

Instructional Technologies and Materials Design

Chapter 1 Technology in the classroom

Dudeney, Gavin & Hockly, Nicky (2007). *How to teach English with technology*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

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Chapter 1 Technology in the classroom

- Technology in language teaching
- Attitudes to technology
- Implementing ICT in the classroom
- Skills and equipment for getting started

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■ Technology in language teaching

Technology in language teaching has been around in language teaching for decades – as the **blackboard** and later on as **tape recorders**, **language laboratories** and **video** since the 1960s and 1970s, and are still used in classrooms around the world.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- Computer-based materials for language teaching, as **CALL** (Computer Assisted Language Learning), appeared in the early 1980s. Early CALL programs required learners to respond to stimuli on the computer screen and to carry out tasks such as:
 - **filling in gapped texts, matching items** and doing **multiple-choice activities**.
 - **text reconstruction**, where an entire text is blanked out and the learner recreates it by typing in words.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- For all of these activities the computer gives the learner **feedback**, saying whether the answer is **correct** or **incorrect**.
- If the answer is incorrect, the computer program shows the learner **why the answer is incorrect** and offers **remedial activities**.
- The CALL approach is still found on many published CD-ROMs for language teaching.

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■ Technology in language teaching

As Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has become more widespread, it is possible to use the Internet and web-based tools so CALL has moved beyond the use of computer programs. The term TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) appeared in the 1990s, in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet and communications technology.

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■ Technology in language teaching

Although the use of **ICT** by language teachers is still **not widespread**, the use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important, and it will become a normal part of **ELT practice** in the coming years. There are **many reasons** for this:

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- **Internet access** - either in private homes, or at Internet cafés - is becoming increasingly available to learners.
- **Younger learners are growing up with technology**, and it is **a natural and integrated part** of their lives. For these learners **the use of technology is a way to bring the outside world into the classroom**. And some of these younger learners will in turn **become teachers** themselves.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- English, as an international language, is being used in technologically mediated contexts.
- Technology, especially the Internet, presents us with new opportunities for authentic tasks and materials, as well as access to a wealth of ready-made ELT materials.
- The Internet offers excellent opportunities for collaboration and communication between learners who are geographically dispersed.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- Technology is offered with published materials such as course books and resource books for teachers.
- Learners increasingly expect language schools to integrate technology into teaching.
- Technology offers new ways for practicing language and assessing performance.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- **Technology** is becoming increasingly **mobile**. It can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall, computer room or self-access centre, it can also be used **at home**, on the way to school and **in Internet cafés**.
- Using a range of **ICT tools** can give learners exposure to and **practice in all of the four main language skills** - speaking, listening, writing and reading.

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- **Technology in language teaching**
- The contexts in which teachers are working with technology can vary widely, and the access that teachers have to computers - the so-called **digital divide** - will affect what we can do with our classes in terms of implementing technology.
- A general **lack of ICT training** for teachers also means that we still have some way to go until **the use of technology in teaching becomes as natural as the use of books or pens and paper.**

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■ Attitudes to technology

- Many people are afraid of new technology, and, with the increasing presence of the Internet and computers, the term **technophobe** refers to those of who might be **wary/cautious** of these developments.
- More recently, the term **digital native** refers to someone who **grows up using technology**, and who thus feels **comfortable and confident** with it - typically **today's children**.
- **Their parents** tend to be **digital immigrants**, who have come late to the world of technology. In many cases, **teachers** are the **digital immigrants** and **younger students** are the **digital natives**.

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- **Attitudes to technology**

- **Think about yourself. Where do you stand?**

How confident do you feel about using the Internet and computers? Although there is a tendency to call computer users either **technophobes** or **technogeeks** (a term for a technology enthusiast), most of us probably are somewhere **between the two extremes**.

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■ Attitudes to technology

- Negative attitudes of teachers towards technology result from:
 - a lack of **confidence, facilities or training**, resulting in an **inability to see the benefit of using technologies** in the classroom.
 - the case that teachers may **not be fully in control of their work situations**. A teacher may want to use more technology in their teaching, but the school may not have the facilities, or
 - the case that a teacher may be instructed to start using technology for which she/he feels **unprepared or untrained**.

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- Here are some **negative comments** from teachers in schools:

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1

I can never get into the computer room in class time - it's always being used.

using computers isn't interactive. My students could do computer work at home.

2

3

I don't know anything about technology!

My students know so much more about computers than I do.

4

5

Why use computers anyway? We've got a perfectly good coursebook.

I don't like them, so I don't see why I should use them in the classroom.

6

I'd like to use computers more, but preparing materials is so time consuming.

7

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- **Attitudes to technology**

- Here are our responses to these comments:

- **Timetable** when you are going to use the computer room well in advance, and use a booking form which covers several months or a term. Put this booking form on the door of the computer room so that all teachers and learners can see when the room will be used, and by whom. You can use the computer room regularly for **project work** (see Chapters 4, 5 and 7), or regular **self-study work** (see Chapter 9). This can easily be timetabled in advance. You might also want to negotiate with the school about the possibility of having one computer in your classroom. Some activities can be done using a single computer in the classroom.

