

ICTs for Engagement, Collaboration, and Communication in English Teaching: A practical guide



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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this booklet is to provide instructors with practical tips for incorporating ICTs into the teaching and learning of English mediated by technology. The selection of practices and digital tools was based on a previous study conducted with students and instructors from the Western Campus of the University of Costa and high school teachers from the same region in 2020. The intended uses of this guide are to serve as supporting material for instructors who are starting to incorporate technology into their lessons and to provide a repertoire of apps and activities that can help guide their teaching supported by technology within a framework of communication, engagement, and collaboration practices.

The booklet includes 4 chapters focused on ICTs practices and applications. The first three chapters consist of an overview of applications and sample guidelines and activities to improve the quality of online instruction. The last chapter consists of a series of practices to improve communication online and to build a positive atmosphere in an online setting. The authors of this booklet hope that the applications and activities will be enjoyable, add spice and variety to classes, and overall help beginner instructors to venture into online teaching and the use of technology.

CHAPTER 1: ICT tools to improve engagement and interaction on video conferencing software

Video conferencing tools have gradually gained importance in learning supported by technology to the point that today they have become an essential part of educators' digital literacy. While conferencing tools offer the possibility of real-time online interaction and feedback, a common problem reported by both instructors and students is that conference platforms can easily become *frontal teaching spaces* if activities are not carefully designed to ensure active participation and thus help students benefit from the available conferencing tools such as breakout rooms, chat, emojis, screen sharing, and the whiteboard feature.

What is key to understand is the need to **use different computer-based interactive apps** and to vary the applications when on Zoom or any other video conferencing software. This in itself will greatly improve the engagement and interaction element to keep students' attention. The following is a sample of apps that will help engage your students online and in several cases, in a face-to-face classroom environment.

Part I: Synchronous activities where students can participate actively

Wooclap.com tool



Overview:

Wooclap is an educational ICT tool that allows students to actively participate in a synchronized class session on any video conferencing software such as Zoom. It is the most complete, and simple audience response system that helps engage learners in live class sessions whether online or in the classroom. It is also a great tool to use in live conferences and training sessions.

The free version allows educators to create an activity of up to two questions per event. Twenty different question-types are available including poll, word cloud, rating, brainstorming, and fill-in-the-blanks, to name a few. Question slides may be shared by either copying the URL link and pasting it within the chat feature of Zoom, for example, or by importing the slides into a presentation. Both ways allow students/participants to interact in real-time.

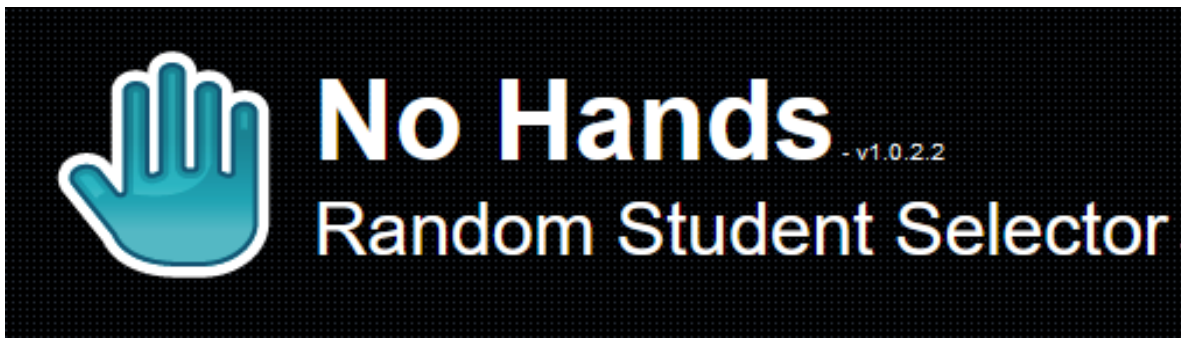
Alternative applications to Wooclap include the following: AhaSlides (free), Slido (freemium), Kahoot! (freemium), Classtime (freemium), Poll Everywhere (freemium), and Mentimeter (freemium).

