

Supporting Student Engagement in the Physically Distanced Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages Classroom

Here, you will find ideas and suggestions shared by teachers during our live Zoom 'MFL Shoptalk'. These ideas correspond to three questions explored during Episode 1 of the [MFL Shoptalk Podcast](#):

1. What has helped you to sustain the energy in your classroom and motivate students in the current context of a physically distanced classroom?
2. How have you used devices / technology in your MFL classroom to sustain student engagement?
3. How have you supported oral communication in the current context of a physically distanced classroom?

If you would like to add further suggestions, feel free to do so by posting on this [Padlet](#) wall.

What has helped you to sustain the energy in your classroom and motivate students in the current context of a physically distanced classroom?

- Make a lot of games digital, if possible. For example, play Guess Who using digital cards rather than the physical game
- Gamification using the websites such as www.genial.ly or www.gamify.com
- Pair translation game - students are given a list of sentences to translate. When they throw a six on a dice, they get control to translate. The other player needs to throw a six to win back control to translate. This is good to raise energy levels
- Adapting previously used games like chain reaction - chunks of sentences to translate correctly
- Mega bingo with the alphabet and numbers. Gets the student energy levels up and students speaking

- Stop the bus
 - Using jokes & memes in the target language to energise the classroom
 - Butterfly game / Mime stop game. Mime a hobby or action and freeze while other students try to guess what hobby or action is being mimed.
 - Kahoot games are always good for energy levels. Click for a tutorial on [Kahoot](#) in the MFL classroom
 - Quick starters at the beginning while you are setting up your computer/projector:
 1. Separate the words in the sentence (write this up as soon as you walk in to keep them busy)
j'adoremonnouveauvélo (j'adore mon nouveau vélo)
 2. J'ai/Je suis _____ sur le toit de la maison
I _____ on the roof of the house
Gives them an unusual context to make up a sentence/sentences in various tenses.
 3. Mystery bag
Bring in a paper bag with an item inside it. Write up one or two clues to describe the item in the bag. Students must write a few possibilities of what might be in the bag (in the TL) before the big reveal
 4. Unscramble the words of a jumbled sentence
 5. Listing activity. If I'm making tea, I need... (students write all the possible things they need)
- *Activities such as these keep the students busy and immerses them in the target language while the teacher gets organised for the lesson.

How have you used devices / technology in your MFL classroom to sustain student engagement?

- Work with the package in use in your school (Office 365 or Google Suite) and learn by using it and from colleagues' successes
- <https://classroomscreen.com/> is an excellent app that gives you loads of tools on your computer screen for immediate use in the classroom with students
- Jamboard and Wordwall are apps that replace physical mini whiteboards. What is really nice is that students can save their texts and add to or edit them later. You can also use the whiteboard function in Microsoft 365 and Google Classroom. A lovely website that replaces physical mini whiteboards with a digital one is www.whiteboard.fi
- Try using a voice amplifier so students can hear you more easily
- A really lovely website is www.storyboardthat.com as it lets students get really creative by creating their own comic strip, but it requires a subscription
- Seesaw (<https://web.seesaw.me/>) is a really versatile platform that can be used in class for pair or group work and it is also great for the student language portfolio as students can store a variety of texts
- Getting students to create avatars for themselves, like with Voki, Telegami and Bitmoji can encourage student engagement. With Voki and Telegami, students can submit their own oral recordings for their avatar to speak or they can type in text for their avatar to speak. With Bitmoji, they can use their avatar in their own creations or in conjunction with other apps. Click for a tutorial on [Voki](#) in the MFL classroom
- You can get students to use a voice recorder which will automatically transcribe their audio to text. Available in different languages
- <https://www.genial.ly/en> is really useful to create presentations, it is similar to Prezi
- Students might record themselves at home, then upload on OneNote or Google Classroom

- Perhaps consider a whole school approach to the apps used in teaching and learning in order to minimise confusion
- Encourage your students to bring headphones to class and they can listen to each other's oral work from homework in class and give each other feedback. Also, you can share listening material on Google Classroom, and they can listen to it from their phone
- www.plickers.com is ideal for using with students in schools where mobile phone use is not permitted
- Vocaroo is a really nice and simple app for providing audio feedback. Here is a tutorial on [Vocaroo](#)
- The voice recording feature in OneNote is good for recordings of students and also for giving teacher feedback. It is much quicker to give feedback this way and it stays in the student's OneNote beside their work for them to listen to again.

How have you supported oral communication in the current context of a physically distanced classroom?

- Seesaw (<https://web.seesaw.me/>) is a really versatile platform that can be used in class for pair or group work and it is also great for the student language portfolio as students can store a variety of texts
- Students can use a variety of apps to communicate
- Kahoot games are always good for energy levels. Click for a tutorial on [Kahoot](#) in the MFL classroom
- Using channels in Microsoft Teams
- Consider using Adobe Spark for students to collaborate, for example using [digital storytelling](#) as a collaborative project.