

USING *POSTERMYWALL* TO PRACTICE COMMUNICATION IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This paper introduces *Postermymwall* and presents three lesson plans that integrate the technology based on the relevant literature and the International Society for Technology in Education standards to support English language learning and practice students' communication and creativity. Specifically designed for an English as a Foreign Language writing and speaking class, the lesson plans also hope to interest language teachers and educational practitioners looking for user-friendly technology to integrate into their lessons and ways to engage students in technology-based language learning activities. Recommendations to optimize the lesson plans are presented.

Keywords: Postermymwall; technology; foreign language classroom; communication; creativity

1. Introduction

Creativity and communication have become core skills to possess in the twenty-first century; those skills require students to be ready for global communication, think creatively, and collaborate with their peers (Davila, 2016; Mali, 2018; Nazikian & Park, 2016). A web-based technology called *Postermymwall* (<https://www.postermymwall.com/>) might have some potential to help university students practice those core skills. In response, this paper would like to introduce *Postermymwall* and present three lesson plans that integrate the technology specifically into an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking and writing class. The lesson plans should interest EFL teachers and educational practitioners who are looking for easy-to-use technology, hoping to learn various types of technology, or still feeling pessimistic and less confident about integrating technology into their lessons, as reported in the literature (see Deerajviset & Harbon, 2014; Silviyanti & Yusuf, 2015). The lesson plans might also add to EFL teachers' knowledge about practical ways to engage students in technology-based learning activities and practice students' creativity and communication skills.

In the following sections, the paper will first review previous studies of teachers' experiences and voices when using technology to provide more justifications about the need to write this paper. It will then briefly introduce *Postermyswall* and review theoretical foundations for the lesson plans to support students' creativity and communication in an EFL writing and speaking class. The paper ends with practical recommendations to maximize the language learning activities and technology presented in the lesson plans.

2. Background

Researchers have reported that teachers rarely integrate various technologies into teaching and learning. A study of 783 educators in teacher education institutions from north and central Vietnam showed that "57.6% of the participants never or rarely used subject-specific software for integration into lesson practice" (Peeraer & Petegem, 2011, p. 979). Another large-scale study involving 486 language instructors from 11 universities in Turkey indicated that Wikipedia ($f=289$) and email ($f=242$) were the most popular Internet resources used in their teaching (Celik, 2013). More recently, a study conducted with 50 teachers in an English department in Iraq found that many of the teachers used PowerPoint (96%) and computer dictionaries (98%) for teaching purposes (Mohammed, 2015). Meanwhile, in an online survey of 1048 in-service teachers from across a Midwestern state in the United States, Ruggiero and Mong (2015) informed that PowerPoint, film, or videos were some technology tools that the teachers often used in their class.

Several Indonesian researchers reported similar results. A survey with 37 EFL teachers working at different educational levels demonstrated that the teachers mostly used websites ($f=10$) to find teaching materials (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012). In another survey with 73 in-service EFL teachers at schools and universities, Son, Robb, and Charismiadji (2011) showed that the teachers (45%) frequently used word processing. In a more recent survey that sampled 26 English teachers from 16 public senior high schools in Indonesia, the teachers mainly used online dictionaries (80.77%) and email (69.23%) in their classrooms (Muslem, Yusuf, & Juliana, 2018). In sum, websites, Wikipedia, email, PowerPoint, word processing, and dictionaries might be the most common technologies used in teaching. The author feels that discussing more various tools and applications (other than the ones mentioned above) and how the technology can be used for language learning purposes might be fruitful for the teachers.

Furthermore, previous studies reported pessimistic voices on using technology. For instance, a secondary school teacher in Seoul, Korea, acknowledged "some difficulties in dealing with resources and activities obtained from the Internet" (Park & Son, 2009, p. 92). In

Thailand, a university lecturer stated that “we are also a bit worried about using information and communication technology (ICT) or nervous about it” (Deerajviset & Harbon, 2014, p. 49). A university lecturer in Indonesia asserted a similar opinion, claiming that “I do not have enough capacity to use ICT, and I need training on how to use the tools or something like that” (Silviyanti & Yusuf, 2015, p. 39). There should be more actions to respond to these voices without passively waiting for an ICT training held by the government or related entities, which might be costly or less available in some settings. As a concrete action, this paper presents three lesson plans that integrate an easy-to-use tool (*Postermyswall*) and some other technology (other than dictionaries, email, word processor, and PowerPoint), specifically to support language learning and practice students’ creativity and communication in an EFL speaking and writing class.

