

# PROFESSIONAL ELT MAGAZINE ONLINE



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## A. CHANGING BELIEFS AND VALUES



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### ARE WE ON THE SAME SIDE OR NOT?

by Deniz Özbeyli

In the hectic days of the pandemic, probably like some of you, I have encountered several discussions on strengthening online proctoring and overcoming different ways of cheating. The established teaching systems will surely show a reaction when it is a matter of the safety of exams. Nevertheless, I couldn't hold myself from thinking about a fundamental question. Furthermore, I've eventually brought the question and my considerations here: Are we on the same side or not? Aren't we altogether in the pursuit of the noble art of learning and teaching? Are teachers and students not two components completing each other? So on, and so forth...

I remember McGregor's X-Y theory; in what teachers or managers assume their students/employees are not "trustworthy" is X, and the other way is Y. Depending on the purpose of the learners' being in that classroom, you can run into various situations, however, why don't we think that we must create such a learning environment and develop a kind of understanding so that we can trust our students more? am I unrealistic? Or too optimistic? Being optimistic is more precious than looking for some malignity in the air, though...

Designing a curriculum, planning the material, and developing all of these are the essentials of the systematic flow of a specific educational project, say, a track, a semester, a year... That's the formal plan. They are officially decided and designed. However, there is the next step which is no less

important than these first establishments: The written and unwritten plans; the spoken and unspoken rules in the classroom. They are all practical and realistic establishments by a teacher and his/her students in the classroom. Practical because that's the application time; realistic because you can customize all the aforementioned preparations to the needs of that specific group of students in that particular class. Regular, official plans are made in offices by using quite a big amount of data and effort. No one can deny their necessity and function as a prerequisite, yet, the things decided in the class altogether by all the participants are indispensably crucial as well. Think of the words, *cooperation, collaboration, help, assistance, empathy*... Each of these words has the right vibes that keep a good lesson going on.

One practical example is about breaking the ice in the very beginning-- not only for outspoken students but those who feel a little bit more reserved or introverted. Pair works, group works, again and again, rotation of the groups, changing partners, laughter and motion in the classes... With simple plenty of mechanical exercises --and motion, including some simple physical warm-up. Physical warm-up. Yes, physical. *I'm awake! I'm alive! Enthusiastic!* These have been our slogan for the start of morning classes for a long time. We've tried that in online classes, too. Repeating these words in a high tone, I raise and lower my arms, open and close my hands, wide open my eyes, smile and wave at them, and ask them to do the same. The first reluctant – please, be a decisive teacher and don't give up in the first few times of reluctance scenes-- and a dull-looking group of students soon turns to a livelier group with smiles on their faces. This first collaboration they get used to in time is the threshold of a better lesson.

Just for the same reason, that is, to make my students feel like real components of the class, I asked them to write and share their opinions during the online education times. Some students have expressed their opinions focusing on the pros of this unlucky period of our life as seen as an example in a student's words: *"...I like my teachers and enjoy the lessons. I think there are many positive and*

*negative aspects of COVID-19. For example, we cannot see the people we love these days. We can only see them by video call. This is a bad thing. We cannot go out freely, we are fighting a virus we do not know. But it's up to us to turn some negative aspects into an advantage. In the COVID days, we can improve ourselves, too. Seeing the good sides is important."* Yet some other students put it the other way: *"... I hope we can return to education on campus as soon as possible and we can benefit more from you and the school's facilities."*

There may be various viewpoints, nevertheless, it is obvious that almost everyone looks forward to going back to normal times before the pandemic. This has been an unforeseen period of time. Unprecedented, at least, in this century... Therefore, it was inevitable to encounter some challenging things. However, we all have noticed and realized that it was doable. Manageable in many ways. We've survived anyway. But together. Teachers and students are on the same side. Altogether. As one of the songs by Mireille Mathew and Patrick Duffy from the 80s said: "When we are together, even cold of December feels like a middle of May. Together we are strong!"



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## SOCIALLY DISTANCED, BUT NOT DISCONNECTED

by Gökçe Ünlü

### Introduction

The unprecedented breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted life in many aspects and education has been one of the areas that have gone through a dramatic change all around the world. The sudden shift to the online teaching and learning environment required a serious adaptation process for all stakeholders; however, this sudden shift has turned into a continuous shift due to the changing conditions caused by the changing course of the pandemic. This has required and still requires an ongoing adaptation process for educational institutions. Having been required to continuously shift due to these changing conditions for quite a long time, we, as teachers, have inevitably developed new skills and shown great resilience. Recently, the newest normal seems to be 'socially distanced' classrooms as part of the blended mode of delivery in many institutions. Although our learners need to be physically distanced in the classroom, they still need to be socially connected to be fully engaged. In this respect, this paper will focus on how to foster student engagement and interaction in the socially distanced classroom highlighting teaching and learning skills that can be transferred from face to face and online teaching and learning environment along

with some practical ideas to apply in the classroom with the aim of supporting teachers on a new level of teaching.

