

Equitable Practices: Increasing Participation and Accountability in Virtual Classrooms

by Ana Kear

Equitable classroom practices are a reflection of a culturally responsive teacher. In my experience, I have noticed that implementing and maintaining equity and inclusion depends on designing lessons that incorporate structure and accountability. Prioritizing students' voices has been fundamental in keeping students engaged, especially those who might be otherwise easily distracted because they have been at home since distance learning started and may have little to no supervision.

I teach secondary students, and in my classes I have a mix of ninth- to twelfth-graders in each class period. Although each student has their own Chromebook device, that alone is not the determining factor of their success because their knowledge of available online tools is as varied as their skill sets. To eliminate the concern regarding how distractions and a lack of digital literacy (Young, 2020) may hinder learning, I make sure that my students can participate in the learning regardless of how tech-savvy they are. To increase participation, I have been utilizing Google Slides and its features to recreate varied activities that worked well when we were meeting in person. The student familiarity with this tool, along with its frequent use in my virtual classroom, has helped to reduce the affective filter associated with spontaneous output in a virtual setting and has increased participation and collaboration in breakout rooms. The flexibility of this tool allows for a richer online experience (Stavely, 2020). Results and feedback have been encouraging; here is how it works.

First, I review the learning targets for the week before selecting the Google Slides activity that would work best; some of my go-to activities include Peer Interview, Think-Pair-Share, and Two Truths And A Lie. I make copies of the master templates before modifying and using them with my students. Using Google Slides gives me the ability to pre-assign the students to their individual section of Slides or have the students claim their own; this allows for choice, which is always appreciated.

After the instructions have been given and the slides assigned, the activity starts, as does the monitoring of participation and productivity, which is one of the best benefits of this application. Since Google Slides allows for real-time feedback while performance is taking place, support is also being differentiated and provided instantaneously and as needed.

With Slides, I have my eyes on every student, just like when we were in the physical classroom. Clicking on the grid view feature of Google Slides allows me to keep an eye on an idling student during the activity. Depending on how long the student remains inactive, I may move from sending an encouraging message to offering assistance when necessary. I have found that a well-planned Google Slides activity allows for on-time remediation, which may be followed by a private or public set of directions or re-directions depending on the student, group, or situation. Google Slides' grid view feature facilitates a teaching style called "Warm Demander," defined as instructors who "expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential in a disciplined and structured environment" (Alexander, 2016). This approach to online learning has been a game-changer for my practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY PROMOTES LEARNING

Reflect on your practice...

What are some of the things you do to hold students accountable for their learning?

How do you provide feedback to students?

How do you assess speaking in your virtual space?

The example I am sharing here is a modified version of the well-known activity Two Truths And A Lie. If you have used this in person, I can tell you that it can be easily modified for distance learning, and it is equally effective for a whole class or small groups in breakout rooms. My students have enjoyed the game-like

experience and appreciated the immediate, yet anonymous, feedback they received while practicing.

My preparation

For this version of Two Truths And A Lie, I selected sentences that contained factual information about the content we were covering. Adding the fabricated piece helped to prompt discussion to review the concept. This type of activity worked well as an entry task and has also yielded satisfactory results when used as the main practice during our live sessions.

I used this activity with my lower levels as well as with my intermediate levels before the Thanksgiving break. The goal for my lower levels involved having students [practice what they learned by distinguishing between imperative sentences and other types of sentences](#) while my higher levels were practicing distinguishing between similes and metaphors.

In my virtual setting, I am always looking to incorporate the students' voice, collaboration, and choice to promote language acquisition and critical thinking. At the end of the period, I offer exit tickets to facilitate student reflection on their learning and as a way to increase accountability. However, since my students started to practice with the help of Google Slides, I have seen an increase in accountability for learning. In addition, the metacognition process seems to be happening spontaneously during the Slides activities, which is a bonus.

Since Google stores the students' work, I can review their performances when reflecting on the next steps. I have reused what I collected from one day to the next by copying the incorrect answers and having the students troubleshoot and collaborate to find the right answer. This again allows for student-friendly interaction, offering opportunities for meaningful connections and the use of the target

language to negotiate the meaning and the main concept being practiced.