3. Lesson plans

The lesson plans presented in this paper are supposed to practice creativity. Egbert (2017) defined creativity as the creation of original ideas, processes, experiences, or objects. Some guidelines to promote creativity include (1) creating an enriched environment (where students can explore, cooperate, and pace themselves, have rich examples and opportunities), (2) letting students show what they can do, rather than what they cannot, and (3) teaching respect for people. Additionally, creativity deals with thinking skills that can only “be learned by doing” (Henriksen, Mishra, & Fisser, 2016, p. 34).

The lesson plans are also supposed to practice communication. “Across diverse disciplines, the way professionals get things done is increasingly social, collaborative, and virtual” (Anders, 2016, p. 224). In this regard, there are types of technology-supported interactions and ways technology facilitates communication. According to Egbert (2017), social interaction happens through technology (e.g., two or more people communicate via email), around technology (e.g., students discuss a problem posed by a software program), or with the support of technology (e.g., a teacher and students interact about a worksheet obtained from a site). Egbert informed that the interaction could also be done synchronously, which occurs in real-time (e.g., in a phone call or a *WhatsApp* chat) or asynchronously, which does not happen at the same time, such as in an email conversation where people wait for some time to receive responses. Besides, Egbert believes that the communication should be conducted in a two-way interaction, which includes collaboration (e.g., planning and accomplishing something specific together) and cooperation (e.g., having separate roles in solving a problem).

The technology-based tasks presented in the lesson plans follow the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards for students (see International Society for Technology in Education, 2019a) so that the tasks can hopefully be applied in various settings. In short, “the ISTE Standards act as a roadmap for bold, innovative educators and education leaders to re-engineer their schools and classrooms for digital age learning no matter where they fall on the journey to meaningful, effective ed tech integration” (see International Society for Technology in Education, 2019b, n. p). With the ISTE standards, teachers might also learn technical aspects of technology and discover how technology enhances opportunities for students’ communication and creativity (Egbert, 2017).

The main technology integrated into the lesson plans is *Postermymwall*, a digital poster creation website. Users can employ free templates based on some themes (e.g., environment, holidays, sports, and many other options) (see Figure 1) to design their posters. The templates can be customized by editing words with various fonts and effects or adding photos. With its free version, users can save their poster as a PNG-format image into their computer. *Postermymwall* has its own YouTube channel that provides tutorial-related videos about poster creation (visit <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVqT84SweLqKUT90iO-dJ0w>). The tool is easy to use, and students can instantly create beautiful posters (Ogen, 2012).

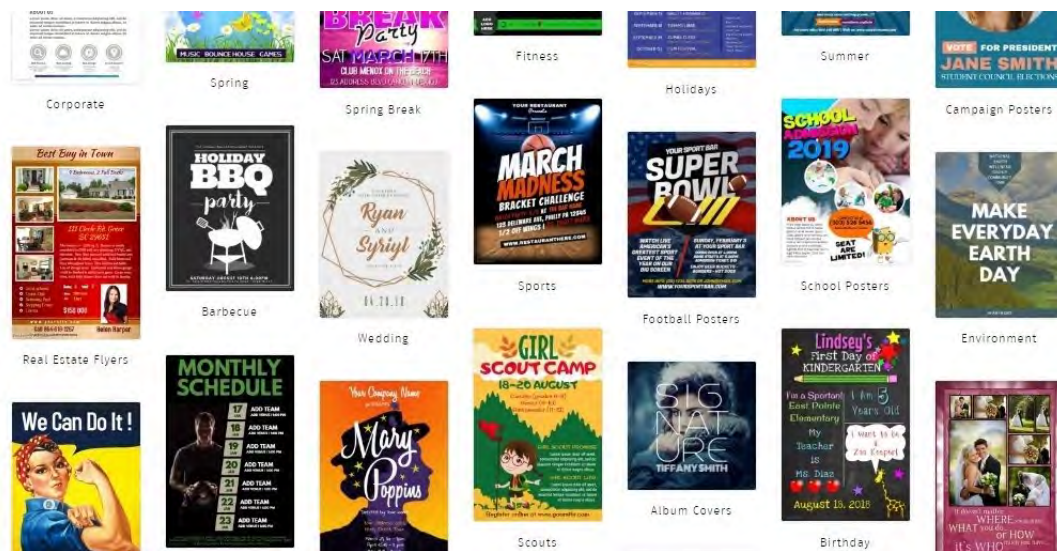


Figure 1. Some free templates in *Postermymwall*

The lesson plans presented in the next sections are intended for the EFL context, assuming the COVID-19 pandemic is (almost) gone, and students can study in a face-to-face classroom.

LESSON 1: Writing a metaphor poem

Level: The first-year university students in an EFL writing class

Time: 100 mins (The teacher might need additional time if the students cannot complete all the tasks in one class meeting.)

Aims: The students will be able to (1) write a metaphor poem, (2) write sentences using the correct simple present tense, and (3) design a digital poster of the poem using *Postermyswall*.

