



Introduction to Tech Tools

Tech experts Nik Peachey and Tom Walton present an invaluable series on using technology in the classroom.

There's an ancient Chinese proverb which is sometimes also referred to as a curse, but it's one that I like because it is very relevant to us as teachers today: "May you live in interesting times." As educationalists, we do live in very interesting times and that can be either a curse or a blessing depending on how you feel about the role of technology in education and the degree to which you are willing to engage with it. Personally, I feel that it's a blessing and that we are very lucky to be living in times that offer us the opportunity to radically change and improve the way we educate our students. With my **Tech Tools for Teachers series**, I am going to share with you some of the enthusiasm I feel for the potential of new technology and help you see how you can apply it within your own working context.

Each instalment will give you:

- an overview of one area of new technology and how it relates to language learning
- a number of suggestions for short activities that you can try with your students
- a **downloadable lesson plan** which will guide you through the technical side of creating more detailed materials and combining them into a lesson for your students
- a **printable how-to guide** (and for some a **video tutorial**) to show you step-by-step how to use the technology
- some tips to help you avoid some of the common pitfalls
- follow up resources to look at
- some links to background reading

Context is a key word when we think about how technology can be applied to supporting our students' learning. Some of you may be working in a technology-rich environment where you have interactive whiteboards and students have access to the internet in the classroom, or a computer lab that you can take students to. Some of you may only have a single computer in your classroom or, perhaps, like the majority of schools around the world, you may have no computer access in school at all. Whichever is the case, this series will still have something to offer you and will enable you to offer something more to your students, either in class or through the development of more motivating homework tasks that students can access outside of school.

Why do we need technology in the language classroom?

- Technology is transforming the world of global communications. New genres of communication are being created and we need to support and enable our students to use these new forms of communication in English,

Optional keyword



in the digital 21st century world. These new digital literacies are broadening the scope for self expression and creativity, democratizing the role of the media and making it possible for more people to have a voice and play a role in defining the society that we live in. English is playing an ever more important part in creation and collaboration in new media, so it's important that we support our students in the linguistic aspects of this process and help to make sure they are equipped for their future.

- Technology can enable us to extend the reach of our classroom and take our students into a world of authentic language use where they can really use their English language skills to communicate, collaborate and participate in activities that are relevant to their own lives and interests.
- Technology also has a supporting role to play within our own professional practice, and sound use and understanding of how technology can be used can help us to work more effectively and efficiently as teachers and cope with an ever-increasing workload.

During this series I will be combining the development of these very important areas with some more traditional and familiar pedagogical approaches from the communicative language teaching repertoire – so, don't panic, not everything will be new.

Getting Started

Getting started with new technologies can seem intimidating and demanding. As teachers, we need to retain a degree of control and responsibility for what happens in our classroom, as well as our students' respect, so trying out new things that we don't feel confident about can be very risky.

If you aren't feeling confident, there will be plenty of suggestions for how to start off small by suggesting activities that students can do outside of the classroom for homework. This takes some of the pressure off you and should help you to build your confidence with the technology.

If you are new to technology, I would encourage you to be honest with your students and tell them that you are trying something new and it may not work. Involve them in the process and get their feedback and advice. Many students may have a wider knowledge of technology than their teachers, so draw on their knowledge, but remember that there is also a linguistic and educational purpose for using technology and this is where you will be able to help and support your students.

Most importantly, I hope that you will embrace this opportunity to try something new with your students and enjoy developing a new aspect of your own teaching – and, of course, please tell us how things go and what does and doesn't work for you and your students.

Nik Peachey