### **Literature Review**

Blended learning, or as sometimes defined by many as hybrid learning, is defined mostly as the strategic integration of face-to-face and fully online instructional modalities and methods (Driscoll, 2002; Graham, 2005). To ensure quality in the blended learning environment and create an effective learning and teaching experience, both interventions must be successfully integrated. This necessitates learners and teachers to adopt different roles, skills, and strategies. One of the most important skills that learners need to develop is autonomy in such a learning environment. Autonomy is defined by Holec (1981) as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3), and Holec (1981) further explains the qualities of an autonomous learner as “identifying learner objectives and content, selecting learning materials, monitoring the learning progress, and self-assessment of learning”. While autonomy has gained more necessity after the pandemic in the online and blended learning environment and learners have been expected to be more autonomous, it may not be possible for them to develop these qualities simply by themselves in the language learning environment. It is the pedagogical practices, suitable learning environment, and continuous training of learners that will lead to the successful development of learner autonomy. Therefore, teachers also adopt the role of the facilitator or mentor, guiding learners to develop and improve autonomous learning skills over time. In line with this, the Common European Framework also “emphasizes the need to develop language teaching approaches that strengthen the independence of thought, judgment and action, combined with social skills and responsibility” (as cited in Raya, M., Vieira, F., 2015, p.20). Once such approaches or pedagogical practices are supported with innovative use of technology, effectiveness can be increased in the blended learning environment to a great extent.

One of these approaches that will help learners adopt such a responsibility and improve autonomous learning skills is to ensure full engagement in the learning process. Therefore, teachers need to apply practices that will encourage student engagement and interaction both in and outside the classroom. In a normal face-to-face classroom, teachers have developed and applied many practices to encourage learner engagement for a long time. Nevertheless, this has not been easy in the online environment upon the shift to fully online delivery with the pandemic. It is now even more challenging in the new normal where most institutions try to apply a blended mode of delivery because it is mostly regarded as a different mode of delivery than fully online instruction which was the new medium of teaching for most institutions for a while due to the pandemic. In addition, teaching now needs to be conducted in a socially distanced classroom. However, the good news among all these newly defined concepts is that educators have been quite experienced on both sides of this blended mode of delivery and this experience in both face-to-face and online instruction could easily be transferred to a blended teaching and learning environment. The fact is that the concern and the focus must now be on how approaches and practices encouraging engagement and interaction can be applied effectively in the socially distanced classroom through effective transfer of skills and strategies.

Socially Distanced Classroom, as a new concept, was defined by EAQUALS as “the classroom situation where both teachers and students need to abide by new restrictions imposed as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These restrictions include a required distance between those present and requirements around mask-wearing and reduction/ removal of hard copy materials.” (February 2021 Report). This definition, like all other definitions, focuses on physical conditions in socially distanced classrooms, however, the emphasis must be more on the pedagogical practices which ensure student engagement in this learning environment. As Philp and Duchesne (2016) suggest, learner engagement refers to a state of heightened attention and involvement in which



participation is reflected not only in the cognitive dimension, but also in social, behavioral, and affective dimensions. To maintain a healthy learning environment no one can deny the contribution of increasing the engagement in the classroom cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally (Arghode, V. et al., 2018, p.31). Furthermore, it is best if the focus of educators is constantly on increasing such engagement no matter what the mode of delivery is. In the newest normal, they must actually aim at connecting with learners socially while maintaining the distance physically. Although this seems to be something brand new since educators and learners never had to keep a physical distance in face-to-face classrooms where a collaborative learning environment has been created with interactive activities so far, the activities in the socially distanced classroom could be mostly the same as long as effective ways conducting these activities are found and implemented.