The ISTE Standard: “Creative communicator: students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals” (International Society for Technology in Education, 2019a, n. p.).

Resources/ materials: Internet access, laptops or PCs, an LCD projector

Possible problems: Slow or no Internet access, unavailability of the equipment

Procedures:

1. Opening:

- a) The teacher explains the learning aims and definitions of a metaphor poem and gives an example of the poem. In brief, a metaphor poem “is a figure of speech that makes an implicit, implied or hidden comparison between two unrelated things, but which share some common characteristics” (Literary Devices, 2019, n. p.). Below is an example of a metaphor poem written by a student:

*My mother is a doctor from heaven.
Her smile is medicine when I am sick.
Her love makes my life healthy.*
(Adapted from Mali, 2016)

- b) The teacher can show the poem using the LCD projector and discuss the poem’s grammatical components (e.g., a subject-verb agreement or a present tense form). The teacher can also explain the rubric used for the tasks. A potential rubric to adapt might be from these sites: https://bit.ly/metaphor_rubric1 or https://bit.ly/metaphor_rubric2 (last accessed in April 2021).

2. Main activities:

- a) The students work individually to write a metaphor poem that tells positive feelings, impressions, or experiences about their hometown. The poem should have a title, and the students should write the poem in *Google Docs* (<https://docs.google.com/>), which can help to detect (simple) grammar-related mistakes in their writing.
- b) The students form groups of three, share the *Google Docs*’ link to their groupmates, read each other’s poems, and provide constructive feedback for language accuracy.

- c) The students revise their metaphor poem based on their friends' feedback and visualize the poem in a digital poster using *Postermyswall*. Next, they should post the poster on their social media accounts, such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, blogs, or other platforms based on the class agreement.
- d) The students should invite people from outside the class to read the poem and leave comments. The teacher can consider this activity to promote the hometowns and make the students proud of where they are from. "Research on student production shows that students work harder when others view their work; publishing student products for only the teacher to view generally is not enough to enhance students' motivation and effort" (Egbert, 2017, n. p.).
- e) The teacher can adapt the rubric to assess the work and consider the interaction or feedback that the students have from their social media as a part of the assessments.

3. **Closing:**

The students reflect on their learning activities: How well did they do? What should they do to create a better poster? How do they feel when they share their work with the audience beyond classroom walls? Do they receive positive feedback from the online audience? Why? The students may also ask the teacher questions to clarify ideas or check their understanding of the lessons.

LESSON 2: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Level: The first-year university students in an EFL writing class

Time: 100 mins (The teacher might need additional time if the students cannot complete all the tasks in one class meeting.)

Aims: The students will be able to (1) write imperative sentences, (2) write a descriptive-persuasive paragraph using correct Present Simple sentences, and (3) design a digital poster using *Postermyswall* to remind people about healthy lifestyles related to the COVID-19 (e.g., wearing masks, maintaining social distance, or washing hands).

The ISTE Standard: "Creative communicator: students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals" (International Society for Technology in Education, 2019a, n. p.).

Resources/ materials: Internet access, laptops or PCs, an LCD projector

Possible problems: Slow or no Internet access, unavailability of the equipment

Procedures:**1. Opening:**

- a) The teacher explains the learning aims, shows an example of the poster that he/she has designed using *Postermywall*, and a sample paragraph to describe the poster.
- b) With the LCD projector, the teacher shows the poster (see Figure 2) together with the following sample paragraph to describe the poster:

You need to wear your mask whenever you leave your house. The mask must cover your nose and mouth so that it can protect you from the COVID-19 virus, especially when you are in a public place and meet a lot of people. Always remember to wear your mask, stay healthy, and stay safe!



Figure 2. A sample poster

- c) The teacher can review the paragraph's grammatical components (e.g., showing the imperative sentences and discussing patterns of the simple present tense). The teacher can also explain the rubric used for the tasks. A potential rubric to adapt might be found at this site: https://bit.ly/poster_rubric (last accessed in April 2021).

2. Main activities:

- a) The students work individually to design the poster. They can use "COVID-19" as the keyword to find poster designs in *Postermywall*. Then, they write one descriptive-

persuasive paragraph using correct simple-present-tense sentences to describe the poster. They can use *Padlet* (<https://padlet.com/>) to write the paragraph.

This *YouTube* video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkBnwPqaljA>) provides a step-by-step tutorial on using *Padlet*.

- b) The students form groups of three. In each group, they share the link to their *Padlet*, read each other's paragraph, and provide constructive feedback for language accuracy.
- c) The students are then asked to revise their paragraph based on their friends' feedback. Next, they should post the poster on their *Instagram* (or other similar platforms) and use the revised paragraph as their post's caption.
- d) The teacher can challenge the students to promote their poster and have, for instance, fifty (50) likes from the online audience. Hopefully, messages on the poster can positively impact more people outside the class.
- e) The teacher can adapt the rubric to assess the work and consider the interaction in or the likes the students have from their *Instagram* (or other similar platforms) as a part of the assessments.

