

## Review of “Language Learning with Technology: Ideas for Integrating Technology in the Classroom”

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| <b>Title</b>                | Language Learning with Technology: Ideas for Integrating Technology in the Classroom |
| <b>Author</b>               | Graham Stanley   |
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Many people, including teachers and students, experience dramatic changes in their lives brought about by the current technological era. The innovations reveal the promising status of technology in educational settings, particularly in view of the implementation of differentiated instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. To take full advantage of technology in pedagogy, Graham Stanley, in his own words, offers his book with three main aims: “a) To provide a wide range of interesting and useful activities, b) To show how any teacher can use technology, and c) To offer a reserve of activities which are suitable for all levels of proficiency” (p. 6) to both novice and experienced teachers.

In “Language Learning with Technology,” Stanley begins with an eight-page introductory section to address some general discussions in this area. In his view, a state of normalization will be achieved “when technology is used without teachers being consciously aware of its role as technology” (p. 4). Moreover, he highlights the importance of applying a more principled approach in the integration of technology into EFL classes. This opening chapter ends with a section devoted to how readers can use the book more effectively.

Apart from the introduction chapter, the book contains 11 other chapters that are closely connected to provide a thorough treatment of almost all areas of language teaching, such as the four main skills, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and so forth. Hence, this book deserves strong praise for its in-depth and valuable coverage of the various aspects of EFL teaching. Stanley starts each chapter with a concise discussion regarding the topic under examination and devotes the rest of the chapter to offer relevant activities categorized on the basis of learning goals rather than technological tools. All the activities are presented according to the following outline: main goal, suitable proficiency level, desired time allocation, learning focus, preparation, and finally technical requirements. Also, the author added a part named “variation” which shows how one can adapt the activity to practice other aspects of language. Two appendices, which are vital for less informed readers, are also included. While the first presents some general notes about each technology referred to in this book, the second appendix proposes some websites and software for the activities, suggesting ideal resources to the reader.

In the first chapter, “Integrating Technology,” Stanley elaborates on the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum; however, he cautions that “it is not always clear that incorporating technology into the pedagogical goal is the right way of doing things” (p. 9). To tackle this issue, he recommends teachers to spend more time on the evaluating aspects to gain confidence in the efficacy of technology in EFL classes. In line with this suggestion, a variety of activities, including a survey-based activity, are presented. What the reviewers found particularly interesting among these activities was the *Flip your class* activity with a focus on increasing learner autonomy.

Chapter 2, “Building a Learning Community,” reflects the author’s interest in taking advantage of the popularity of social networking in teaching environments. His argument is that a large majority of the learners are already members of these sites; therefore, it would be easy to persuade them to use this technology for language learning. Stanley believes that facilitating communication outside the classroom with the support of technological tools such as email, threaded forum discussions, blogs, and wikis is the most distinguished contribution of technology. Moreover, he argues that social networks like Facebook and Twitter can properly serve the purpose of learning and concludes this chapter with nine activities, mainly focusing on building learning communities in and out of class in social networks.

Following these two chapters, the author shifts his attention to language teaching. Chapter 3 deals with vocabulary acquisition. A huge repertoire of chunks must be acquired; however, due to a lack of time in class, the author believes that it should be done out of class and puts special emphasis on encouraging “learners to become more autonomous in vocabulary learning” (p. 39). The following 15 suggestions for learning activities start with mostly receptive lower-level activities followed by more advanced and productive ones.

Chapter 4, focusing on grammar, begins by defining descriptive (the structure of a language used by its speakers and writers) and prescriptive grammar (the structure of a language that teachers believe should be used). The author elaborates what a technology-supported approach to grammar acquisition can offer learners through engagement and motivation, access to real world data, feedback, and so forth. One of the strengths of this chapter lies in the selection of authentic examples of grammar in use, included in activities such as *Audio gap-fills*, *Grammar in context*, *If only*, *Authentic word clouds*, and *Real-world grammar*. However, as most activities address upper-intermediate learners, the needs of learners at the beginners’ level are not fully met and teachers would have to modify the activities to fit their learners’ levels.

Chapter 5, dedicated to listening, offers a variety of authentic activities with the aim of providing meaningful experiences for learners and supporting them to become more autonomous learners. The collected activities pursue the main goal of sustaining motivation, promoting practice, and listening outside the classroom. The striking feature of the presented activities lies in the readily available tools such as voice recorders, which are required for conducting activities such as *Interview bingo*, *Recorded stories*, *Voice-recorder dictation*, and *Online classroom guest*.