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- Some computer-based work can be done alone, for example using CD-ROMs (see Chapter 9), but a lot of ideas for using technology and the Internet explored in this book involve pair- and small-group work. The ideal scenario is to have one computer available per pair of learners, but many activities can also be carried out using a single computer with a whole class, or with small groups of learners (three to four) per computer.

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- This remark reflects a **very real lack of training in the classroom use of technology in ELT**. When pressed, teachers usually admit that they do in fact know a bit about technology - they usually know how to **use email, a word processing program, and the Internet**.
- This knowledge is certainly **enough to get started with using technology in the classroom**. The lack of ICT training in ELT is an issue which is slowly being addressed by training bodies, and there are also **several online teacher development groups dedicated to exploring and learning about the use of technology in the classroom for teachers to join** (see Chapter 11).

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- This remark is often true **for teachers** who teach younger adults, or young learners, and who, like the teacher making comment 3, may have **received no training in the use of technology**. However, some **learners knowing more about technology** may help the teacher in the class.
- When starting to use technology in the classroom, **teachers can rely on these more technologically knowledgeable learners** for help and support.
- **Learners are usually delighted to be called upon** to help out, and to get a chance to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in this area.

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- Attitudes to technology
- The use of technology in the classroom does not replace using traditional materials such as a black/whiteboard or a course book - rather, **technology tools are used to complement and enhance regular classroom work.**
- Imagine that a unit in the course book deals with animals in danger of extinction. Technology can be used to do complementary activities such as a **data collection email project**, or a **webquest** on animals in danger of extinction or even to create a **podcast** on the topic. The teacher can produce **additional electronic materials** to review course book material on the topic, too.

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- This dislike and fear of computers is often expressed by teachers who have had negative experiences with technology in the past. The best way to address the situation is to make teachers aware that they already have certain technical skills - they probably know how to use a tape recorder in the classroom, for example, and often already use technology in their personal lives, such as an MP3 player, the Internet or email. In other words, rather than dismissing very real fears, these need to be acknowledged and addressed.
- The technophobic teacher needs to be encouraged to get started by implementing simple, undemanding technology with learners. Using a ready-made webquest from the Internet, for example, is a good way to start.
- Teachers also need to realize that technology does and will break down occasionally, and that it's always good to have a backup plan that doesn't require the use of technology. Also, providing good training in the use of technology in the classroom through face-to-face workshops or online courses is key to encouraging the long-term acceptance and use of technology by technophobic teachers.

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- **Attitudes to technology**
- Making new materials from scratch can be time-consuming, both for paper-based classes and for classes using technology.
- Teachers need to **collaborate** in schools and pool resources and lesson plans, as well as use the technology-based resources that most commercial course books provide nowadays.
- A course book will have its own **web pages** on the publisher's website, a list of **recommended websites** to visit for each unit, a CD-ROM and/or DVD, and occasionally **teacher support online**, in the form of frequently asked questions (**FAQs**), or discussion forums.

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- **Implementing ICT in the classroom**
- Teachers have **varying levels of access to computers and technology**, and **teach in all sorts of contexts** to all sorts of **learners**. Here are some of the **questions** you may be asking yourself about using technology in the classroom.

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■ Implementing ICT in the classroom

■ How can I use ICT with my class if there is only one computer in the school?

- Introducing a **booking system** for the computer with your colleagues will ensure equal use for all the teachers in the school. You will need to use the Internet mainly as a resource with your learners, accessing the Internet to download and print out materials to use offline with classes. Technology-based activities you can do by printing off materials include:
 - using **websites** (see Chapter 3).
 - Internet-based project work - especially **webquests** offline (see Chapter 4).
 - email **keypal** projects using the teacher's email account (see Chapter 5).
 - a class **blog** with learners preparing their contributions on paper and the teacher typing them into the computer (see Chapter 7).
 - using **online reference tools** such as **concordances** on paper (see Chapter 8).
 - electronically produced materials printed out for learners (see Chapter 10).

You can also join free online teacher development groups (see Chapter 11).

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- **Implementing ICT in the classroom**
- **What can I do if my learners have very low Information Technology (IT) experience and skills?**
- You need to first find out about your learners' IT skills and degrees of experience, for example, by means of a questionnaire, and then start off by using the simplest technologies in the classroom.
- For learners with zero or very low IT skills, or literacy issues, a good place to start is with
 - simple word processing tasks
 - basic email or searching the Internet by trying to pair up more technically experienced learners with the absolute novices for any ICT-based class work because the more experienced users can help the less experienced ones.

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- Implementing ICT in the classroom
- I teach classes of 30+ students. How can I use computers with such large groups?
- You will need to have access to a minimum number of computers, with no more than four learners per computer doing small-group work online.
- Large classes, with more than 30 students, can be divided into two groups - while one group is doing online computer room work, the other group is doing paper-based work.
- The two groups then change over.