Creating a template and implementing the activities takes some preliminary work, but again, templates may be reused and customized to fit specific groups and their needs. Giving editing access to students when planning to collect evidence on a broader scale is also advised. Regardless of which way the instructor decides to take it, working with Slides allows for equity during live peer interactions, painless monitoring, and effective feedback, making the preliminary work worthwhile. I have also found that starting with Google Slides facilitates much-needed gains in digital literacy before introducing other digital tools such as GoFormative, Edpuzzle, and Flipgrid. For more inclusive breakout room activities, please review [my presentation, Accountable Talk, 2020 WAESOL Online Conference \(Kear, 2020\)](#).

References

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Ana Kear is passionate about teaching and learning. She has taught Portuguese and Spanish for many years. After receiving her M.Ed. with an emphasis on Curriculum and Instruction and an EL endorsement she has been teaching Language Arts to high school English Learners and loving it. Her interests include researching language acquisition, the application of art in a language classroom, and blended learning. She has served in various Equity teams throughout her career. She also enjoys serving her students and her community by being an advocate of equitable practices and bilingual education. You can contact her at akear@auburn.wednet.edu.

Using Neologisms: A Way to Teach Vocabulary and Intercultural Awareness during Online Instruction

by Sezgi Acar

The current pandemic has affected the status quo of classroom instruction around the world. Many teachers are now learning the fundamentals of teaching online and doing their best to keep students engaged and motivated. Classroom content now takes the form of online presentations on online platforms through video recordings and with the help of various online tools. To spice up the vocabulary instruction in online settings, I would like to discuss the importance of implementing neologisms into vocabulary instruction and propose a few tools that would enhance vocabulary instruction.

What is a Neologism?

In his book, *Fifty Years Among the New Words*, Algeo (1993) notes that “A community is known by the language it keeps, and its words chronicle the times. Every aspect of a people’s life is reflected in the words they use to talk about themselves and the world around them. As their world changes – through invention, discovery, revolution, evolution, or personal transformation – so does their language.” This quote accommodates two compelling concepts: Language acts as an indicator of the history, which means that the language we use today illustrates today’s world and concepts; secondly, vocabulary is the living proof of the change the world endures (McDonald, 2004). Cultures change, so do the words; a solid example for this would be that every year, an average of 600–1000 words make their way into the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). These are the newly coined words, also known as *neologisms*.

The word neologism has been defined by various scholars and dictionaries as “a newly coined word or expression, or the coining or use of new words” (Lexico.com, n.d.) On the other hand, Peter Newmark (1998) says that “Neologisms can be identified as newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense” (as cited in Bahera & Mishra, 2013, p. 26). It means that neologism can also be an existing word with additional different meanings. For instance, while “vape” is a newly created word for a

recently existing concept, the word “snowflake” is an existing word that has shifted in meaning, gaining a new string to it. In 1983, the word “snowflake” was used to describe a person’s unique qualities because each snowflake has a distinctive shape. However, the word is now used for describing “a person who is easily offended, overly sensitive, emotionally fragile” which shows that the word lost its positive connotation and adopted a negative meaning (Dictionary.com, n.d.). As can be seen, neologisms represent the evolving culture, the dynamism of a language, and what matters at the time. Besides, it is possible to track cultural changes by observing new words that are added to the dictionary. However, instead of monitoring every new word in the dictionary each year, one can evaluate the changing norms by delving into the “Word of the Year” chosen by the Oxford English Dictionaries (OED).

The Word of the Year by OED

Every year, experts at Oxford Dictionaries announce the Word of the Year. They define it as “a word or expression that has attracted a great deal of interest over the last 12 months.” Experts debate several candidates for the Word of the Year and choose a winner that is “judged to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of that particular year and to have lasting potential as a word of cultural significance” (Oxford Languages, n.d.) It is not only a word that is used the most throughout the year or a word that becomes unpredictably popular. It is a word that is considered to have a potential cultural significance. Words that bear cultural significance undoubtedly represent a significant portion of the culture and the language they belong to; therefore, neologisms should be involved in language classrooms.

Recent research shows that 98% of the students say they would like to have neologisms implemented in their language lessons. According to the study, participating students said that learning neologisms “increases the potential for language imagination and creativity,” “boosts students’ motivation and interest towards language