrown up lots of other problems, because now green screen technology is available as an editing thing, isn't it? The last time, people had it on their mobile phones, so we had to be really careful with this year's competition trying to work out whether people had actually done it in real time, or whether they'd done it in front of a green screen and then added the pictures later. But it's all a learning experience for us, this new form of theatre. Kids in Palestine are very good at it. It's something that's really come from them, and so we're excited about developing it in all kinds of different directions now.

**LT:** So, if there are people who are reading this who want to do something similar of their own, either get involved with your project, or to do something similar with their own class as an interesting way of involving them online, what's the best way of starting?

**NB:** They can get in touch with us. For instance, Adrian Underhill has just been working with a school in Spain, where they were working on their own piece of remote theatre, and they linked to a class in Gaza. They performed their plays to each other and then they had a chance to talk to each other about them. This is something we're trying to expand all around the world. I'm running training courses in remote theatre in Croatia, that is if I'm allowed to travel again from the UK in the summer. So, we are trying to train people in this particular form of theatre.



**NB:** There are lots of ways of linking up classes. We do an online show and tell as well. At the end of last year I spent about a month in the Balkans, visiting schools in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania. I was going into schools, linking a class there to a class in Gaza. And I just often did things like to say, bring something along to the session that means something to you. You hold it up to the webcam and talk about it, and then they do the same in the other context. It's amazing how motivating that can be. We had some lovely moments. For instance, a girl in Gaza showed a bracelet that her friend had given to her when she moved away from the city where she lives. She held it right up to the webcam and told the story of how her friend had given it to her. And then a girl in Croatia said, oh, I've got a bracelet like that and she held her bracelet up and talked about it, how it was given to her by her older sister when she moved away to University.

**LT:** A touching moment, I'm sure.

**NB:** Yes, it was. They were practising their English in a motivating way but also finding something in common with somebody who lives in another place. So, it can be very exciting. We've got something like 40 active volunteers at the moment around the world. Unfortunately, because of the current situation [covid-19] they can't connect to groups of kids in schools. So, what we're doing is trying to move over to Facebook Live. Obviously that works in a different way because we can't see the kids.

**LT:** Why did you choose Facebook live?

**NB:** Um, because Facebook is massive. In Palestine it's used so much by teachers and students. We've already got quite a big network in our Facebook groups related to the Hands Up Project. So, what we tend to do is trying to get as many kids as possible in the session. We had something like 600 people in one recent session, connecting from home So they were connecting from home and writing comments. We're having to adapt the way that we work. It's a different way of working, but I think it's also got its benefits. For instance, today I was doing a story with a group of five kids. I was asking them to focus a little on the past simple and I would scaffold and reformulate what they said and hold this up on a mini whiteboard.

**LT**:  A mini whiteboard?

**NB:** Yes, this is one of my favourite tools for doing this online work. I actually prefer it to the online whiteboard in Zoom. I think one of the things I like about Zoom, why I prefer it over other similar tools like Adobe Connect is that it can be kind of quite intimate somehow. Sometimes we do a session and there are kids right up to the webcam, the whole screen is full of kids, almost breaking through the screen.

**LT**: Is that because they are usually clustered around the teachers computer?

**NB:** Yes, that is it. In most places that we work, they will have a projector, they'll have speakers, and a computer, so we tend to be projected onto the big screen. They can see us. And if we are telling a story, I think that can be very powerful. You want a big screen but we are also experimenting with this idea of green screen storytelling. So, trying to encourage people to use a backdrop that they change for the stories. When I first started doing these sessions, I suppose I did them in a different way. I showed a picture and elicited vocabulary about the picture, asking them to call out what they could see. This doesn't work very well in an online session. It's very difficult to hear what anyone is saying If they're not really close up to the webcam. So we do a lot of group activities now. But we emphasise a lot what Jane Willis might call the feedback stage of the activity, where they get to perform. We might do an activity where we say, here's a picture, can you try and name as many things as you can in the picture?

And they work in groups. They brainstorm what they can see in the picture and then we get maybe one person from each group to say the things that they can see. Then we might write them up, and we might turn it into a game by saying if you repeat a word that another team has said, your team is out or something like that. So, we encourage group and pair work, but still emphasising the moment at the front when they come and interact with the remote volunteer. I think is important because that's usually the only chance that they have to interact with somebody outside of Gaza. Most people under the age of 20 have never been out of the Gaza Strip. So, it's very powerful.

**LT**: Not only from a language point of view…

**NB:** Yes, not only from a language point of view, but from a cultural point of view, of course. Definitely. The sessions are very popular. There are a lot of very disappointed kids in Palestine at the moment because they're not having their regular sessions. People get attached to their remote volunteer as well. Not only the kids, but also the teachers. We've got some very interesting friendships that have developed between the classroom teacher and the remote volunteer.

**LT**: OK, that's excellent. Many thanks for telling me about how this works. I hope things get back to normal soon so you can continue with this wonderful project.



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## Planning for remote teaching

### Interview with **Anne Fox** by **Graham Stanley**

*Anne Fox (https://annefox.eu) is a freelance online learning consultant specialising in language*



*learning, intercultural communication and entrepreneurship. After moving to Denmark in the nineties she became a language teacher using the emerging digital technologies both in her teaching and to keep in touch with her now distant family. In Denmark, she has worked in language schools, a vocational college and an adult residential high school. She has also been an assistant professor at NTNU in Norway and is a regular visiting teacher at the Koblenz Hochschule in Germany. Anne is co-host and producer of the Absolutely Intercultural podcast which started in 2006 and currently works mainly on European projects that explore new and innovative approaches to learning. She is also an author including an*

*English course book for Danish seniors to help them communicate when they travel.*

**LT**: What do teachers need to keep in mind when preparing to teach remotely?

**AF**: This is a difficult question to answer because it depends on the circumstances. I imagine there are teachers who are school teachers with about five, six, maybe more classes per week, and that's obviously more challenging than if you are a tutor who sees a few students a week. So, the scale matters and it's difficult to give general information. However, there are obviously a few things I would say, but it's very context dependent. We could assume all students have got access to the Internet, a computer and so on, and that may not be the case. And related to the coronavirus situation, for example, I am in Denmark, and my default position would be I go to the library, but the libraries are closed. Actually, if you're in a school, I would also strongly recommend collaborating and coordinating with the other teachers, because what could end up happening is that the students are overloaded because every teacher assumes that they've got the whole day to devote to their class, when in fact the students may have many demands being made on them

by other teachers. That's really a management issue, but it might be that the management doesn't think of it, so, coordinating  is important.

The other thing I would say about getting ready or keeping in mind is to look at your existing channels because most teachers nowadays already have existing channels of communicating online with their students. Even if it's simple email. Or maybe they have their own LMS in the institution. Look your existing channels and see what you can do with those. That would be my main piece of advice as far as thinking about it in the future.



**LT**:  Thanks very much.  What mistakes do teachers who are unfamiliar with teaching online usually make, in your experience?