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- Implementing ICT in the classroom
 - I'm keen to use ICT in the classroom, but don't know where to start! Could you suggest what I try first?
 - If you don't have much experience of ICT, start with simple tools and projects in class, such as using websites or using ready-made materials for language learners, such as webquests.
 - You might also want to start using email with your learners, simply for receiving and marking work, or for simple collaborative writing projects.

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- **Implementing ICT in the classroom**
- **I don't have much time for material preparation. What chapters in this book would you recommend I read first?**
- **Using ICT-based activities does not mean** that completely new materials need to be prepared for every class. The **Internet has a wealth of ready-made materials available** - you simply need to know how to find them!
- **First use your Internet search and evaluation skills**, then **look for ready-made materials** to use with your classes, such as **webquests** or **technology-based courseware** or use **simple tools** that need little or no preparation, such as **email** or **chat**.

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- **Implementing ICT in the classroom**
- **What types of ICT tools and activities would you recommend as best for young learners?**
- All of the ICT tools, and many of the activities are suitable for use with young learners.
- You can ask your young learners what tools they already know or use, and start off by using those. Many teenagers, for example, will already be familiar with email, instant messaging and chat, and perhaps even with blogs.
- For younger learners, you can use some of the ready-made materials and websites available on the Internet for this age group. There are also plenty of webquests on a range of topics available for younger learners.

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- **Implementing ICT in the classroom**
- **I'd like to use the Internet to put my learners in touch with learners in other countries. How can I do this?**
- Several Internet tools provide an excellent way to put learners in contact with learners from other countries and cultures, as well as providing them with realistic and motivating opportunities to use their English.
- The simplest way to set up a project between classes is **via email** but this can be extended into **collaborative projects using blogs, wikis or even chat**.
- **Joining an online teacher development group** will make it easy for you **to contact other teachers around the world**, and to set up these kinds of projects.

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■ Implementing ICT in the classroom

- **My learners need to use the computer room mainly for self-study or research, without a teacher being present. What can they do on their own?**
- There may be times when learners are scheduled to work alone on computers in a self-access centre. CD-ROMs are provided for these occasions. In some schools students can access content placed on a central school server via an Intranet. However, if the computers are linked to the Internet, learners can also be encouraged to work on Internet-based projects in pairs, such as:
 - **webquests.**
 - **electronic materials** developed by the teacher especially for these students.
 - **research** for later presentation to the class, using **online dictionaries** or other **reference tools**.
 - They could also be **listening to podcasts**, preparing and updating their **personal blogs** or developing a **class wiki**, or even using **text chat**.

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- **Skills and equipment for getting started**
- **What does a teacher need to know to be able to use technology in the classroom?**
- **The basic skills you need are**
 - how to use a simple word processing program (e.g. Microsoft Word),
 - how to use email and how to access and use the Internet.
 - By reading this book, and trying out the activities suggested with your learners (with plenty of step-by-step help provided in the tutorials on the CD-ROM if you feel you need it), you should be able to greatly increase your ICT skills set, and to feel a lot more confident about using technology in the classroom.

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- **Skills and equipment for getting started**
- You will also need some essential equipment in order to get the most out of this book, and to start to implement technology with your learners:
 - at least one computer (preferably one per two students).
 - an Internet connection.
 - a printer.
 - an audio card in the computer, and a headset (audio and microphone) for every computer.
 - basic software (a word processing program, a web browser like Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari or Mozilla, and an email program).
- Teaching contexts and teachers' access to computers and technology can vary widely. While reading this book, you'll find plenty of activities which can be done if only one computer is available in class. However, access to a computer room to which you can take your class will provide more opportunities for implementing technology, for both you and your learners.

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■ Skills and equipment for getting started

- The layout of the computer room directly affects the types of activities you are able to do with your learners, and how they interact with one another and with you. A layout which has computers at desks around the walls, facing the walls, with a large table in the centre of the room, allows the teacher to walk around and easily see what the learners are working on and what they're looking at on the computer screens. The central area provides an easily accessible space where learners can go when they don't need the computers, and for when we might want to do more communicative group work. If the central space is reasonably large, more movement and activity is possible in the centre of the room; this will offer up more opportunities for kinaesthetic learners, and the chance to use games and physical activities with younger learners away from the computer monitors.

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- **Skills and equipment for getting started**
- You may be lucky if it is possible for you to make some small changes in the work environment so that it's more comfortable to work in the room, and easier to teach in. It's well worth considering how **your institution's computer room** could be made more **user-friendly** for you and your classes.

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Conclusions | *In this chapter we have:*

- considered the causes of technophobia and suggested ways of overcoming it.
- examined specific teacher doubts about using technology in the classroom and suggested some solutions.
- looked at a variety of EFL teaching contexts and teachers' access to computers, and discussed the types of computer-based activities you can do with your learners.
- outlined the basic skills and equipment that teachers need in order to start using technology in their teaching.



ON THE CD-ROM YOU CAN HEAR THREE TEACHERS TALKING ABOUT THEIR USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE!