A sample Wooclap activity:

Get to know each other: First create a question on Wooclap using the “Find on image” question option. Upload an image where students/participants can locate where they are from within their country or regional area. Then the presenter or educator can share the zoom screen to show the responses of the participants.

For the second question, use the “Open question” for an icebreaker by creating a question that is tailored to the context of the course or time of year. For example, you could write “What is your favorite thing to do over the weekend?” or “What did you enjoy most over the holidays?”

No Hands tool



Overview:

This software is a simple classroom management app that will randomly select a student from the course list of names. It is based on the theory that students feel more comfortable if selected at random. At the same time, this tool keeps everyone attentive as anyone may be selected to actively engage in the lesson.

The No Hands free app is a simple but effective tool. To download, go to <https://www.ehyde.com/No%20Hands/> Then open the zip file and right click the No Hands folder to extract the folder to your desktop. Next, open the No Hands folder on your desktop and click on the No Hands Classes to add your students' names. Watch the following YouTube

video on further details on the setup and see what it looks like:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q6iFBLIm3E&t=189s>

In regards to user interface, the application may be left on top of any windows. To do so, simply click on No Hands and then press CTRL + T to lock it in place. It can also be placed on top of a powerpoint presentation or even while on a web browser or using an application such as Nearpod. This setup is useful as it allows for the educator to check students' understanding of the material being covered by asking some key "check for understanding" questions to randomly selected students.

Alternative applications to No Hands: transum.org (free), Popsicle Sticks (free, available on Chrome only), Random Student Selector at www.aschool.us (free, asks for a donation), classroomscreen.com (Mac).

Activity ideas with No Hands:

During any online synchronized lesson on Zoom, or any other video conferencing software, you can randomly check for student's understanding during a lecture, powerpoint presentation or even while watching a video clip. The key element is that the presenter's screen is being shared on the video conferencing software so that students can see that their name has been randomly selected.

The same principle is true when you are wanting students to take turns reading an excerpt from a story or an article or get students input in a brainstorming activity. Just think of all the activities you used to call on students for in the physical classroom; now with No Hands, calling on students has been upgraded to 2.0.

PowerPoint Games



Overview:

Another powerful resource to boost students' engagement and interaction online or in face-to-face instruction is through Interactive Games with PowerPoint. Games are known to release tension and relieve stress while checking prior knowledge or students' understanding of a topic. There are many premade PowerPoint Games. Here are two links to get you started:

<https://powerpointgames.uk/> This first link contains over 100 PowerPoint games that can be used just for fun, as tutorials and then there are educational games as well. This next link has 10 excellent games for in the classroom or synchronized learning, for workshops and for presentations: <https://slidelizard.com/en/blog/powerpoint-presentation-games>

Note: When using these games on Zoom or any other video conferencing software, you will need to share your screen with the participants.

Alternative applications to Powerpoint Games include: Nearpod (freemium), Kahoot! (freemium), Quizizz (free), Quizlet (freemium), GimKit (30 day free trial), and Google Slides (free) in conjunction with an addon such as Nearpod and Pear Deck plus Pear Deck Power-Up.

Sample Powerpoint Game Activities:

Once Upon a Click -- this game is based on reading “Story Cubes” in which the participant chooses several squares which will reveal a different icon in each square. The idea is to use your imagination and creativity to come up with a story that incorporates each of the icons that were revealed. The following link gives you the download link along with a short video with different ways to use this game with your students:

<https://powerpointgames.uk/portfolio-items/once-upon-a-click/>

Monsters and Dinosaurs-- The present game can be used with any topic to ask questions to review a topic or check students’ understanding of the content material. This is a great game to play with teams or individual students. Each team/player will be given turns in which they are presented with a question to answer. If the answer is correct, the team/player chooses a square. There can be four different outcomes when choosing a square: a dinosaur image for 2 points, evil/angry minion who can steal or take 1 point from another team, a happy minion for 1 point, and a rotten orange to lose 1 point. It is recommended to use the No Hands app as a means to randomly choose the team or player for each question. Here is the download link to the Monsters and Dinosaurs ppt game:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GzIII8x8N_6jrDDgZ9kkM3sdJrDLnF2E/view

Part II: Asynchronous activities where students can participate actively

Bitmoji Classroom



Overview:

The Bitmoji Classroom has really taken off since the pandemic began in 2020 with educators looking for creative ways to teach online while engaging students and creating autonomy through self-paced scaffolded activities using a variety of digital apps, tools and media.

