

Integrating ICT into Daily Teaching

Many schools, high schools and language centres have received a computer, a sound system and a beamer recently. These tools allow both teachers and students to integrate ICT into daily classroom activities, which provides choice, dynamism and effectiveness both to teaching and learning.

When ICT becomes part of our daily teaching, we soon notice some advantages:

- We save money and time. By using the beamer, we do away with many photocopies and save the time we used to spend handing them out.
- Classes are more varied and dynamic. We do not necessarily eliminate any of our traditional teaching resources. Rather, we provide more variety by adding new material (pictures, video, sound, websites) to our repertoire.
- We have a wider range of materials. We can easily use any material obtained from the web or from other sources (scans, students' pictures).
- Materials can be updated or changed easily. Gone are the days when we had to use the same material for some years because it was expensive to record, buy or print. If we use digital material, we can change it almost on-the-go.
- Using technology in the classroom is no longer an extra trip to the computer room, technology becomes part of everyday practice.

We can use the multimedia equipment to show images and carry out different types of activities, to promote webquests and online resources and to manage our classroom.

The power of pictures in the English class

Using digital pictures is a powerful resource. Pictures are easy to obtain and update, can be interpreted by anyone and provide a sense of context of the language while getting students' attention.

We can get digital pictures in several ways: scanning photographs, magazines or books, asking students to bring in pictures they have taken or surfing the net in search of inspiring images. This last option can provide us with a wealth of material on different topics, especially if we know how to get the most out of a website called "Flickr" (<http://www.flickr.com>). This site allows us to search for pictures that many people have decided to share with the world. To make sure that we do not infringe any copyright law, we should go to "Advanced Search" and tick the box "Only search

within creative-commons licensed photos”. This allows us to use the pictures for teaching purposes if we quote the author, in most cases.

Once we have saved some pictures on to our computer, we can start using them to create different types of activities, such as guided descriptions or guessing games.

Guided descriptions are an excellent example of how technology can provide more tools for language teaching. We usually show students pictures on postcards, posters or any other paper format and ask them to describe what they see. This is sometimes too demanding, since students are at a loss for words and the activity just does not take off.

By using digital pictures, we can give students tools to describe what they see, when and if we want. We just need a PowerPoint slide where we can insert the picture. Then, we can add a text box containing the words and phrases that will help students with their descriptions. We can even add a sound file with a recorded description. Besides,

we can decide when we want these resources to appear by adding an animation effect. If we used traditional medium (paper), we would not be able to stage the activity or, at least, it would take longer (we would have to hand out the vocabulary or write it on the blackboard), and the material would not be so easy and fast to update.

The image shows a PowerPoint slide with a dark blue background. At the top, the title "Guided descriptions - vocabulary" is written in white. Below the title, on the left side, is a vertical list of ten words in yellow: "go jogging", "tracksuit", "cap", "gloves", "snow", "winter", "morning", "signpost", "road", and "chilly". In the center of the slide is a photograph of a person in a pink tracksuit and white cap jogging on a snowy path. To the left of the person is a yellow diamond-shaped sign with a black silhouette of a person jogging. Below the photo, the text "By 09traveler" is visible. On the right side of the slide, there is a small black rectangular area with white icons, likely representing a media player or a video player.

Creating a slide for a guided description is not difficult. You can visit <http://www.xtec.cat/~fromeu/techteaching.htm> to learn how to do it.

Using digital guided descriptions entails several advantages:

- We can stage the activity, thus presenting it as challenge or as opportunity.
- We deal with both passive and active vocabulary.
- We give students input and we also encourage them to produce output.
- We can achieve a balance between productive and receptive skills (they speak about the picture, but they also listen to their classmates and even to recorded descriptions).

- We save time and money.

Another example of how digital pictures can enhance our range of materials and teaching techniques is “the mystery picture”. We just need to cover some parts of a picture and ask students to imagine what is behind the parts of the picture that we have covered. By doing this, we are encouraging our students to speak, to interact with their classmates and to revise vocabulary. The picture below shows a possible sequence of a “mystery picture”.