### **Study and Results**

To identify practices that can be transferred from both online and face-to-face classes to blended learning and teaching environments as well as how to implement them in the most effective and safe way in the socially distanced classroom, a survey was conducted at a higher education institution in Turkey and the responses of 22 instructors were collated. The overarching results derived from teachers' responses suggested that teachers have clearly developed an inevitable understanding of the value of face-to-face and online teaching techniques and how these provided them with competencies that are transferable to a blended mode of delivery combined with socially distanced instruction. Based on these results, it is clear that there are many activities which seem to work better in online classroom settings whilst many other activities work better in face-to-face settings in the socially distanced classroom. That's why the blended mode of delivery would provide learners and teachers with the opportunity to continue with the best practices of both settings in order to promote effective teaching and learning. Some common points which could be transferred

from online classrooms to socially distanced classrooms could be identified as keeping learning portfolios as e-portfolios, continuing the use of the effective tools on institutional Learning Management System, continuing the use of flipped learning in a more structured way as an institution to focus more on higher-order thinking skills, continuing the speaking classes online, setting pair and group activity assignments online, carrying out one-to-one tutorials online based on specific needs instead of face-to-face tutorials, and asking learners to bring their tablets or laptops to eliminate the use of hard copies in the classroom. Regarding the aspects of face-to-face teaching ideas that could be transferred to the socially distanced classrooms to maintain quality in blended learning, conducting exams physically in the classrooms, making use of the outside of the classrooms when/ if necessary depending on the activity conducted and continuing the activities that were used to be conducted in the classrooms after planning how to pursue them with a physical distance to maintain engagement, could be identified.

## **Conclusion**

In the light of these, the value of blended teaching and learning lies in the fact that resorting to online instruction as a result of the pandemic enabled teachers to gain new capabilities along with their traditional skills of teaching in their classroom settings. This provided them with more opportunities to make use of principles of online and face-to-face teaching to promote effective teaching and learning in the blended classroom where learning still needs to take place with social distancing.

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## CLASSROOM DYNAMICS IN ONLINE TEACHING

by Nazan Gelbal

Do you think the dynamics of an online group of learners are different from those of a face-to-face group? The digital environment may change group dynamics, which have an important role in the success of a class. Therefore, teachers should see this as a new challenge, and employ techniques that will help learners create a bond with their classmates and their teacher. This bond, and learners' need to feel it is now more important than ever as there is very limited social contact nowadays.

First of all, teachers should start their course with get-to-know activities. We should give learners the opportunity to get to know each other. A bond will develop between students and the teacher through these get-to-know activities. Remember building good rapport will help learners be more attentive, productive, and enjoy their lessons. Let your students know more about you. We see each other through screens every day, we even open the doors of our houses. How could we keep ourselves aloof (unknown), even if we wanted to?

In addition, teachers should show interest in students' lives. Start your lessons by asking how they feel, how they spent their weekend, or how they are doing these days. We may have students who are Covid-19 positive. Offer them make-up lessons. Let them know if they do not feel well and miss some lessons, they can have make-up lessons. This will reduce their stress and it will be great emotional support. If you show them you care about them as people, they will learn that health and the human touch are the most important things in life. Remember, we are teachers, and teaching English is not our only mission.

We should set routines that will help students feel more secure. They should know the online world around them better. It should be like seeing the same faces during the breaks, doing similar things on campus. That's why I start with a five-minute chat every day. Students enjoy being in the breakout room together with their classmates without any restrictions. They can talk about anything as in break times before the Covid-19 pandemic. It also builds confidence in students as they realize they can talk about different topics, not just the ones given by the teacher.

How about organizing gatherings at the weekends? Try it! Ask students to wear their best clothes, put on some make-up. Do your best to make them feel like face-to-face gatherings. We all need that feeling these days. Send off your students into breakout rooms, give them some fun topics that they can talk about. Hey, it can be in their own mother tongue. It's not a regular class.



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## DOES LANGUAGE HAVE A GENDER?

by Şevval Alageyik

Everyone is aware of the fact that most languages appear to be 'sexist' when analyzed in terms of structures. Especially in English, this sexism is obvious in the male forms of the words, and the creation of the words, simple as words created with "man". These male-dominant words and sexist discourses apparently still exist and will exist for a long time in our egalitarian society, but does this have to mean that men are dominant in modern languages still?

Looking through the past of Foreign Language Education and especially English Language Teaching, we can see that without a doubt, women outperform in mastering these fields of study. Isn't it just bizarre, women learn and teach languages more enthusiastically and, as most people say whether it is not scientifically proven or not, "better", they just keep teaching and transmitting the language in its sexist form? Of course, it's not an official mission or even possible to change the structures and forms all of a sudden, and this is not our priority, to change the language, what I question in this situation is why men are rather inactive in the language compared to women, and how they still maintain their impact on the language? For years, mostly women have been teaching languages. Why men don't play a big role as women do? What I do is here not to accept the fact that women are more dominant in the teaching of languages, but to question why.

