



**La Asociación**

Ex Alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas

*"Juan R. Fernández"*

National Exams, International Standards

Teachers' Centre

**AEXALEVI *Forum***

**# Stayathome**

April 2020

**H**ere is a special AEXALEVI *Forum* issue, short and sweet. Very sweet. It reflects the contributions of many teachers that wished to share their experience, tips, ideas, activities and the like, with the AEXALEVI community.

We would like to thank all of them for their prompt replies to our request.

Difficult times bring people together. For most of us, the sudden changes in our classes have meant concern and despair. Novel ways of communicating, interacting, and teaching and learning with others are now part of our everyday lives and work. This is a unique opportunity to experiment and learn, to make mistakes and try again, to share and to reflect. We hope that the following pages can become an inspiration for all of these purposes.

**AEXALEVI *Forum***

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**Mercedes Pérez Berbain**  
Methodology Lecturer



Covid-19 lockdown showed me the value of place and community. I noticed that messages addressed to everyone seldom reach anybody. In sensitive times like this, it is only personalised contact that hits home. Interaction acquired a whole new dimension. I found unthinkable ways to stay in touch with my “nearest” and dearest. Far better than technology was thinking of my loved ones and doing things with them. Indeed, I co-edited a book, helped with various papers, cooked, shared, listened, studied, wrote, designed courses, taught on-line...But by far the biggest and most rewarding challenge was telling an interactive story to the children at Normal 9 on video, as the picture shows, and helping colleagues teach around that story. Life is what happens when you are busy helping someone else.

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**María Eugenia Uría**  
Primary and Secondary School Teacher  
Former AEXALEVI student



Lockdown is hard, I must say! I think the most challenging part as a teacher is to find the way out of the comfort zone. I work both in primary and secondary school and I quickly found the typical assignment presentation boring so I decided to investigate. I have been working with my students through *Google Classroom* and *Moodle* to keep the conversation and the class flow as alive as possible. As regards activities, I found myself using lots of different ones. I have designed videos using *EdPuzzle*, didactic games using Kahoot and interactive worksheets using *Wizer*. I feel now is the opportunity to explore online activities and I feel our students are very thankful for that because we are making them step out of the *Word.Doc* as well. Last but not least, I have put into practice the design of activities that I call "mindfulness at home". They consist of a craft or physical exercise that keeps my students focused yet relaxed so they can find the calm they need to work. I believe it is very important that we take care of our students fully, and that means taking care of their mental health as well. The picture is from one of the mindfulness activities. Make your own rainbow to share some hope across your neighbourhood.

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**Elida Ramos**  
AEXALEVI Member Teacher



First of all, being away from our family is very hard so we are trying to have chats online twice or three times a week. So far so good, but there is another problem. I have been a face-to-face teacher all my life and, just at the moment when I was thinking about my retirement, once again I find myself following tutorials, taking online courses, reading and watching information about virtual classrooms, *hangouts*, *zoom us* and everything available on the market in order to keep up to date. It is not easy, but I am devoting myself to it. Perhaps by the time scientists find a cure for COVID-19, I will have become an online teacher.

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**María del Carmen Leites**  
Secondary School Teacher



As I met my first-year students at secondary school only once before lock-down, I decided to post a video in my Google Classroom in which the speaker turns 35 so he tells 35 facts about himself. Thus, my students would have the opportunity to talk about themselves following this model. I thought it would be easier if I sequenced the steps. First, I asked them to watch the video and answer a quiz on it. Next, instead of asking them to write about themselves, I asked them to film themselves. They were expected to make a video with about 11 or 12 facts about themselves, that is, according to their age. Students in Buenos Aires province start secondary school at the age of 11 or 12, that's why I thought of that number of facts. The video had to last about 3 minutes. In the instructions, I included the criteria that I was going to use to assess their performance. I thought that my students would work better if they knew right from the beginning that I was going to take into account content, pronunciation and language. I also included a "Do not panic" notice in my post as I guessed that some of them might. The outcome was great! My students loved the task! Some of them showed their favourite things in their videos as they talked about their preferences. I was even able to spot a couple of potential Hollywood stars! It was lovely to see how quickly they produced their videos, which shows that they found the task enjoyable.

