



Technology is for everyone: Take the leap!

Özge Karaoğlu

Terakki Foundation Schools

Özge_Karaoğlu@hotmail.com

www.twitter.com/Özge

www.ÖzgeKaraoğlu.edublogs.

org

The immense and growing change in technology in the last decade has opened up a new door in education, creating new opportunities to learn, collaborate, and connect to each other by exponentially expanding the physical limits of school. This digital revolution has unleashed creativity and new insights with unlimited resources to facilitate language learning. Our newest generation has already demonstrated to us how it has impacted the way they learn, think, and interact, pointing us to learning technologies and their potential uses in and out of our classes. This talk will explore the whys and hows of integrating technology in small steps; making learning fun with web tools that every teacher should know and take advantage of to heighten the learning experience in young learners' classes. Hang onto your hats because technology is for everyone and we are about to take that leap!

この10年のテクノロジーの多大な変化で、学校の境界線が物理的に急拡大し、学び、協働し、お互いにつながり合う新しい機会が作られ、教育の新しい扉が開かれた。このデジタル革命は、言語学習を促進させる無限のリソースで創造力と新しい洞察を引き起こした。最も新しい世代の人々は、テクノロジーがいかに彼らの学び方、考え方、インタラクションの方法に強い影響を与えているかを私達に見せつけ、教室内外における学習のためのテクノロジーと、その使用の可能性についても示している。本講演では、テクノロジーを取り入れる理由と、その方法について検討する。年少者のクラスでの学習経験の質を高めるために教師が知るべき、利用すべきウェブツールを使って、学習を楽しいものにすることを提案する。皆さんの準備はできているだろうか。テクノロジーはすべての人々のものであり、私達はまさにそこを飛び越えようとしているのだ。

"Our students have changed radically. Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach."
Marc Prensky

Today the world is undergoing a digital change that cannot be dragged back, changing our newest generation of digital users as well. If we look around, we can easily see the effects and the radical impact of the latest technologies on our children that are growing up in this digital wave. It is reshaping the way they live, think, and learn, allowing our children to collaborate, interact, and create more things than ever before. It is as if our children have been normalized by all these new gadgets of this new era. In one of his talks, Sir Ken Robinson said, "Technology isn't technology if it already existed when you were born." He is quite right because what we actually call "technology" today our children simply accept as a natural part of life.

Today's children are interactive, online, more collaborative than ever, and they are much more motivated to respond when they do the things that they are passionate about. They have a wide range of hobbies and they are multi-taskers. They like to be challenged and they can easily get bored if they are not. Every day, they are spending countless hours using these popular technologies. They are in a way learning to use the digital devices before they learn to tie their shoes or even speak and they are good at adopting and using them, most of the time they are much better than us. I have always had children in my young learner classes who are trying to help me figure out how to make the computer or the CDs work when they think I am not capable of doing so. I am sure you have had similar experiences in your life with children at home or in classes.

"If we teach today as we taught yesterday, we rob our children of tomorrow." John Dewey

In fact, integrating technology in education is no longer a new area. It's always been a part

of our classes from the beginning. Once it was the pen and paper; today the Internet, mobile devices, and web-based tools are the new technologies. While all these technologies have arisen throughout the centuries, our needs and passion as teachers to find useful and meaningful ways to incorporate them into our teaching has flourished as well. It has pushed the evaluation of learning technologies that is demonstrating to us the immense potential that they have for our children today.

It has opened new doors for us, letting students and teachers access information, resources, and even each other in a more flexible way. It has created a new and a different context where children can experience new challenges and connect to different places and cultures. It has made it easier for us to connect with our students outside the walls of the classroom and create new dynamic learning environments. The innovative and creative ways of using these tools help us to engage our children in their own learning using different materials and activities in ways in which traditional education doesn't seem capable of. The new tools have helped us bridge the gaps between the classroom and the real world: how students learn and how they are taught.

"If you generally think of the Internet as a place to look up stuff, you are missing the best part."
Anonymous

There are numerous web tools that we can integrate into our own teaching, and if you are a teacher of young learners like me, the tools that you can use are more colourful, interactive, and fun to play with. The good thing about these tools is that you don't have to be a tech savvy teacher to use them. If you know how to sign up for a website, have a Facebook account, or know how to upload pictures and copy a link to an email, that's enough to figure out how to use them. Most of the tools are alike in form and in use, so once you get the idea of using one, the others seem much easier to implement and create. We can also take advantage of the fact that often, educators from around the world have already created tutorials on how to use these tools, written lesson plans for different level of

students, and come up with inspiring ideas to integrate these tools into our own teaching.

