

Technology and Language Learning An Industry Perspective

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Abstract

Most educators will agree that pedagogy is best served by taking advantage of the incredible advances in computing and communications technologies – and the proven benefits that these technologies bring to the learning process. Integrating computers and the World Wide Web into the language syllabus is however, not without challenges.

This paper looks at some of the common technology implementation pitfalls and explores some of the ways in which any teacher – not just those with a degree in computer science – can employ new technologies to supplement existing instructional techniques. We view technology from a user perspective, and focus on the benefits that technology brings to both language teachers and language students.

The role that technology is to play in the classroom is very much influenced by the role that the teacher is to play. We consider the evolution of language teaching methods and the influence of student learning style research on language teaching approaches. We examine how computers and the Internet can be integrated into lesson planning to accommodate disparate learning styles and teaching methods.

Specific examples of available web resources for language instruction are highlighted, and sample lessons integrating web, computer and multimedia content are presented. We focus on how teachers can start with simple and inexpensive activities and explore how additional capabilities can be incrementally added to support advanced team and groupwork activities.

We look at how technologies like the web can expand language-learning opportunities beyond rigid classroom schedules and beyond the confines of the classroom to enable an *anytime-anywhere* learning model.

INTRODUCTION

In a recent Robotel market study (2004), which investigates the use of technology for language learning applications in US schools, it was determined that 67% of teachers believe computer technology should play an important role in foreign language education. While an identical 67% of teachers reported currently using computers in their language classrooms, the study data suggest that computers, the Internet, and related audio-visual systems are primarily being used to support teacher-managed presentations. Less than 3% of the teachers surveyed are working in a technology rich language learning classroom, where students are equipped with individual computers, and the instructor is equipped with a collaboration management system that facilitates advanced pedagogical functions like pair, group, and team exercises.

In this paper, we look at the type of technologies being employed to help deliver and manage lessons in modern language lab facilities. We also look at some of the challenges that educators are encountering in migrating to a technology rich environment. One factor is the teachers' *comfort zone*, and inherent resistance to change.

Technology is developing so rapidly that it can often be difficult or even overwhelming to harness – somewhat like trying to get a drink of water from a gushing fire hydrant. (Warschauer, 1995, p. xv)

Many teachers have the perception that they will need to become computer scientists in order to work with technology in the classroom. In practice, this is not the case. Teachers must, however, become competent technology users to keep pace with current generations of students, most of whom have already embraced technology as part of their everyday lives.

We begin this paper by stating our perspective on the role of technology in the classroom and on the teacher's role in language learning. In considering the teacher's role in language learning, we first briefly examine how students learn – and the implications of having to contend with different student learning styles. We then look at how the pedagogy of language teaching has evolved over time – at least on paper – to accommodate both the growing knowledge base

regarding student learning styles and the shifting mandate for language learning – from the early translation of ancient texts through to present day communicative competency and natural language use.

From our look at the evolution of pedagogy, we extract some guidelines that we shall use in deploying technology in a model language learning classroom. We focus on using technology to help migrate from the *traditional* language learning environments to newer *progressive* language learning environments. We also look briefly at some of the ways that we can extend our classroom technology to facilitate supplementary language learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

The paper concludes with some concrete examples of lesson plans that have been developed primarily for our model language learning classroom, and with a list of some Internet web sites that teachers might find helpful for integrating their own classroom activities.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LANGUAGE LEARNING?

In this paper, we are looking at language learning by students, from the perspective of the teacher. “...look at the teaching process as the facilitation of learning...” (Brown, 2000, p. 1)
“Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning.” (Brown, 2000, p. 7)

Our focus herein is to look how the teacher can use technology in support of his role as a facilitator of student language learning, and we shall consider *language* to include all aspects of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LANGUAGE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY?

The acronym CALL (Computer-assisted Language Learning) has been widely used in research studies to identify the technology that is most relevant to modern day language learning. Note that the technology emphasis is on the computer.

When we think about technology, there is a natural tendency to focus on the physical components that we see and touch, such as telephones, televisions, and computers. In practice, these physical elements are only a minor part of the whole of technology.

Many recent studies in the field of language learning are beginning to favor the acronym ICT (Information & Communication Technologies), which broadens the technology focus to include both computers and the Internet. In many ways, the term ICT acknowledges that the computer is no longer an isolated box, but rather has become a telecommunications gateway providing access to both global communications and an immense global knowledge base through applications like email, instant messaging, and the World Wide Web.

We shall use the term *technology* throughout this paper as being synonymous with ICT. We shall also interpret ICT as including related computer, communications, and audio-visual systems.

We are in no way implying that technology can be a substitute for a good teacher. Rather, we are looking at technology as a *toolkit* – a toolkit that teachers can use to help build and deliver better instruction, and that students can use to accelerate learning and improve performance. “Soft skills like language learning can be practiced to a certain extent using technology delivery, but final mastery cannot be assured without some instructor interaction.” (Carey, Farber, & Davie, 1998, p. 22)

We shall primarily focus on the use of language learning technology in the classroom environment, and we shall also present some examples of how technology can be used to

promote enhanced learning opportunities outside of the classroom on an *anytime & anywhere* basis.

