

# Technology-Focused Activity

## **Overview:**

Learner Audience & Level:

Adult ESL international classroom in the US

Any level; activity can be adapted to beginners or to advanced speakers, and produced projects at any level will benefit other students at any level.

Activity Type:

Semester-long, technology-laden project involving "ethnographic" research, observation, video-recording, and online production for use in future classes.

Activity Goals:

To expand students knowledge of contextual, situational chunks of language through the extended use of technology

To provide a permanent webspace that provides relevant language information for future students to learn from

## **Activity: Situation Chunks & Ethnographic Video Project**

### **PRE-Activities**

1. With a partner, students brainstorm lists of their daily routines that involve contextual situations where students interact with others in English, especially with native speakers.

Example list:

- ordering a burger (at McDonalds, at a fancy restaurant)
- getting on/off a bus,
- buying clothes,
- checking out at a grocery store
- asking for directions
- ordering something over the phone
- using a taxi

2. A volunteer student writes the lists on the board, making sure that there are no repeated situations. In a class discussion, students clarify vocabulary and unknown situations with the teacher and other students.

3. Students select a project partner (or group of three). Students also select a situation chunk from the list on the board for that groups' project.

4. In groups, students discuss the step-by-step actions involved in their situation chunk

For example:

- enter Pizza Hut and wait in line
- decide what you want before you order
- when it is your turn, the cashier will ask you what you want
- you tell the cashier
- the cashier asks what you want to drink, you tell her
- the cashier puts your order in a computer and tells you the price
- you pay
- you wait for your name or number to be called

5. Student groups then write a draft script between the interlocutors in the situation chunk, with attention to unknown context-specific vocabulary, which can be clarified by the teacher. In addition, students must brainstorm possible context-related divergences from this script.

For example:

- “Hi, welcome to Pizza Hut, what can I get for you today?”
  - “I would like a cheese pizza.”
  - Possible divergences*: “Thick or thin crust? Stuffed crust? Provolone, mozzarella, or agasio cheese? Would you like a side salad with that? We’re out of cheese pizza, would you like pepperoni?” etc.
  - “I’ll have a thin crust pepperoni pizza with provolone cheese, no salad, and a Dr. Pepper.”
- DURING-Activities

#### 6. “Ethnographic Fieldwork”

As Garza pointed out in the lecture on Culture, “students must become active observers of the target culture.” Outside of class, student groups conduct scavenger-hunt-like research projects about their particular Situation Chunk. With digital cameras or their mobile devices, students photograph everything they can related to that Situation Chunk, with the goal to devise an online collage on **Evernote**.

Examples of photos:

- Vocabulary words in the dictionary related to pizza
- Pizza restaurant signs
- Pizza menus
- The inside of pizza restaurants
- Web pages for online pizza ordering, etc.

This part of the activity will help students familiarize themselves with the context and the vocabulary that corresponds with that situation chunk. It will also serve as a part of their final online project, to complement their final video.

7. As part of their fieldwork, student groups observe (discretely or openly) their target conversation in real life (ex: the interaction between the person ordering and the cashier), paying attention to special vocabulary and phrases that native speakers use.

8. Video recording:

With permission from their interlocutors, students will eventually **video-record** one or many natives interacting in their Situation Chunk. Another option would be for the video to be of one of the students participating in the Situation Chunk (ordering pizza). If video technology is not available, students can make a video with still images and audio recordings.

9. Students create a final, edited Situation Chunk video that, once uploaded to **You Tube**, is posted on the **class website** alongside the corresponding **Evernote collage** for that Situation Chunk.

### **POST-Activities**

10. Student groups watch and listen to their video, and develop an entire online informational package on their Situation Chunk for future students.

- Students write and post a transcript for the video

- Students create an online glossary for possible new vocabulary and slang.

11. End of semester viewing:

At the end of the semester or project period, student groups give a final presentation of their online informational package to the class. They hand out scripts and glossaries, explain why their particular Situation Chunk is important to know, and explain possible intercultural differences they encountered while compiling their project. Finally, they show their **website, Evernote collage, and You Tube video**.

12. During the presentation, classmates take notes, and are asked to **post relevant comments (critiques, questions, new ideas, personal experiences) to the You Tube site** or class website. Comments can be made anonymously under pseudonyms, but students must let the teacher know their pseudonyms.

Notes:

Possible addition to project: Student groups do everything listed in 1-12, but can additionally video-record a “bloopers” video of what not to do in their particular Situation Chunk.

Future students can watch and learn from videos from previous semesters, but ideally they must think of new Situation Chunks or variations of already done Situation Chunks, so that no two identical chunk is on the class website.

## Activity Materials

Example Videos (with natives):

How to order a pizza by phone:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IHPuy3P7rU>

How to order a pizza by phone audio example (funny):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_2B3Sxr7U04](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2B3Sxr7U04)

## ***Reflective Statement on Technology***

In his lecture on technology, Orlando Kelm made the point over and over again that every assignment must have distinct context – it must have an obvious, applicable purpose. His lecture was an inspiration for making us wonder what things we can do with context by using technology that we couldn't do before. Regarding context, Kelm is clearly an advocate for inductive learning; he kept emphasizing that we should always start with contextual examples instead of the rule. This was one main incentive for this technology module – that students draw from their own experiences and knowledge to then observe and document what they experience with language.

The concept of student work and data transforming into lessons for future students is most compelling. Sarah had tried to achieve this through written blogs, but video and other multimedia online technologies are clearly much more rich and diverse, and allow students to undergo a much more creative process. They also make the product of students work much more packaged and appealing to future students that might find the information useful for their own language learning.

Kelm's videos for his Portuguese students were topic based (food, relationships, animals, youth, etc.) but the impetus for the lesson plan in this module is that videos for a project like Kelm's could focus specifically on contextual chunks of everyday experiences that students encounter. As Kelm said, language can (or should) more easily be learned in schematic chunks. He mentioned "Schema Theory", the idea that you learn the script for what you are supposed to say in a certain situation. Often, students already know the script for a certain situation for their own country and in their first language (i.e. how to order in a restaurant, how to get on the bus), so the lesson should require that students access that previous knowledge, then work to translate that schematic chunk into another culture and language. This process allows students to not only explore the language that is used in that particular situation, but also to more deeply evaluate and understand the cultural differences between their own culture's ways of performing and the performances and situational context of the target language. Though potentially a semester-long project, the rewards of this proposed lesson plan are multi-faceted and can be used for future instruction.