

32 Using educational technology

A Warm-up

Think of three examples of when different technology tools (e.g. apps, websites, or hardware such as projectors) were used during your CELTA course so far. These examples could be from your own lessons, other trainees' lessons, input sessions or observations of experienced teachers. For each example, answer the following questions:

- What was the tool used for during the activity?
- Who was in control of the tool? The teacher/trainer? Or the learners/trainees?
- Was the activity a one-off or something which could be repeated later, for example at home after the lesson?
- Do you think the use of the tool benefitted the learners'/trainees' learning or distracted them? Why?

Based on your observations, what do you think a teacher needs to remember when using technology tools in their lessons?

B Factors influencing the use of educational technology

There are many different factors you might consider when deciding whether to use a specific tool with your learners. Choose five factors from this list which you think are particularly important.

- **Learning benefits:** for example, supporting recycling of new language, or allowing real-time communication outside the classroom
- **Ease of use:** the amount of time it might take to set up an activity using the tool, and the amount of technology knowledge and/or English knowledge needed to understand how to use it
- **Synchronous or asynchronous:** whether the tool must be used by everyone at the same time, or whether each person can choose to access it at times that suit them
- **Learner autonomy:** whether the tool can only be used with a teacher or independently by learners as well
- **Functionality:** the range of possible functions the tool has
- **Content availability:** the ability to create your own content or adapt existing content and the ease with which you can do this, and/or the range and quality of ready-made content available
- **Target audience:** the demographic that the tool is targeted at, for example children or businesspeople
- **Security:** including privacy settings, for example whether the tool collects data from users
- **Accessibility:** for example, whether the colour scheme or font size can be changed to help learners with visual impairments
- **Compatibility:** how compatible the tool is with different operating systems, for example on mobile phones, computers or tablets
- **Cost:** whether the tool is free, or what the payment model is if paid

Compare your choices with a partner.

C Opinions about technology and education

Here are some statements about educational technology. Rate each one out of 5: 1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree.

1.

The older the learner, the less comfortable they are with using technology during lessons.

2.

Technology is a part of our everyday lives. It should be part of our lessons.

3.

I only want to use websites in lessons if they don't require students to create an account or log in.

4.

As English teachers, it's not our job to teach learners how to evaluate facts on websites.

5.

Using online games in lessons is just a gimmick. Learners might enjoy them, but they don't really learn anything.

6.

You should match the choice of tool with the learner's preferences and goals.

Compare your opinions with a partner. Say why you think this.

So what comes first? Technology or learning objectives? The answer is, neither. The learners come first, and this is why one of the best ways of knowing if, and how much, technology should play a part in your class is by finding out from your learners their attitudes to using technology for language learning.

Graham Stanley, 2013

D Putting it into practice

- 1 With a partner, choose a technology tool (an app, website or piece of hardware) which you think might be beneficial for your learners. Make a list of what a teacher might need to know or consider before using the tool with their learners. Use your priorities in task B and opinions from task C, and any other factors you consider important.
- 2 Think of three possible activities you could use the tool for in your lessons.
- 3 Present your tool and activities to another pair. Listen to their presentation. Do you think that their tool and activities would be beneficial to your students? In what way?

KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *educational technology*
- *synchronous learning/teaching*
- *asynchronous learning/teaching*
- *learner autonomy*

REFLECTION

Complete these sentences in as many ways as you can:

When using educational technology, it's important to ...

A tool I have used in my teaching is ...

A tool I have used in my learning is ...

A tool I'd like to experiment with using is ... because ...

Compare your endings with other trainees.

Reference

Stanley, G. (2013). *Language Learning with Technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.9.