We all had an English teacher that we loved so much and inspired us to be a part of this ELT journey. When I look around, I see a few men sharing the same desires as I do in choosing a department and

a profession. Why? Didn't they love their teacher? Were they unsuccessful in class? Were the boys let down by their language teachers? Or was it just the stereotypes and the age we were involved in language classes? I am not implying that language teachers discriminate and do favoritism between their male and female students and I hope there aren't any doing that, but I kind of blame it on the age and the thoughts we have at that age. We choose ourselves an idol and we get language classes around 5-9, which are the exact years that we try to look like almost every same-sex adult around us. There is this stereotype which claims that women English teachers are beautiful and friendly and just very understanding. I remember from my primary and middle school years, we would feel very comfortable talking to our English teacher who was a woman, but very hesitant to consult a male teacher. As boys at that age, though feel very comfortable and close as well as girls to their female English teachers, they look for a male idol. These gender characteristics are constructed by our society. The way we socialize determines our roles in society. A traditional view in the socialization process builds old-fashioned characteristics, as in the situation I have mentioned. A great number of people think being an English teacher suits woman better than men. As teachers, I am of the opinion that we should reconstruct these built roles and characteristics while transmitting knowledge. In Turkey, research was conducted in Turkish universities and the university students' perceptions of gender roles indicated that they still have a traditional view on gender roles (Vefikuluçay Yılmaz et. al., as cited in Kızılaslan, 2011).

Thus, as ELT teachers, or people involved in language, language learning, and teaching, I think we should challenge gender-related stereotypes. Because through language, we are not only transmitting the rules or the words and their meanings, we are transmitting the culture, and the attitudes, behaviors, perspectives, and remarks follow.

**Reference:** Kızılaslan, I., & Diktaş, I. Ö. (2011). The Role of University Education in Changing the Gender Role Perceptions of Turkish ELT Student Teachers. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 3(2).



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## SOCIALLY DISTANCED CLASSROOMS: DECREASE OF GROUP/PAIR WORK

by Şevval Alageyik

Due to the Covid outbreak, group activities and pair work seem risky, and this reduces the interaction between the students, hinders peer review, which has a big impact on their speaking skills and confidence.

Almost 2 years after being in a virtual environment for learning, it feels strange to leave the screens and be present in physical classrooms. In this process of adaptation to the post-Covid era, we still have online classes, although the teachers and the students are aware that they are not the same as in-person classes. Without a doubt, we have benefited quite a lot from the online education we have been taking part in for the last 2 years, but what is missing is the in-class collaboration opportunities. During my pre-service internship and observations in the high school I am going to, individual activities now inevitably dominate the English classrooms, and this hinders the speaking practices between the students considerably. It would not be wrong to say that those collaboration activities play a huge role in students' development regardless of the subject, they help them to exchange ideas and learn from each other, as well as boost their creativity and critical thinking skills.

A potential problem is the fact that after 2 years, being in class and having face-to-face education did not bring group work or pair work back, as we still need to protect our social distance. Here, we have one question, that is, how do we integrate collaborative pair of group work activities into the socially distanced classrooms?



### 1. Integrating Digital Tools into the classroom

One of the advantages of online education is the digital tools that we met. Teachers may integrate the digital tools to facilitate active learning activities and encourage student-student engagement. To give an example, we can integrate the collaborative tools that we use in online classes, such as Moodle Discussion, Forums, Google+, Yammer, or Slack to communicate in the socially distanced class to deliver documents or work on a project with the team members while keeping our distance. We can also make use of Google Docs, Slides, and Sheets to work collaboratively (Millin, 2016), as they allow the students to edit documents in real-time, comment on others' work and present a chat option.

Another way of using these digital tools is to bring peer review back. We can integrate the Google tools mentioned before to provide an environment for students to give feedback to each other in the class.

### 2. *Forming small groups and Socratic Seminars for discussions*

Group discussions can also be integrated by forming small groups. It may not be possible to have 5 students in one group and be sure that they are safe, thus, maybe forming groups of three could be suitable for a safe communication environment. With the masks on, it is hard to hear each other and there may be background noises, thus, in small groups, it would be easier to talk and listen to each other. It can also be useful to form circles in the classroom for discussion activities. When I was in my freshman year, for the class of Spoken English, we used to hold Socratic Seminars. We would form a huge U shape as a whole class, and each student would have an assistant student behind them, to help them prepare what to say next. This could be integrated in a socially distanced way easily, by creating space between the assistants and the speakers. Socratic Seminars could also help the development of critical skills of the students by filling the gap of peer interaction.

