# In the (Virtual) Classroom: Transition Signals in Zoom with Gestural Cues

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## Lesson Plan

### Teaching Background
Jacqueline Gianico is an instructor of high-intermediate to advanced reading/writing intensive English courses at Penn State. Her students are learners from China, Ecuador, Korea, Japan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

### Lesson Title
Using Zoom to enhance comprehension and use of transition signals in writing with American Sign Language-inspired gestural cues.

### Zoom
Zoom is a web conferencing software that is known for its video capabilities. Some of the notable features are the ability for students to share audio and video during meetings and sharing screens during breakout sessions. This allows for a highly interactive synchronous learning experience.

### Lesson Objective
With instructor and peer support, students will recognize and orally produce appropriate transition signals with synchronous gestural cues in writing examples.

### Time
45 minutes.

### Materials
PPT slide with gesture cues for transition signals and punctuation.

### Preparation
Materials used in the lesson are posted on LMS prior to the lesson. Using giphy.com, the instructor makes gifs of the transition words and gestures for the PPT slide as review (see PPT slide in online submission form). One Writing Model is required; the number of Cloze Writing Samples depends on the number student groups. Students will read a brief explanation of the breakout session feature in Zoom.

Part 1 (10 minutes): The Zoom meeting begins (audio and visual enabled). Sharing the PPT slide, the instructor reviews the use of gestural cues. Students then take turns reading the Writing Model, sentence by sentence, synchronously using the transition and punctation gestures.

Part 2 (20 minutes): Students are given brief instructions and are reminded to access the materials on the LMS. The instructor emphasizes the need to read the Cloze Writing Sample in it entirely to ensure appropriate transition selection based on context and meaning. Then, the instructor initiates the Zoom breakout session. Students are randomly assigned to breakout room groups. Groups of 3 or 4 students work together identifying transitions and punctuation using ASL-inspired cues with the Cloze Writing Sample assigned to their group.

The instructor visits each breakout session group for 3-5 minutes to provide support. The instructor also broadcasts messages to the groups to alert them at the midpoint of the breakout session. Ending the breakout session, the instructor sends a 60-second warning to the groups before Zoom ends the session, redirecting everyone back to the main meeting.

Part 3 (15 minutes): After the breakout session, students return to the original Zoom meeting. Sharing their screen in turn to show the Cloze Writing Sample, a representative of each group provides each transition and gestural cue with any explanation prompted by instructor. Any observations about transition signal choice and frequency can be discussed.

**Assignment**

A follow-up homework assignment gives students a chance to practice asynchronously. Using FlipGrid or a similar video app within the LMS, learners post a video reciting a short, original writing piece with appropriate transitions and gestures. Students are required to comment on at least one classmate's video in the LMS. A simple rubric is used assessing accuracy of transition signals and punctuation.

**Instructor's Reflection**

My students in general are bored when learning transitions, and I have found that introducing a bit about ASL can make things more engaging, particularly in Zoom. I like the extra emphasis on intonation which can help with reading aloud and presentation skills.

**Instructional Design Note**

Teaching online presents challenges, even with the inclusion of synchronous audiovisual communication. Students may lose focus easily, distracted by their surroundings. It is good practice to instruct students on how a breakout session works, and what is expected of them during the sessions. This may mean including both written and oral instructions. Remind students to upload or open materials posted on the LMS prior to enabling the breakout session. Using the broadcast message option in Zoom can be helpful for sending out very short messages while a breakout session is in progress.

Writing Model (Complete writing sample, at least two paragraphs)
Example sentence #1:  The others, however, did not appear to support the new policy.
Cloze Writing Samples (essay with transition signals blanked)
Example sentence #2:  You can use several techniques. _____, you can do wet-on-wet oil painting.

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