IS THERE A NEED FOR TECHNOLOGY?

Language learning is not a new concept. Man has been trying to communicate with his fellow men since the beginning of recorded time. Egyptian hieroglyphics – having both symbolic and spoken language roots – are believed to date back to 3100 BC. Clearly, language learning can take place in the absence of modern technologies.

In response to the question “Do you think that personal computers should play a major role in the teaching of languages?” foreign language teachers in the United States responded, “Yes” (67%), “No” (19%), and “Not sure” (14%). More than two-thirds of the respondents to this Robotel (2004) market study indicated their belief that technology has an important role in language learning.

This positive response is perhaps not unexpected, as there is a growing body of evidence that suggests technology can bring significant benefits to the learning process.

The reasons for using Computer-Assisted Language Learning [CALL] include: (a) experiential learning, (b) motivation, (c) enhanced student achievement, (d) authentic materials for study, (e) greater interaction, (f) individualization, (g) independence from a single source of information, and (h) global understanding. (Lee, 2000)

Another strong argument in favor of adopting computers and other new technologies in the language classroom can be drawn from the way in which language students have assimilated technology into other aspects of their lives.

Hi-tech visual images are a pervasive feature of young people's lives. Textbooks, worksheets, and overheads are a poor match for these other, more complex, instantaneous, and sometimes spectacular forms of experience and learning. In this context, the disengagement of many students from their curriculum and their teaching is not hard to understand. Teachers are having to compete more and more with this world and its surrounding culture of the image. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 75)

While there might not be a consensus, a majority of educators acknowledge that the use of technology is beneficial for language teachers and for language students.

STUDENT LEARNING STYLE

In their paper *Learning and Teaching Styles In Foreign and Second Language Education*, Felder & Henriques highlight the significance – and the challenge - of matching teaching styles with student learning styles.

The ways in which an individual characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information are collectively termed the individual's learning style. Mismatches often occur between the learning styles of students in a language class and the teaching style of the instructor, with unfortunate effects on the quality of the students' learning and on their attitudes toward the class and subject. (1995, p. 1)

Richards & Renandya echo a similar sentiment in their introduction to "Classroom Dynamics".

...most teachers find themselves working with a class of 50 students or more, and, to make matters worse, these students often exhibit a wide variety of abilities. This less than ideal situation often leads to the use of teaching methodology that does not promote optimal learning. For example, teacher-

centered methodology, which largely ignores individual differences and the contribution of the learners in the learning process is, unfortunately, still ubiquitous in many ESL classrooms. (2002, p. 49)

Behavioral psychology continues to discover and document new factors that influence human learning. The *ultimate* learning model is likely to become so complex, that teachers having a class of 50 students will be unable to fully fine tune their teaching style to suit the needs of every individual learner. However, there are some general guidelines that we can draw from the body of research into learning styles to ensure that classroom work addresses a broader range of learners. These guidelines are perhaps best reflected in a paper prepared by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) to describe their NETS project (National Educational Technology Standards). The ISTE recommendations, which contrast idealized learning environments (*progressive*), with traditional learning environments (*traditional*), are summarized in table 1.

Table 1	
Guidelines for Effective Learning	
<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Progressive</i>
<i>Learning Environments</i>	<i>Learning Environments</i>
Teacher centered instruction	Student centered instruction
Single sense stimulation	Multi-sensory stimulation
Single path progression	Multi-path progression
Single media	Multimedia
Isolated work	Collaborative work
Information delivery	Information exchange
Passive learning	Active/exploratory/inquiry based learning
Factual knowledge-based learning	Critical thinking & informed decision making
Reactive response	Proactive/planned response
Isolated, artificial context	Authentic, real-world context

An even more simplified model for describing learning style variations characterizes learners as being primarily *aural*, *visual*, or *kinesthetic*. One of the more pragmatic interpretations of learning styles dates back to a 1969 work by Edgar Dale, titled *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching*. Dale's famous Cone of Experience, shown in Figure 1, relates specific aural, visual, and kinesthetic learning activities to a learner's retention of materials.

