Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Online

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Teacher Training Day: Sharing Good Practices in Teaching Chinese Language and Cultures in the AI Era

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Nicely prepared speaking activities...
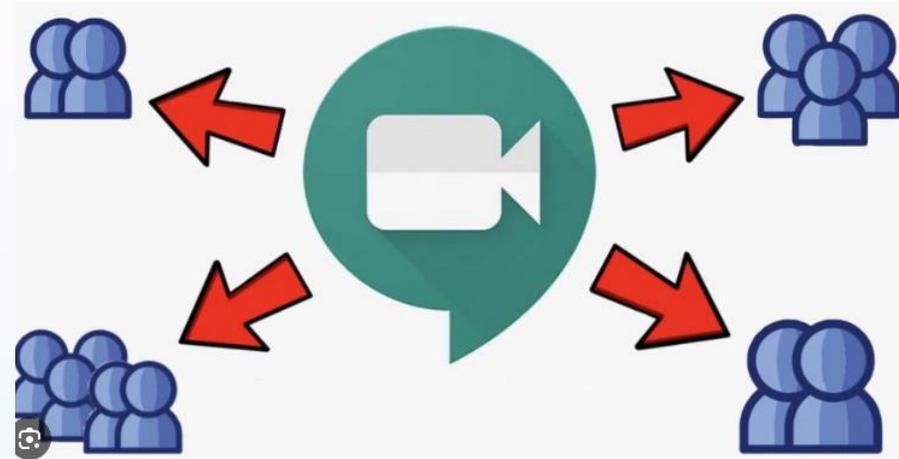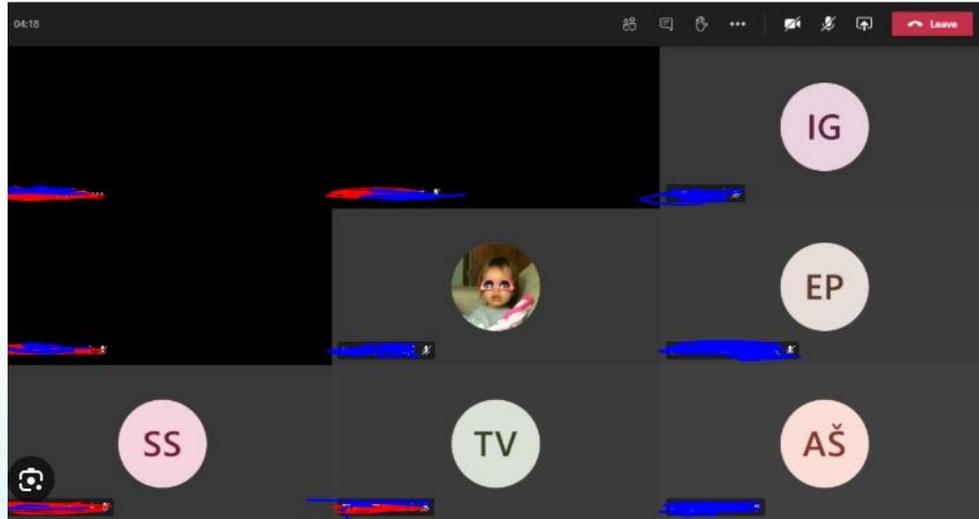
Overview
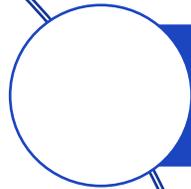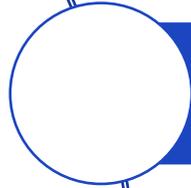
- Emotions in the classroom
- FLSA online
- Breakout rooms
- What can we do?
- Over to you
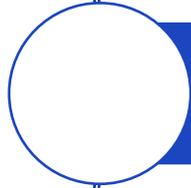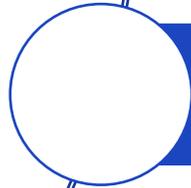
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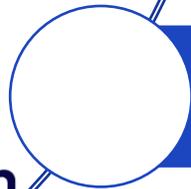
Emotions in the classroom

‣ motivation

‣ anxiety

‣ enjoyment

‣ boredom

Motivation

‣ Integrative → to connect (culture, people)

‣ Instrumental → practical benefits

‣ Intrinsic → pure enjoyment

‣ Extrinsic → external rewards or pressure

‣ Demotivation/amotivation

‣ Boredom (low arousal, high arousal)