### 3. *Paper-cup Telephone*

Especially in primary and middle school, we can integrate some games that would help teachers to keep students safe and communicative. As children, we all know about Paper-cup telephones. Besides the fun, they actually do work. It can be a great activity to ask students to make their own Paper-cup telephones first and then use them in speaking activities, we can make use of them in role-plays, dialogues, and so on. This

would not only contribute to the students' creativity, by offering them a chance to design their own paper cup telephones, but also motivate them to take part actively in the classroom while keeping their social distance.

**Reference:** Millin, S. (2016, June 26). *Social distancing in the ELT classroom*.  
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## B. TROUBLESHOOTING/ CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



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### HANDLING FOUR SKILLS IN SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE FLIPPED CLASSROOM

by Büşra Ataş

Because of the pandemic, education systems around the world have needed an emergent and unprecedented shift. As English teachers, we have had to teach remotely, and it has brought both challenges and opportunities. So, we have had to try new strategies to keep teaching and encourage our students to involve in lessons while dealing with the global pandemic. At that point, some teaching methods have become prominent in online teaching such as blended teaching and flipped classroom model. This article discusses Flipped Teaching Method (FTM) which is quite common and obviously not new for every English Language Teacher.

'FLIP' is an abbreviation of a flexible classroom, learning culture, intentional content, and professional educators. This model is a special blended learning model that helps educators optimize class time to encourage effective communication. (Soleimani, Abdi, 2021) Students will be given much more practice making better use of classroom time. Therefore, the lessons' content should be not only intentional but also efficient in every skill. So, the question is how to handle and examine four skills in an online flipped classroom to create engagement.

Firstly, we should not compare online activities with face-to-face activities, which are totally different, and both need different kinds of tools, prompts, and plans. Secondly, we should consider four skills according to their types, which are receptive and productive.

#### Receptive Skills:

Reading: In FTM, the aim is to increase practice time in the classroom. English teachers' role is encouraging and motivating learners to read while at the same time she activates their existing knowledge and vocabulary. However, reading activities need more time respectively. Thus, we need to decide whether these activities are implemented in class or are homework. It depends on these three parameters,

1. Level of the learners: We should consider whether the learner will need support while reading.
2. How lesson time is best spent: According to the objectives, if the learners have an opportunity to read before the lesson, we may allocate lesson time for practice substantially.
3. The type of reading task: If the task requires deep reading skills, the learner needs much more time. But if the task requires scan reading skills, they need to read for specific information. So, it means the task will take less time.

Listening: Listening comprehension is a significant component of language learning. Based on Krashen et. al. (1984), acquisition takes place when language learners receive adequate and understandable input. In the lesson, the professional educator is the resource of listening. But the learners should listen to other accents and people. Moreover, the learners need to be given a specific purpose for listening. How should we incorporate the recorded texts and audio in a flipped classroom? In a listening activity, the necessity of listening to the recorded text at least twice requires much time. According to the findings of a current study (Rajabi, Mahmoodi, Hosseini, 2021),

the listening task should be received by the learners before the classroom to use the time wisely. And the learners should have the opportunity to listen to the audio as much as they want. In an online classroom, the teacher implements the task without listening to the audio again and again or giving them a similar task without wasting any time. Consequently, the teacher has time to check what is going on in the learners' minds.

### Productive Skills:

Speaking: Considering current trends in ELT, it is preferred to support increasing interaction, critical thinking, and communication. So, speaking skill is the focus of instruction in FTM. Almost all the tasks should lead the learner to communicate in the target language during the lesson time. Thus, it is needed to add more pair works and group works to raise communication and peer instruction in a flipped lesson. There is another issue that the teachers should be careful in online speaking lessons, which is classroom management.

In that point, four parameters are discussed:

1. Instruction: To make the instruction clear, it is needed to use some charts like the picture below, which gives you the opportunity to visualize everything such as the instruction, time, rules, grammar point etc.

Moreover, there should be rivalry in every task. Because learners like competitions and they always want to win, which makes them be prepared and work hard in group work activities.

**20 mins.** **Task: Story Completion**  
Now you need to complete the rest of the story below.

**The story**

Last night I was walking home next to the river Thames, when something strange happened to me. It was late at night and I had had a long and difficult day at work. There was a large full moon in the sky and everything was quiet. I was tired and lonely and I had just had a few pints of beer in my local pub, so I decided to stop by the riverside and look at the moon for a while.