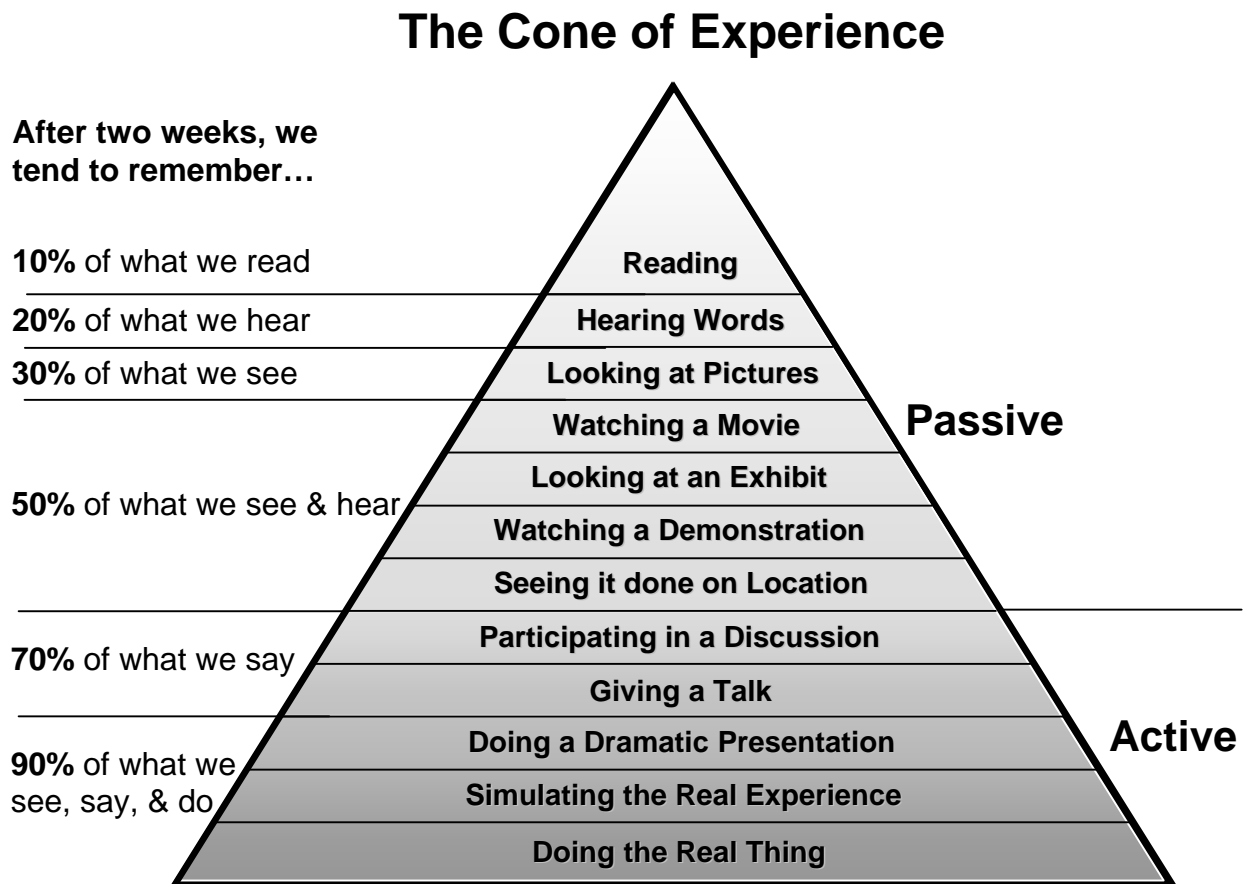


Figure 1
The Cone of Experience
 Adapted from (Dale, 1969)

While some scholars have disputed the choice of Dale's specific percentage values, there is little dispute that providing both aural and visual stimuli and involving the learner in a highly interactive fashion will increase overall performance.

PEDAGOGY EVOLUION

In reviewing the current literature on teaching approaches and styles, one encounters the concept of different teaching *methods*. As advances have been made in understanding the psychology of human learning, the teaching profession has looked at evolving the ways in which languages – particularly second languages – should be taught. Over time, accepted teaching methods have changed, with each new method building on the strengths of the previously accepted methods and adding important new elements.

The Grammar Translation Method

The *Grammar Translation* method (also known as the *Classical* method) is perhaps the oldest of teaching methods, and has focused on giving students an understanding of the fundamentals of target language grammar and the translation of the target language into their first language (and vice versa). This method primarily focuses on reading skills with the objective of giving students the ability to understand texts written in the target language – originally Latin or Ancient Greek.

The Direct Method

The *Direct* method, which emerged in the late 19th century, puts much more emphasis on developing communicative competence in students. This method includes oral communication and more spontaneous use of the target language. The Direct method promotes the concept that all teaching of a second language should be done in that target language.

The AudioLingual Method

The *AudioLingual* method, which draws heavily on behavioral psychology, came into prominence at the end of World War II, when the US military needed intelligence personnel to learn foreign languages very quickly. This method puts much emphasis on overlearning the target language through extensive repetition and a variety of elaborate drills. This method owes

its name to its extensive use of audio-visual technologies such as slide projectors, tape recorders, and language labs.

The Communicative Method

The *Communicative* method was born in the mid-1980s. This method differentiates itself from previous methods in its emphasis on *using* the target language rather than just learning the target language. Variations of this method promote extensive interaction through pair work and group work, genuine language input from the real world for meaningful communication, giving some responsibility for language learning to the learners themselves, working cooperatively in team environments (rather than working competitively), and content-centric learning activities (e.g. studying Math or History in the target language).

The “Post Method Era”

In his 1997 paper titled *English Language Teaching in the “Post Method” Era: Toward Better Diagnosis, Treatment, and Assessment*, Brown suggests that traditional teaching *methods* are too static in their approach, and today’s language teachers must dynamically select from “...a number of possible methodological – or, shall we say, pedagogical – options at our disposal for tailoring classes to particular contexts.”

Brown summarizes the underlying language teaching objective succinctly.