3. Closing:

The students reflect on their learning activities: How well did they do? What should they do to create a better poster? Do they make some grammatical mistakes in their paragraph? What are the most common grammatical mistakes? What should they do so that they do not make the same grammatical mistakes? The students may also ask the teacher questions to clarify ideas or check their understanding of the lessons.

LESSON 3: Campaigning a healthy lifestyle

Level: The first-year university students in an EFL speaking class

Time: 2 class sessions (The teacher might have additional time.)

Aims: The students will be able to (1) orally persuade the online audience to maintain their healthy lifestyles (after the COVID-19 pandemic), (2) design a digital poster using *Postermyswall* about healthy lifestyles (e.g., to wear masks, maintain social distance, or wash hands), and (3) create a one-minute digital video using screen-casting technology.

The ISTE Standard: "Creative communicator: students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals" (International Society for Technology in Education, 2019a, n. p.).

Resources/ materials: Internet access, laptops or PCs, screen-casting applications

Possible problems: Slow or no Internet access, unavailability of the equipment

Procedures:

1. Opening:

a) The teacher explains the learning aims and shows an example of the poster that he/she has designed using *Postermypass* (see Figure 2). Then, the teacher introduces some (free) screen-casting applications that the students can use to create the video:

- *FlashBack*: <https://www.flashbackrecorder.com/>
- *Screencast-O-Matic*: <https://screencast-o-matic.com/home>
- *Screencastify*: <https://www.screencastify.com/>

b) The teacher explains the rubric used for the tasks. A potential rubric to adapt might be found at this site: https://bit.ly/video_speaking_rubric (last accessed in April 2021).

c) The students are given time to explore and record their voices using one of the screen-casting applications. They can collaborate with classmates and help one another in their exploration.

2. Main activities:

a) The students work individually to create a digital poster using *Postermypass*. Then, they should write the scripts for their speaking. In that case, they can apply the Present Simple tense knowledge that they learned during the writing/grammar class.

b) The teacher can ask the students to memorize the scripts they have written and work in groups of three students to practice their speaking. Each student listens to each other's presentation and gives constructive feedback (e.g., related to pronunciation, gesture, eye-contact, or grammatical aspects in the script).

3. Homework:

a) After the students are confident with their speaking, they can create a one-minute video using one of the screen-casting applications to persuade the online audience to maintain their healthy lifestyles after the COVID-19 pandemic.

b) In the video, the students should display the poster and their face. They should also maintain their eye-contact and *not* read the script.

c) Next, they should post their one-minute video on their *Facebook* or *Instagram* (or other similar platforms). The teacher can challenge the students to promote their video and have, for instance, fifty (50) likes from the online audience. Hopefully, more people beyond the classroom walls can be positively impacted by the video.

- d) The teacher can adapt the rubric to assess the work and consider the interaction in or the likes from social media as a part of the assessments.

4. Closing:

In another class session, the students reflect on their learning activities: How well did they do? What should they do to create a better digital poster and video? Do the activities provide them with language learning opportunities? Why? Which speaking aspects should they improve? The students may also ask the teacher questions to clarify ideas and check their understanding of the lessons. They may also share some technical issues in creating the video and find solutions to solve the problems.

4. Final words

The paper has presented three lesson plans to outline the potentials of *Postermyswall* in supporting language learning, students' creativity, and communication in an EFL writing and speaking class. Before using the lesson plans in a real classroom, teachers might consider planning a staff meeting, simulating the lesson plans together, finding out what works and does not in the planned activities, and making necessary modifications. In the meeting, they can also collaborate in a group of three teachers to try to design a poster using *Postermyswall* and explore functions of some other technologies (e.g., *Google Docs*, *Padlet*, and screen-casting applications) described in the lesson plans. Teachers who are more tech-savvy should mentor those who are still "a bit worried or nervous about using ICT" (Deerajviset & Harbon, 2014, p. 49). Teachers can also encourage their students to explore new forms of technology independently and should be willing to learn from their students (Mali, 2017). Furthermore, when asked to share their digital posters or video on social media (see Lesson Plans 2 & 3), not all students will feel comfortable doing it. In that case, the teacher and students can always consider any other options to share the work, especially after listening to students' concerns and talking about social media safety rules. In closing, it is worth remembering that technology discussed in the lesson plans is "as transformational as we make it. It's not the tool that counts; it's what we do with it" (Muhtarlis & Ziemke, 2015, p. 13).

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