

# 10 tips for developing engaging online pedagogic tasks

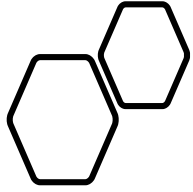
Dr Celia Antoniou (UCL/ UWS)  
IATEFL Research SIG Events officer  
14/07/2020



Hello! I'm **Celia Antoniou** and I'm here as an IATEFL Research SIG Events officer!

I'm also a :

- Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, UWS
- Senior Teaching Fellow, UCL
- Teacher trainer



# This session will

Explore key online task development principles

Outline different online task types

Offer some practical tips and suggestions

# Task design principles

1. Provide a communication motive: to share information, opinions or values or ideas.

2. Ensure communication results in achieving an objective: e.g. the creation of a text or artefact.

3. Develop tasks that require students to:  
a) Consider each other's contributions and b) contribute themselves.

4. Ensure you cover a range of online interaction patterns and types of tasks.

# Reflecting on our situation



What are the needs of your specific group of students?



What are the learning objectives and duration of the course?



Create a list of types of activities that learners should be able to perform



What are the options?  
Alternatives?

# Task types

- **factual:** sharing information on factual topics
- **critical:** an exchange of opinions
- **personal:** an exchange of personal information
- **scenarios:** entering into an imaginary scenario, such as a roleplay
- **creative:** the creation of a story or article etc.

(Clandfield, & Hadfield, 2017)

Delivering a range of task-types online allows to address learner preferences and cover language needs.

# Task Interaction patterns (1)

- *Spider web*: the teacher posts a statement and students respond.

E.g. online **factual** task: the teacher posts a well-known saying and the students ask questions to decide who has said it.

- *Breakout Room*: students work in two online platform groups, A and B, then regroup into pairs with one A and one B student to exchange views in the chat box.

E.g. **critical** discussion task: the A and B groups discuss arguments for and against a topic, and are then regrouped into pairs to exchange views.

## Task Interaction patterns (2)

- *Forum*: students post opinions in an **online critical** discussion task. Students comment on at least one opinion they agree with, then discuss.
- *Workshop*: students respond to a stimulus such as a diagram / picture or the first line of a story by producing a piece of **creative** writing, e.g. a story or an article, and then read and comment on each other's work.

(Antoniou, 2020)



# Steps for creating online tasks

1. Decide on the task focus
2. Consider: the topic, the target language, the student level
3. Choose a type of task.
4. What will be the starting point of the online interaction?
5. Interaction patterns (Breakout room, etc.)
6. Delivery and evaluation.

# Encouraging online group work



The steps



Explain the rationale and how the task links to the overall aims of your lesson



Explain task requirements and the evaluation



Assign students in groups



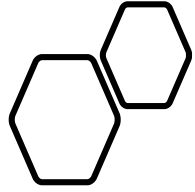
Provide clear, written instructions



Provide an example



Set the groupwork guidelines for online interaction (i.e. co-operation, turn-taking, etc.)



# Remember the gains...



It creates speaking opportunities.



Practice opportunities with their partners in a controlled environment.



Increased participation through collaborative learning.



Higher levels of learner autonomy, satisfaction and achievement.

# Speaking vs. writing

At times some students might prefer to write instead of speaking during an online lesson.

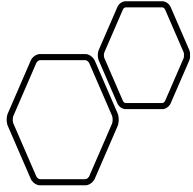
- More time to reflect, think and revise.
- You can avoid communication overlap.
- If there are tech problems, it is still a form of participation.



# Preparing the students

Students should also be prepared about switching from face-to-face to online learning.

- Stress the advantages.
- Train the students too.
- Allow time for practice and experimentation.
- Seek feedback and suggestions.



# A few last points...

1

Ensure students are given a voice: (i.e. through polls, online quizzes, feedback forms etc.)

2

Encourage online interaction (i.e. chatting, use of break out rooms, etc.) as it is an essential element of communication

3

As Lantolf (2004: 58) highlights, “social relationships [...] play a central role in organizing uniquely human forms of thinking”.

# References

- Antoniou, V. C. (2020). 'An action research intervention for academic reading skills online', in S. Mavridi and V. Saumell (eds.), *Digital Innovations and Research in Language Learning*.
- Clandfield, L. & Hadfield, J. (2017). *Interaction online*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lantolf, J.P. (2004). 'Sociocultural theory and second and foreign language learning: an overview of sociocultural theory' in K. van Esch and O. St. John (eds.) *New Insights into Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Thank you 😊



[celia.antoniou@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:celia.antoniou@ucl.ac.uk)



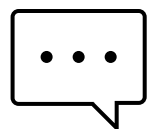
@ciliagr



Now, let's take some questions from the Q and A.



You can also use the chat box to leave your comments and questions!



# Question and Answer