In Chapter 6, the author addresses reading from a new angle and presents the term *digital literacy* to refer to “a person’s ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment” (p. 99). In order to help learners develop their reading skills, Stanley arms teachers with a range of activities to improve learners’ sub-skills such as skimming, scanning, activating schema, and so forth. Moreover, extensive reading and reading for pleasure activities are included to increase learners’ motivation. Three of the suggested activities, namely *Ask the Internet*, *Big events*, and *Interactive fiction*, integrate the two main skills of reading and writing.

Chapter 7, dealing with writing, is the richest chapter of this book, including 20 activities, which are offered in response to the author’s claim that “writing is the skill most affected by the rise of the Internet” (p. 121). *Writing on a class wiki*, *Blogging summary*, *Speed writing*, and *Report writing* are just a few of the presented activities. In addition to the diverse set of activities addressing various areas of writing, one of the main strengths of this chapter is that almost all the activities require approximately 20 minutes to be completed. Furthermore, Stanley pays special

attention to the writing of CVs and emails which are challenging for EFL learners because of their unfamiliarity with cultural norms of the target language.

In Chapter 8 with a focus on speaking, Stanley shows the power of technology to breach the walls of the classroom to perform speaking activities and highlights the learners' role to become more autonomous in speaking. To achieve this goal, he refers to mobile voice recorders, Computer Mediated Communication media, and Skype, employed in activities such as *Unscripted and scripted dialogues*, *Guided tour*, *Virtual-world tourists*, and so forth.

Chapter 9 focuses on pronunciation, which, in Stanley's words, "is often overlooked" (p. 171). *Voice recognition*, *Different accents*, *What is the intonation*, and *Guess the language* are sample activities related to raising awareness to phonetics and common pronunciation errors, word stress, and features of connected speech. These activities take advantage of tools such as computers, mobile phones, podcasting websites, voice recognition software, and so forth.

The reviewers found Chapter 11, on project work, to be one of the most striking chapters of this book, as it supports active participation of the learners in experiential learning tasks. Some collaborative writing activities such as producing an online magazine, e-books, and short films as well as speaking activities like making TV programs and producing time capsules encourage negotiation of meaning among learners. All the activities follow three phases, namely exposure, participation, and internalization. Although the power of such activities in motivating learners is unquestionable, it is suggested that the teachers should create enough time to conduct them properly.

To close the volume, Stanley touches on assessment and evaluation, describing the former as the testing of learner performance and the latter as any means of getting information about the course. The nine activities presented in this chapter reveal the contribution of technology in conducting formative and summative assessment. *E-portfolio archive and showcase*, for example, addresses formative assessment, while the *Awarding badges* activity focuses on summative assessment.

All in all, this volume can be considered to be a valuable resource for teachers to integrate the presented activities into their syllabi and move beyond the idea of technology as novelty. Thorough treatment of almost all areas of ELT in this book is in line with the blooming enthusiasm in technology integration. Moreover, the book covers less discussed areas of language teaching such as pronunciation, assessment, and project work. This peculiar feature, plus a clear and detailed description of the steps taken while carrying out the activities, makes the suggestions very smooth to follow. The variations presented for each activity constitute another strength of this volume, making it possible to customize activities for particular classes with specific levels of proficiency, age ranges, and so forth.

Another point worth mentioning is that a noticeable number of activities demonstrate the usefulness of smartphones for teaching purposes. As some of the activities require technological devices that are not very prevalent in developing countries, the utilization of smartphones reveals the practicality of integration of particular technologies into EFL classes. In a nutshell, smartphones can be employed to solve the lack of computer-centers in EFL schools.

One potential problem of this book is that little room is related to the explanation of some technological tools. For instance, providing further information about interactive whiteboards or learning management systems could be helpful. Although some technical notes are provided in the appendices, it seems that more elaborate explanation of these technological tools is necessary as some readers and tech-novices may be less familiar with some resources and websites and this could be a slight inconvenience for them.

This book can be employed in teacher training sessions, as teachers are key figures in the success of technology integration in EFL classes. Especially in developing countries, many teachers remain engaged in traditional teaching methods, which require no or little acquaintance with novel technological tools. Therefore, it would seem that allocating some time to teacher training sessions in order to familiarize them with technological tools will be of benefit. Furthermore, visiting the suggested websites and carrying out real activities in teacher training sessions would help to iden-

tify and solve potential areas of difficulty which may arise in real classes. Moreover, presenting some hard evidence for the effectiveness of the presented activities would assure administrators about the potential enhancement these technologies can make to the classroom; however, the mentioned issues are just suggestions and not major drawbacks. To put it in a nutshell, the book has left us in little doubt that the use of technology in class will be an option that will be popular with learners.