First, to create a Bitmoji Classroom, you will first need a Bitmoji which is an emoji of yourself created using the [Bitmoji app](#) downloaded on an iOS or Android smartphone. The creation process is made simple as you begin with a selfie so the app can generate a good likeness of yourself. Then tweak your virtual doppelganger with a hairstyle, clothes, accessories and more to your liking.

Next, you will need to create your virtual classroom space. This can be done on Google Slides (only works fully on Chrome) or PowerPoint. Begin with a blank slide and add a background.

How to add a background	
Google Slides using Chrome	PowerPoint
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Click on “Background” ● Select “Choose Image” ● Then “Google Image Search.” ● Type in something like “wall and floor background” / “wall floor” or “white brick wall” and “wood floor” -- then arrange them on the page. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Go to a search engine such as DuckDuckGo, Google or Yippy Search. ● Search for a background image for your classroom. ● Copy and then paste the background to the blank slide. ● Resize as needed.

In step two of creating your virtual classroom, you get to be really creative as you add in your furniture, wall art, posters and other accessories.

How to add furniture & other items	
Google Slides using Chrome	PowerPoint
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Click on “Insert” ● Select “Image” ● Then “Search the Web.” ● Search for items to add to your virtual classroom (i.e. whiteboard, table, desk, windows, sofa, plants, bookcase, posters, wall art, etc.) <p>NOTE: Search for items that do not have a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Go to a search engine such as DuckDuckGo, Google or Yippy Search. ● Search for transparent items to add to your classroom (i.e. whiteboard, table, desk, windows, sofa, plants, bookcase, posters, wall art, etc.) See the “TIPS” below on how to find images that you need quickly using Google

background by typing in “transparent window” for example. See the “TIPS” below on how to find images that you need quickly using Google Images or how to make a background transparent.

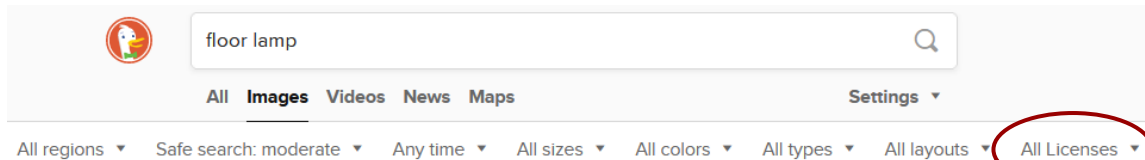
- Drag images over to your slide
- Resize as needed.
- Right click images to “Order,” “Rotate,” “Crop image,” as well as to access the “Format options”.

Images or how to make a background transparent.

- Copy and then paste the items to your slide.
- Resize and rotate as needed.
- Right click images to “Bring to Front,” “Send to Back,” “Crop,” as well as to access the “Format Picture”.

❖ **TIP 1:** How to use Google filter tools to search for Images.

1. For this tip, open a Firefox Browser to the Search Bar.
2. Type in the item you need for your classroom (i.e. floor lamp)
3. Go to Google “Images”.
4. Then click “All Licenses”.



5. To find images that are labeled for reuse, click “Free to Share and Use” to avoid copyright violations as digital citizens.
6. To find images without a background, click “All types” → “Transparent”.

❖ **TIP 2:** How to use “remove.bg”. If you can’t find an image with a transparent background that fits your needs go to [Remove Background from Image – remove.bg](https://remove.bg).

