



5. INTERACTIVITY

How to form a direct connection with students in distance communication

CONTEXT

Belonging is a fundamental human need. Connections with others are vital for our mental and physical health and well-being. For this reason, in times of social distancing, it is even more important than ever to connect meaningfully in distant meetings and events.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Forming a connection with participants can be harder for the mediator in distance communication because there is no one-to-one small talk as in face-to-face meetings. At the beginning of the session, if the participants do not know each other, there might be misunderstandings and miscommunication between them because some sociolinguistic markers, such as politeness and register differences, are harder to interpret in distance communication. The session could start with some warm-up activities, lowering the level of anxiety between unknown participants. It also enhances the readiness to familiarise oneself and interact with each other.

ACTIVITY IN A NUTSHELL

Meaningful connection is an interaction in which we feel accepted, understood, and supported. We feel heard and cared for. It applies not only to face-to-face communication but also to distance communication.

Activity/Solutions

CONTACT TYPE

Online

TIME NEEDED

10-30 minutes

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

5-20

ACTIVITY TYPE

Group work

TARGET GROUP

- All target groups

VARIATION OF THE ACTIVITY

If meetings are always held in the same group, one introductory game might suffice as you do not have to repeat the same game every time.

Goal

- To create connections with participants during distance meetings.
- To encourage all participants to share their thoughts.

How to prepare

- Ask the participants to take a picture in advance of something that is important to them in order to save time and avoid distraction and stress.
- The picture can be related to a specific theme. For instance, if you have a meeting on artwork, food culture, or travel, the picture could be related to the theme.

Activity step by step

1. Ask participants to take a picture related to the topic of the meeting in advance.
2. Ask the participants to post their picture during the meeting to the chat or another platform (e.g. Padlet, Flinga).
3. Encourage each participant to take their turn and present their choice. This is a great way to get participants to know each other and share their thoughts without making them feel nervous.