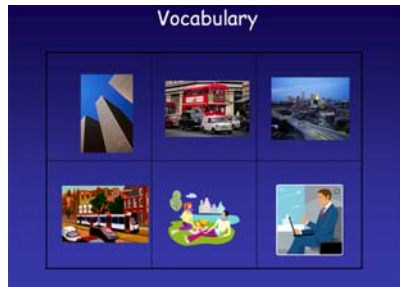
Presenting and revising vocabulary

The use of pictures in the English class is not limited to descriptions, whatever the kind. We can also use images to present and / or revise vocabulary. Books are full of pictures that students match to the corresponding vocabulary, so we might think that it is not necessary to create digital activities if they already exist in books. However, digital presentations of vocabulary may allow us to control much more of what we ask students to do, because we can:

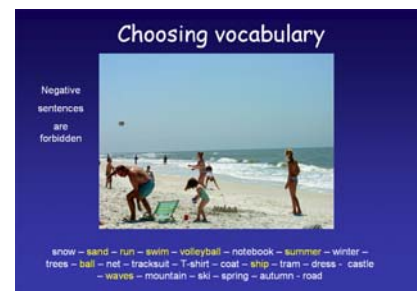
- Decide when we show the words to students. This way we can elicit what they already know.
- Determine how many vocabulary items we want to deal with.
- Choose the picture that illustrates a concept or an object.
- Include sound to practise pronunciation.
- Design both presentation and vocabulary revision activities that suit our students’ needs.

A couple of activities may well exemplify the above-mentioned advantages: vocabulary presentation or revision and vocabulary choice.

In the first activity, we project some pictures and we ask students what they think the topic is. Then, we elicit the names of the objects or concepts in the pictures. Finally, we show them the vocabulary.



The second activity asks the students to choose the vocabulary they need to describe a picture. They have to read all the vocabulary given and decide what is appropriate and what is not. By doing this, they revise all the vocabulary and then put some of it to use. An animation effect in PowerPoint will allow us to highlight the correct vocabulary, so that they know if they are on the right path.

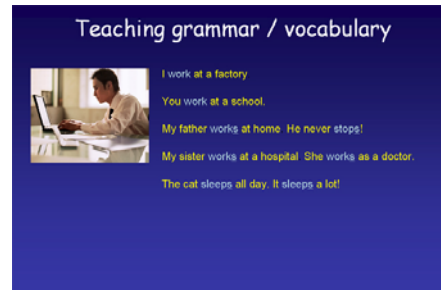


Teaching grammar

Grammar is often associated to charts, rules and diagrams. We can use multimedia resources to make it more meaningful and a bit less stressful. Pictures can be the basis for grammar practice on many occasions. The following slides exemplify how we can put grammar into practice while integrating it into a meaningful language context. In the first case, we use two pictures to practise comparative forms. In the second case, students study the present continuous by listening to the description of a picture where different actions are taking place and then describing a picture where they can also see different activities.



These activities do not mean that the traditional presentation of grammar excludes the use of technology. We can benefit from ICT resources even when we show students a list of verb forms, since we can present the verb forms one by one, illustrate all or some of them with pictures and save time, because we will not have to write everything on the blackboard or hand out photocopies.



Exercise correction

Time and effectiveness are also relevant when using our multimedia equipment to correct classroom activities. Not only do we avoid repetition and misunderstandings, but we also focus attention and save time when correcting activities, while generating valuable resources which we can later use for our website.

A simple example of these advantages is the correction of jumbled sentences or word-formation tables, as the following slide illustrates.

Correcting exercises

drink / how much / water / I / each day / should / tell / you / me / Could ?

Could you tell me how much water I should drink each day?

Adjective	Noun	Adjective	Noun
assertive	assertiveness	spiritual	spirituality
energetic	energy	self-sufficient	self-sufficiency
enthusiastic	enthusiasm	independent	independence

But this is just a very simple, though useful, example. We can use PowerPoint to carry out more complex exercise corrections, such as the answers to reading activities. We can decide when the questions appear, so that students read the text carefully. Then we can discuss question by question, show the answer and highlight the bit of text where the answer is. And it just takes 3 minutes after one has typed in the text!

Correcting reading activities

There was once an Indian king called Shahriyar.
One day, king Shahriyar found his wife with another man so he killed her and her lover.
After that the King married a different woman every day and killed her the next morning before she could stop loving him. This continued for three years.
Sharahzad was the clever and beautiful daughter of the king's adviser. When her father told her what was happening, she decided to marry the king. She had a plan to save herself and all the women in the kingdom.

