Virtual cultural exchange and COIL

Introduction

In this teacher development activity, participants explore the potential and challenges of cultural exchange projects and explore some British Council resources which enable them to find cultural exchange partners.

This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Paloma Varela in her presentation ‘Virtual exchange: Internationalising the ELT classroom.’

Webinar time reference: All or 06:38 to 11:30

Time: 60 minutes

Aim: To introduce the concept of COIL and cultural exchange

Preparation:

- You could ask participants to watch the video before coming to the training session.
- Explore the British Council’s Connecting Classrooms website at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources

Procedure

- Ask the participants what they know about cultural exchange projects.
- Put the participants into groups to share their knowledge and experience.
Tell the participants they are going to find out more about it.

Play the video presentation and ask the teachers to make notes about the benefits and challenges of an approach called COIL.

Either play the entire video or just play from 06:38 to 11:30.

Next, ask the participants to share their reflections on the benefits.

Then ask the participants to get into groups of 3 - 5 and share the challenges they identified and what they could do to overcome the challenges.

Get some feedback from the participants and see what challenges they identified and how they could overcome them.

Next, ask the participants if they would like to be involved in a classroom exchange project.

Give them a link to the British Council’s Connecting Classrooms website and ask them to explore the site and see what support they can find and what they can do to find a partner school.

https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources

Get some feedback from the participants, and if they are enthusiastic, you could try to organise a cultural exchange project with another school.

Materials:
British Council’s Connecting Classrooms website at:
https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources

Additional resources

Intercultural communication, part 1

This video, with Professor Adrian Holliday, is an excerpt from a two-hour workshop filmed at the University of Guanajuato, Mexico. One of the themes is about two language students, Beata and Kira, who are faced with foreign cultural content in a textbook. In the workshop, Adrian uses his grammar of culture to discuss and make sense of the different issues.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/adrian-holliday-intercultural-communication-part-1
Developing Cross-Cultural Awareness in the Monolingual Classroom

- Watch a recording of this 1-hour webinar on cross-cultural awareness with Dr. Susan Barduhn. This webinar presents two frameworks as vehicles for being able to talk about culture. It is also important to recognize that no two people are identical representatives of the same culture. The session shares activities that can both sensitise participants and provide tools for their own classrooms.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/developing-cross-cultural-awareness-monolingual-classroom

Culture - the fifth language skill

- In this article, Barry Tomalin looks at four different aspects of culture and how they represent a fifth language skill for students.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/culture-fifth-language-skill

Storytelling to celebrate cultural diversity

- In this article, David Heathfield shares some insights into the cultural importance of folk stories and sacred texts.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/storytelling-celebrate-cultural-diversity