



TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

Engaging Online Students and Teachers: Making A YouTube Series

by [Diego Boada](#) and [Dawn Bikowski](#)

Over the last year, the rapid shift to emergency remote teaching and online learning has posed significant challenges (and opportunities) to education systems around the world. As teachers, we've had to learn all sorts of skills and strategies to keep teaching, even with little or no access to technology. We've had to encourage our students to keep learning at the same time that we're all dealing with the effects of a global pandemic. It has not been easy, but things are starting to look better. We have become more resilient, more resourceful, and better problem solvers. You've probably learned to do something you did not know you were capable of!

Engaging Students and Teachers in Online Environments

As instructors in the [TESOL Certificate: Developing an Online Teaching Program](#) (DOTP), we are interested in what online engagement looks like. We've heard numerous teachers express concern about their students not wanting to speak or participate in class. Some teachers have also expressed being overwhelmed or feeling burnout. Both student and teacher engagement are crucial to institutions.

Engagement can be defined as students being involved in their own learning (Kuh, 2009) and often translates into higher retention and satisfaction rates, better academic outcomes, and higher curricular relevance (Dymont et al., 2013; Redmond et al., 2018). Engagement also plays an important role in advancing social justice. If we engage *all* our students, we can help ensure that they have an equal chance of success in life. Now, the question is: How can we engage students and keep ourselves engaged as teachers in online learning environments?

In the following YouTube video, we invited Franco Cook, a Peruvian teacher and former DOTP participant, to discuss how we can find and share our passions online. We argue that by sharing more about who we are and what we love, as teachers we can keep ourselves more engaged in our courses. The more we enjoy discussing ideas with our students, or reading the assignments we have given them because we find them interesting, the more engaged we stay in our own course. If you have taught online, you know how important it is to keep yourself interested!

Students also benefit from feeling connected to the course. Staying engaged can help them achieve higher cognitive and emotional engagement online (Trowler, 2010). Students who are cognitively engaged are invested in their learning, embrace challenges, and seek to go beyond

the bare minimum. When students are emotionally engaged, they feel more connected to the course and have a sense of belonging. With both teachers and students feeling engaged in an online course, we can end up with a vibrant online community of people who are excited to share their passions. In the video, we discuss four ideas to engage ourselves as teachers and to engage our students:



“A Cup of Coffee with TESOL Experts: Online Engagement”

Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=knu1f2AYD4I.

The Series: A Cup of Coffee with TESOL Experts

This video is part of A Cup of Coffee with TESOL Experts, a YouTube series created by instructors and participants in the TESOL DOTP Certificate Program. The series is in fact a passion project itself. We started using videos to bring together our DOTP students and other professionals in the field. Little by little, it has expanded to more topics and has created a wider community. We have all been able to learn more about connecting online, creating videos, and networking during this journey as well.

The idea for the series is simple. We invite guest experts to discuss a question that relates to online English teaching. Our goal is to share research and best practices using accessible language in a short and fun video. We used to make YouTube videos for our students but kept them private. In the spirit of open educational resources, why not share these with others?

In this YouTube series, we have discussed various topics, such as:

- How to teach vocabulary to students reluctant to read
- How to teach pronunciation in the age of world Englishes

- How to foster online teacher communities of practice
- How to engage students in live sessions
- How to design online learning for low bandwidth contexts
- How to network and benefit from professional associations

You can browse this [playlist](#) to check out previous episodes. You can also submit and vote for a question for future episodes [here](#).

DOTP: Developing Safe Spaces to Cultivate Teaching Passions

A Cup of Coffee with TESOL Experts is a video series that came from our passion of teaching online and connecting with the greater world of teachers. We do this in the DOTP TESOL Certificate Program. Our participants from that course can use the information to develop their own passions in teaching with technology. Franco Cook completed the DOTP certificate last year and designed a course on one of his passion topics—helping Spanish-speaking students with their spoken English. According to Franco:

The program helped me tap into what I wanted to learn and wanted to teach. I wanted to become a better course designer, developer, and facilitator in online, blended and mobile learning environments. With the guidance and resources provided by my instructors, I was able to create an online course on Canvas, my very own syllabus and materials, and I got to pilot 1 week of the course with real students, on a topic I love!

Brenda Gonzalez is another former DOTP participant from Bolivia. Brenda was featured on a video where we discussed how to incorporate social-emotional learning into our online classes. She shares,

I was very nervous because I had never made a YouTube video. It was such a great experience, though. I loved discussing the question with Diego and our guest from Voice of America Learning English. I feel excited to share what I learned with others. I know there's a plethora of webinars and resources out there, but they're not always fun, teacher friendly, context appropriate, or research based.

A Cup of Coffee with TESOL Experts hopes to become a safe online space where we can connect with people from around the world. As teachers, we all need to share a lot more. Teaching can be an incredibly isolating profession. There's no doubt people are coming up with very creative solutions for the challenges we face in this "new normal." However, it's not always easy to communicate with one another and without intending, we sometimes end up working in silos. Only by working together and coordinating our recovery efforts will we be able to achieve systemic changes that meet the needs of our teachers and students.

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Dawn Bikowski is an associate professor at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA. Her background is in applied linguistics and educational technology, with research focusing on educational technology, global education, and academic and professional communication. She is the author of numerous journal articles and coauthor of the book *Teaching with a Global Perspective: Practical Strategies from Course Design to Assessment*, as well as being a cocreator and long-term instructor of TESOL International Association's *Developing an Online Teaching Program*.