**AF**: I think the main mistake is focusing too much on the online aspect, and thinking it's all about the tools, when actually, as I just said, you should look at what you're already using. What have you already done? Do more of that and try and think about how you can use that to your advantage rather than thinking that you've got to suddenly get access to a whole lot of New tech tools, which is going to take you ages to learn how to use their best advantage. So, I think that thinking it's all about the tech is a mistake. Put the pedagogy first, absolutely. The other problem is that when you're in class, you take a lot of cues from what's going on in the classroom. The faces of your students, for example. You can see if they've understood or not. When you're online, you have to give really clear, detailed instructions. I'm actually doing teacher training at the moment, and one of my participants said it would help  to think about going back to primary school, and I thought, actually, that was helpful. When you're in primary school, you have to make sure that you are giving really clear and detailed instructions so that your students know what's expected of them. I think this is something that you need to bear in mind. You can't just say watch the video and tell me what you think. You have to give word limits. You have to give an indication of how long the video is going to be. So, you need to give a lot of detail that you don't necessarily think of doing

when you're in the classroom. Any other mistakes? Thinking of online learning as doing a classroom session online and then feeling constrained That can mean the teacher ends up giving a lecture for the whole time that you would have been in class. I think that's a mistake. It's not what you would do in a class these days, and also it's a good idea to aim for bite size chunks, to change the pace, check with students whether they've understood, and then move on to something else.



**LT**:  Very good advice…

**AF**: The other thing is that the tasks need to be varied too, and I think it is not easy to see immediately how you can give a variety of tasks when you start teaching online. People tend to think of showing a video, reading tasks, answer some questions, make a multiple-choice quiz and the imagination doesn't go much further than that. But there are lots of things you can do. It would be a good idea to think about variety of tasks. Another problem is trying to aim to match the time online with the in-class time. I think that's a mistake because you should be aiming to perhaps reduce the amount of time live online, to give students more asynchronous tasks that they can then report to when they see you online. So, I think you have to think about the actual live online time and think about how it might be beneficial to give more asynchronous tasks. Having said that, the other problem is that, especially at first, it can take longer to do the same thing online than if you were doing it in class. I think that's a question of learning how to do things, but you will always have the initial "Can you hear me? Can you see the chat?" stuff that goes on at the beginning of an online session and that can take time away from your what you perceive is your teaching time. That's probably something that only happens at the beginning and once you get into it, it's OK.

**LT**: What about other recommendations for teachers who are new to this type of teaching? Apart from what you just mentioned?

**AF**: I would say relax. This may be the time to not stick to the original Lesson plan. It may be the time to abandon some tests, maybe even some exams, dare I say it, but that depends on your school management. Really, if you can be a little bit flexible and relax and don't expect to cover as much as you might have done in the face-to-face it will help. The other thing I would say is it is really important to keep the communication channels open proactively? I guess that your students already know that they can reach you by email, but maybe they wouldn't dare too and so you have to be proactive. It doesn't have to be by email. It can be through the institution LMS, but proactively being in touch with your students at distance is important. Show that you're thinking of them and that you're actually interested in what they're doing, I think that is essential Maybe you want to announce some office hours. As I've been doing this for nearly 20 years now, I don't know what it's like to do it for the first time, but I can imagine that one thing that might be could a problem is organising the work. I think that in preparation, teachers might want to set up a good set of online folders to prepare yourself for the work that's going to be coming in digitally.

**LT**: Many thanks, Anne, for all the useful advice.

## Teaching online with a coursebook

### Interview with **Lindsay Clandfield** by **Graham Stanley**

*Lindsay Clandfield is an award-winning writer, teacher, teacher trainer and international speaker in the field of English language teaching. He has written more than ten coursebooks including Global and Straightforward (Macmillan), and Studio (Helbling Languages). Lindsay was the series editor of the Delta Teacher Development books and has co-written various methodology books for teachers, notably Dealing with Difficulties and Teaching Online (Delta Publishing) which he co-wrote with Nicky Hockly. His most recent methodology book was Interaction Online (CUP) which he co-wrote with Jill Hadfield. Lindsay is also the creative force behind various web projects including the popular blog Six Things, the e-publishing collective The Round, the sci-fi/adventure materials website Extreme Language Teaching and the podcast The TEFL Commute. Lindsay has taught online courses more than 15 years now, with The Consultants-E and Oxford TEFL.*



**LT**: Lindsay, can we start by you telling us a little bit about what your advice would be to anyone who is new to teaching online, especially if they would like to use the coursebook'

**LC:** I think what's happening now is a large number of people who are having to teach online in a hurry, almost in an emergency, so they are being forced from one day to another, to go online and continue their curriculum. This is a result of the coronavirus crisis, so they are continuing a syllabus which they have already begun, and they have to just keep going because there are exams at stake and so on and so forth. Many of the teachers that I'm talking with now are indeed working with a course book and are being forced to go online and continue the classes.

**LT:** So, let's talk about those a little bit. What would that involve?



**LC:** First of all, their institution may have already set up something for them. At other times it will be much less clear, and they'll just say you're going to start doing classes online. Unless you are told exactly what to do and where to do it, my advice would be to start with what you're familiar with. You're going to be reading a lot of stuff about how *this* is really good and how *that* is really good, and so on and so forth, like using **Zoom** or **YouTube** or using **Google classroom**, or using **Edmodo**, or using a **Moodle**. But begin with what you are comfortable with. At the very least, I imagine most teachers are comfortable with email and/or messaging via Whatsapp or Facebook and it may be that simple at the beginning to start with one of these tools and then slowly build on it.

**LT:** So, start small and don't complicate things at first…

**LC:** Yes. My second piece of advice is things may change, so stay flexible. That's what good pedagogy is. It is always about being flexible to the needs in the classroom. The online stuff can change. If you start with one thing and it's not working, it's OK. All of us who have taught online have learned the hard way to let things go if they are not working. If a tool is not going well, OK, let's move on and switch to another way.

**LT:** You need to find something that works for you and your context…

**LC:** Exactly. So, imagine you begin by exchanging emails and then you set up a **Google Doc** and then for example, half the students aren't able to get into it or the school says you're not allowed to use Google. I think that, just as long as you keep the communications clear, people will understand. Be honest and clear and keep going. It's OK if things change just as long as you let the learners know.

Another thing I would say, being in a country that is currently on lockdown and seeing children and students getting to grips with it, is that one thing that has been immensely reassuring is getting a personal message from the teacher. If you are able to send a personal video message to students when you're going into this thing, that's great. If you can, do a weekly personal video and/or audio message. If you can't do that, send a very personalised written message. Especially with younger learners. This provides an immense amount of comfort, and can help you if you need to make changes.



**LT:** Excellent advice.

**LC:** So, once you've decided what you're going to do, there are different options. You may be using your book; you may be doing this asynchronously or synchronously. If you are teaching online asynchronously this means you don't all have to be online at the same time. The students can do their work whenever they want. Teaching synchronously means you meet and do the work together at a set time, live. This will depend in part on what your institution provides as a platform. One thing that we've noticed in Europe and in lockdown countries is that video conferencing platforms like **Zoom** work really well for classes. Until every single classroom in every country tries to use it. So, for example in Italy, I've already started hearing that they can't use **Zoom** as easily anymore because so many people were trying to use it at the same time, and it created a strain on the Zoom servers on local Internet. If you are doing live online classes, and you're having those sorts of problems, only have one person on the webcam at the same time.