By using some of the tools in class or assigning students to play with one of the tools at home, we can give students another powerful tool to motivate them and facilitate language learning. Think of your children creating avatars (a character that represents an online user) and making them talk about their likes and dislikes with their own voices, or putting some pictures together with their favourite music and creating a short video of the things that they did last weekend, or creating an online pin board where they can pin virtual pictures, texts, links, and videos and share them with others. Think of yourself as a teacher sitting in front of your computer screen, with your coffee in your hand, ready to collaborate with your students or other classes on a worldwide project. Think of the power in your hands when giving your students the two options of writing a diary: one of them is with a pen and paper, the other one is by simply trying a web tool to keep an online diary. To be able to do this, you don't even need to have the facilities in the classroom because students already have them at home.

These days, we have various tools in our magic bags to encourage our kids to speak and write in English at home while they are having fun and doing the thing that they know best: using technology and engaging themselves in their own learning while facing challenges. Our children can write a dialogue on a worksheet or they can use the same dialogue in creating an animation or an online pop-up book. What they write, what they learn, and the outcomes will be the same. The only difference is the tools that they will be using.

Yes, of course, web tools have come with their numerous uses and put new demands on teachers. Our classrooms, houses, and even our students may be surrounded by the latest and greatest of technology and the challenge starts here. It is how we find the best tools that are relevant to our topic, culture, and curriculum and most importantly, important for our objectives. It is how we use these tools to facilitate language learning that counts, because we cannot think of technology tools that can be used every day

or for every bit of our curriculum. We can't use technology just for the sake of using it or it certainly cannot replace what we are teaching. We should consider technological tools just like any other tool such as a new game or a new spice for cooking to help us to teach, motivate our students, blow their minds, and make them learn or practice the language.

Answering the call of the new century with small steps, even if it is only on a trial basis means a lot (Klopfer, Osterweil, Groff, & Haas, 2009). You may think that you do not have the facilities to use these tools at the moment. But who says that you won't forever? Let's be prepared. Let's not limit ourselves from seeing the potential of the tools that are ready in our hands, because we are teachers who are building the steps towards the future. It means that we believe in lifelong learning and continuous professional development. Let's juggle one more thing to take another leap forward with our students to do our best to engage them in this globally connected world, by giving them something new, something better. In the end, taking this leap is sure to be a journey that we and our students will enjoy and benefit from.

References

Klopfer, E., Osterweil S., Groff J., & Haas J. (2009) Using the technology of today, in the classroom today. Retrieved from <education.mit.edu/papers/GamesSimsSocNets_EdArcade.pdf>.

Özge Karaoğlu is an English teacher, teacher trainer, and educational consultant in teaching young/very young learners, teaching with web-based technologies for international organizations, schools, and institutes worldwide. She is the main author of "Minigon" ELT books and she is working



for Mindactiva in the US as the content and story coordinator of the "Yes, I Speak English" DVD series. She has been developing animations, digital games, and smartphone applications

with her young learners for the last four years. She has won many prestigious awards for her work including the "Creativity and Innovation," award, the "Highly Commended 2010," "Highly Commended 2011," "Microsoft Award for Outstanding Teachers - Runner up," and most notably, "ESU - Cambridge University New Writing Award," which earned her a visit to Buckingham Palace to receive her award from Prince Philip. She has a blog where she writes about teaching English through technology and web-based tools. She is currently teaching young and very young learners in Turkey and enjoying every minute of it.

Speakers at JALT2012

This year's conference brings to Japan five respected plenary speakers from five distinct fields which means that whatever your area of interest, there is something for you. On top of this, there are eight featured speakers and a specially invited Asian Scholar.

Even a brief look at the biographies of the plenary speakers suggests that among them, they have worked in, taught in, lived in, or been to a large percentage of all the countries in the world.

John Eyles

... speaking on Saturday afternoon, is a new communication technology expert who works with companies and organizations around the world planning and developing digital education programmes and projects, some of which he'll talk to us about. Early in his career, he taught in Japan so he has an insider's knowledge of the situations that Japan-based educators face on a day-to-day basis. Like the other plenary speakers, he has worked around the world, including the UK, USA, Thailand, and NZ (his homeland). John is Chair of the EON Foundation.



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