Indeed the single greatest challenge in the profession is to move significantly beyond the teaching of rules, patterns, definitions, and other knowledge ‘about’ language to the point that we are teaching our students to communicate genuinely, spontaneously, and meaningfully in the second language. (2000, p. 14)

INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY INTO THE SYLLABUS

In a utopian world, the pervasive benefits that accrue from using technologies like computers and the Internet would dictate that all language learning students and instructors have unlimited access to computer-based language learning facilities. In the real world, however, there are impediments to such universality.

In his paper titled *Teachers' Barriers to the Use of Computer-assisted Language Learning*, (2000), Lee cites four major potential roadblocks; financial barriers, availability of computer hardware and software, technical and theoretical knowledge, and acceptance of technologies. We prefer to think of Lee's barriers as *challenges*, and prefer to focus on how we can surmount these challenges.

Jones and Sato (1998) suggest that educators consider the following questions in evaluating any new technology:

- Does the new technology facilitate the attainment of course goals?
- Is it cost-effective? Do the benefits outweigh its cost?
- Are the teachers ready to work with the new technology? Is any training required?
- Does it serve the needs of teachers and students?
- Does it help teachers make more efficient use of class time?

Funding Challenges

The funding of technology purchases is an omnipresent issue. Educators often find it difficult to justify technology purchases, as the primary return on investment (ROI) or value on investment (VOI) of new technologies is typically characterized as “covering more content in less time”.

This means that students can cover a fixed syllabus in less time – or students can achieve greater results if investing the same amount of time to cover a fixed syllabus – or students can cover an enriched syllabus in the same amount of time. It is not entirely obvious how we can associate a currency value with improved student performance and shortened syllabus time.

Another factor that influences the ROI/VOI of technology is usage rates. In many situations, computer labs and language labs are acquired, but sit idle for a significant amount of time. In Europe, one of the approaches being taken to mitigate against this situation is the acquisition of multifunctional computer labs that work equally well with a broad range of subjects, including language instruction, computer aided drafting, multimedia studies, information technology, and sciences. Multifunctional labs generally ensure that the technology is in constant demand and in constant use by one discipline or another.

While the benefits of technology are both real and measurable, technology acquisitions are almost universally associated with outspoken, energetic teachers and administrators who champion the cause and won't take "no" for an answer.

Lesson Materials Challenges

The availability of computer hardware and software is really an issue of having access to appropriate lesson materials designed to operate in a computer technology environment. Most traditional textbook publishers have begun to supply CD-ROM based materials to supplement their books. In some cases, the supplementary materials include autonomous language learning lessons.

Even if we make the assumption that there are no off-the-shelf software packages that mesh well with the course syllabus, there are other options. One such option is the World Wide Web. Internet based content is growing in leaps and bounds. There are a number of sites that include excellent language learning materials, (such as the BBC's news archives – www.bbc.co.uk), and permit educational use of these materials without any royalties.

Not only does the Internet provide a wealth of information, but its universal accessibility means that students can review Internet based language materials anytime and almost anywhere.

It is unreasonable to expect that the Internet will yield a perfect lesson plan with all associated content. Rather, the Internet provides access to some excellent nuggets of information rife with authentic context. The real challenge for the teacher is to filter through prospective web sites and put together a short list of sites that students should consult. While there are a number of excellent web sites that have already compiled such lists, the dynamic nature of the Internet is such that web sites referenced in compilations often change, quickly rendering the compilation obsolete – or at least less useful.

Another option for teachers is to author some lessons themselves, and pool these lessons with their colleagues. We are not suggesting that teachers need to become programmers. Rather, for those teachers who are comfortable in working with a digital movie camera and a video editing software package, today's software packages make it quite simple to create near professional audio-visual content, and to tailor this content for educational purposes.

Technological Skills Challenges

Many teachers lack the necessary skills to work with technology in the classroom. While there are some teachers who have excellent computer skills, it often seems that the majority of language teachers are somewhat computer-phobic. It is not uncommon to have a language teacher suggest that they avoid computers because they are embarrassed that their students know more than they in this area.

Industry training on the use of technology systems like software packages and collaboration systems can allow even casual computer users to master all they need to know about specialized systems, but some familiarity with computer basics – as a user, and not as a programmer – is essential. From an industry perspective, the acquisition of basic computer skills must become mandatory – not just for new teachers, rather for *all* teachers.

Comfort Zone Challenges

We all have our *comfort zone*, that mental image of who we are and what we do and what we know works for us. When faced with change – like new technology – our knee-jerk reaction is often to avoid conflict and retreat to our comfort zone.

It is a truism that people first tend to use new technology the same way they used older technology...The tendency is to use computers to deliver the same kinds of traditional instruction...We remain trapped in older paradigms.

When the opportunities offered by new technology are combined with learning style research, the promise to revolutionize the teaching paradigms found in the academy begins to take some direction. (O'Connor, 1997)

To help ease the transition from *traditional* teaching practices to *progressive* practices that take advantage of the benefits offered by new technology, it is critical that school boards and schools involve teachers in the technology decision making process, provide for ample teacher training, and initially provide a higher than usual level of technical support to ensure that any technical glitches or operational concerns are immediately addressed. On-going availability of technical support is also crucial for all technology rich environments.