After the wedding, while the King was drinking with his friends, Sharahzad went to find her sister. "I need your help," said Sharahzad. "Come to the palace this evening and ask me to tell you a story".

True or false?

The king killed his first wife. **T**

The king was married to his second wife for three years. **F**

Sharahzad worked for the king. **F**

Sharahzad asked her mum for help. **F**

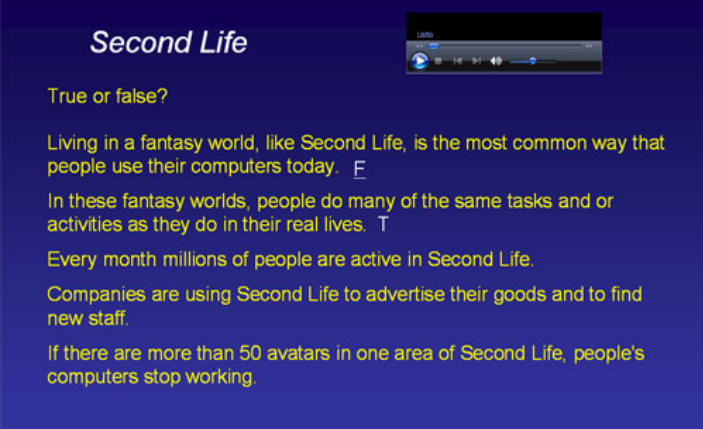
Using sound files in our classes

Before computers became a common element in the language class, we all used to carry our CDs –and probably CD-players- to our classes. Then we asked students to do listening tasks in the book or we handed out photocopies with activities.

The combination of a multimedia computer and the Internet has changed this scenario to such a great extent that it looks definitely like a thing of the past.

The first change is the opportunity to save our CDs on to the class PC or the school's network, so that we do not have to worry about forgetting the CDs at home or in the department by mistake. Many computer programmes, like Windows Media Player, do this easily.

But we may go beyond this small change. We can re-create existing listening activities or build our own using PowerPoint. Apart from being able to incorporate sound files from any source –including the Internet-, we can design a variety of listening activities that will allow us to decide when students see the questions and to correct the exercises in a clear and meaningful way by showing students where in the transcript the answers are. This helps our students immensely because of different reasons:



Second Life

True or false?

Living in a fantasy world, like Second Life, is the most common way that people use their computers today. F

In these fantasy worlds, people do many of the same tasks and or activities as they do in their real lives. T

Every month millions of people are active in Second Life.

Companies are using Second Life to advertise their goods and to find new staff.

If there are more than 50 avatars in one area of Second Life, people's computers stop working.

- They can concentrate on one thing at a time if necessary. Unlike listenings from books, our presentations may not show the questions before students listen to the recording, so they just listen for general understanding until we feel appropriate to ask them to read and answer the questions.
- We can use visual elements to help students identify the parts of the listening that require special attention.
- We save time, since we can project the transcript, thus avoiding the small print of the tapescripts in books. Students usually get lost while trying to find the tapescript and/or the words we ask them to focus on.

Video

Our PC and beamer are also a great resource that we can use to project video files in class. We are no longer limited to DVDs and/or DIVX. We can play videos from the

Internet in any format (Real Player, Windows Media, Flash Video, Quicktime ...) and we can also insert these videos into PowerPoint slides if we have previously saved the videos on to our computer.

Information search tasks

Students can share the class computer when carrying out some group-based activities. For example, when we are dealing with a compulsory reading, we may divide the class into three groups: language, culture and characters. Students share the computer to look up information and complete the tasks that they have been assigned. Later on, they can use the class computer and the beamer to present their work.

Showing resources to students

We often tell students about wonderful new websites that we have discovered. Some students visit these sites as soon as they get home. However, many students just jot down the address and forget about it.

It may be a good idea to use some interesting online resources regularly in class, so that students get used to them and realise that these websites can be very useful. Online dictionaries, learning portals and publishers' websites with exercises are just some examples of websites that we can encourage students to visit by using these sites as often as possible in our daily teaching practice.

How to ...

You will find detailed information on how to create and use the material described in this paper on my website. The address, as stated previously in this paper, is <http://www.xtec.cat/~fromeu/techteaching.htm>. Should you have any doubt or suggestion, please email me at nandoromeu@gmail.com