1. Drag or upload the image to remove the background.
 2. Then copy the image and paste in slide keeping source formatting.
- NOTE: This may also be used to obtain an image of your pet (for example) from a digital photo.

In step three, you are adding your Bitmoji to your virtual classroom.

How to add your Bitmoji	
Google Slides using Chrome	PowerPoint
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Install the Chrome Bitmoji Extension.● Open Google Slides.● Click Extensions → Bitmoji● Click the three dots next to Bitmoji to pin it to the Chrome toolbar. It will then show up as a green smiley face.● Search for your desired Bimoji, select, and drag onto your Google Slide.● Resize as needed.● Right click images to “Order,” “Rotate,” “Crop image,” as well as to access the “Format options”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Install the Chrome Bitmoji Extension.● Open Google Chrome.● Click Extensions → Bitmoji● Click the three dots next to Bitmoji to pin it to the Chrome toolbar. It will then show up as a green smiley face next to your web address bar on the right.● Search for your desired Bimoji, right click, and “Save image as . . .” NOTE: You can also log into Bitmoji via Snapchat.● Open the Desktop or Folder where the image has been saved. Right-click and copy.● Paste the items to your slide.● Resize and rotate as needed.● Right click images to “Bring to Front,” “Send to Back,” “Crop,” as well as to access the “Format Picture”.
<p>NOTE: To change your Bitmoji’s look, open the Bitmoji app on your phone to make any changes to your avatar's hairstyle, clothing and accessories.</p>	

CHAPTER 3: How to integrate collaborative group work using digital tools

Part I. Use digital tools that favor group-based learning.

In the findings obtained in the research project grounding this practical guide for the use of ICTs, it was identified that collaborative activities are perceived as a strong need for teachers and students. Although the benefits of group-based activities are unquestionable, teachers may not necessarily know how to successfully incorporate them into their online classrooms in ways other than traditional forums.

ICTs offer multiple possibilities for promoting collaboration. In this sense, Valtonnen (2011) reinforces the benefits of collaboration online and asserts that, when carefully organized, online collaboration leads to a model of progressive inquiry that helps students achieve higher level thinking through sharing, revising/ revisiting content and generating new ideas.

A principle of online learning that allows for enhanced interaction is social annotation. It represents a shift in the way that educators and students have traditionally interacted with texts since it allows to create an on-going dialogue as different people navigate through the text. This principle is increasingly gaining popularity not only in higher education, but also in high school classrooms. One app that can be used for social annotation is Perusall.

Overview:

Perusall is a reading tool that changes the way in which people interact with a text. It is very practical for university courses with a heavy reading load. With the help of this application, students and instructors can create comments or highlight areas of the text and easily analyze and

discuss the content of the text together, making reading more engaging, enjoyable, and interactive. Perusall can be easily integrated into platforms like Blackboard, Canvas or Moodle through a link.

Perusall is based on assignments that students complete before a lecture starts. Lecture time is used to discuss issues around the course content. The assignments are made for points (course credits), or rewarded in some other way (for example, as a bonus exam question). The assignments consist of reading one or more the texts and making annotations based on this text. Annotations consist of questions based on the text or responses to the other students' questions. Because of the type of learning Perusall promotes, its principles align well with those of a Flipped classroom.



Sample activity:

Confusion report

Perusall grades the student work automatically and provides an overview of all annotations in a confusion report, providing advice to the lecturer on what points are interesting for discussion. Teachers can use the questions in the report to prepare a power point presentation in which they address the students' questions and comments. When an interesting comment was made, teachers can take some time to praise the student's work.

Alternatives: Hypothesis, NowComment, Perusal, and Diigo.

Part II. Plan activities focused on a variety of digital apps, tools and media

Using a variety of digital tools and apps is without a doubt an essential component of engagement. For some people, planning classes with a variety of tools and apps means to innovate with a different app every time. This is not necessarily beneficial for students and even for teachers if the uses of an app are not clear yet and if sufficient practice is not provided. The authors of this booklet believe that the essence of variety lies in the possibility of having an open learning system or environment that can integrate several apps and media into a whole. The final product should consist of a multimodal online classroom with a variety of media and with hyperlinks to different learning apps, with everything located in one place.

