

Introduction

Overview

In 2013 when the first edition of this handbook was published, the title of *Language Learning with Technology* suggested a necessary change in focus away from using technology in language teaching, towards placing the language learning objectives at the front and centre. Digital technology was starting to become an integral part of education in many parts of the world. Now it can be argued that it has become ‘simply part of the way we ‘do’ education, as well as how education is ‘done’ to us’ as Neil Selwyn (2016) put it.

An argument can also be made that education has become more relevant with the rise of digital technologies in the classroom, especially with the proliferation of technology in the world of work, and society at large. Despite this, it should be remembered that the use of technology is not a requirement for learning a language, and despite the nature of this handbook, there will always be times when you will want to just sit in a room with your learners and talk.

That said, there are definitely times when technology can enhance the language learning experience. Judicious use of technology can engage and motivate learners, it can support and enable learning, make the experience more authentic, situated, and/or fun. This is what the advice and activities in this book aim to help with. In other words, *Language Learning with Technology Second Edition* is a handbook for teachers interested in integrating technology into their classroom practice. The handbook makes a point of putting pedagogy at the forefront of the lesson, which is why content has been organised around specific learning content goals rather than specific technologies.

Each chapter deals with a different aspect of language learning, and use of technology is suggested only when it adds significant value to the learning. With over 175 activities to choose from, this book can be used by the teacher, as a classroom resource, to supplement an existing language course.

Who is this handbook for?

This handbook has been designed to be used by any teacher who wants to improve their own knowledge of how best to integrate a variety of technology into their classroom practice.

It has been written to appeal to language teachers who are both new and experienced. Such teachers may have years of practice in using technology with their learners or be looking to take their first steps in using it with a class.

A wide variety of activities has been provided for use with learners from beginner to advanced levels of proficiency. Although most activities have been written with the adult learner of general English in mind, many should be equally as effective when used with teenagers, or adapted for children, as well as for the teaching of any other foreign or second language.

Whatever your language teaching context, we hope you will find this handbook an invaluable classroom guide to using technology.

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Technology is ever-present

We now live in a world in which technology permeates every aspect of our lives. Apart from its time and labour-saving function, technology can also inspire creativity and bring new opportunities to people, connecting them to new ideas and people they otherwise might not have met.

In language teaching and learning, technology can be used for:

- accessing information, including information about language
- exposure to the target language
- entertainment (i.e., reading/listening for pleasure)
- creating text
- publishing learners' work
- communicating and interacting with other language users/learners
- creating community
- managing and organising learning (e.g., learning management systems, online vocabulary notebooks, etc.)

The changing face of technology

When *Language Learning with Technologies* first appeared, it received a warm response, and the handbook was awarded the English Speaking Union's HRH The Duke of Edinburgh award for ELT book of the year, describing it as 'a clear and well-presented book for teachers, promising to help those who are new to the possibilities and range of ELT resources available. It covers the use of technology in all aspects of language teaching.'

Since then, technology has become a more familiar sight in many of our classrooms, and more and more teachers have become comfortable with using it to serve the learning aims of their lessons. That is not to say, however, that the digital divide has disappeared. If anything, the school closures in 2019–2020 as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic threw a harsh light on the inequalities that still exist throughout the world, and many learners were excluded from continuing their education (British Council, 2020) because they were unprepared and under-resourced.

More recently, the 2023 Global Education Monitoring report on Technology in Education (UNESCO, 2023) asks the question, *Can technology solve the most important challenges in education?* And it goes on to remind us that 'except in the most technologically advanced countries, computers and devices are not used in classrooms on a large scale' and 'the most disadvantaged are typically denied the opportunity to benefit'.

For those teachers and learners with access, though, there is still a need, ever present, to assist with implementation and ideas to make the use of technology to serve language learning and teaching effective. This handbook aims to help teachers and learners with this, both in the classroom and outside.

What has changed?

Many of the activities in the handbook have been updated to reflect the changes that have occurred in technologies during the last ten years. This period has seen shifts towards some technology and other

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technology becoming less popular or necessary. One example is the wiki, which featured heavily in the first edition. The wiki has been a casualty because of the rise in popularity of shared documents (such as *Google Docs*TM).

