October 2021 (Issue #4)

The University Grapevine

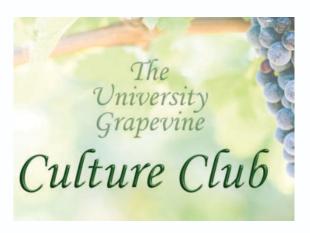## For University English Language Teachers

Contents

Grapevine News

You can now publish up to 3 articles per year!

After the enormous response to the start of the newsletter, I've now decided to accept up to 3 articles for publishing from authors each year. I want to give everyone a chance to share their great ideas and also allow those with lots of ideas to get them out there for us all to enjoy! The deadline for Issue #7 is January 30th. Take a look at the simple guidelines.

Find a 2022 online classroom exchange with Culture Club!

If you want to get your students communicating with students from around the world, submit some simple info on the website and other teachers will contact you directly. It's all free and probably the easiest way to make classroom connections!

Start teaching your students the SMART way from 2022!

You can make classroom preparation, online teaching, assessment and student motivation easier by switching to the SMART Class Series textbook range. Take a look at the textbooks available and make a switch to give yourself and your students a new and exciting start to 2022!

From the Editor

I'm proud to be sending you all this fourth issue of the newsletter. Once again, there are some excellent ideas inside to help us all improve our teaching and feel a little bit closer to each other. Thank you to everyone involved and please do not be shy about sending in your very own creative lesson plans, project ideas or approaches to helping university students learn English. Our world has very much changed and the experience and wisdom that we teachers can offer really are the way forward.

If you have not yet registered for the newsletter, you can join here. Also, if you wish to send in an article for review, please use the simple guidelines and template.

Good luck to everyone with teaching!

Robert Stroud
TUG Editor

Tips and Skills for Better Online Presentations

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Teaching Goal

My challenge, as is the case for many of us, was getting my students in shape for how to properly conduct themselves online. I quickly realized that if my students did not learn appropriate online etiquette they would be an annoyance in class and produce substandard work...especially on their presentations. By teaching them how to correctly carry themselves online not only would it address the aforementioned issues but they also would develop a skill set that can serve them well in their professional lives outside of, and after, their time at university. Several specific problems that I consistently came across were:

1. Not being able to see the faces of my students due to cameras being off, poor lighting and/or poor camera position
2. Poor "eye contact" during presentations
3. Poor presentation skills online because my students were simply reading poorly prepared slides
4. Poorly prepared slides (especially too much color and chart junk in their slides) for presentations

To that end, I set out to present a clear and concise lesson for my students covering tips on how to properly conduct themselves online, how to make presentations and how to develop skills that would be acceptable in most university and professional settings.

Approach

I am fortunate to have a background as a presentation coach & trainer for both in person and online settings. Applying the skills that I have learned as a Toastmaster, TEDx Presentation Coach, Data Storyteller Trainer and a consultant to companies I created slides to concisely and directly address what my students should do and what they should not do.

As basic as it seems, by simply taking the time to clearly explain (and demonstrate) to my students what was okay, what was not okay, what would be expected and what would make them look good online made a significant difference in the quality of online classes and their online presentations.

I used [Google Slides](#) for my presentations platform but PowerPoint would work just fine. [This is the link to my deck](#); you are more than welcome to copy and create a deck that works for you. Please view the slides in "Present" mode, line by line, as opposed to scrolling down slide by slide.

Also, I strongly suggest that when you teach the lesson to your class(es) please present the information line by line, as I have done, not slide by slide. Line by line makes it easier for students to focus on each point and not get overwhelmed with the entire content of the slide being presented all at once.

Some students had technical or equipment issues or environments and conditions which made if difficult to create an optimal atmosphere for online situations or presentations. More often than not this reality was to no fault of their own and I simply had to be tolerant and understanding of the situation; not a problem.

Ideally this presentation takes 15-20 minutes however depending on the class it could take 35-40 minutes; the additional time dedicated to teaching this material was not a problem. In fact, the time invested in educating my students on how to properly carry themselves and make presentations online made a world of difference moving forward. To that end, taking an additional 15-20 minutes on the lesson, if it was needed, was worth it.

The lesson was, of course, tailored to the level and needs of my university students. That said, for the most part, I used the same style and presentation that I use to train TEDx teams for online presentations, Toastmasters for speech

contests and corporate entities in various countries. I used the same slide format (simple black lettering on white background with red lettering to emphasize the points of specific attention) and the same direct style to convey the information. Bottom line, if it is good enough to train my TEDx teams, professional speakers and corporate entities...it certainly is effective with my university students.

Should you have any questions about the tips or should you need further elaboration please feel free to reach out to me and ask.

Pros and Cons

The biggest "pro" is the difference that I can see in this year's 2nd and 3rd year students who received the training with me the previous year in a prior class compared to their classmates who did not receive the training. Actually, the difference has even been noticeable in my 1st year second semester classes this year with students that I taught in the first semester. The better lighting, improved "eye contact", cleaner slides during presentations, stronger confidence, and overall improved presentation skills & ability of those who have received the training in a prior semester is evident when compared to their classmates who have not (yet) received the training.

I could say that the only significant challenge, or "con" if you will, with this lesson is that in and of itself it is not a full ninety (90) minute lesson and usually there is other content that must be addressed during the class. Making sure I do not spend <u>too</u> much time on this proper presentation content at the expense of the other material, in the syllabus, for the day's lesson can be a challenge. This is simply time management and proper teaching...as such, negotiating this challenge is not a problem.

Hope this lesson helps you out, I trust it will. Again, please feel free to reach out should you have any questions. Happy teaching, be as healthy as you can and travel safely.

Contact information:

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How to Publish an Article

Please follow the guidelines to submit an article to the newsletter:

Content:

Ideas that help ESL/EFL university teachers around the world improve their craft are warmly welcome. Some topic suggestions are: online teaching, student motivation, classroom management and teaching material design.

Language of Submission:

All articles will need to be submitted in English.

Length of Submission:

Ideally, articles should be longer than 500 words and no more than 1500 words.

Editing:

Please check your spelling/grammar carefully as it cannot be corrected for you (and the article may not be published).

Citations:

Citations/research data are not necessary. If you do want to include some, please keep them to a minimum.

How to Submit:

Submit your article by completing the boxes in the template and sending this file directly to robertstroud@hosei.ac.jp.