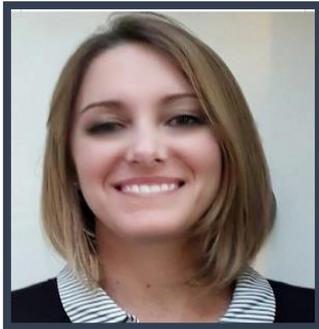
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**Griselda Beacon**  
Literary Studies Lecturer

During the #stayathome quarantine to fight the coronavirus pandemic, I found a way to reach out to teachers and students worldwide. How? I became a YouTuber! My channel is called The BEACON Experience (*A BEACON of Stories. Story Reading by Griselda Beacon*), and I share my favourite stories with you all. Hope you find them as appealing as I do! This project makes me very happy and it came as a huge surprise in times of confinement!



**Marina Falasca**  
Methodology Lecturer



The term "Pandemic pedagogy" has recently been coined to refer to the strategies and activities that teachers all over the world have started to implement to ensure that students can still be "instructed" in this difficult context. Is there one specific approach that will work better than others? I don't think so. Given that in most cases we must plan our lessons without even having met our students in person, it is imperative to conduct some sort of needs analysis first. If we intend to be able to meet our students' needs during this particular period, we must figure out how they can learn best. Do they have access to technology? Can they handle the resources we expect them to be able to use? Will they need parental support? Before making any kind of "pedagogical" decision, we must make sure that the conditions are right. Once we do so, we can decide what platform we should use or what the best App might be. And perhaps the students can contribute their own ideas, too. Why not ask them as well? This is a time when we must all learn to be flexible and adapt to new things. If anything, try and set a good example. Teach your students that communities work together for the greater good. That even when circumstances are scary, people can be good, too. You care enough to be present for them here and now -- and that's all any of us can do, love and care for each other through this. Our students will be ok. Take care of yourselves, too. You've got this - and if you don't, no one's telling. 😊

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**Myrian Casamassima**  
AEXALEVI Forum Coordinator

As my fingers struggle over the touchscreen and my mind is busy empathizing with teachers' complaints about how much they have to correct virtually, my non-high-tech side whispers confidently into my ear: Exposure! Exposure? I stop for a minute to ponder my next move. Exposure before production. I know that already! Yet, the whisper is about what I should prioritize *now* and I realize that this is a dream come true. This is when exposure can be enhanced. Songs, videos, websites, glossaries, games, stories, you name it. The algorithm is on the side of the teacher. Exposure does not have to be finely-tuned; it has to be enjoyable. Exposure does not have to render production; it has to generate interest



and that will encourage further exposure. Exposure can be customized easily by offering students a choice of what to read, listen or view, whereas teachers' favourite production activities tend to standardize and control. Exposure to discourse contains contextualized language. However, long practice exercises that teachers must correct deprive language of its very nature. But when are my students going to produce? I need to correct their mistakes. Increasing exposure does not mean avoiding production altogether. It means balancing the work so that there is more exposure than production. Is this suggested so that teachers have less to correct virtually? No. The suggestion is dropped to guarantee that finally exposure will have the role in language learning that it needs to have. A role that has been postponed because the walls of the physical classroom are too rigid and because its poor resources have limited teachers to the static blackboard and flashcards. I need to consider this thoroughly and I would like to invite you to join me. There we go! The algorithm is really on the side of the learner.

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**Gonzalo Rosetti**  
**ICT in EFL Methodology**

Social distancing forced venture into the virtual acceptance and to try web-based tools teaching strategies synchronous lessons. A environment) is a must distance education; in



many students and teachers to world. With different degrees of success, many teachers started and apps that could make their work in asynchronous and VLE (virtual learning and a fundamental tool for my case, I chose *Edmodo.com* as

the site offers tools for communication, learning and assessment in one place. Then I set my mind on *Remind*, an app to use instead of *WhatsApp*, as neither the teacher nor the students have to share their phone numbers. And, finally, I went for *FlipGrid* to create an oral and aural environment, in which students post videos and can interact with each other using all the tools available in all social networks and the teacher has different possibilities to give feedback.

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**Valeria Plou**  
**Secondary School Teacher and Drama Lecturer**

We are faced with a big challenge, making the most of educational modify our current curricula and learning. Doing this can be How can we deal with lots of of the screen and piles to correct What I have implemented quite



having to teach online, platforms and having to lessons for remote teaching daunting and overwhelming. planning, many hours in front without dying in the attempt? successfully is teaching

through *Zoom* for live lessons and sharing material and assessing work through *Edmodo* or *Google Classroom*. These platforms allow both teachers and students to upload PDFs, word documents, videos, audios, *Powerpoint* presentations and pictures. I try to offer students as much variety as I can by providing input through all these different resources. Likewise, I ask them to respond to whatever is being dealt with by using non-conventional formats so that I don't have to spend so much time correcting texts or checking answers. Some examples of activities which could be carried out are: writing poems, recording podcasts, films, video testimonials, opinion pieces, film reviews, newspaper articles, or even making a painting or a virtual collage to summarise concepts or ideas. This is a time in which students need a chance to engage in meaningful work, to express themselves creatively and to face new challenges. These are powerful formats which may allow them to demonstrate what they know and can do. And they will, hopefully, provide artistic outlets that are highly needed in a moment of great anxiety and uncertainty.