Overview: Padlet is a collaborative board that can be used to display information about any topic. It can be used for activities such as blogging, publishing videos, and posting presentations, or simply for discussion. Padlet can be easily accessed from computers, cellphones, and tablets. This app can be used by an individual, a small group of students, a classroom, or even multiple classrooms. The possibility to post other links on the collaborative board is precisely what allows the integration of a variety of apps and media. Some of the things you can include in a padlet are documents, images, hyperlinks, audio, and video files. This app can be easily turned into a mosaic of possibilities for collaborative work when used with a group.



Sample activities

According to the University of Sussex (2020), these are four ways in which Padlet can be used in a classroom.

Sharing resources

Teachers can share a variety of multimedia on a Padlet board and make it accessible to students for collaboration.

Group work

Padlet can also work for more short-term group work. For example, if a teacher is holding a group session on Zoom, and she/he has broken students up into breakout rooms, then each group can be asked to post their thoughts or notes onto Padlet. This way all the students' thoughts can be captured in one place.

Maps and timelines

Maps

The map format, with a range of different styles, can be used to pin posts, containing any of the usual range of Padlet content including text, files, images, weblinks, video, audio and drawings. Examples of activities include: locating places on a map for possible visits, locating historical events in place and time, sharing documentation about fieldwork, among other ideas.

Timelines

Similarly to maps, Padlet can be used to create time lines including a variety of links and media. Examples of activities include timeline of theorists, historical points, stages of process, a journal, etc.

A Q&A space

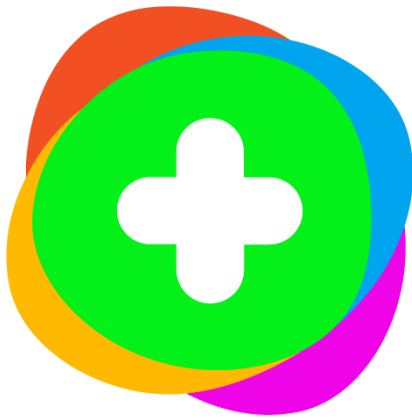
Padlet is a good alternative to a Q&A forum. It can be used to post questions anonymously and to provide answers that are accessible to everyone.

CHAPTER 3: Online Communities

ICT activities that help build a sense of community

Building a sense of community in online learning can help to compensate for the absence of a physical shared space between students and teachers and to loosen the tension that the first approach to technology online can generate. Learning is a social event and online instructors must take the necessary precautions to establish good rapport with the students and to foster a positive interaction among group members - just like it should be in a physical environment. Creating a sense of community builds on the three pillars of this project given that candid communication and the desire to participate and collaborate online are also connected to a feeling of belonging in the classroom. A platform that is versatile and appealing for learners to interact at a more personal level and build a sense of community is Flipgrid.

Flipgrid



Flipgrid

Overview:

Flipgrid is a free discussion video app that allows its users to record short responses on the computer or cellphone, simulating a real-life interaction. The responses on Flipgrid can be recorded synchronously or asynchronously at a convenient time for users. One of the aspects that makes this application engaging is that the videos can be accessed several times and by many people after being recorded and the format of the responses can be both written and oral. The Flipgrid experience goes beyond sharing a video as you can also include filters or change your backgrounds to make the videos more appealing, which in turn is conducive to an increased desire to comment or participate. The platform can be used by teachers to connect people locally and internationally.

Note: If you want your students to share images (i.e. posters, charts), try Wakelet (free). You can record Flipgrid videos directly into Wakelet.

It is also a great tool that allows for the creation of collaborative boards where everyone can post their work.

Alternative apps to Flipgrid: Classroom YouTube Channel (freemium), Loom (free for teachers and students), Classtime (freemium), Voicethread (freemium), Vyond [formerly GoAnimate] (freemium),

Sample activities:

In the Flipgrid blog (2020), you can find a vast array of activities. The authors of this booklet would like to recommend the following three as well as to invite you to visit the blog yourselves.