**LT:** Great, what about asynchronous work?

**LC:** I would have a dedicated place where you can post things. A **Google classroom** is easy to set up, even easier to set up would be a shared **Google Doc**, where people can go and get their work, and so on. You can expand out from there. This is a sudden situation and sudden change, and you don't having everything built out perfectly. You're going to be building it as you as you

go. For using a course book, it may be that you will be assigning a lot of the stuff to do outside of classroom.

**LT:** What's the best way to approach that?

**LC:** This would be in your weekly message. You'd say "Please read this" or "Please do the exercises in the course book." You can also assign some of the speaking tasks as writing tasks, or ask students to pair up and do a few of time via skype or whatsapp audio themselves. Of course, you may not get as much speaking practice as you normally would in the live class but at least you're starting.

If you have live online sessions where you're going to be teaching the course book, find out if your course book has a digital version. There's often a teacher's book version which is a digital version that can be projected. See if you can get a hold of that. When you have your live classes, screen share the relevant page of the book and make sure students have the book there with them too.

You may find that, when you're teaching a course book online like this, you are speaking a lot more than usual.



**LT:** So, teacher talking time increases?

**LC:** Yes. Teachers who are new to online teaching often find that they're always talking on the webcam. It is very odd to try to promote interaction if you're not used to it. That's natural. We had to train ourselves to reduce unnecessary teacher talking time in person when we became teachers. You can also do it again when you teach online. Start trying to get students answering more. This could be at the beginning, with you asking them questions. You could get students to read out exercises, parts of the text, answers. Or do open pair work, where you call on one student to ask another a question and so on. Eventually, you can move on to more focused speaking activities like in regular class. This would be usually done by using a breakout rooms in the live

online lesson. Most video conferencing sessions do have the possibility of breakout rooms. You send students into these rooms, which are like private areas where they can use audio and talk to each other. And yes, you as the teacher can go in and monitor. If you are using a Zoom or another platform which has breakout rooms, experiment with a friend first to see how it works.

**LT:** This is all great. Any final words of advice for teachers?

**LC:** Yes. My last bit of advice for online teaching of lessons is about timing. Lots of people are finding that a 90-minute class is a very long time to do a webinar (let alone a 2 or 3 hour class). I recommend making it either shorter or breaking it up into 20-minute chunks. Don't worry about having silence for more than a minute while they do a task if you have a long class. For example, I was doing a class where the students had read something. Usually I would have asked them to do it before class, but I had forgotten. I told everyone to turn off their webcams, then gave them 3 minutes to read the text. You will feel awkward sitting for three minutes in front of your computer screen, but that's fine. Again, the temptation is to talk a lot and all the time. It's not necessary. The last thing I'll say is to repeat something I was told about teaching online. At the beginning you may feel like you are teaching TO the screen. But with practice and interaction, you eventually get comfortable with it, and then you find yourself teaching THROUGH the screen. Don't worry, you'll get there!

**LT:** Many thanks for your time, Lindsay, and for sharing all of this useful advice.

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## LTSIG FRIDAYS

The IATEFL **Learning Technologies SIG** warmly invites you to join us in **a series of weekly meetings** which are designed to help English teachers around the world cope with the Corona virus crisis. There will also be **regular free and open discussions** where you can voice what kind of help you need right now and what tools you would like to know.

**Starting with Joe Dale**: 'Advice and resources to support language teachers in response to the Coronavirus outbreak' (recording available)

**Abstract:** In this practical session, Joe Dale, independent languages consultant from the U.K., shares some timely advice on how to get started with remote teaching as a language teacher. Joe has collated a comprehensive resource including advice and tutorials to support you during the Coronavirus pandemic.

In future webinars you can learn:

- How to teach English Live Online in 1:1 and 1:many classes
- How to use tools like Zoom/ Skype / MS Teams
- How to engage your students
- How to provide listening and reading tasks
- How to encourage learners to speak and to role-play online
- How to teach grammar online
- How to deal with error correction using the text chat
- How to encourage your learners to produce language by means of recordings.

There will also be regular free and open discussions where you can voice what kind of help you need right now and what tools you would like to know.

**When:** Every Friday from 3pm - 4pm UK time (GMT)

**Start:** Friday 27 March 2020

**Where:** https://zoom.us/j/885028983

**NO NEED TO PRE-REGISTER**. Join this meeting room on ZOOM at the time of the event in a browser, or if you have ZOOM already on your computer, open up with that and add the meeting room ID shown.

## Transitioning to teaching online

### Interview with **Gavin Dudeney** by **Graham Stanley**

*Gavin Dudeney is Director of Technology at The Consultants-E, and lead tutor (MATALL) on the NILE / University of Chichester MA in Professional Development for Language Education. He has worked in education for the past thirty years and gives seminars, workshops and teacher training courses for practising teachers all over the world and is also involved in materials development, for both print and online delivery.*

*He is a past coordinator of the IATEFL Learning Technologies Special Interest Group and also past editor of the SIG newsletter.*

**LT**: Gavin, can we start by telling us what connection you have to online learning, teaching and teacher training?



**GD**: My work has always been technology related, but since 2003 **the Consultants-E** has been running online training courses for teachers in the use of technology. That's one side of the work, and then obviously we do other things. This is one of those periods where all the work we've done seems to be kind of coming to the fore, with the school closures and restrictions everyone's looking at teaching online, and suddenly I think lots of people have been forced into that area, so apart from our commercial work, we're working behind the scenes with various organisations to help with that transition as well.

**LT**: What kind of things do you find people need help with? Particularly teachers or organisations that are unfamiliar with working online or teaching online.

**GD**: There are a variety of scenarios. It seems to me that the most common one at the moment is people who are simply trying to replace the experience that they were giving their learners face-to-face with an online alternative. That involves live online teaching, using something like **Zoom**

or **Adobe Connect** on **Skype** to teach one-to-one or one-to-many in real time. Those are the people who are doing it in what would be probably described as a kind of an agile, sort of ad-hoc way. And then I think behind the scenes are also organisations who are looking at this as something bigger and longer term. So, there are some organisations looking at taking this opportunity to finally make the plunge into perhaps developing their own materials, some of which may be real time synchronous and some of which may be asynchronous.

**LT**: I think they're very different audiences, aren't they?



**GD**: Really. I've been watching the language teaching organisations recently, and I think the response is great. I've seen the British Council, International House in various places - Italy springs to mind, where instead of working in isolation, which is the traditional approach to everything that we do in our profession, they are coming together. The International House schools got together to do training together. They all sat down and learned how to use **Zoom** together and they've been talking about teaching ideas and things that might work and things that don't work, and obviously also going through the organisation looking for where that expertise lies. Clearly there are people who know what they're doing, so that's been kind of heart-warming.

**LT**: It's great to see that kind of response to the situation.

**GD**: Yes, and it's in the simple steps taken where we make the most impact. I firmly believe that online synchronous real-time online teaching doesn't have to be significantly different to face-to-face teaching. In many ways it can be done well, I think, with a few visuals, a portable whiteboard, and you can hold up a few bits of realia, and especially if you're dealing with young learners, hand puppets, songs, videos, you know. None of this is any different from what we would do face-to-face. I think those people are going to be successful, the people who can take what they do and just recreate that as far as possible online. Where I think things might be going wrong is when we see the posts such as '56 tools to help you teach online' and that kind of thing. To me, that just leads most teachers to panic. Which ones do I use? What do they do? How do I work with them?