At the forefront of mind when preparing a handbook featuring technology is future proofing. It's necessary to think long and hard about what you suggest and whether the technology, websites, etc. will be around in one, two, five, or even ten years. When I came to revise *Language Learning with Technology*, I was pleasantly surprised at the number of activities that still held up or which did not need many changes. I hope and expect this to be the case with the second edition.

The biggest shift since the publication of the first edition has been the rise in importance of mobile technologies. The number of smartphones and apps available to help with language learning has proliferated, and as such references in the activities have changed to recognise this.

Just as it's true that mobile devices have become more important, so it is that the use of the IWB (interactive whiteboard) has declined. They are still being used, but many classrooms have replaced them with smart TVs (often with touchscreens) or computers and projectors.

Learning and teaching online has also become more popular, especially after the global school closures that occurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Among teachers' main concerns during that period were that learners (and often teachers themselves) did not have sufficient connectivity to be able to learn (or teach) online, or that they had sufficient devices. The switch to remote teaching was new for the majority, and it led to what was called 'emergency remote teaching' (Hodges, et.al. 2020), which was less than ideal when it came to methodology or available resources.

As a result of this, you will find many references to how the activities in this handbook can be adapted to a fully online or hybrid classroom (see Appendix A – *Hybrid teaching and learning*).

Apart from additional activities, there are also two new chapters in the handbook: *Fun and games*, and *Inclusion and special needs*. The first reflects the growing demand to make language learning enjoyable, and the increase in the number of ways technology can help with that. The second reflects an awareness of the need to cater for all learners, in order to foster an inclusive classroom. Technology can help with this, as I hope you will see when you read this chapter.

The rise of artificial intelligence

Perhaps the most dramatic change in educational technology occurred toward the latter part of the revision of the handbook, with an explosion in generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools. The potential for these tools to disrupt education as we know it has quickly been noted, and in particular, the implications for assessment through the emergence of large language models (LLM) has been what teachers have been most concerned with (see Appendix A – *Large Language Models*).

The emergence of generative AI tools (both LLMs such as *ChatGPT* and *Gemini*TM, etc) and generative art software (*Midjourney*, *DALL-E*, and others) offer the language teacher a rich new array of resources to draw upon, and you will see ideas for how to use these tools distributed through many of the chapters. This is an area that is changing from week to week, however, and so undoubtedly, the capacity of these tools will increase dramatically, and this technology will lend itself to changes it is impossible to imagine at the time of writing.

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Benefits of using technology in language learning

Many classroom teachers using technology have anecdotal evidence of their learners being motivated and engaged, and this is often a major reason for using technology. There is also evidence that teachers should use technology in order to meet the needs of their learners in an increasingly digital and interconnected world (Mavridi & Xerri, 2020), and technology such as social media tools can lead to learners becoming motivated and can provide opportunities for interaction in meaningful contexts inside and beyond the language classroom (Reinders & Benson, 2017). This can lead to learners taking greater ownership of their learning (Terrell 2011), especially through being actively involved together outside the classroom.

Technology can be a highly engaging and interactive tool, providing a source of real language, both written and spoken, in the classroom, and motivating learners to produce more language than they otherwise might have done.

Instant information

The internet, in particular, has become a social phenomenon which ‘pervades work, education, interpersonal communication ...’ (Thorne & Black, 2007), and having internet access in the classroom opens up learning to the real world, beyond the confines of the classroom.

For instance, having web access in class can be an instant provider of information for the teacher, as it has fast become in the world outside the classroom. Rather than telling learners you will tell them the answer to a question later, you can look it up there and then. You can also show the learners how to use reference tools, such as dictionaries, concordancers, a thesaurus and phonemic charts. By helping them help themselves, you are promoting their autonomy, as learners and users. A teacher also has more choice researching online – more ways to answer vocabulary questions, for example. As well as explaining something or providing a definition or translation, you can look for example sentences, or show your learners a picture. I remember one class when a learner asked me the difference between the words *geek* and *nerd*. Rather than attempt a clumsy explanation, I turned to *Google Images*TM, and the learners were able to see the differences *and similarities* for themselves.