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Emotions in the classroom

Enjoyment

‣ Task-oriented → specific activities (songs)

‣ Learning-oriented → process of acquiring

‣ Social → interactions (teachers, peers)

‣ Achievement related → feeling of accomplishment

‣ Agency-based → feeling in control

Foreign Language Anxiety

Anxiety: negative emotional state, feelings of worry, nerves, fear

‣ Physical (sweating, strong heartbeat)

‣ Emotional (panic, frustration)

‣ Cognitive (mental block, freeze)

‣ Behavioural (avoidance, over-preparation)

Foreign Language Anxiety

‣ Foreign Language Anxiety is a specific type of anxiety; "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986)

‣ FLA does not correlate with language competence (even language teachers often experience it)

‣ Most studies report its negative effects on language learners

→ Willingness to Communicate

Foreign Language Anxiety

➢ Reading is the least anxiety provoking FL activity

➢ Speaking is the most anxiety provoking FL (even in asynchronous contexts)

!Emotions fluctuate!

What are learners afraid of?

- o communication apprehension: fear of speaking or understanding

- o test anxiety: worry about performance

- o fear of negative evaluation: being judged

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Why speaking?

- ❯ time pressure: processing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, meaning all at once in real time → cognitive overload
- ❯ pronunciation is the subskill most linked to identity

Difficulties in online learning

- time management

- self-directed learning

- collaborative learning/socialising → disconnect, loneliness

- staying engaged/keeping motivated

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Online

Most studies in the face-to-face classroom

or in emergency online settings → negative attitudes / pedagogies lacking

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Data draws on research carried out

at The Open University with Bärbel Brash

- school-wide interventions

- survey data from 307 OU languages students

- group interviews with 10 students

How do students encounter FLSA in the online classroom?

I feel I shouldn't be here

I feel an absolute fraud

Everybody else is better

The majority of my group are native speakers

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What are students afraid of?

→ emotions are magnified

Perception of self and others – "face loss"
- o fear of being judged
- o impostor syndrome (*I feel an absolute fraud*)
- o keeping others back
- o offending the tutor with their pronunciation (*butchering their beautiful language*)

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How do students encounter FLSA in the online classroom?

Perception of self and others – inadequate performance

- others are better (...*speak so well; half of my group are native speakers*)
- not understand or being understood
- fear of making grammatical mistakes
- *"I cannot express complex ideas"*

Vocabulary retrieval

I cannot remember the vocabulary although I know it

Why?

- can be a direct result of stress / freeze mode
- lack of automatised knowledge

Skills Theory (DeKeyser, 2017): declarative knowledge vs. procedural knowledge

Controversy around cameras
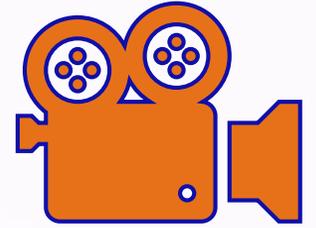
"I would really dislike if there were cameras."

"The fact that we don't have a camera, helps me so much as I don't feel as anxious when I have to put myself on the spot."

Why?
→ anonymity can help feeling less exposed more shielded
→ appearance anxiety – being watched (Zoom fatigue)

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Controversy around cameras
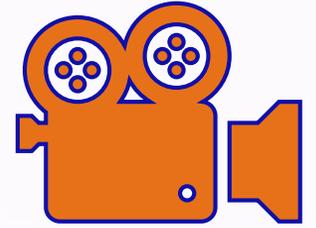
"I'd prefer cameras to be on - I find speaking into the void very difficult even in my native language."

"I think a smile, even online, might help people to feel more confident."

Why?

→ to overcome isolation

→ visual cues

Spoken assignments

2in1: test anxiety + FLSA (+ mental health conditions)

- only languages have an interactive spoken examined component

- growing number of students with MH conditions → reasonable adjustments

→ challenge: prepare and protect

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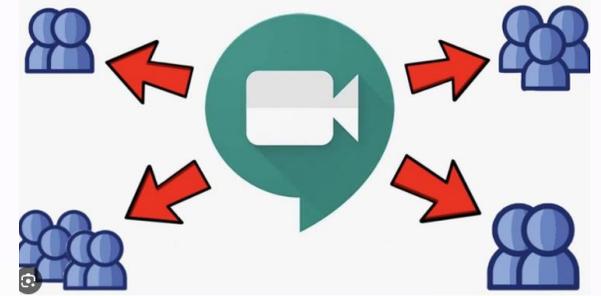
Breakout rooms

Why to use breakout rooms?