Breaking out of our comfort zone and embracing new technology is a challenge in itself. And when teachers do this, they quickly recognize that many of those tried and true materials and lesson plans that have been carefully accumulated over the years, can be significantly improved. Without question, adapting lesson plans to accommodate some of the possibilities offered by computers and the Internet involves some hard work and most likely some false starts, but the results can be spectacular.

CONFIGURING OUR MODEL LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOM

In conducting a recent market study involving language teachers in the USA (2004), we determined that the two most popular teaching media in US schools today are textbooks and audiotapes. Teachers are also using audio-visual equipment like VCRs and DVD players, and in many cases are also using the Internet and CD-ROM based lesson materials. However on closer examination of our survey results, it became evident that audio-visual and newer digital technologies were being used almost exclusively for presentation purposes.

It is clear from our examination of both student learning styles and the evolution of teaching methods that as the teacher's role is shifting from "the sage on the stage" to "the guide at the side", educators must look beyond basic *presentation* technology, and focus on putting at least some of the technology into the hands of their students. The traditional computer classroom or computer lab, having a separate computer for each student, is therefore the starting point for our model language learning classroom.

The model language learning classroom is a "connected" facility. All of the computers are connected to a local area network (LAN) that provides access to centralized, shared resources like printers, *servers* (computers that store files that can be accessed by many users), and wide area network (WAN) *routers* (computers that manage off-site access to the Internet and email communications).

To ensure that our model classroom is fully utilized, we shall ensure that it has multifunctional capabilities. This means that other departments will be consulted regarding their needs for this room. However, as the language department's technology needs are typically the most stringent of all disciplines, this underlines that the language department must play a dominant role in defining the technologies to be included in the multifunctional classroom.

Beyond basic computers and network connections, the specialized technology elements of our model system can be partitioned into three functional areas: presentation support, collaboration management, and student audio playback and recording support. These elements can all be

introduced into the classroom concurrently, or they can be added incrementally as budgets permit.

Presentation Support

At the teacher's station, in addition to a computer, we shall provide audio-visual media support, (audio cassette deck and VCR/DVD players), for activities involving group presentations, and we shall also add a document camera, which functionally replaces the overhead projectors used in many traditional classrooms. We shall also include a connection portal for a guest speaker's laptop computer, so that our guest speaker can take advantage of all of our presentation facilities.

Retaining some support for traditional media like audiotapes, transparencies, and videotapes enables teachers to have a grace period in which they can continue to use existing materials while they are updating lesson plans and assembling their new digital resources.

If our model room is suitably configured so that all students have a clear, unobstructed view of the front of the room, we shall also include a data projector with our presentation equipment.

Collaboration Management

A computer classroom having a set of independent computers works extremely well with applications involving independent study and individual work exercises. When our computer classroom is to be used for a combination of individual work exercises, synchronous class exercises, and some form of pairwork, groupwork, and/or teamwork, a technology building block known as a *collaboration system* or *control system* is essential. This collaboration system effectively provides centralized control of all computer stations, and enables the teacher to electronically partition the class, and monitor and support individual students, student pairs, and student groups from his own workstation. In our language learning environment, clear audio communications capabilities and management of audio pairs and groups are the most critical collaboration system features.

Advanced collaboration systems include support for both random pairing and random grouping activities, for sharing of computer screens from any station to any or all other stations, and for remote control of any workstation from any other station. Note that screen sharing support permits the collaboration system to be used as a de facto data projector, as the teacher's screen, guest speaker's laptop computer screen, or any audio-visual source (VCR, DVD, etc.) can be broadcast to all student workstation screens. Screen sharing also enables teachers to electronically restrict access to student computers, (e.g. blank screens and lock keyboards and mice), when attention needs to be focused elsewhere (e.g. on the teacher or on a presentation).

Student Audio Playback & Recording Support

Because listening and speaking exercises play an important role in language learning, we will need to equip each student with an audio player/recorder. Back in the days of the AudioLingual method, each student would have his own mechanical tape recorder, but in today's computer world, our recorders are "virtual", meaning that they are software applications that run on the computer and use the computer's audio card for connecting headsets and microphones. Virtual recorders are "dual track" devices that enable concurrent playing of a *program* track and recording of a *response* track.

Virtual recorder technology delivers several advanced capabilities over traditional tape recorders. Most virtual recorders support both audio-only and audio-visual materials on the program track. This means that students can work with multimedia content. Students do not always have to work in a synchronous fashion. Each student can work at his own pace in reviewing program materials and recording his responses. Each student can be working on the same program materials or different program materials at any given time. And, all students can work from a single centralized copy of the program materials without any need for duplication of media at each student station.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

“Few if any people achieve fluency in a foreign language solely within the confines of the classroom.” (Brown, 2000, p. 1)

“Most people would agree that learning a second language in a natural acquisition context is not the same as learning in the classroom. Many believe that learning on the street is more effective.” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 91)

There are strong arguments to suggest that most students would improve their target language fluency if they were given opportunities to practice outside of the classroom.

