

Always on – The culture of availability

Teaching notes

Goal: To practise the art of impromptu speaking

Focus: Fluency training, thinking on one's feet

Level: B2/C1

Time: Long version – 60 minutes including primer discussion, role-play and film clip (and not including webquest)

Shorter version – 30 minutes solely for film clip and discussion

Target group: 1:1 learners or small groups

Other information: Video clip 'Busted! The sneaky moves of antisocial smartphone users'. Recorded at the TED conference, February 2009. Duration: 03:47

link: http://blog.ted.com/2009/04/busted_the_snea.php

For more talks from the TED conferences see www.ted.com

See also the *Up to Speed* worksheet 'The Long and Winding Road' in which participants watch a TED video clip and discuss the question: What leads to success?

Brief description

In this worksheet participants reflect on their own personal use of technology and give a short impromptu talk. Following that, American social strategist Renny Gleeson provides rich food for thought by questioning our 'always on' world in a short video clip. Participants are challenged to provide balanced arguments about the pros and cons of the 'always on' world they inhabit in a role-play. Finally, a webquest can be done as an optional follow-up activity.

Pre-watch primer

Tell participants they are going to watch a short video clip later but that first they are going to have a discussion and give a short impromptu talk.

1 Mobile me!

Is your mobile phone (UK) or your cell phone (USA) on right now?

Point out the false friends 'to be handy' and the German word 'Handy' and ask participants to make an example sentence including the words 'mobile phone' and 'handy'. Eg 'It's very handy to have a mobile phone when you travel.'

What do you consider mobile phone etiquette to be?

Ask participants to relate any good or bad personal experiences about the behaviour of mobile phone users. Play devil's advocate and ask questions like:

- Do you think trains, airports, restaurants etc. should have mobile-free zones?
- Should people who telephone too loudly in public spaces have to pay fines?

2 On hand!

How obliged do you feel to be available all the time? How available does your organization expect you to be?

Ask about availability during holiday times, weekends and evenings. Encourage participants to elaborate on their company's culture concerning availability.

3 Can't live with it, can't live without it!

Brainstorm what you love and hate about modern technology and present your results in a short impromptu talk.

Ask participants to first jot down ideas on a piece of paper either in small groups or individually. Hand out the 'Impromptu Speech Template' which can be found on the *Up to Speed* CD-ROM and have the participants structure ideas into a short informal presentation. Allow 15 minutes for this activity.

4 Constant partial attention (CPA)

'Constant partial attention' has been identified by sociologists as a phenomenon of our times. Look at each individual word. What do you think the term means?

Refer to the cartoon depicting 'constant partial attention' here:

<http://asilenti.wordpress.com/2008/08/10/an-example-of-constant-partial-attention/>

The term 'constant partial attention' was coined by writer Linda Stone in 1998. It involves paying only partial attention continuously in order not to miss anything.

See webquest below for link to Linda Stone's website.

5 And action!

Watch the video clip and answer the questions.

Tell participants that they are going to watch a short video clip about the role technology plays in our daily lives.

Pre-teach the following words:

- proliferation – a rapid and often excessive spread or increase
- obligation – the act of binding oneself by a social, legal or moral tie
- furtive – hidden, secretive
- prop – an item used on the set of a theatre or film production
- to be recumbent – to be lying down

Warn the participants that the presenter speaks extremely quickly and that you will play the clip through once for general understanding (where they should sit back, relax and enjoy) and then a second time so that they can answer the questions.

KEY:

- a Renny Gleeson has two points on his agenda: 'the rise of a culture of availability' and 'a request'.
- b The three points he highlights in the trend he has identified are:
 - 1 'We're seeing a rise of this availability being driven by 'mobile device proliferation, globally, across all social strata.'
 - 2 'We are seeing along with that an expectation of availability.'
 - 3 'And with that comes the third point, which is an obligation to that availability.'
- c When he mentions 'a significant delta', Renny Gleeson is referring to what we are willing to accept in terms of mobile device usage and how in fact this etiquette is notoriously ignored in public.
- d Body language strategies and tactics we have developed to cover up our furtive mobile device usage are the lean, the stretch and the hide.
- e Renny Gleeson's request is that we make future technologies 'that make people more human and not less'.

6 Exchange of ideas

- a *How do you think technology can be made more human?*
- b *How do you use technology to share experiences?*

Encourage open discussion where participants use newly acquired vocabulary.

7 Role-play

You are a health and safety officer or a hospital administrator. Create a set of rules for using mobile phones and other devices on your premises.

Instead of the two jobs mentioned above, students can suggest a job related to their line of work.

8 Webquest

Do an Internet search on 'constant partial attention'. Present your findings in a short talk in your next English session.

Read more about 'constant partial attention' on Linda Stone's website:

<http://www.lindastone.net/>

Always on - The culture of availability

☺ Where are you now? ☺

from a phone call I have just received

1 Mobile me!

Is your mobile phone (UK) or your cell phone (USA) on right now?

What do you consider mobile phone etiquette to be?

2 On hand!

How obliged do you feel to be available all the time? How available does your organization expect you to be?

3 Can't live with it, can't live without it!

Brainstorm what you love and hate about modern technology and present your results in a short impromptu talk.

4 Constant partial attention (CPA)

'Constant partial attention' has been identified by sociologists as a phenomenon of our times. Look at each individual word. What do you think the term means?

5 And action!

Watch the video clip and answer the questions.

- a What is Renny Gleeson's agenda? _____
- b What three points does he highlight in the trend he has identified? Complete the sentences.
- 1 'We're seeing a rise of this availability being driven by _____ ,
_____ ,
_____ '
- 2 'We are seeing along with that _____ ,
_____ '
- 3 'And with that comes the third point, which is _____ ,
_____ '
- c What is Renny Gleeson referring to when he mentions 'a significant delta'? _____

- d What three body language strategies and tactics have we developed to cover up our furtive mobile device usage? _____ , _____ and _____
- e What is Renny Gleeson's request? _____

6 Exchange of ideas

- a How do you think technology can be made more human?
- b How do you use technology to share experiences?

7 Role-play

You are a health and safety officer or a hospital administrator. Create a set of rules for using mobile phones and other devices on your premises.

8 Webquest 

Do an Internet search on 'constant partial attention'. Present your findings in a short talk in your next English session.