I sat on some steps very close to the water's edge and looked up at the big yellow moon and wondered if it really was made of cheese. I felt very tired so I closed my eyes and after a few minutes, I fell asleep. When I woke up, the moon had moved behind a cloud and it was very dark and cold. The wind was blowing and an owl hooted in a tree above me. I rubbed my eyes and started to get up, when suddenly I heard a splash. I looked down at the water and saw something. Something terrible and frightening, and unlike anything I had ever seen before. Something was coming out of the water and moving towards me. Something green and strange and ugly. It was a long green arm and it was stretching out from the water to grab my leg. I was so scared that I couldn't move. I had never been so scared in my whole life. The cold green hand was moving closer and closer when suddenly there was a blue flash and a strange noise from behind me.

**What to do**

**Steps:**

1. Read the story again.
2. Complete the story with an interesting ending.
3. Use your creativity.
4. You need to write at least 8 Past Perfect sentences.
5. Don't forget to use conjunctions such as when, before, when, by the time.

**Rules:**

1. Be respectful to your friends.
2. Be careful about tentaking.
3. Watch out the time.

**Roles-Turns**

**Roles:**

- **Timer:** Takes time of the speaking activities and indicates when time is up.
- **Note-taker:** Takes notes of the sentences you produce.
- **Screen-sharer:** Shares the screen when you need.
- **Reporter:** Presents the story you write.

**Turns:**

Choose talking turns. For example according to your initials. Every group member needs to produce at least 2 sentences.

**Language**

**PAST PERFECT TENSE**

**How We use:**

event 1: I stepped outside.  
event 2: It started to rain.

**Formulation:**

had + past participle (V3)  
had not/hadn't + past participle (V3)

**Conjunctions**

you can use 'after, before, by the time' with this tense.

ps: 'really, just, already' can be used in a past perfect tense sentence.

2. Managing time: In a flipped classroom, we invest most of our time in practice. Especially working with break-out rooms may take a long time in online lessons if you don't check every student's understanding before starting the task.

3. Managing dominant and quiet learners: In every classroom has its own unique characteristics including both dominant and quiet. It is needed to put clear rules like in the chart above. This makes every individual give effort and show themselves without letting someone steal their thunder. Furthermore, you should put just one dominant student in each break-out room to boost peer instruction.

Writing: Improving writing skills needs more effort, time, and thinking. Therefore, it should be outside of the classroom activity commonly. Because teachers should focus on some subskills like punctuation, vocabulary, informal-formal writing rules. You may set a writing competition and the other students can vote for their friends' writings using a shared platform. However, giving feedback should be via email or google docs.

All in all, the implementation of FTM is fruitful in most aspects. On the other hand, there can be some challenges. For example, you should invest much more time in preparation and planning. You

sometimes face resistance. Because students tend to resist doing new things and changing their habits. Also, technology can be tricky sometimes. But I think the pros of the method are more than its cons.

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## COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL IN FORMATIVE FEEDBACK:

### TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO MAKE STRESS WORK FOR THEM

by Kassandra Robertson

It's difficult to overstate the challenges and transformation brought by COVID-19, particularly with the abrupt shift to online education. For many university students, already particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, these circumstances came as a complete disruption to their plans and expectations, and an alarmingly high percentage of university students in Turkey are reported to have anxiety, depression, or both (Aslan, Ochnik, & Çınar, 2020). From the feedback collected from my own classes, first-year undergraduates in a writing-intensive humanities course, major disparities have been observable not only in terms of physical workspace conditions and access to resources but also in terms of how students were managing these stresses and their own learning process. While many recognized an opportunity to learn at their own pace (through asynchronous materials) and some managed it quite effectively, others – even otherwise quite capable – experienced tremendous struggle stemming from the psychological toll of the pandemic. The issue, it would seem, is not so much a lack of effort or even a lack of interest, but a lack of self-management *strategies* or the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and actions in a conscious and productive way.

To promote student wellbeing as a proxy for supporting successful academic development, it is relevant to consider the significance of the thought-emotion connection for learning. In his book,



*The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt (2006) argues that “rationality depends critically on sophisticated emotionality,” presenting evidence showing that when there is damage to emotional centers of the brain, the ability to make decisions and define next action steps are markedly impaired. In education, this finding would suggest that support in developing emotional regulation strategies among our students can make a major difference in their progress toward academic objectives. Stress is an inevitable reality of life, but the truth is that *in moderate amounts*, stress can actually serve constructive purposes for personal growth; a lot depends on interpretation. One especially useful strategy for this is ‘cognitive reappraisal’ whereby the physiological experience of stress is framed with meaning that minimizes negative emotion while upregulating positive emotion. This approach has been found to have a powerful positive impact when it comes to improving education outcomes (Jamieson et. al, 2010) and offers a useful angle for training students on how to make stress work in their favor.