The expression *outside of the classroom* has two potential interpretations, one involving additional time, and the other involving authentic materials and situations. Coaxing the typical student to invest additional time outside of the classroom (e.g. do homework) may be difficult, unless the student is particularly serious about his studies or the prescribed activities are perceived as being fun.

Additional Practice Time

For serious students, technology affords many options for practicing language skills outside of the classroom. Language lessons that have been created in a digital format can be copied to CD-ROM media and taken home for use on a home computer. Alternately, language materials can be posted on the school’s website, and students can access these materials from their home computers. Some commercial developers of virtual recorder software packages offer a simplified no-charge version of their products that can be used for home practice.

When considering outside activities for the average student, where the emphasis is on having fun, the World Wide Web can offer some interesting options. For younger students, there are many educational sites that feature word games like crosswords and hangman in various foreign languages. For more mature students, there are again a number of excellent web sites featuring

international foreign language news stories. Many sites also offer live or recorded news stories in the form of web-based audio or audio-visual feeds. A brief list of some excellent language learning related web sites is presented in Table 2 (overleaf). The site name, site address, and a brief description of each site are included in this table.

Authentic Materials and Settings

Teachers have a very limited influence with respect to orchestrating student activities outside of the classroom. Field trips and guest speakers represent some of the traditional methods that teachers have used to introduce authentic materials and settings into course work. In the computer age, the tradition of having students work with foreign “pen pals” through email is another way in which students can be encouraged to experience authentic language situations.

The Internet also offers the possibility of accessing many authentic materials albeit in a simulated rather than natural setting. The Language Box web site listed in Table 2 provides an excellent compilation of foreign language newspaper, radio, and television web sites that can be very useful in providing authentic language reference materials for both class work and home study projects.

Table 2
List of Language Learning Web Sites

#	Site Name	Web Site Address (URL) /Description
1	British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)	www.bbc.co.uk News stories in 43 different languages. Special section for language learning and teaching. Several autonomous language lessons.
2	Language Box	www.languagebox.com/Resources.htm Compilation of radio, TV, print, dictionary sites in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Dutch, and Hebrew
3	Quia Corporation	www.quia.com/dir English and foreign language games and exercises for native speakers of English and ESL students.
4	Activities 4 ESL students	http://a4esl.org Activities for ESL students (dual language activities for 36 different languages)
5	ESL Blues	www.collegeem.qc.ca/cemdept/anglais/trouindx.htm ESL spelling and grammar exercises
6	Okanagan University College	www.international.ouc.bc.ca ESL resources
7	In2English	www.in2english.com ESL resources for native Chinese speakers
8	Internet Picture Dictionary	www.pdictionary.com Pictures/words in English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian (suitable for younger learners)
9	CASLT (Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers)	http://www.caslt.org/teachers/flash.htm Exercises in English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian (suitable for younger learners)
10	ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages)	http://www.ecml.at/documents/resource_pack.doc Compilation of 282 interesting language learning sites (not all sites referenced in this document are currently valid)

LESSON EXAMPLES FOR THE MODEL LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOM

We shall present four examples of language lessons prepared for our model classroom. In both technology rich and traditional learning environments, lessons begin with a plan. Our plans are based on Tyler’s (1949) four-step model: (1) specify objectives; (2) select learning activities; (3) organize learning activities; and (4) specify methods of evaluation.

In selecting and organizing activities, we shall refer back to the list of progressive learning environment characteristics presented earlier in Table 1. These items include: (1) student centered instruction; (2) multi-sensory stimulation; (3) multi-path progression; (4) multimedia; (5) collaborative work; (6) information exchange; (7) active/exploratory/inquiry based learning; (8) critical thinking and informed decision making; (9) proactive/planned response; and (10) authentic real-world context.

In acknowledging the “Cone of Experience” presented earlier in this paper, we shall also emphasize activities that combine aural, visual, and interactive elements.

For simplicity, all lessons shall be targeted at ESL learners and we shall assume a class size of 32 students. The first lesson shall presume minimal technology support, while subsequent lessons shall require increasingly greater levels of technology support.

Lesson 1 – News Story Video Presentation – Individual Student Written Summaries

It is feasible to use this lesson in an environment that includes only a VCR and a data projector, however, the lesson flows more smoothly if all participants are equipped with computers and the classroom includes a collaboration system.

News Story Video – Individual Written Summaries

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce a methodology that students can use for study of Internet-based materials for class work and home study.• Expose students to a range of authentic English speakers with different
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accents.

