



7 Easy Ways to Use Technology in Class

More Information

Here's more information on interesting websites and apps for students.

Google Translate

<https://translate.google.com>

Any ESOL teacher knows that translation into a student's native language is helpful from time to time. More and more students are using the Google Translate app and website to better understand text and even words in images by taking pictures.

Purpose

To present several easy ways that teachers and adult students can use technology to enhance learning.

Rationale

It seems like everyone wants to improve their technology skills. However, technology—whether it's the internet, apps, or smartphones—can sometimes create additional headaches. Perhaps a website is hard to follow, a user doesn't know how to navigate an app, or internet service goes down.

In this article, we present seven relatively simple ways to use technology with adult learners. Although we can't promise using technology will always be easy, we do believe you'll find these teaching ideas that incorporate technology into lessons easier to implement than others.

The Basic Activities

1. Have students look up new words using an online dictionary, such as www.learnersdictionary.com or www.dictionary.com. Many dictionary sites have an audio button so students can hear how a word is pronounced.
2. Use a phone, an audio recorder, or the recording function of the computer to record short passages whole and phrase by phrase, suggests Jody Lantz of Thrive International Programs in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Students can listen to, repeat, and record and rerecord their pronunciation.

If you became a ProLiteracy member or renewed your membership since May 2016, you have a free one-year subscription to *News for You*® Online, where students can listen to story audio on the newspaper's website, www.newsforyouonline.com. If you're not a subscriber, you can still access three free stories, and their audio, by visiting the website and clicking "Click here to try for free." *News for You*® Online is one site that provides easy technology practice.



3. Use the speech-to-text feature available on many smartphones.

“These are easily the most widely used feature by my students,” says Josh Anderson, adult literacy coordinator at Waukegan Public Library, in Waukegan, Illinois. “It isn’t perfect, but if you speak carefully, you can send comprehensible messages. Students love it!”

When using this feature, if the target word(s) appear in the text field, students know they said things correctly. If not, they keep trying, says Lynne Weintraub, ESL coordinator at Jones Library in Amherst, Massachusetts. “When I first heard about one of my students [using] this, I thought it was brilliant,” she says.

- 4. Try texting.** “For tutors who feel comfortable with texting, they will text back and forth with their students on days they’re not meeting. We encourage students to text using complete sentences, so they can practice their skills outside of lessons,” says Shelley Karnz, program manager of adult tutoring at Literacy Green Bay in Green Bay, Wisconsin. If you don’t want to share your phone number, there are apps that let you set up a different number that will only work when you want it to work. The following website discusses these apps in more detail: <http://appadvice.com/appguides/show/apps-for-texting>.
- 5. Use easy apps and websites.** They *are* out there, says Victor Castellanos, literacy coordinator at Monrovia Public Library in Monrovia, California. He is a fan of the free app OG Card Deck, which can be used on any iOS iPhone or iPad to practice phonics. He also has used YouTube, Yelp, and Craigslist to give students easy computer skills practice.
- 6. Use sites that work well on a smartphone.** One site Weintraub uses is The English Minute (www.theenglishminute.com). It includes videos and short quizzes, is entertaining for students, and it is easy to use on a mobile device, she says. It can be useful for students anytime a computer is not nearby, such as when they are in a car or on a bus or train.
- 7. Provide listening practice with “The Diane Rehm Show.”** With two clicks, your students can hear insightful conversations and interviews on current events featured on National Public Radio’s “The Diane Rehm Show” (<http://thedianerehmshow.org/>). Rehm speaks slowly, making it easier for English language learners to understand. Rehm was planning to retire after the recent presidential election. However, her older shows as well as more current episodes are archived on the site.

More Information

Apps for English Language Learners

<http://tinyurl.com/notebook-ell-apps>

Instructors are always on the lookout for apps to help their students learn better. This article, found at the website eSchool News, lists eight apps and resources for English language learners. Although the author focuses on apps for younger learners, you’ll still find some utility for adults. For example, Duolingo and Dave’s ESL Café are on the list, and they both are popular with adults.

Duolingo

<https://www.duolingo.com/>

Many instructors praise the language-learning site and app Duolingo because it’s so easy to use. It can be used for English as well as other languages.