You Know, if you just find a tool, the one we're using now, for example [Zoom]. Keep it simple. Do what you would normally do. That. That's my advice for people who are in this kind of position at the moment.

**LT**: Definitely very good advice. What about asynchronous support between the live online classes? What do you think people should try to do? Is it necessary? How should they get started with that?



**GD**: I think this goes back to that old discussion of what a teacher is best for. Teachers are good at communicative activities, fluency, pronunciation, error correction, all of those things I think, work fabulously face-to-face and synchronously online too. With an asynchronous tool, what you can do is structure things around those live sessions. So, being able to give people things to read before they talk to you, before they come to the live class, some exercises to do afterwards, websites to look at. Even things slightly less exciting like grammar exercises which you can find online. I think the one thing that an asynchronous platform does is help you to structure things better. I think it's quite hard to do that if you're just doing live face-to-face sessions. So I'd use an asynchronous platform such as **Edmodo**, which is simple and easy to use. It also works on mobile devices. Use that to structure what you're doing and then make it very clear what students should do before the online meeting. If they want to do extra things, you can provide them there too. Obviously I think the live, synchronous time really should be making as much use of the teacher as possible. You know nobody needs to come to a live online class and read a text.

**LT**: A platform like **Edmodo** is also good for storing things, too, right? And what about recording the live online sessions for those students who can't attend?

 **GD**: Yes, you need somewhere to store documents, so an asynchronous platform is going to be useful for that. As for recordings, I teach on an online Master's course with Nile in Norwich and we've just been having a discussion about the live sessions that we do. During the course, which

is 8 weeks in the case of the Masters modules, we have a certain number of online sessions and as always with online sessions, it's very tricky to get everyone together. And so up until recently we've been recording those sessions and making those recordings available. It suddenly occurred to a group of us that we didn't actually know whether they were useful or not, or whether anyone actually watches them, and if they were watching them, what were they getting out of them? And so, we've been rethinking those recently and trying to decide whether we want to keep them as is or to more specifically embed them into the course so that you need to watch the recording before you can do tasks X, Y or Z, in order to guarantee that people will watch them and that they'll make sense. With recordings, the other thing is that people often put recordings on and then do the ironing or another activity, so people don't necessarily pay that much attention to them. With language classes, it's probably slightly different, and with live recordings you're going to miss out on the interactions.



**LT**: Yes, if you're looking at a recording of a language class, it may be of limited value.

**GD**: Yes. It's definitely a different kind of dynamic, isn't it? With language learning, hopefully if you're doing it properly, you're interacting with people, and if you are watching a recording it would be like sitting outside of a proper classroom and just looking in the window. So, I think watching a recording wouldn't be the same. It would be very tricky for students, but it's probably not a problem for people who are being forced into online language teaching because they're not going to have the time difference we have when doing, for example, online teacher training.

**LT**: Are there any other things that organisations need to take into account based on, the age of the students or the level of the language of the students? Or something around access to technology?

**GD**: Well, access is going to be fundamental, and anyone who's ever done a webinar for the first time with a group of people, will know how much potential time you lose in the first 10 to 15

minutes. So clearly, I think it's managing expectations, making sure that people know in the first session that there's going to be a certain amount of time wasted while solving those problems. I think organisations also need to be training their teachers. I think if a school or an organisation is saying we're moving online, then I do think they have a responsibility to actually say look, we're using this platform and I've arranged for some training for you. But again, I think if we don't over-complicate things, if we stick to one tool like **Zoom** or **Collaborate** or whatever, then you can train people to use that very quickly. And then after that, there is a minimal set of variables, things that could go wrong, people with their microphones not properly configured, etc. but there shouldn't be much of an issue.

**LT**: What about those who don't like the idea of teaching or learning online?

**GD**: There are people who are going to be, I suspect, very disappointed that their classes are happening like that, a lot of language learners. Certainly, in the private sector at least, many language learners go to language classes for other reasons. More often than actually learning the language, you know, it's a social event, it's an escape from their lives and stress, things like that. I'm hoping that most students will look at it as an opportunity to just carry on learning rather than not having lessons at all, but I suspect some people will find it disappointing and demanding and not quite as much fun as they thought they were going to have. But we have to make the best of what looks like is something that's going to last at least for the short term. And clearly it's better than nothing. And with respect to state education, they have much bigger issues to deal with than perhaps language organisations and language teachers do. They've got high stakes testing coming up. Certainly, in the northern hemisphere, there are of end of school year exams and so I think for language teachers, it's probably a chance to try out a few new things, not to get too stressed about it, and maybe because we do know there's a massive market in online teaching, some of these people will really take advantage of what is not a particularly pleasant situation to develop their skills, and then perhaps move forward with offering their own online classes, becoming their own. I think we have to try and look on this as an opportunity. Otherwise I think we're just going to be weeping into our coffees every morning.

**LT**: Yes, we both know that once you get over the initial talking to a camera, it can work very well.

**GD**: Yes, I remember, years ago when I came to Uruguay and I sat watching those teachers and I found it utterly amazing how quickly the technology disappeared, and it was just basically a teacher talking to some kids. It's definitely possible.

**LT**: Definitely, so that's the main objective, isn't it? It's a way of getting the teacher to the students.

**GD**: Absolutely. The more the technology disappears into the background, the better. I mean, talking to you now, I've completely forgotten that I'm on a computer. I'm just looking at you in what I presume is your living room and we're having a chat with each other. I think when the technology is working fine, then people tend to forget about it.
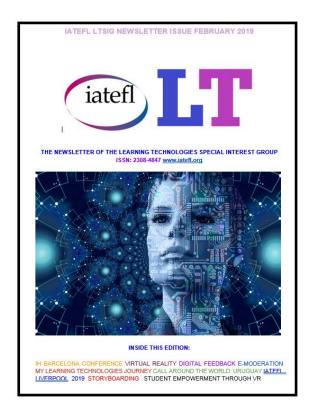
**LT**: Definitely. What about the lessons learned from this, for schools, and other organisations such as universities that hadn't really prepared for this kind of thing?  What could they do in the future to make sure that they're not caught short as they have been this time round?

**GD**: It's interesting. I have been going on for a long, long time about digital preparedness and at least having the basic digital literacy and skills to survive. I think they're clearly more important than ever now. Not just because of this virus, but because of other things, such as considerations of environmental impact, the impact of travel. Even local travel, commuting to work, time restraints etc. Clearly these kinds of viruses are not going to go away. You know this will go away at some point in the short to medium term, but it will probably come back and if it doesn't, another one will. If I was running an organisation, I'd be looking at two things. The first thing would be training my current people in some basic skills of how to manage an online class, but I'd also be looking at my employment policy as well. As teachers leave and I replace them, I would be looking at my job advert. Having the ability and experience to work with technology would be required.

**LT**: Thank you. Any last words? Is there anything that we haven't had a chance to speak about that people should know?