- Focus on listening comprehension of authentic materials
- Identify students who are having difficulty with comprehension

Selected Activities

- Present a brief current news story video (3 to 5 minutes)
- Have every student prepare a written summary in the target language (1 page or less) of what they have seen and heard (allow 5 minutes)
- Collect responses and share several good and bad examples with the class
- Have the students (collectively) verbally critique each example

Activity Organization

- Bookmark web site news clip in advance, and bookmark one alternate site as a backup. (Bring suitable DVD/VHS video as an alternate in case of Internet access problems)
 - Open web site on teacher's PC (or initialize DVD/VCR)
 - Configure collaboration system to broadcast video clip from teacher's computer (or DVD/VHS player) to data projector (where so equipped) and to all student screens (where so equipped)
 - Explain exercise to students
 - Play video (repeat if vocabulary is challenging)
 - Reset collaboration system to free up student computers.
 - Have students open word processing application (e.g. Notepad) on their PCs (where so equipped – can use paper & pencil as an alternative) and prepare a 1-page summary.
 - Instruct students to include their name in the summary and send their summaries to the printer.
 - Collect summaries.
 - Use collaboration system to replay video to give students one last look, while teacher scans through the summaries. Pick out a few good and bad examples.
 - Use document camera to show examples to the class and call on volunteers (or select students) to critique the examples and offer suggestions for improvements.
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- Where appropriate, replay segments of the video clip to emphasize key points.

Evaluation

- Written summaries will provide a basis for comprehension evaluation
 - Critique activity will provide additional feedback on comprehension
 - Evaluation focus is on listening comprehension (and not on grammar of the written responses)
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In this lesson, authentic multimedia materials are used. Additionally, the format of the lesson is such that students can repeat and even clone the main lesson activity in computer study halls or even on their home computers. While the classroom lesson is quite structured, the approach can become very much student-centric if students are to practice this same activity with news stories that are of interest to them.

In this lesson, we had students print their reports, however an alternate approach would have had students save their reports on the server, from which the teacher could open each report at his station in an electronic fashion.

Lesson 2 – Student Selected News Story – Prepare “Radio” Report

It is necessary to conduct this exercise in a computer classroom that includes virtual recorders. It is feasible to run the exercise without a collaboration system, although a collaboration system will simplify certain instructor tasks.

Student Selected News Story – Prepare “Radio” Report

Objectives

- Focus on reading comprehension and the development of speaking skills
 - Give students some experience with Internet research in the target language
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Selected Activities

- Have students choose a news story that is of interest to them (from a predetermined Internet news web site)
- Have students prepare a 2-minute script that might be used for a radio report on this news story. (20 minutes)
- Have students record their radio script (15 minutes)
- Select some good and bad examples of radio reports and have these critiqued by the class.

Activity Organization

- Explain exercise to the students (setting some broad ground rules)
 - Have students open their browsers and access a predetermined news site, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>)
 - Have students research their selected story and prepare a written script that can be used for a 2-minute radio report. (Preferred that students use a word processor for this purpose, although pen and paper would also work.)
 - Monitor student work and provide suggestions to students having problems
 - When scripts are complete (20 minutes max) have students save their script files on the server.
 - Then have students launch their virtual recorders and configure the recorders for ad hoc recording.
 - Have students record their radio scripts (and re-record as necessary) (15 minutes max)
 - Monitor recording activities and offer suggestions if students are encountering problems
 - While monitoring, determine which recordings appear to be the best candidates for presentation and critique exercises
 - When the recording activity is finished, instruct students to save their files on the server.
 - Open the first of the recordings (selected in the previous step) and play this to the class.
 - Open the floor to critiques and comments with the students using their call buttons to request the floor.
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- Repeat this procedure for each of the selected recordings

Evaluation

- Script files will provide basis for evaluation of reading comprehension
 - Radio files will provide basis for evaluation of speaking skills.
 - Monitoring will also help to determine which students are having difficulties
 - Evaluation is based on a combination of reading comprehension and speaking skills
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Authentic materials are used. Students are empowered to choose a topic that has some personal interest for them. Student organization and decision skills are emphasized in reducing written news materials into a concise 2-minute report. Exploratory/research skills are exercised in collecting information from the primary and secondary web sites.

It is presumed that all students are wearing headsets. This exercise can be done without a collaboration system, although the collaboration system greatly simplifies teacher monitoring of student activities.

While the lesson has been described in a linear way, with all students participating in a synchronous fashion, there is no reason that individual students cannot be allowed to work at their own pace in completing the script and advancing to the recording. Such an approach is motivational for advanced students, and allows the teacher to focus his support on the students who are having problems – rather than policing students who have idle time on their hands. To run this lesson asynchronously, it is important that supplementary materials are available for advanced students so that they are fully engaged and progressing at all times.

Lesson 3 – Restaurant Video – Student Pair Role Playing for Alternate Audio Track

For this exercise, it is presumed that we have a fully configured classroom with computers, a collaboration system, and virtual recorders. A collaboration system offering fixed audio pairing is sufficient for this exercise.