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**María Angélica Quevedo**  
**AEXALEVI Member Teacher**



People all over the world are slowing down and reflecting. We are all waking up to a new reality. What can we do to keep up with our classes, to encourage and inspire our students? I am using *Google Classroom*, video calls, TEDx talks, BBC radio news, songs, *Zoom*, apart from the contents of the course. It is not an easy task and sometimes we may feel like giving up but ..."happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if we remember to turn on the light". Dear

colleagues, we have this challenge: Let's turn on the light in all our classrooms once again! May God protect us.

**Gustavo Sevilla**  
AEXALEVI Forum Editor



This pandemic has led us to resort to new tools we had never dreamed of using, or to activate others we had dropped. I am currently teaching private students by Skype. We do mostly conversation and, as we talk, I take note of grammar and vocabulary mistakes we go over by the end of the lesson. I then send students an email with a list of the mistakes they made and, where necessary and possible, some exercises for practice. My contributions at the *Grammar Exchange Forum* and at *English Language and Usage Stack Exchange* have increased, and perhaps even improved. My feeling is that, with so many people involved in the same situation, these forums have turned into a kind of oasis, where the language becomes a good excuse to share not only our linguistic but also our human experiences, as can be read below:

 **Gustavo, Contributor** ○ Professor of Legal and Financial Translation

“ David, Moderator posted:

Although we may not know each other personally, we all know that there is much more to us than the English grammar issues we discuss here.

This post is devoted to the dimensions of you and your lives that I know nothing about. I celebrate all of you and wish you something far greater than improved English grammar knowledge at this time.

Your post above was really very nice, David. I think the sentences I quoted are particularly good to depict this forum: we are a community of people from all over the world that now shares, apart from our interest in English grammar, our wish to overcome this universal plight as soon as possible. For us to get to know each other better and perhaps feel a bit closer, I suggest that we add a short post to this thread saying where we are from and, perhaps, what we do and how we are currently getting on.

I am currently working for my company from my home and will be teaching through a virtual environment until we can resume our normal lessons at university. We have been in social isolation for 15 days and still have another 15 days to go. Best wishes from Argentina!

When we first met our students on March 10<sup>th</sup>, one of the messages we had chosen to welcome them was “Welcome to a new year, full of challenges and success”. Of course, at that time we couldn’t imagine the nature of the challenges we would have to face in a few days. Schools were suddenly closed so we decided to teach our students remotely. At first we shared work with our students through *Google classroom*.



Everything went more or less smoothly until we started to feel that this was not enough... we wanted to see our students’ faces, we wanted to talk to them! That’s why we decided to take another step forward: we began to interact with our students through *Zoom*. It is not the same as our classrooms, of course, but we feel closer... we can see our students smile or frown when they are finding it difficult to solve something. And they can see each other again! Students feel at ease in this virtual environment; it is us teachers who must become acquainted with all that this technology has to offer.

In addition to this, we have asked some groups of 12-year-olds to record videos at home, introducing themselves and their families. (*Preadolescents 2 & 3* – Starter unit where the characters of the books introduce themselves). And we are really pleased with the outcome! Our students introduced their families and showed us their bedrooms and their favourite things. One student even sent us the backstage! The slips he had made, the times when he could not help laughing and had to start all over again. We have all their videos now and we will soon evaluate them together, and why not discuss on how to improve them and make another recording in some weeks’ time. This activity has been particularly enlightening for us teachers as we have discovered talents our students have, which we were not aware of, perhaps because we are often only focused on their linguistic skills.

On the whole, I would say that we do feel connected again, not only with our students but also with their parents, many of whom usually watch our interactions. Has it been easy to make the switch to the virtual mode? Not at all. You have to be prepared to deal with the unpredictability of the Internet, unexpected power cuts and technical failures of different sorts. However, these challenges should not paralyse us; they are here to make us all grow and become stronger as a community.