‣ enhances collaborative learning

‣ allows for practice; applying concepts learned in the main room

‣ raise concerns with peers

→ empowers students

BUT one of the main triggers of FLSA

Breakout rooms

awful place

I just get left behind and lost and I don't particularly want to get involved as much either, I feel quite isolated quite quickly...

don't attend because don't want to work in small groups with strangers

It's stressful when you go into a breakout room and someone takes over the conversation and doesn't allow time to reply.

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Breakout rooms

Why?

> ‣ tutors create a structured, predictable learning space
> → but in breakout rooms it's the joint responsibility of learners
> → turn-taking is a "virtual dance"
> → difficult to hide without the camera
> → people feel they are continuously watched

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Avoidance

‣ students rarely seek help form their peers

‣ students rarely seek help form their teachers

BUT avoidance is more nuanced

- some leaners don't go to tutorials at all

- some don't go, but watch recorded tutorials

- some go, but never interact

- some go, and interact in writing

- some go, speak, but without a camera

- some go, speak, but not spontaneously

What can we do?

- ❯ enhance learning community and peer support
- ❯ scaffold breakout rooms
- ❯ psychological and metacognitive techniques
- ❯ subject-specific practice

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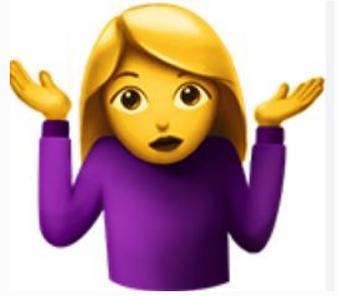
Enhancing learning community

‣ Build relationships

  o ice-breakers; introductory videos; something "personal";
    fun facts; games

‣ Foster collaboration

  o collaborative tasks in small groups; buddy system

‣ Help active engagement

  o forums; interactive activities (e.g. Padlet); vicarious
    learning

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Enhancing learning community

‣ Instructor presence

    ○ regular updates; answer questions on forum

    ○ delicate balance not to overtake (a forum)

‣ Foster inclusive culture and safe learning environment

    ○ errors pave the road to learning

    ○ teachers are learners, moderators

    ○ speak openly about worries

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Scaffold breakout rooms

- students *know* what they have to do
- help with turn-taking
- translanguaging

Prepare for synchronous sessions

› Send materials in advance

› Make plans together for the tutorial
  - just ask one question
  - switch off mic if overwhelmed
  - have a list of useful expressions at hand
  - prepare and practice a few sentences in advance
  - write down response first

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Prepare for synchronous sessions

‣ Positive (self-)talk

- o what are you good at? /what do you enjoy about Chinese?
- o welcome errors
- o show our own anxieties as teachers
- o breathing techniques
- o try not dwell on problems /not to compare yourself
- o acknowledge that others are too busy with their own difficulties

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Perception and production

Conscious integrated pronunciation teaching from the start.

1. No perception and no production
2. Perception but no production
3. Perception and production
4. No perception but production

Not stable scenarios!

Perception and production are not categorical.

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Perception and production

Let's not start with spelling start with listening!

- o work with chunks of discourse
- o songs
- o "classes without a white board"
- o learn to listen

Retrain the perception system!

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AI assisted language learning

- individualised feedback
- chatbots for realistic conversation practice
- adaptive vocabulary learning
- game-based learning
  - VR and AR safe space to practice (different skills, levels, scenarios)
  - analytics flags on disengaged or struggling students
  - emotional support
  - mindfulness prompts

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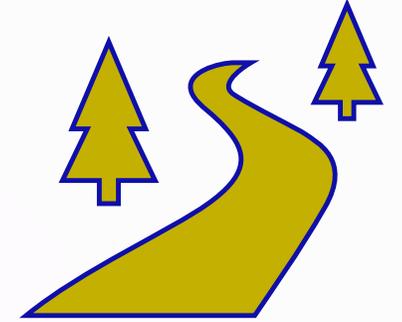
I have an accent (why) does it matter?

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/accent-does-it-matter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIGYtPorFbE&t=2s

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Over to you

谢谢！

Merci!

¡Gracias!

謝謝！

Thank you!

Danke!

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