**GD**: No. The only thing I'd say is that although these have been a difficult few weeks, months, what I've noticed is that every time something like this happens, our community responds well. People are very, very good at swiftly getting together to support each other, offering free things, etc, to help people gain a little bit of confidence. There are lots of people blogging and collecting resources. I just think for me that's one of the great strengths of this profession. We are a deeply social and supportive profession and so I'm convinced that although it might be tough for a little while, I think we're going to do all right. The only worry we have, of course, is that some schools may not survive this, but there are lots of things that are perhaps not going to survive this.  We are good at supporting people, at helping each other, and that's where we should be looking now.

**LT**: Excellent. Thanks very much for your time, Gavin. It was a pleasure speaking to you.
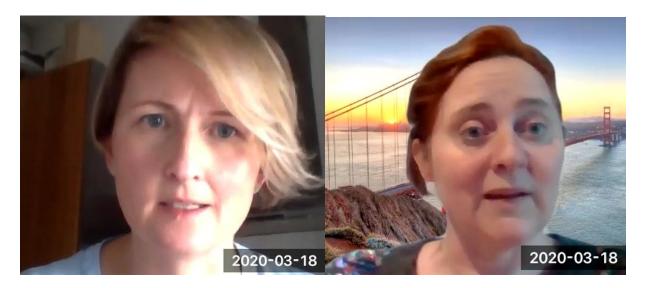




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**New to remote teaching?**

Interview by **Phil Longwell** with **Helen Legge** and **Marion Odell**

*Helen Legge (left in photo below) has been teaching English in Italy for 20 years and developed a rich experience training teachers and managing YL courses at the British Council. Over the years she has investigated a variety of CPD opportunities, developing interests in creativity and SEN, to teaching with technology, leading to the integration of online platforms in her YL courses 5 years ago and an e-moderator qualification. Helen moved from the ELT world into the English as an Additional Language field two years ago and is currently teaching in an International School in Milan. There she continues to integrate effective online tools to promote learning while supporting the English development of secondary pupils and providing SEN support for both primary and secondary pupils.*

*Marion Odell (right in photo below) lives in Saronno, Northern Italy. She has taught all age groups from pre-school to secondary schools, university and adults. She has been teaching EFL for over 23 years and 3 years ago transitioned to primary school EAL provision in an international context. She was ICT coordinator for the British Council in Milan where she ran blended courses in online and blended learning in ELT, and learning technology workshops for Italian state schoolteachers. She collaborated briefly with Zanichelli publisher on preparing teachers for digital teaching and is now an EAL teacher and Head of Primary School ICT in a private international school. Her real interest is finding ways to develop ICT skills which help teachers teach and learners learn and that can be transferred to their future lives.*



**LT:** Could you tell us a bit more about yourself, where you work and your experience of living and working in Italy?

**HL:** I currently work in an International school in Milan, which follows the British curriculum. I've been there for two years doing EAL teaching. So I give English language support to students in

the secondary school. Until about four weeks ago, I used to commute with my daughter every day. Suddenly we are now at home, not getting out much and we have got back all those extra, useless hours which were spent on commuting. The Italian government brought in restrictions by closing all the schools immediately four weeks ago and gradually limited our ability to move around and visit other places.  We are not supposed to leave our flats at all now.

**MO:** I work in the same International school as Helen, but in the primary school. I've been there three years since leaving the British Council.  We take the same train every day and have two children who I hoik backwards and forwards.  The real shock has been not having a run up to this situation. We were on half-term when it started, so there was no preparation. So day one was "arrrghh! What are we going to do?"  A lot of emotional reactions came from many people. People were stressed, scared. Parents were fed up, then stressed and fed up again. My work days, the extra time I got from the train I now spend at the computer. I'm doing 16 hour days. It's crazy. I manage the ICT, produce my own content but I'm also managing the fallout from people who aren't ready to suddenly go digital.

**LT:** OK. What do you think are the key factors that teachers need to keep in mind when teaching online, especially at this particular time when we are seeing a lot of people moving their face-to-face delivery because of the Covid-19 crisis?

**HL:** I think certainly for me, in the secondary age group, what is really important is that teaching online is not the same as teaching face-to-face for different reasons. One of the main reasons is that it takes an awful lot of planning to produce a lesson which has enough variety in it to keep young people engaged.  You can't just expect them to do what they've always done in the classroom. One of the most difficult things is that everything needs to be ready to go, you need to have really thought about everything and you need to have all your connections ready. Quizzes or polls are needed to break up lessons. Another thing, because you can't see the students a lot of the time, there is also a lot of pressure to make sure your instructions are really clear. ELT teachers are going to find that easier than others, because we really work on that a lot in our training. We also need to work out different ways of understanding if the pupils have followed instructions.  Some people are using chat boxes to get responses.  You can't see them nodding, so people are using different ways and a lot of this also depends on your concept checking questions being of high quality. In some ways this is good, because it really pushes you to provide the best possible lesson. But it is time consuming and challenging.

**LT:** So concept checking questions, all those things that we practice as EFL teachers in the classroom, but without that face-to-face thing of being able to monitor. Monitoring sounds to be the most difficult thing. Making sure the learners are on task.  What about you, Marion? You mentioned the shock to the system, as you were away, and digital learning had to kick in. What do you think about teaching online and what the difficulties are and what can we bring to the situation?

**MO:** Well, one is the didactic aspect. So scaffolded tasks, audio instructions which are accompanied by written instructions. Things that don't require parents' assistance. Things that children can engage with without having to have an adult present. We've had a lot of trouble with that in primary school. In addition, manageable amounts of work. Don't think that you can fit 8 hours teaching in, you can do two sessions and the rest has to be autonomous work. You can't ask them and the family to do homework. So it's a huge shock to the system. My issues have been, well, the world is online. The biggest problem is that you will have connection issues. Your local Internet providers will not be able to give you stable connections, servers will go down, people will be stressed, while staff and parents won't cope. So you need pre-emptive disclaimers saying this. Parents need support in how to support children, because they are not teachers. For example, they don't use lined paper, they write in block capitals. There is an added complexity when families have more than one child online at the same time, because this affects connectivity. They have a variety of devices, and they don't behave in the same way, so instructions on how your apps are going to work on those different devices. Families might not even be at home, for example, with grandparents or children up in the mountains with no connection. We've lost children and don't know their location. These are the issues you need to think about, how to catch up with those that go missing. The complexity of multiple children etc.

**LT:** So you are expressing a lot of the technical difficulties of online teaching, especially to young learners, given their nature and the fact that parents who are not teachers are involved. The technical issue of drop outs and poor connections. It strikes me that it takes a hell of a lot more preparation and delivery time than a face-to-face class.

**HL**: Yeah, I think in a classroom situation as a skilled teacher, you work off what students give you. So, you might go in a different direction and you can do activities spontaneously, which work in the moment. I think it's so much harder to be spontaneous in an online classroom, because you don't have the resources, so it's quite limiting, until you work out how to do that with the right tools. As Marion said, we don't always know what kids have - an iPad, a computer, or a telephone, we don't always know, so that's always an issue. Understanding the student perspective of this experience and we don't have time to ask them or investigate that. How can we give them what they've paid for? How can we give them education at this point? A lot of this is a knee-jerk reaction, which I think slowly will become a deeper kind of experience. A lot of experiences from people across Europe and the US.. it's a sudden 'Oh my goodness, we have to do this." Even though people have been doing this for four weeks.. so why is it a shock? Why weren't you prepared?