As teachers, one way in which we might support the development of healthy emotional regulation strategies among our students is our capacity as feedback providers. Research shows that “Academic feedback is more strongly and consistently related to achievement than any other teaching behavior ... this relationship is consistent regardless of grade, socioeconomic status, race, or school setting” (Bellon et al., 1991). In a recent Turnitin webinar, a research team led by John Hattie (2021) presented strategies for crafting what they term ‘where to next’ formative feedback for student writing. According to their findings, the type of feedback most strongly correlated with student growth includes three core elements – *issue, relevance, and action*; meaning the advice most likely to be acted upon clearly communicates to the student how it’s going in relation to where they’re going, and what they can do, specifically, to take action toward that goal. From a positive psychology standpoint, we might also consider how this approach can be further leveraged to provide actionable guidance not only with regard to areas for improvement (or the *issues*), but also

encourage what the student has achieved in relation to where they have been, particularly in navigating the writing process. In this way, feedback can be a powerful mechanism for building confidence in the learning process.

In considering the essential components to wellbeing, the research points to several factors as playing a mediating role in the relationship between stress and academic achievement. Beyond moderate and consistent engagement in physical activity as one such factor, the research would suggest that human beings need both meaningful social interaction and what Haidt (2006) calls ‘voluntary activities’ or those involving “a state of total immersion in a task that is challenging yet closely matched to one’s abilities” and, importantly, draw on a person’s strengths. Taking what our students are doing well as a starting point and framing clear, actionable feedback in a way that celebrates their successes while de-emphasizing negative interpretations of stress-inducing situations can offer an avenue for the development of constructive emotional regulation strategies among our students, which in turn, can have a powerful impact on academic success.

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## TIPS FOR NOVICE TEACHERS FROM AN EXPERIENCED COLLEAGUE

by Özgü Öztürk

Every teacher needs some tips to learn the best way to become “the teacher”. So, how about hearing my story of teaching?

I will never forget my first year in my teaching journey. As I had teacher parents, I didn’t have any anxieties or fears but I was newly- graduated and very enthusiastic. My students were a little bit shy due to not knowing me at all and that didn’t make my job any easier. As time passed by, I have had so many experiences about the difficulties that a teacher can come face to face and with the help of the view of learning by doing, I could overcome all of it.

Keep in mind that you can’t teach them all: Not every student comes to school with the same reasons and the same background. They have different aims, different socio-economic situations, and different troubles. Most importantly, they have different skills. Some students perform best at Maths, some at Languages and some at Art. Making them love your lesson would be pretty good, but you cannot push them to be successful at your lesson. They try, believe me. Just sometimes, it won’t happen. Do your best, but know when to go with the flow.

Learn what to do when you suspect a child is bullied in school or online: According to Ericsson, bullying is frequently misunderstood by adults as an unavoidable part of growing up and, as a result, often occurs in the presence of adults who fail to do anything about it (3). Cyberbullying is a real threat to our students as they still don’t decide properly what to share online. Sometimes they do

this just to be popular, sometimes not to be alienated. Talk with experts, search the ways of fighting against the issue, learn and teach how to be safe online.

Be their teacher: You will have lots of students' love with you, but there will be some others who will not be like this, which is to be expected in a school setting. However, you need to love them all. While the idealistic inexperienced teacher within you will argue that behaving like a friend is the best way to win students' hearts, you must remember that you are their teacher. Your purpose here is to show the right way, instruct the right approach, and guide people to act appropriately. Behave more like their parents than their friends. Although it may not appear so, children and adolescents look for role models and respect those who know how to accept responsibility. For the simple reason that they are the ones who prepare them for the future.

Know how to motivate and entertain your students: To carry out a perfect lesson and engage the students' attention, the first step to take is knowing the students, their interests, and their needs. Use their names from the very beginning of the term, try to learn everyone's name as soon as possible. Try different activities to learn about their interests and learning styles. Use their favourite songs, plan your lessons from the films they like to watch, choose readings from their best writers. Be a gamer, an artist, an actor, and a good playmate.