Goal Setting: Students come into a new class excited about the year ahead. Some have big plans! Allowing students the time to set goals is a meaningful way to get them thinking about what they want to accomplish. It is also a topic that can be revisited throughout the year with “updates” recorded by the students in regard to the goals they set or if they have any new ones! Once students update their goals, you can send home to parents as an update.

Show and Tell: Students get a chance to record something that they want to share with the class. This can be an object from home, a special talent, memory, story or simply something fun and unique about themselves. This can extend to home or throughout the week.

Summer Reading Talk: Hopefully students read over the summer or anything that they find interesting and you could have them respond with books they read while out of the classroom. This would be an easy way to get them talking while integrating a core subject area.

CHAPTER 4: Communication 2.0-- Communication is Key

Establish an online communication protocol

The success of an online course relies heavily on communication. While it seems that communication online is easier and more fluid because of the variety of existing tools and applications, it is no surprise to find misunderstandings or communication breakdowns of some sort. The following are a series of good practices that need to be acknowledged to make sure that communication is efficient in the online environment.

a) Plan ahead and be attentive to messages

Students will want to contact you as soon as the course starts. Make sure that your email and other contact information is placed in a prominent place in the course outline or in the virtual environment. Develop clear guidelines that students can access at least a week in advance to achieve more intentional communication. More importantly, be attentive to messages from students and respond in a timely manner.

b) Be clear and share your expectations

There should be no room for confusion when the instructor is not there to clarify questions. Break complex tasks into simpler steps, use numbers, and subtitles. When possible, provide examples or infograms if they can help to get your message across. Remember sometimes less is more; long instructions can also confuse your learners. Students and teachers should also be able to share expectations in order to develop proper guidelines.

c) Identify yourself properly

Remind your students to please introduce themselves the first time they contact you. Ask them to use their full name accompanied by the name of the course. The username of the students' account should be the same as their name. Otherwise, they may not be accepted in a course or a synchronous session. When possible, students and instructors should keep their camera on or use an appropriate photo to illustrate their identity. For security reasons, your identity needs to be verifiable. The use of the camera is desirable when participating in a discussion or in a conference with the students.

d) Keep a balance between synchronous and asynchronous interaction

A healthy balance between synchronous and asynchronous communication is always encouraged. Follow the guidelines recommended by your institution about the synchronous sessions such as on a video conferencing application like Zoom or Google Meets. It's recommended to do no more than an hour at a time. Therefore, the instructor must plan for moments for synchronous and asynchronous interaction within the agenda of the day and the course calendar.

Remember that the attention span is likely to decrease after longer periods of time.

e) Look for opportunities for individual and group feedback

Your students need to know that you care about them. Find opportunities to open up spaces for individual feedback and look for the best times to talk to the group as a whole. The connection with the group grows stronger when the teacher is there for the individuals in the group.

f) Recommendations for proper classroom management online

Be mindful of these recommendations for proper classroom management: 1) Be punctual to synchronous classes to avoid interruptions. 2) Microphones should be turned off while the instructor or classmates are speaking; 2) Raise their hand to participate; 3) Use appropriate language and tone in your interventions; 4) Be respectful and professional; 5) Remind your students to acknowledge receipt of emails and messages on WhatsApp and Telegram; 6) Ask questions during times designated by the instructor; 7) Avoid sending messages in the evening or on weekends.

g) Communication must be multifaceted and personalized.

Welcome different forms of communication like different audio or video material that can break the monotony of extended written guidelines. Your voice and image can help create a stronger bond with the student community and contribute to add realness to the class. Whenever possible, look for opportunities to personalize your learning materials with images, bitmojis, or even with a selection of colors and fonts that can contribute to add personality to your work.

h) Don't forget to proofread your messages

Be it to achieve a more professional or courteous tone or simply to fix your grammar and spelling, a last revision always comes in handy.

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