**LT:** It strikes me from what you are both saying, including what Marion said about the different kinds of devices the learners use and you mentioned you don't always know what they are using. So what kind of software, platforms or Virtual Learning Environments do you both use the same or different ones? Have any idea what the learners are using and is that a real difficulty teaching online - you don't actually know if what they are using is compatible with what you are doing?

**MO**: Yes, it's a problem. We are using things which will work over a number of platforms. One example is Zoom, which we are using now. I had a Zoom meeting this morning with a primary school teacher, using it on an iPad. Her toolbar was in a different place from my PC and on my

Android telephone. So that's a big problem and massively affects resilience. People will give up, because they just don't understand. I was also trying to explain to our head how to use Padlet, who has used it before and he was using it on a different device, did something different and got a different result ... On the other hand, Helen and I have a lot of experience doing this kind of thing, because of our ELT backgrounds. So tools like Quizlet or (HL:) Socrative, (MO:) they'll work across any kind of device and are very, very intuitive. So you can wham up a link to a Quizziz test and whatever device the kid uses … it will come up and be the same. So we know that, but cascading that information is practically impossible in these circumstances.

**LT:** Did you want to add anything, Helen?

**HL**: Well we were quite lucky, because in the secondary school … we have the Microsoft 365 package and we have a range of tools with that. One of them is 'Teams', so quite quickly a decision was made obviously to use 'Teams' because everyone already has a profile, email etc. We can make classes easily and it ties in with OneNote and OneDrive, which some of us have been using. This started almost straight away, as it's familiar, but it's different for us in the secondary context because kids are much more autonomous or able to navigate digital spaces in a more independent way. We had the platform ready to go. So it was more about timetabling in classes, giving teachers the absolute minimum they needed to be able to carry out an online lesson. So, like Marion said, having more experience in this so it has not been so traumatic. But for some teachers they haven't had a lot of digital experience - for them it might be difficult sometimes just to save a document into a folder. So you are dealing with such a variety of teacher ability in digital skills, so it's really challenging to get good quality uses out of certain platforms quickly. But I am impressed with our school, they have just coped. So we are going through that steep learning curve … and people will work things out a little bit better when they have time to reflect. But we don't have young learners, so I'm sure that Marion can add more about using 'Teams' with primary school.

**LT:** I was just going to say that just today, I got an email from my employer, a County Council, asking us to use 'Teams'.  I've never used it, even though we use the Microsoft package. But I don't teach online with my refugee class, who are not set up at home with all these devices. They don't have the resources. Even if they have got access to a laptop, they are not going to know how to use it and you can't train them remotely, because they are low-level language learners.. They have barriers to getting access.

**MO**: Yeah, it's the same with small children. The linguistic barriers are there and the physical barriers to access the technology are there. Zoom is free. If they have a smartphone, they can download it to a smartphone and it does a lot of the same thing that 'Teams' does and often more. So if you are looking at people who have economic barriers to access, I wouldn't really be pushing out 'Teams' unless they all had access to Office 365.  That's expensive. We have a privileged user base, but even they are struggling to access everything.

**LT:** So you have variable and significant differences in what the learners can access. There is also the teacher training side, being told that you've got to teach online from next week, and there

is not enough time to train teachers up. It's like 'bang!' - you're in. …  Marion, did all that experience of running blended courses and delivering learning technology workshops for Italian state school teachers, did that help you get ready for these unprecedented times we are living in?

**MO**: No. Not at all. Personally, yes, because I know a lot of tools and a lot about how to stage information as it goes out. Helen and I did this together about setting up effective interactions online, establishing rules. We know a lot about how to engage students, so when you would expect them to be online. I produced some Padlets for my EAL classes and during the first week the teachers say "can I do one" etc, so eventually by the end of the week we made a decision that primary school content would be pushed out on Padlet. It is not interactive. It is video lessons, links and worksheets.  Now it looks like Years 1 and 2 will be using Zoom now because there is a push for 'contact' - the human business - the little children are desperate to see your teacher. They don't post their homework, but I get messages crying 'I miss you, Miss Odell.'



Remote Teaching - Interview with Helen Legge and Marion Odell (18 March 2020)

**LT:** So, it strikes me that one of the difficulties of remote teaching is when you can't see the teacher or tutor. There is some disconnect with the learning process and that motivation drops. If you have poor connection, that's another reason for not completing tasks because of this disconnect.

**MO**: Yes, absolutely.

**LT:** So you've both transitioned in recent years. What are your experiences of making your transition so far [to online teaching]. What have you learned? How could you sum up what you have learned as best practice so far?

**HL**:  I'd have to say fundamentals are keeping an eye on the 'safeguarding' side. Making sure that you are making choices that are going to protect privacy and are going to protect data, also. So I think in this period where people are making decisions really quickly, I think they need to also think of the bigger picture … for example, things like online teaching, if you have one-to-one lessons, in theory you shouldn't really be teaching under some school policies with a minor. So there are lots of things that people aren't thinking about right now, because they just want to get the lesson done. Also, thinking about your learners and their needs, SEN students, as well, making sure that you're accommodating everybody all of the time. It goes back to planning, too. You have to go back to those old days when people did the DELTA and you had to plan so thoroughly.  It's kind of back to that again, with detailed structured lessons. … This is my second week of online teaching and I'm already finding it a lot easier, a lot less challenging and a lot less time consuming.  Then you remember stuff and how to do things differently and break things up.

**LT:** We've noticed that a lot of tech companies have been offering their platforms for free or uploading premium versions of, for example, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Techsmith's SnagIT is free up until the end of July for organisations, and loads more.  Do you think that's a good or a necessary thing they should be doing in times like this?

**MO**: Yes, absolutely.  First of all, people are being pushed at the moment to make decisions and trying new products. If you make those products available to them, they will buy them subsequently. For example, there are some that are free and absolutely wonderful, like Quizziz. I can't believe that is still free. Quizlet is absolutely wonderful. I think it's necessary. We've got a very good package from Padlet who upgraded to 'school backpack'. Even though I migrated all the content to another domain overnight. Yes. It's a moral duty.

**HL**: Yes, I agree, but I am a bit cynical, I don't know. I'm suspicious of this generosity sometimes. The problem is there aren't always well-informed people making decisions about what to use. So I think there are some many things being given, and maybe people aren't always making the right decisions, but when the decision is right then yes, it's great that things are being offered for free, temporarily.

**LT:** That leads into my penultimate question. If anyone has to start teaching online tomorrow, what would you recommend they do?  You said it's difficult to choose from all these different companies offering services. If they were given no guidance, do you have any advice for them?

**HL**:  While I think 'Teams' is a good enough platform, there are some issues with it. It's not really pitched for secondary school children.  I think you can see that if you've used other sites. You really see the difference. I think the platform may even be irrelevant. I think it depends on what you are already using. Link it to something you already know or are familiar with. If you are using something, you know, that has ways of moving documents, then that could create extra stress, but Marion has much wider experience than me in choosing platforms.