The internet is, of course, also a great source of listening. You can find video clips of people speaking countless varieties of English, as well as having access to songs, through sites such as *YouTube*[®]. Apart from providing a large bank of authentic recordings, the web allows you to personalise listening tasks and choose a video clip to complement something in the syllabus. You can also use the web because your learners are particularly interested in a specific topic, or as a stimulus for speaking about a subject.

Real communication

There has also been a clear shift in the role of the internet. First, the web moved away from it being a huge resource library towards what was called *Web 2.0*, where communication took the lead, and this led to an increase in internet use. A Web 2.0 site allows users to interact and collaborate with each other, as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them. Since then, Web 2.0 use has

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exploded, with image and video sharing social media sites such as *TikTok*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube*®, coming to the fore.

It is clear that online interactivity is an important part of everyday life, and its importance in being present in learning in schools cannot be overstated. Although classroom uses of social media have received less attention than its value and use by teachers for professional learning (Ito, 2023; Stamm & Lomis, 2021), studies (Duong & Pham, 2022; Howard et al., 2021) have shown a growing interest in using these emerging web tools in language learning (Thomas 2009). The studies also show promise for the roles classroom uses of social media will play in the future, not only as learning tools, but also when used as authentic means of communication and relation building (Skykes et al., 2008).

Your learners can connect to other learners, or users of English, in real time (*synchronously*), or at different times (*asynchronously*), thereby providing opportunities for authentic language practice (i.e. real communication), rather than the practice for practice's sake that usually takes place in the classroom.

Publishing learners' work

Publication of learners' work online (e.g. via blogs, wikis, class webpages, etc.) is just one application that can have a positive effect on the quality and quantity of written work that learners produce. The fact that their work is being offered for reading to an audience beyond that of the teacher and the class can also be used to encourage process writing, and a focus on error correction, that would otherwise be difficult to achieve.

Even if you don't have internet access in your classroom, you can publish learners' work online, and provide an audience that may include parents and guardians, other learners, and other stakeholders.

A variety of different tools

Of course, it's not just about the internet. The proliferation of handheld devices, such as smartphones, mobile phones, digital cameras, tablets and digital voice recorders, has led to what, for some teachers, is a sometimes bewildering choice of potential activities and resources. Even if smartphones are banned in your classroom or institution, you can use your own device (any smartphone) to record learners using the voice recorder, a digital voice recorder or a video recorder, and if it is a smartphone, there are a rapidly increasing number of applications you can make use of to help you in class.

As the potential of these devices is realised, and more and more learners have access to them, teachers are beginning to see the benefits of using these tools. Research into mobile assisted language learning (MALL) has shown it to be effective (Burston & Giannakou, 2021), with many more learners studying or practising with manageable chunks of language wherever they are, and in their own time. This revolution in mobile learning is happening both inside and outside the classroom.

Pedagogy versus technology

This increase in availability of technology has led to an explosion of interest in its use in the language classroom. Despite the potential for new ways of learning, the trap that teachers can fall into is one of being seduced by the 'wow factor' of new technology, with pedagogy being pushed to the sidelines.

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As language classrooms become more technologized, however, there is a real danger of teachers developing *Everest syndrome* (Maddux, 1994). Named after George Mallory's reason for wanting to climb Mount Everest, teachers can be tempted to use a specific technology just 'because it's there'. Care must be taken, therefore, to make use of what we have available only when it serves the language aims of the lesson, and to avoid any use of 'technology for technology's sake'.

For this reason, the organisation of this book avoids prioritising technology over language learning. Many other handbooks for teachers, from the first guides to using the internet (Sperling 1999; Windeatt et al. 2000; Dudeney 2000; Teeler & Gray 2000), through the second wave (Barrett & Sharma, 2003; Lewis, G. 2004), to the ones (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007; Hockly & Clandfield, 2010; Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Farr & Murray, 2020) are organised around different technologies, rather than the uses to which they can be put, whereas some of the newer handbooks put language learning at the forefront (Walker & White, 2013; Stickler, 2022).