Restaurant Video – Student Pair role playing for alternate audio track

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on listening comprehension and on speaking skills in preparing alternate audio track for the video clip• Challenge students to work in a pair environment and address a task in a cooperative fashion• Identify students who do not work well in pair environments
Selected Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present a restaurant video clip (2 minutes) to the class. There are two participants in the clip, the client and the waiter. The scenario is ordering breakfast.• Have all students open their virtual recorders and access this same video clip• Divide the class into student pairs (adjacent seats will work best for this exercise) and have each pair assume the roles of client and waiter and prepare their own alternate dialog for the video. Using their virtual recorders, each team will record their finished dialog. Students are free to replay the video and re-record their soundtrack as often as practicable. (allow 30 minutes)• Have all pairs save their recordings.• Select a few recordings for presentation to the class• Have students critique each selected recording.
Activity Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure that the target restaurant video file is available on the server• Open the virtual recorder at the teacher station and open the restaurant video file.• Configure collaboration system to broadcast the video clip from

teacher's computer to data projector (where so equipped) and to all student screens (where so equipped)

- Explain exercise to students
- Have students launch their virtual recorders and open the video file
- Divide the class into pairs and begin the activity
- Monitor pair activities and offer suggestions if students are encountering problems
- Use the projector (or whiteboard) to inform students of the progression of various time milestones (do not use the audio "all-call" function as students are recording)
- While monitoring, determine which recordings appear to be the best candidates for presentation and critique exercises
- When the recording activity is finished, instruct students to save their files on the server.
- Open the first of the recordings (selected in the previous step) and play this to the class.
- Open the floor to critiques and comments with the students using their call buttons to request the floor.
- Repeat this procedure for each of the selected recordings

Evaluation

- Pair recordings will serve as the primary vehicle for evaluating both listening comprehension and speaking skills.
 - Monitoring of pair activities will serve to assess how students are able to establish a working arrangement together.
 - Monitoring will also help to determine which students are not participating well.
 - Evaluation is based on a combination of listening comprehension and speaking skills
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Authentic multimedia materials are used. A significant focus is placed on collaboration with a partner. In addition to completing the language-related components of their mandate, students

have also been tasked to work with their partner and choose their own role for the role playing exercise. Role playing increases the level of student interactivity.

It is presumed that all students are wearing headsets. The collaboration system is used to create student pairs. In this case, it is most advantageous to have student pairs seated beside each other, so that both students can observe a single (shared) workstation screen when recording their alternate audio track for the restaurant video.

Lesson 4 – News Story Video Presentation – Student Group Discussions & Reports

For this lesson, it is presumed that the classroom includes a collaboration system and full computer support for all participants. The collaboration system must support ad hoc and/or random grouping capabilities.

News Story Video – Group Discussions & Reports

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| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expose students to a range of authentic English speakers with different accents.• Focus on listening comprehension of authentic materials and on speaking skills when presenting summaries• Challenge students to work in a group environment and address a task in a collaborative fashion• Identify students who do not work well in group environments |
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| Selected Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present a brief current news story video (3 to 5 minutes)• Divide the class into groups of 4 and have each group discuss what they have seen and heard and prepare a brief presentation (2 minutes max) that their spokesperson will present orally to the class. (allow 20 minutes)• Have spokespersons deliver their presentations while other groups take notes for their critique. Repeat for each group.• After the final presentation, groups will be given 5 minutes to |
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collaborate and choose the best presentation from the other groups.

- The spokesperson for each group will be asked to identify their “best presentation” selection and explain why this presentation was selected (1 minute summary)

Activity Organization

- Bookmark web site news clip in advance, and bookmark one alternate site as a back-up (Bring suitable DVD/VHS video as an alternate in case of Internet access problems)
 - Open web site on teacher’s PC (or initialize DVD/VCR)
 - Configure collaboration system to broadcast video clip from teacher’s computer (or DVD/VHS player) to data projector (where so equipped) and to all student screens (where so equipped)
 - Explain exercise to students
 - Play video (repeat if vocabulary is challenging)
 - Divide the class into groups of 4, and give students the responsibility for how they will organize themselves within their groups
 - Monitor group activities and offer suggestions if groups are becoming bogged down on specific points
 - Use “all-call” function to keep groups apprised of time milestones
 - When 20 minutes has expired, ask for volunteers (or draw straws) to determine the order of group presentations
 - Use collaboration system to allow each group spokesperson to address the class for their presentation. Enable all group members to clarify points while their spokesperson is presenting.
 - After the final presentation, reestablish the groups so that they can collaborate on their “best presentation” selection.
 - Again, use the collaboration system to selectively monitor each group’s progress
 - When presentations are concluded, cue up the video at the teacher’s station so that it is available to emphasize critique points.
 - Sequentially have each of the 8 groups’ spokespeople identify their top choice and the reasons for selecting this presentation (one minute per person)
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Evaluation

- Group presentations will serve as the basis for evaluation
 - Monitoring of group discussions will serve to assess how students are able to establish a working arrangement together
 - Monitoring will also help to determine which students are not participating well within their groups.
 - Evaluation is based on a combination of listening comprehension and speaking skills
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In this lesson, authentic multimedia materials are used. Additionally, a significant focus is placed on group collaboration. In addition to completing the language-related components of their mandate, students have also been tasked to establish their own group dynamics and elect a group spokesperson. Similarly, students must collaborate in preparing their selection of the best presentation. Cooperation is stressed within groups and focus is given on positive feedback to minimize competition between the various groups.

In our technology rich classroom, it is presumed that all students are wearing headsets, and groups are formed electronically using the collaboration system. It is not necessary that group members be physically seated together, as grouping can be ad hoc or random.

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