**MO**: I think it depends on the context you're going to use your product. So if I am a school without much money, then I would go for Edmodo, if I don't have my own LMS. This would allow me to

distribute and manage content. It allows me to monitor interactions within the virtual classroom. It also links up to external apps, such as 'Blend Space', which will give you integrated, interactive content. It essentially creates an interactive wall with videos, links etc. Edmodo with 'Blend Space' is totally free and it allows you to manage staff, it's safe, includes parent codes and a range of resources. I also think we're going to push out Zoom for lower age learners because although you shouldn't be in a classroom one-to-one with small kids, by sending out the email to parents, they receive a link and the parents make the decision, by joining with their own account. So you get around e-safety concerns in that way and it allows you to share documents. It's incredibly intuitive. You can 'disappear' your conversations, too, so there is no trace left of them. People can't video unless permission is given. So, choose a very simple, possibly free platform, which has been tried and tested by other schools. I think the British Council is using Zoom now … and you know what? I would make sure you have a document drawn up of communications. This is what we expect you do / not to do. These are the key people you can contact if you have technical difficulty, emotional difficulty. If you want a different channel of communication. My advice to schools would be: Be firm with parents, don't let people demand stuff that you can't give, take your time, don't give something just to keep people happy, because you end up creating a tsunami of complaints!

**LT:** That's a nice quote, a 'tsunami of complaints'.

**HL**: Can I also add something? Going back to making choices about how you are going to do your online teaching. I think people need to also think about what they want to do. Do you want live lessons? Synchronous learning? Or do you want to set something up which is asynchronous and takes a lot of pressure off and you don't have the problem with time and distractions? It's not a bad thing to do and it's not exactly short-term, but this is not going to be forever, we hope..

**LT:** ..and maximising the speaking time in a 'flipped learning' model where you do all the lower-order thinking skills at home?

**MO**: Yes. Because the tendency of people who aren't necessarily as mature in teaching tend to stand at the front of the classroom again, but on video. They will project a PowerPoint and read through this, that's the lesson, and you have gained nothing! Send these [in advance]. Have them read it. Some reflective tasks, talk about what they've been learning. Your meeting could be a preamble to the learning that's going to happen or a posthumous discussion of what they've been doing.

**HL**: Yeah, I think language teachers have a real advantage for fitting that kind of teaching into the online, digital context, because it's pre-reading tasks, pre-speaking tasks and post reading and writing and we already really think about staging. That makes it much easier to compartmentalise ... So how can I break this task down and how can we get the most of this productively?

**LT:** Thank you for your extensive answers. One final question: Predictions of the months ahead. We can't predict fully how Covid-19 is going to spread. It's getting worse in the UK and finally the

UK is starting to catch up with Italy and Spain, in bringing in much more stringent measures. So predictions, for you, in your context and the wider world.

**MO**: I think we are going to settle into a pattern. Once your first month of tragedy has gone by, people settle down and they'll be a rhythm of face-to-face catch ups. Online resources in the flipped manner, that's what we're doing really. People will calm down, parents will get a grip, because a big problem in schooling is that parents lose their sense of reason.

**HL**: Same for me. I talked about this knee-jerk reaction, just getting the lessons done. I think that will morph into more thoughtful planning and strategies for online education. I think that Marion is absolutely right. People will settle down, reflect and change it if it doesn't work, which is important. We are in this for a longer period than people initially thought. The school calendar is potentially going to change ... we just don't know. One of the things is you just have to go with the flow. Everything could be completely different in two weeks from now. In the far off future, when we come out of this again, I really hope that schools keep a lot of the stuff they have implemented. I think it will be hard to go backwards. Online won't ]completely] replace face-to-face learning, but a lot of the support systems will [need to] be supported by digital platforms in the future. I think that's the way to go. We are remarkably 'cheery', me and Marion. We just adapt. You have to be flexible, get on with it and do what you can..

**MO**: ..We are 'cheery' because I can't stress this enough ... We have a lot of previous experience which we largely gained together and in this situation together as well. What you cannot underestimate is the absolute social isolation that some people are feeling … I've had mature teachers crying on the phone, because they just can't cope with the stress. Our resilience comes from years of learning and yet you have teachers who <u>should</u> be able to manage these things ... they just can't manage the administration task of online learning and it's hugely isolating and stressful.

**HL**: Also, from a pupil or student point of view, some of them are having real trouble managing their time and keeping up with deadlines.  We [make this] assumption about learners being 'digital natives' ... but they don't know how to [study online] and they need help. We underestimate this. There is so much more than just having a lesson online. It's a massive undertaking and we are discovering more as we go through. But I am impressed. It's huge.

**LT:** So, to summarise what you are saying about teacher wellbeing. It seems, from what you are saying, that there's a lot of additional, unexpected pressure on teachers to carry out their functions and it's going to have an impact on teacher mental health. Organisations and employers are expecting us to have a contingency or to adjust or make a transition very quickly. While this is possible for some teachers who have resilience and experience, some teachers will fall by the wayside, it's going to be overwhelming.  Can I finish by thank you so much for taking part in this interview. Stay safe.

## Vocabulary retention in the medium of Twitter for ESL learners
by Abdulhameed Aldurayheem

*In the article that follows, Abdulhameed writes an account of a study on Twitter using the account @English2Arabic. This popular ESL Twitter handle is aimed at Arabic speakers learning English and currently has more than 637,000 followers. **Abdulhameed Aldurayheem** is a PhD student at Liverpool John Moores University and can be contacted at thaqep@gmail.com*

### INTRODUCTION

Twitter is a microblogging service and social network. Users of Twitter post and share tweets, posts, which are very limited in size and the tweets can be read by one's followers. The followers may interact with these tweets in different ways, reposting (retweeting) them in their own accounts so that their followers can read them, favoring someone's tweets by marking the posted tweet, and replying to the tweets in a conversation-like way under the main post where people can read the responses as well. Twitter can be, and in fact is being used for out-of-class learning based on a very active and informal tool. However, this area is still in the beginning stages of investigating the different approaches to teaching and learning through Twitter and similar social networks. These new directions of learning provide opportunities for learners to apply, create, and retain knowledge in comparison to traditional methods of learning. Younger learners in particular, have a good attitude toward such tools which may lead to positive outcomes. Bangert (2004) stated that the learners' attitude toward constructive methods is a valuable learning experience. Hence, when language learning occurs in such setting, i.e. Twitter, where learners are actively involved, this will ultimately lead to increased knowledge of that language. This article examined briefly learning vocabulary through the medium of Twitter.

Most studies looked at the vocabulary acquisition in class-based activities, for instance Zimmerman (1997). With the case of learning vocabulary via Twitter, one may consider what Hunt & Beglar (1998) have discussed about incidental, explicit, and independent approaches of vocabulary learning. With such a shift in multimedia technology, Graber and Hicks (2010) raised the issue of reconsidering the creation of knowledge based on the five Cs (community, collaboration, creativity, conversation, and control) of the participants after the revolution of Web 2.0. Thus, investigating the effectiveness of Twitter and similar social networks for teaching and learning is very crucial as they are widely embraced for such purposes.

## AIM OF THE STUDY

It may be hypothesised that learners who interact more with tweets in the form of retweeting, adding as favorites, replying, and saving the contents to their phones, will retain the new learned vocabulary more than those who do not do so. Hence, in order to test this hypothesis, this short study examined the extent speakers of Arabic learning English of would retain vocabulary learned via Twitter.