Keep on your professional development: As Heraclitus said, 'The only constant in life is change'. When I first graduated from university, Gardner had eight multiple intelligences (4). A few years ago, I learned that there came the ninth intelligence with the name of existential intelligence (5). What I mean is, you cannot teach your students with obsolete methods. You should keep going to improve yourself, you should brush up on and you should learn to teach better. You can do this in many ways from reading for further information to enrolling in some online courses which is the new way of learning.

Maintain your wellbeing: You won't be in the zone every day. Most days, you will feel exhausted, actually. And weekends won't be as relaxing as you expected. Teaching can be the most challenging and demanding job from time to time. It may be the only profession which needs more study at home. We occasionally read the assignments, exam papers, project works etc. at home and we spend our free time doing these kinds of stuff. To keep you safe both physically and mentally is a must in our job. You can read your favourite book when you feel tired or stressed, listen to a calming melody, try breathing exercises or do some yoga.

Well, all of these suggestions are just advice from a teacher of seventeen years' work. They are not professional ones but experimental ones. I am sure that each and every new teacher will have their own precious experiences somehow. Then, they will create their own story of teaching.

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## C. LEARNER VOICES:



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### SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP AMONG MOOD, HEALTH, AND SUCCESS

by Enes Çağlar

Mood, which can be defined as an instant feeling, may affect our lives more than we think. For instance, emotional eating, which is a common problem among people, can show up because of a bad mood. In other words, people tend to eat more when they are coping with stressful situations. Imagine that you have an important exam or presentation for tomorrow, and there is some ice cream in the fridge. It probably won't be there until tomorrow. On the other hand, people can eat more to reward themselves. For example, when your exams are over, you can reward yourself with delicious food, which is very normal. Nevertheless, when you start to reward yourself a lot; it may cause emotional eating too. Therefore, we should balance our moods because both extreme emotions can cause emotional eating. Also, brain chemicals which are named opioids can increase during a bad mood. According to Psych-Central, which is a psychology website, your immune system can be weakened by these chemicals. In addition, a bad mood can increase the risk of heart diseases because it may cause irregular heart rhythms and high blood pressure. In a nutshell, our moods can affect our health negatively.

What can we do in order to boost our mood? Firstly, we can listen to upbeat music to boost our mood. A study, which was published in 2013 by the University of Missouri, claims that listening to

upbeat music can raise our mood. Secondly, we can watch sitcoms or stand-up to boost our mood. For instance, I love watching sitcoms to laugh and improve my English. In my opinion, there are a lot of advantages of sitcoms such as they help you to learn new words and phrases, they are generally under 30 minutes, so you don't spend a lot of time watching them, and last but not least they make you laugh. Thirdly, you can go outside and walk around to boost your mood, which is my favorite one. I love going out and walking while listening to music or talking on the phone. I think it makes me feel relaxed and lifts my mood. Fourthly, you can exercise to improve your mood because while you are exercising your brain increases adrenaline, endorphins, and dopamine which are chemicals that make you happy, confident, and less stressed. Next, you can sleep, I think it is the most common way among people. Also, according to researchers' sleep can affect you like 8 weeks of therapy or winning a quarter of a million. Then, you can meditate or do yoga to feel better. There are a lot of studies showing that yoga and meditation decrease our stress, relieve anxiety, and help us to cope with depression. Finally, you can find a hobby which makes you happy, and you can do it to turn a bad mood into a good mood. For instance, playing guitar, running, listening to music, and playing basketball are some of my hobbies which make me happier, relieve my stress, and help me to discover myself. Moreover, all strategies which increase our mood affect our academic success too, because when we are in a good mood we can focus easily and learn quickly. For instance, imagine that you are in a class and the teacher is explaining something, but you are depressed, and you are thinking something else, so it is quite normal that you are not understanding anything. Let me give you another example, dream that your teacher is so mean, boring, or doesn't like teaching. I think it directly affects your academic success in a negative way because it makes you uneager to learn.

Therefore, what can we do to improve our academic success? I think we need to be independent as a student in the first place because we shouldn't allow environmental factors to affect us. As

referred to earlier, there can be a teacher who is so mean or boring, but it doesn't mean that you are going to fail that lesson. At the end of the day, it depends on you to be successful or not. In addition, to be more successful academically we should set goals and prioritize them. Then we should practice every day to achieve our goals. Motivation to achieve our goals shouldn't be our fuel for success. Our discipline should be because we can lose our motivation, but we can't lose our discipline. In conclusion, I would like to quote Joe Louis, who was an American boxer and world heavyweight champion from 1937 to 1949, "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die."



# TESOL

**TURKEY**

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES