Email in Real Life – Video Lesson TEACHER'S NOTES

Level:	B2
For:	Adult (Business English)
Length:	90 minutes
Aim:	Comprehension: Extensive (general understanding) and intensive listening (decoding connected speech). Familiarising with and practice using email related language. Discussion highlighting the challenges of communicating by email.

A. Introduction   (5 minutes)

1. Lead in speaking activity for the video lesson. Elicit responses from the whole class and write them on the board. Suggestions might include:

- **Reply all** – accidentally copying colleagues into conversations you don't mean them to be a part of. When you're copied into something that doesn't concern you and then receive all the replies to that email.
- **Auto-response** – forgetting to update when you're back at work, not including the correct contact on the email.
- **Attachment** – forgetting to attach it, sending the wrong file or, file size too large to send

2. Quickly elicit 2 or 3 more email related communication problems here and write them on the board

B. Video   (25 minutes)

1. Elicit some predictions from the class of what they expect of the video. If they're not sure, remind them of the problems from the previous exercise and how these might be depicted in a video.

2. Watch the **first 15 seconds** of the video. Check with the class which prediction came closest. Then ask the students to describe how the video represents emails. For example: It shows how communication in email would look like with conversation scenes in a "real life" office.

3. Now watch the rest of the video up until 2'41. Check with the whole class which of the ideas on the board are included in the video with a tick or cross

4. Divide class into pairs (or breakout rooms if online). If possible, they should watch the video on their own devices, so they can pause and rewind when they need to. If not, play the video once without stopping, then play it again, pausing after each scene to give students time to confer. Here are all the issues that come up in order of appearance:
   1) **Out of office** response left on after someone has returned from a holiday.
   2) Sender has **copied in** lots of people, and one person is responding with "reply all" rather than just to the sender.
   3) **Automatic signature** (including job title, phone no. etc) appears even on short replies
   4) Sending an **attachment** but forgetting to attach it to the email
   5) Replying in **CAPS LOCK!!!** And using **;)** - this will be discussed further later on in the lesson so if nobody has worked out what's going on, say you're going to come back to it later.
   6) Receiving unwanted videos from friends/family on work email.
   7) Receiving unwanted **spam** emails X 2
   8) **Failed to send** message because attachment was too big

9) A **circular disclosure** is a legal message automatically added at the end of emails used by organisations to protect internal data from being shared externally. **NOTE:** Here, it's not important for the students to understand the content, only to have an idea what it's for.

10) **Inbox full** when you have too many emails and can't send or receive new emails

11) **Copying in** the wrong person (because he has the same first name) to a group email.

C. Listening Focus   (25 minutes)

1. In pairs students listen to the exchange from **1'14 – 1'24** and fill in the missing words in the sentences (correct answers below). This short conversation goes by quickly it's a challenge to catch the words which are rather garbled.

   Decoding connected speech
   The aim of this exercise is to highlight some common problems with connected speech, so students can identify the challenges by focussed listening and hearing the excerpt slowed down. Ideally they should work in pairs with the video on their own devices so they can pause and repeat play, this focussed listening plus the visual context will help them to infer meaning.

2. Once they have had time to check in pairs, elicit their answers as a class.

3. Replay the section (on YouTube you can slow down to 0.75x in the Settings menu), this time ask them to identify what makes some words difficult to hear. It's important to highlight that it's not only the speed of delivery, but the fact that some words are crunched together, consonants and vowels are lost, and that makes it difficult to understand, even slowed down.

   a) **Hey Beth, <u>did you see</u> all the submissions <u>we got</u> today?**   <u>Note:</u> "did you" sounds like [dʒə] and "got" is pronounced [gɑː]

   b) **Easy <u>on the old</u> caps!**   <u>Note:</u> "old" sounds like [əʊl] without the final [d] sounded

   c) **<u>It's</u> okay! <u>Semi colon,</u> close parentheses!**   <u>Note:</u> "it's" sounds like [ts]

4. What issue with email correspondence does this conversation highlight?
   - The conversation highlights the use in emails of **acronyms** such as **"OMG"** or **icons** such as **emoji,** or back then their equivalent keyboard symbols in this case ;) Both acronyms and icons are commonly used in messaging.
   - Should acronyms and/or emojis be used in work emails?
   - Can they give another example of an acronym from the video? Play the video from **1' 21** where **"ASAP"** is used.
   - Are there any other common acronyms they know? For example: **TBH** to be honest, **LMK** let me know, **BTW** by the way

D. Language Focus   (20 minutes)

1. **Can you match the icons on the left with the responses on the right from the video? There may be more than one possible option for some responses.** It's a good idea to clarify that there may be more than one correct answer <u>before</u> they do the exercise. As well as checking for understanding of the expressions, the idea is also to highlight the ambiguity of what icons such as emoji represent. For example, there doesn't seem to be much difference between the thumbs up 👍 and the OK 👌 icon, however they can mean different things to different people, particularly between people of different age groups.

These answers are based on the Emojipedia descriptions (see the links for each icon) but even these definitions are by no means universal.

😲 Astonished Face OMG I know! - OMG = acronym: Oh My God! For surprise or shock

🙄 Face with Rolling Eyes Yeah, I know what I wrote…

👍 Thumbs Up Will do! – a positive confirmation when someone asks you to do something

😉 Winking Face It's Ok – in this case it means "don't worry" or "no problem" -

😳 Flushed Face Rain check? – "take a rain check" Am. Eng. used when you turn down an invitation politely or want to do it another time.

🤔 Thinking Face I don't know what that means

✌️ OK Hand Yeah, sounds good – used when you like a suggestion

2. Watching the video again will help students understand the expressions better when they hear and see them in context.
3. Because of the ambiguity of the icons the idea is for students to check with their peers to see if they've understood the expressions correctly as well as comparing their opinions on what the icons represent. Once they've had time to compare, elicit their answers and explain the exact meanings of the expressions where necessary.

E. Discussion   (15 minutes)

1. Encourage students to share which issues raised in the video they particularly identify with.
2. Some of these issues no longer exist due to technological improvements e.g. increased hard drive storage capacity and better filters for Junk mail or Spam.
3. However, there are other issues that aren't included on the video which may be raised.
   For example:
   - Your inbox becoming your boss, feeling unable to leave your desk or getting a backlog of emails after you've been away from your desk.
   - The pressure to respond quickly: Being expected to check emails outside working hours
   - Not seeing important emails because they are filtered into "spam" inbox
   - Using the wrong tone/being misunderstood
   - Emails that are either much too long or so short they seem abrupt.
   - People sending emails when a conversation or phone call would be more efficient.
4. **How important is email to your work?** Discuss why, for most people, email is still the main form of communication at work, though it's hardly used for personal communication at home and particularly by young people.
5. **How do you think email could change in the future? Will it be replaced altogether?**
   There could be a range of responses to this, especially on ways email communication could be improved. You can prompt by encouraging students to refer to the issues they highlighted in in Part B ex. 4 and Part E ex. 3. What could be done to solve these issues? For example:
   - Nowadays emails are integrated with calendars, messaging, audio and video calls, filing systems and other software. Are there software could be further simplified?
   - Using voice recognition/dictation rather than typing. Already exists, but how could it be further exploited in the workplace.
   - AI can predict what you're going to write/how you might respond. Could it be even more personalised with algorithms?