That is not to say, however, that an organisation around technology, particularly educational technology, wasn't necessary when the first handbooks were written. Quite the opposite is true. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) had just started to attract mainstream interest, marked by the emergence of the internet, and there was a need to introduce language teachers to how it could be used, especially as CALL was still 'a peripheral interest in the language teaching community as a whole' (Levy 1997).

Normalisation

At the turn of the century, the idea of there being a new generation gap of *digital immigrants* and *digital natives* (Prensky 2000) struck a chord with many educators and seemed to describe a new technological landscape which educators needed to start exploring. However, this distinction no longer seems helpful, as we moved to a place where we are used to technology being in 'a state of perpetual beta' (Pegrum 2009). In other words, technology is in a state of constant development, and it seems as if new tools and innovations emerge every day. It can be argued that 'technology use has become the norm in education' (Hasumi & Chiu, 2024) and it is now being used by many language teachers, as a matter of course. This shows a move towards *normalisation*.

Normalisation (Bax 2003) occurs in language education when technology is used without teachers being consciously aware of its role as technology. Few teachers consider dry-wipe board pens to be technology, for example, but the same cannot be said of the interactive whiteboard (IWB) and the electronic pens that go with it.

The concept was revisited by Bax in 2011, and although the conclusion then was that most technology, as other research indicates, is 'not yet normalised in language education' (Thomas 2009), there were definite 'signs of a more fully integrated approach to CALL emerging because of Web 2.0' (Motteram & Stanley 2011). With the danger of teachers using technology 'because it's there', forever lurking in the sidelines, it was clear that a new approach is required – with the need to blend technology use with pedagogical strategies. In their analysis of current trends in TELL (technology-enhanced language learning), Hasumi & Chiu (2024) report this is still the case.

A principled approach

What is still needed, is an approach to using technology that has learning at its heart, where teachers question how and when to integrate technology into the classroom. The need for a more ‘principled approach’ was made just before the first edition of this book was published, with Hockly (2011) and Lyon-Jones (2011) both producing guidelines and checklists for teachers, which I have expanded upon here.

- **Why use the technology?** In other words, don’t just use it because it is there. Are you trying to do something with the technology that can be better done without it? If learning is not enhanced by using the technology, then don’t use it.
- **Who is the technology best for?** Is the technology appropriate for your learners? What age group is it suitable for, and what language level is required to use it? How much teaching / technical experience / training is required to use it effectively? How much expertise and knowledge do the learners have with the technology? Can you utilise this?
- **What is the technology best used for?** It is worth considering if there is another technology that can be used, instead, that may better suit the learning objectives.
- **Where should it be used?** Is it more suitable for the classroom / a connected classroom (i.e. with devices or computers, each connected to the internet) / a computer room / at home? Think also about classroom management issues here. Where in the classroom is the technology to be used and, if appropriate, what will the other learners be doing when one is, or some are, using the technology (i.e. will they be engaged)?
- **When should the technology be used?** Not only when is the best moment during the class to use the technology (at the beginning/end, etc.), but also when in the term/syllabus? (It is best if used to enhance, and complement, what you are already doing with the learners, rather than be used as an added extra.)
- **How should the technology be used?** This shouldn’t just be about what to do, but also how best to incorporate the technology into your class. Will using the technology be a more efficient use of a teacher’s, or the learners’, time?

This principled approach can do much to address the criticism of the use of technology in the language classroom, much of which tends to focus on time spent getting things to work – time which could have otherwise been spent practising language.

One example of this is the use of a *backchannel*, (Yardi, 2006; Ilic, 2021), which is used here to refer to a channel of communication that is open during collaborative activities. This is an effective way of giving every learner a voice in either the face-to-face or online classroom environment (Holland, 2014). The backchannel can be a tool allowing for chat, or an online sticky notes app. Or something more sophisticated, offering multiple choice and polling options. The learners can use this for note taking, commenting, asking questions, offering suggestions, and it is an effective way of opening up the classroom and building community. Using such a backchannel can be a quick and effective way to find out what learners thought of an activity, or to check they understand, and the results of these polls can be easily shared if using a smart TV (i.e. a television that allows for connection to the internet) or other way of sharing digital content in the classroom, such as on an interactive whiteboard (IWB).

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Although IWBs are being phased out and replaced by smart TVs in many classrooms, there are still a lot of them around. Use of the IWB has provoked a lot of criticism. One of the major reasons why this is so because of misuse of the technology. Although the IWB looks like a standard whiteboard, this is deceptive, and teachers limiting themselves to using it to show *YouTube*® videos, or simply picking up the electronic pen and writing on it, shows a misunderstanding of the affordances of this technology. In the hands of a teacher who knows how to use it well, the IWB can be a tool that encourages learner collaboration, is perfect for revision and helps with lesson organisation as well as saving the teacher a lot of time.

Lack of training

Research suggests that the pedagogical exploitation of IWBs, smart TVs, and indeed, all technology in the classroom, depends as much on the availability of teaching resources as it does on teachers’ understanding of the how best to use the technology (Cutrim Schmid & Van Hazebrouck, 2010). This tends to indicate that training, therefore, is the key to effective use of any technology for educational purposes.

Training teachers how to use new technology is often a hidden cost that is not factored in when technology is introduced into an institution, which leads to a mismatch between what the institution expects teachers to know, in order to effectively use technology, and what their actual knowledge is. One of the aims of this book is to help teachers bridge this gap.

What technology?

This book draws upon a wide range of technology for its activities for its activities, which many teachers have easy access to. The technologies used in this book are:

The internet

automatic translators
blogs
comic-creator websites
generative AI sites
image-creation software
instant messaging
news websites
online games
podcasts
poster websites
social networks
survey websites
text and voice chat
video-sharing websites
wikis

Software

apps
concordancers
ebooks
electronic dictionaries
email
interactive fiction
mind-mapping software
music software
presentation software
quiz-making software
screen-capture tools
social bookmarking
sound-editing software
videoconferencing
word processors

Hardware

computer room
data projectors
digital cameras
laptops
mobile phones
smart TVs
tablets
video cameras
voice recorders
webcams

Summary of aims

1. To provide a wide range of interesting and useful activities, where technology has been used only when there is a clearly added value to language learning and practice.
2. To show how any teacher can use technology, alongside an existing language course, to enhance language learning.
3. To offer a reserve of activities which are suitable for all levels of proficiency, from beginner to advanced, and which include ideas for listening comprehension, grammar practice, oral production and fluency practice, amongst others.

How to use this book

At the end of each chapter, there is a *Reflection* box. These boxes are meant for self-reflection – and therefore aid your own professional development as you progress through this book – or they can be used to stimulate discussion in teacher education sessions.

The activities presented in this book have been divided according to learning focus, or language learning goals, rather than by technology or tool, so they can be found after the theory in each chapter. The outline of each activity begins with the following:

- *Main goals*: the purpose of doing the activity.
- *Level*: an indication of the proficiency level for which the activity is likely to be suitable.
- *Time*: a rough guide to the time the activity is likely to take.
- *Learning focus*: an indication of the specific language practised by doing the activity.
- *Preparation*: what needs to be done before you do the activity with learners.
- *Technical requirements*: the equipment and any special knowledge you, and your learners, need in order to do the activity.

In addition, many activities end with:

- *Variation*: ideas on how to adapt the activity so that it practises another aspect of language, makes use of different technology, etc.
- *Age range*: unless otherwise noted, the activities are suitable for use with all ages.

At the end of the book, Appendix A: *Learning technologies guide* is designed to help teachers by providing specific details about some of the software and hardware used in various activities. Appendix B: *Technical notes and suggested software/websites per chapter* will enable teachers to better understand what technology is required for each activity. Finally, look in the Index to see which activities focus on a specific language item or function.

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