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In this column, we discuss the latest developments in ed-tech, as well as tried and tested apps and platforms, and the integration between teaching and technology. We invite readers to submit articles on their areas of interest. Please contact the editor before submitting.

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Using "Fakebook" for Writing Practice
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Overview

Designed to resemble Facebook, "Fakebook" (https://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page) is an online resource that can be adapted for language teaching. Users can choose almost any famous or historical person of their liking, or even choose themselves, and create a fake Facebook page. As with most social media platforms, users can build a profile by filling in their personal information, posting comments, uploading links, and adding friends, and then save their progress with a password-protected account. Although designed to teach history, its versatility enables students to practice their writing skills in a general or more targeted language context. It can be used for just one lesson, or the account can be saved and built upon throughout the term.

Advantages

It is by saving the account and building upon it throughout the term that the strengths of this website are found. Students can do their writing practice somewhere other than in their textbook or university-provided online platform. The use of authentic materials for enhanced language learning is well documented (Gilmore, 2007; Wong et al., 1995). Transitioning a writing class from the classroom to an online and asynchronous format can perhaps make the writing practice more realistic, as most writing today is accomplished online or on a computer rather than by hand.

One issue with online writing classes is that the majority of the writing is often completed on the university's student management system; for example, students write a Microsoft Word document that is embedded within Teams. While instructors usually need a single place to collect classwork for class management and grading purposes, this is clearly not an authentic context. Though Fakebook cannot be said to be truly authentic, the way that it imitates a standard social media platform format makes it familiar and intuitive to its users.

Another strength is that it provides a place where students can see all of their coursework on one page, which is not usually possible with student management systems such as Teams or dotCampus. More convenient access to prior work can allow students to more easily draw on previous assignments for current ones, as well as act as a motivating factor as students see improvement (hopefully!) in their writing as the course progresses.

Disadvantages

One predictable problem is the lack of interest that students will have if the website is used only once. A writing course may have a social media unit or lesson plan, and creating a Fakebook page as the post-lesson assignment for that lesson may seem like a logical choice. However, if students know they will only need to use this website once, they will not be invested in learning its various features and understandably will do the minimum to complete the assignment.

Another weakness, due to the website's design, is that after the Fakebook accounts have been created

and saved, each student will need access to every other student's account URL and password in order to view their pages and comment on any posts. This is not an issue if the account is used as a private repository of writing accessed primarily by the student and the instructor, but if the intention is to encourage dialogue and students commenting on each other's posts, this information will have to be provided to all.

Another problem—one shared by all online resources not provided by the university—is the danger of losing login and password information. If the account is made without registering an email, there is no recourse if login and password information is forgotten, so it is advised that instructors collect and store this information in a secure way.

Conclusion

Fakebook is an online resource that can be utilized for general and target language writing practice. By being aware of its strengths and weaknesses, instructors can use the website in a way that best serves their course and provide a more familiar and intuitive place for students to accomplish their

writing. Those interested can email the author to receive an initial student handout with instructions on how to set up and save a Fakebook account. The official Fakebook Startup Guide can be found here: https://www.classtools.net/_FAKEBOOK/docs/fakebook_startup_guide.doc and an official Generic Marksheet can also be found here: https://www.classtools.net/_FAKEBOOK/docs/fakebook_marksheet.doc

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[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 editors at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.
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Simple Ideas and Strategies for Promoting Intercultural Understanding in Schools and L2 Classes

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Intercultural understanding is one of the aims of foreign language (L2) study in Japanese schools, and we can find images, videos, dialogues and passages related to culture in most textbooks from year 3 of primary school and upwards. Larger proj-

ects and virtual exchanges have been introduced in previous *TLT Younger Learners* articles this year. However, there are also strategies and activities we can implement in our everyday L2 classes to enhance intercultural understanding and create an overall learning environment that fosters cultural awareness. Thus, the focus of this article is to share activities, ideas, and resources for younger learners to extend and complement the culture content of textbooks without inviting speakers, designing big projects or events, or participating in virtual or real exchanges.

Intercultural Understanding and Awareness

Norms, behaviors, and beliefs within our own cultures are acquired from the surrounding socio-cultural environment, internalized, and passed along from one generation to the next. Intercultural understanding involves knowing one's own culture