

ZOOM APPLICATION FOR TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE

Nataliia Chizhova

Lecturer,

Olena Mukhanova

Senior Lecturer,

National Technical University of Ukraine 'Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute'

Online lessons are the only way to continue the educational process at the universities nowadays. Online mode of education sets a lot of challenges teachers and students face: how to use a certain technology, which tool is more convenient, the relevance of material to lesson outcome etc.

According to the current syllabus the methodology of teaching a foreign language combines the provisions of communicative methodology aimed at the formation of foreign language communicative competence, in which communication is both the ultimate goal of language learning and a means to achieve it. Work on practical classes is aimed at acquiring knowledge, developing and improving communication skills and abilities in a foreign language environment.

The number of existing technologies for online education is overwhelming. It's quite difficult for the novice in this field to choose one, so you may conduct some research by speaking to colleagues, attending training sessions and seminars. It's important that technology facilitates the learning process and not used just because it's available. There are five main concepts teachers are taking into account before choosing certain technology (COFA, 2011).

1. Establish the key pedagogical principles and then decide how technology can support them. Set the outcomes of the lesson (what skills students should learn or develop) and then think how technology can be integrated to achieve these outcomes.

2. Technology is just a means to an end. Sound teaching strategies can be enhanced by appropriate technology.

3. Activities should remain relevant to the learning process. There are plenty of attractive features which technology may provide you, but use only activities, tasks, games, etc. with educational purpose to stimulate learning.

4. Stick to the basics. Despite the wish to use lots of tools, start with one component, use it appropriately, assess its success, let you and your students use it easily and then you may introduce another one.

5. Limit the number of technologies used overall in any lesson. Too many online components may confuse, frustrate and distract students from the learning experience.

It's a good idea to explain to students the purpose of the technology and its

benefits for learning language. Before introducing any technology you need to know it rather well to help your students, although they are widely using technology for communication, shopping and working, some technologies can be unfamiliar to them. Some YouTube guidelines may be helpful with your comments. Peer assistance works well when students respond to one another's questions and share their technical experience with their group mates.

Communicative approach is used to teach English so the language is the means and the purpose of the education. To train all four activities (speaking, reading, writing and listening) during the classes, teachers may use Zoom conferences, which provide a large number of instruments to reach the educational goals. Zoom conferences are very close to face-to-face classroom environments.

There are some features of Zoom which considerably simplify the process of teaching English.

1. Screen demonstration (sharing). While working during the lesson teachers may demonstrate any materials just sharing their screens and even see the materials of the students. It's an invaluable feature that considerably saves the time as students don't need to search the required book and page and enables you to demonstrate videos, presentations, as well as show the text and listen to the recording simultaneously. Due to screen sharing students can deliver their presentations, illustrate reports with some visuals and while defending library research papers show some diagrams, tables, etc. Teachers can share a part of the screen. This feature can be used for guessing the topic, picture or word. Another tool is "pause share" freezes your shared screen, similar to freeze frames on a projector or interactive whiteboard. Students may follow instructions, predict the next slide, and work with vocabulary. They won't see the 'behind the scenes' (Waterston, n.d.).

2. Writing annotations. This tool enables you and your students to write comments, elicit error correction on the screen. The tools available will vary, based on the version of the Zoom desktop client or mobile app and your device type, but participants can draw and highlight on the screen share. It can be used to get students to 'vote' for or indicate the best ideas on the screen, describe and draw, etc. (Waterston, n.d.). While checking the home assignments of my students I usually write down the sentences with their mistakes and then during the lesson I demonstrate the file with the set of sentences which all students try to correct.

3. Reacting symbols. Students may react somehow to the utterances of their group mates and if they are ready with the answer or want to help they may raise their hands. "Raising hand" option is very helpful and serves to avoid mess and maintain discipline. The same situation is with questions: if a student misses something or has a problem he/she is able just to raise a hand and solve it.

4. Whiteboard. Like in a real classroom there is a board and teacher as

well as students may write on it illustrating grammar, answering questions, doing quiz, etc.

5. Breakout rooms. The main option is to train speaking in groups. It may considerably save the time of the lesson as all students are involved. Teachers may divide students into pairs, groups of three, four, five, etc. To create breakout rooms teachers may use random division or assign special students to special rooms, but it needs time and works well if your group is up to ten students. There is one more option – to give students an opportunity to choose partners but it is rather time consuming. Allocated time encourages students to work fast. Students may share the information, tell about themselves, and make startups. Teachers may suggest some problems to discuss and solve, think about the reasons and consequences of some issues. Students in breakout rooms may use a whiteboard to note their ideas then make the screenshot and afterwards to show their ideas to all students of the group. If students have a problem – there is a special button to ask the teacher's help. Teacher monitors the overall discussion process by entering different breakout rooms and listening to students.

6. Chat box is for sharing some links to additional materials, tests, comments, and telling about technical problems.

7. Private chat is a great opportunity to send praise and prompts to individuals. It's also useful to replace whispering in a learner's ear, for several games such as Taboo or Pictionary. Specially prepared materials such as a list of sentence halves or opposites can be sent to individuals to help organize pair or group work (Waterston, n.d.).

8. Virtual background allows you as well as your students to choose any picture and not to worry about what's behind you and completely concentrate on the training process. It can be used for language practice: a teacher may introduce the topic of the lesson, students can explain the choice of their current background, describing the place and possible activities there. Groups can also plan a story around a virtual background (Waterston, n.d.).

Talking about the organization of educational process zoom platforms provides a set of useful tools.

1. Teachers can plan all the classes for a certain period, for example a studying term, so each time the teacher opens the system he/she sees the timetable for each day.

2. Waiting mode is like a door of a real classroom, each student has to get permission from a teacher to join a conference. There is even the function "to lock the conference", so the students who are late will not be able to join the lesson.

3. Teacher can see all the students in the group on the screen but it's rather difficult to make all of them turn on their cameras.

4. Ability to record a lesson is the brilliant Zoom feature. Teachers may send the recorded lesson to the group for those students who missed the class and for others who want to watch the lesson one more time to revise and analyse the main ideas. In case of unstable internet connection and frequent blackouts, students have the ability to find time and record themselves delivering presentations using Zoom tools, giving a speech, conducting research and then sending recordings to the teacher instead of attending the lesson.

All these described Zoom features enhance considerably the efficiency and effectiveness of online training.

To sum up, a teacher is in charge of the choice of technology and is aware that carefully considered pedagogy takes precedence over technology. The Zoom platform is similar to the real classroom and provides a variety of necessary tools.

References

COFA online UNSW (2011, March 7) *Considerations for choosing technology for teaching* [Video] You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51NMd3zRYrY>

Waterston, K. (n. d.) *Zoom: top tips for online English teaching*. Retrieved April 17, 2021, from <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Zoom-top-tips.pdf>