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In this column, we explore the issue of teachers and technology—not just as it relates to CALL solutions, but also to Internet, software, and hardware concerns that all teachers face. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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Bring the Back-row Students to the Front of the Class with Flipgrid

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Authenticity, meaningfulness, and engagement in learning are the goals of every language teacher. However, in striving for these goals, teachers are often battling against various challenges. Amongst other factors, insufficient time for communicative activities, large class sizes, and students' lack of confidence in using oral English in class, can potentially affect the success of second language learners (Nguyen, Warren, & Fehring, 2014). Evidence shows that through Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) methods, the language produced in learning activities is qualitatively better, more coherent, and more expressive compared to the language that learners produce in face-to-face communication (Lamy & Hampel, 2007; Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002). Flipgrid <https://flipgrid.com> uses asynchronous videos recorded by learners, allowing the learners the extra time they need to process the language input without the tension of having to give an immediate response (Mclain, 2018). By sending and receiving pre-recorded videos rather than communicating in real time, this CALL tool provides learners time to think, organise, and elaborate their production. Flipgrid is a powerful tool that allows teachers to bring their back-row students to the front and have their voices heard. Although there are many functions embedded in Flipgrid, this is just a brief guide to help teachers get started in using Flipgrid in their classrooms.

Flipgrid in a Nutshell

The concept of Flipgrid is similar to that of an internet forum or message board: a user-friendly, online discussion site where people hold conversations in the form of posted messages. In the case of Flipgrid, teachers post topics to trigger conversations for students to respond, and the typed messages are replaced with short videos. As long as the students have access to a mobile device with a camera, they can get started. Flipgrid provides every student a chance to speak without the anxiety of being in front of the class. From my experience, in the beginning, some students may feel equally anxious about having their voices recorded. However, they soon got over this once they started viewing each other's videos. The wide range of users, from PreK to PhD students, attests to its versatility, depending on the creativity of the teachers in integrating it into their classroom activities. In 2018, Microsoft acquired it and made it free for all users.

The Big Picture and Basic Flipgrid Lingo

The Flipgrid website allows you to create a community of learners for your class, called a *Grid*. Once you've set up your Grid, you are ready to facilitate video discussions among your students by posing questions, discussion starters, or prompts, called *Topics*. Students respond to the Topic by recording video responses and uploading them. Each Grid can hold an unlimited number of Topics and each Topic can hold an unlimited number of responses. If you share a class with other teachers, you can invite them as CoPilots. You will own the Grid but as Co-Pilots, they can edit the Grid, create Topics, review responses, and provide feedback. They cannot delete the Grid—only the owner can do that. Finally, the Flip Code is a code you share with your students for them to access your Grid.

Getting Started

To sign up for a free teacher account, teachers will need to have either a Google or Microsoft account. Go to <https://flipgrid.com> and fill in the required fields: name, country, name of organization, the age of learner community and the area or subject of expertise. Lastly, check the terms of use and agreement box and the registration is complete. It should take less than a minute to complete the process. Once you have signed up, the Educator Dashboard will appear, which is where you can start adding

your first Grid. Students do not need to create accounts. Teachers only need to provide students a Flip Code, which is automatically generated along with a shareable QR code and URL when every Grid or Topic is created. Students can then enter the code on the Flipgrid app or website.

Creating a Grid

Remember, the Grid is your classroom or community of learners. Click on the *Add New Grid* button to set up a new Grid. Figure 1 shows the screen to begin a Grid. There are three Grid Community Types, providing different options on how you want your learners to access your grid. They are: *School Email Domain*, *Student ID List,* and *PLC and Public Grids* (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Create a Grid screen*.*

School Email Domain

Use the *School Email Domain* option if your school has a common Microsoft or Google school email account for each student. Firstly, with *School Email Domain*, students will need to enter a Flip Code and then verify their school email using Microsoft or Google. You can add multiple domains if your students have different email domains.

Student ID List

Secondly, if the students do not have Microsoft or Google accounts, teachers can use the *Student ID List* option. They can either manually add students by entering their names (both first and last names are required) and adding an identifier for each

student, which can be the student IDs, their lunch PINs, names, or something else that is easy to remember. If left blank, a random ID will be generated. Instead of adding the list manually, teachers can also choose to upload a CSV file by using the template provided by Flipgrid. Once done, teachers can print the list in the form of a card for each student, each card has the student's name, the identifier and a QR code which students can scan using their devices and enter their IDs to access the grid. A maximum of 250 students per Grid can be added.

PLC and Public Grids

Lastly, the *PLC and Public Grids* option allows anyone who has a Flip Code to view the videos in the Grid. However, to participate in the discussion by recording a video, participants first have to verify their email address via Microsoft or Google. There is an optional security feature, teachers can add a Grid password. Flipgrid recommends participants be above 16 years old or have parental permission to participate in *PLC and Public Grids*.

My students do not have Microsoft or Google school email accounts, so to set up the grid, I use the *Student ID List* option and it takes less than 10 minutes. In my experience of using *PLC and Public Grids* option in workshops, participants had no difficulty accessing the Grid as long as they have either a Microsoft or Google account.

Figure 2. Selection of Community Type*.*

Start a Topic and Spark off the Discussion

To add a topic, teachers need two things: a topic title and a topic description or question. Click *Create*

Topic and you are ready to spark off the discussion amongst the students. Teachers can choose the response duration, which can be as short as 15 seconds or up to five minutes long. Teachers can also allow students to record replies to their classmates' video responses. There are a variety of moderation features that can be used per topic. For example, the status of each topic can either be *active*, *frozen*, or *inactive*. If topics are frozen, videos can be viewed, but no new videos can be recorded. If they are inactive, students can no longer have access to that topic. To help students locate the topics easily, clicking on *Pin Topic* will ensure that it appears at the top of the rest of the topics in the grid. Now, you are ready to make classroom learning authentic, meaningful, and engaging with Flipgrid!

Resources

There are 5-minute tutorials that consolidate all the above information, available at <https://goo.gl/Tccs1S>. There is also a 38-page manual, *The Educator's Guide to Flipgrid*, available at <https://goo.gl/wVnxZs>.

References

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Editor's Note: *We hope that you will now try to add FlipGrid to your lessons as you look toward the end of the semester and plan for future classes. Many other tools for making your lessons more engaging were recently shared at the PanSIG and JALT-CALL2019 conferences. If you shared your experience at these conferences or have put new CALL tools into practice and want to share how your students have benefitted, please consider contacting us about submitting a manuscript to help other readers make their lessons* Wired!

[JALT PRAXIS] YOUNGER LEARNERS

Mari Nakamura & Marian Hara

The Younger Learners column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editor at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.

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Technology Resources That Work with Young Learners

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Technology resources have found their way into most foreign language classrooms. In some schools, students have individual tablets or laptops; in others, the teacher's personal smartphone or tablet is the only tool available. Most teachers recognize that technology tools are among the resources they can choose from when planning lessons. As with any other learning resource, teachers are in the best position to decide how and when technology tools should be used. What teachers do with technology is more important than which devices they have available. Technology is most effective when it is an integral part of the lesson rather than an isolated activity (Sakamoto, 2015).

Let's examine several effective ways of using technology resources, with suggestions for keeping