**María Florencia Galibert**  
Leader Institute  
AEXALEVI Member Institution



I work with 2nd and 3rd Year at Leader Institute. Due to the current situation, we have incorporated a new way of working. For example, the students and I share a class on *Google Classroom* and we see each other through video call. I upload songs and activities to work on to the platform and we discuss them at the time of our class. I believe this quarantine has created a sense of responsibility and friendship in the students, as they are expected to attend class online on time and they help each other and do assignments together.

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**Paola Verando**  
AEXALEVI Examiner



During this quarantine, there have been countless ways of reaching out to students. Some of us have decided to resort to teaching online live lessons in real time through different platforms. So... how to do this well without feeling exhausted and exhausting your students? I think there's no answer to that, especially to the fact of not feeling exhausted yourself. You will, especially the first few classes. Stiff necks, back pain, headaches and many hours at the computer, trying to find the best way to teach a particular item.

But these are complex times and students are already getting a lot of work to do at school or other subjects, and we are insisting on their getting connected and participating actively in our lessons. Sometimes I wonder if this isn't too much asking. Some of my teenage students have even told me that their parents are obviously asking them to take part in household chores more than they did before.

After our lessons, some of them have said "thank you, teacher" or "that was a lot of fun", or even the most dangerous "I prefer this class to our face-to-face session". As soon I was told I would have to teach online, I resolved to have fun while doing it, and not suffer from this (although I do feel actual pain in my back or neck: nothing that a stretching online class can't solve, anyways).

One of the ideas I have had is to provide students with lots of opportunities for speaking about how they are living this quarantine, but without being dramatic or pessimistic. How? Trying to make fun of some situations in order to survive this period in the best possible (but still responsible) way: memes, Covid-19 covers of songs such as “Covid Queen” (instead of “Dancing Queen”) or “I gotta wash my hands” (instead of “I wanna hold your hand”), or the one which I found most hilarious: the “Social Distance” Bingo. I found it online in a slightly different version, and I didn’t use it as a Bingo per se, but in order to practise Present Perfect in a roleplay. Here goes my version of it.



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**Mercedes Foligna**  
Secondary School Teacher  
Teacher Trainer



The pandemic we are facing is revolutionizing education in more senses than we can even envisage, and it is not an overstatement to affirm that we teachers, at every level, have a central role in this historic moment. We had to go digital overnight, and it is imperative for us to be aware that we have a priceless opportunity in our hands: for the first time since cell phones invaded our classrooms, we can have our students’ full attention, as we are communicating with them through the device where they dwell. Our roads have crossed at last! Let me tell you about my experience with my third year students. I teach at a secondary state-run school, and as I have not yet had the chance to meet this class face to face this year, my first action

was to carry out a survey via *Google Classroom* to know what kind of access to technology they have. I learned that although all my students have a cell phone, not all of them get internet connection at home, and almost half of them do not have access to a computer. I would have to adapt, and so I did. My first objective being to make these 15-year-olds gain confidence in themselves and their possibility to learn English, I have designed a unit of work whose main theme is Covid19. The information they are constantly receiving about the disease and its consequences provides them with a sound scaffold, and the fact that it has affected their own lives in every possible way makes for motivation. A tailor-made video shot with *Screencastify* was used to explain to them in detail how to make meaning out of the authentic text I proposed to work with: this is how they took their first baby steps towards comprehension on their way to critical thinking. We are just starting, but we will make progress, because now I am there, on their screen, opening a new era in the way in which I relate with my students. And they are there too, behind the black mirror. Finally, we are speaking the same language.

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**Marina Domínguez**  
**AEXALEVI Member Teacher**



I have been forced by the Coronavirus and its "side" effects to get familiar with only some of the current technological tools to be able to start doing part of my job. I sometimes feel old-fashioned, frustrated and even out of my wits every time I start using these new strategies. But also surprised and somehow proud when I see myself on a screen as a modern youtuber giving tutorials with the help of a small whiteboard, a couple of markers and my old books at home. I have introduced myself to new students, greeted old ones and I have managed to explain, read, ask them to repeat and give them tips on a reading comprehension exercise as well. Pictures, photos and charts also help me. So far, I can do with seeing my students ' reactions on a screen while meeting up at a *WhatsApp* session and asking them about themselves, their names, their habits and hobbies, but I still miss our eye-to-eye contact. I am eager to see them working, playing and laughing in our old traditional classroom. I still wonder if I am too slow in this process. Anyway, I won't give up!

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**AEXALEVI *Forum***

Thanks to all the teachers  
that have contributed to this issue.

*AEXALEVI Forum*