## METHODS

### Data Collection

I chose an account from Twitter that is dedicated to the teaching of English, to address the study's aim. The account, **@English2Arabic**, is directed to Arabic speakers learning English and had more than 250,000 followers at the time of conducting the research. Permission was obtained from the account owner.

The followers were given a survey, in Arabic, which included three sections. The first relates to the general background of the participants. The second is a vocabulary test about the participant familiarity of some of the words that were taught in the account's tweets. The third section recycled some questions mentioned in the tweets. The data was collected a month prior to posting the survey in order to see if the words were still retained. To make sure that the participants were exposed to the words under examination in the account, several procedures were maintained in the survey.

The study defined two categories used in the account's content. The first one included pictures, screenshots of news headings captioned with explanations, or word meanings. The second category was tweets containing questions that prompted learners to find out their answers (puzzles). I made these two distinctions of categories to see which one was more effective in vocabulary retention.

It was requested that when they answered the survey's questions not to seek any aid assistance.

### Participants

Eighty-one participants took part in the survey. Procedures were followed in the survey to ensure that those participants were followers of the account for not newer than a month in order to control

population target, exposure, and retention scale. This reduced the number to 65. The age of participants ranged from 13 to over 23. The average time of learning English was 6 months.

**Data Analysis**

As was hypothesised, since the acquisition of a word needs a set of practices and those who interact more with tweets will have a better chance of vocabulary retention, the participants were asked if they interacted with tweets in the form of retweeting, favoring, replying to tweets, or reading them carefully as they go through them. If those who interacted with the tweets could remember the words better than those who did not, this would support the hypothesis. To reduce the possibility of words being exposed somewhere else, only the answers that were reported learned in the account were accepted.

**FINDINGS**

The first question of the test (results in table 1) was based on a list of non contextualised words that were used in account. They tell whether they remember that they have seen them in the account or not. Two made-up words were given for further verification. The category refers to either tweets with pictures or tweets with puzzles.

**Table 1. Question 1 results**

|  | Listed words | No. of who remember the word | No. of who don't remember the word | Word category |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Aggressive | 19 | 32 | Picture |
| 2. | Panic | 22 | 32 | Picture |
| 3. | Swelt* | 10 | 48 | ----- |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. | Appointment | 33 | 13 | Picture |
| 5. | Hit | 29 | 8 | Puzzles |
| 6. | Make up | 30 | 6 | Puzzles |
| 7. | Due | 13 | 33 | Puzzles |
| 8. | Heatproof | 13 | 41 | Puzzles |
| 9. | Dral* | 16 | 50 | ----- |
| 10. | Challenges | 27 | 17 | Puzzles |
| 11. | Banned | 13 | 43 | Puzzles |

The total numbers of answers were then calculated and converted to percentages. It shows that 17.91% of the participants reported that they remember the words from the account while 20.25% of them did not remember. And the percentage of each of the two categories which fall under remembrance was almost the same, 16.50%.

Thirty-one of participants who reported that they interact with the tweets in the form of retweeting, favoring, replying, or saving them on their phones for later reviewing could remember 105 items out of 351, 29.9%. On the other hand, 49 who reported that they only read the tweets with concentration and without any form of interaction could remember 65 out of 351, 18.5%.

- The second question of the test (results in table 2) was based on contextualised and recycled items from the contents used in the tweets. The target words used in the questions were eight words and they were similar to the ones used in the first question excluding the fake words., The questions were supplemented by pictures as a reminder to what they have seen in the tweets for the purpose of contextualising the words. The participants were asked to give meaning of the words from a multiple choice list.

|  | Words used in contexts | No. of who remember the word | Category |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Appointments | 45 | Picture |
| 2. | Challenges | 62 | Puzzles |
| 3. | Panic | 32 | Pictures |
| 4. | Heatproof | 37 | Puzzles |
| 5. | Aggressive | 51 | Pictures |
| 6. | Hits | 19 | Pictures |
| 7. | Due | 7 | Puzzles |
| 8. | Make up | 28 | Puzzles |

**Table 2. Question 2 results**

29.28 % of the participants reported remembering the words. 15.68% of responses were from the picture category and 16% from the puzzles. The percentage of those who could not remember was 19.52%.

The thirty-one participants who reported interaction with the tweets could remember 193 words out of 273, 70%. On the other hand, 49 participants who reported that they only read the tweets with concentration and without any form of interaction remembered 145 out of 273, 53%.

**DISCUSSION**

As we saw that in the first question where the words were listed non contextualised and the participants reporting if they remember learning them in the account or not, the results showed that 17.91% of them could remember the words while 20.25% did not. In contrast, in the second question, the contextualised words that were aided by pictures used in the tweets, 29.28 % of the participants reported remembering them and 19.52% did not. These results show that there were clear differences between those who can remember the words in both of the questions, non contextualised and contextualised with an increase of 11.37% in favor of the later ones which reveals the importance of contextualising when designing quizzes or recalling words tasks.

Importantly, it was hypothesised that those who interact more with tweets would retain vocabulary longer, and the results of the first question (without a context) showed that their percentage was higher at 29.9% whereas the other's was at 18.5%. This was also true in the second question (with a context) with a percentages of 70% and 53% respectively of interaction behaviour.

The results revealed that there was no difference regarding the categories of the tweets, i.e. whether they were tweeted with pictures or having puzzles which prompt followers to find out their answers. This might be because the puzzles category contained pictures as well.

**CONCLUSION**

We have seen that DeCosta et al. (2010) witnessed in their research a positive impact on learning via Twitter which leads to learners' progress. We saw that those who interacted more with the contents of tweets for the purpose of learning new vocabulary were able to retain them longer. This supports the claim by Zimmerman (1997) that interactive vocabulary instruction leads to more gains in vocabulary knowledge. This also supports Chapelle's (2009) suggestion that such

practice that involves interaction leads to successful learning when learners pay attention to the tasks in the form of reviewing and repetition.

Since Twitter supports informal learning which will benefit interested learners, it could be concluded that learners' attitude is a major variable in acquiring vocabulary in the medium of Twitter. Those who reported that they always tracked the tweets are more likely to enjoy learning English on Twitter which will be reflected on their vocabulary retention. Tian and Wang (2010) confirm that the major impact of such informal setting was because of the learners' positive attitude. Ortega (2009) presented a central component of attitude that should be available to have a successful language learning experience. The component is the learners' attitude toward the setting and its dynamics. DeCosta et al. (2010) found that the positive impact of Twitter on students' progress was because of instantaneous communication Twitter has to offer and the dynamic setting in peers relation. 70% of participants in this study expressed that learning through Twitter was valuable.

It is recommended that further studies look at traditional classroom activities and compare these to social media tools for vocabulary retention tasks. Such further investigation is suggested to help avoid many limitations that have been encountered such as controlling the participants' background and administering issues.

This study, however, gave a general sense of the potential of Twitter for vocabulary retention, assuming interaction is practised and tweets are well-designed to serve its goal.

 *Feedback is highly appreciated via email.*

**The survey, test questions, and further references provided by the author on request.*

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Edited by Sophia Mavridi and Vicky Saumell

Would you like to share your experience of remote teaching with **LT**? Are you using learning technologies in a way that the **LTSIG** members would find interesting? Contact us with your idea for an article or to arrange an interview here: graham.stanley@ltsig.org.uk.