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## *Technology in Language Classrooms*

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### **Abstract**

*Technology acts as a tool in English language classrooms to learn and teach English. It brings different cultures and provides varied experience for the learners of language in a new way within the provided space. It also provides ample opportunities for the teachers of English to give additional resources to the students in the process of teaching. It is impossible with a book. Some technology tools and apps that can be used in language classrooms include podcasts, Mobile phones, Tab, PC, Skype and so on. This paper focuses mainly on the application of Skype in the language classrooms.*

Skype is a tool through which the users can communicate over internet by making both audio and video calls. It is an online communication tool where the users have to create an account to make both local and international free calls to other Skype users. Skype also provides computer-to-land-line service for both local and international calls, as a fee-based service. It is vital that the users should possess a mic and audio enabled personal computer. If the computer does not have those features built in then the users have to buy a Skype-enabled headset with earphones and a mic.

Once the Skype account has opened and all the necessary equipment in hand, the users can get start with its application. They can start to make audio and video calls. It is necessary that the both ends (caller and receiver) should have webcam to make video calls. Unless, any problem arises in the internet connectivity, the users can view each other till the end of the video call. If the internet connection is slow or if users do not have web cams, they can still make audio calls. It is significant to bear in mind that Skype facilitates through computer-to-computer, not necessarily person-to-person. One computer can be connected to a large screen and the presentation through skype can be projected onto that large screen to a large group of people in a theatre-style classroom. It is one of the ways where Skype may be used to teach group of people. As per the requirements, for teaching, it is an input to know that Skype can be connected to an individual with other individual or one individual to a group, or one group to another group. It is quoted from the Davis that “Educators have been incorporating Skype into their classrooms for a number of years now”. Many educationist used skype in language classrooms include Waters, Smethurst, Eaton. This may be of interest to language teachers, as it is noted that activities such as debates and speech competitions in the target language are on the rise.

Some of the technocrats argue that Skype is less potent than other e- learning technologies such as language soft wares. This may be true. Skype offers interaction with only a very narrow number of users at a time. It also does not include the same interactive features such as white boards or other

features found with more refined technologies. On the other hand Skype's simplicity makes it as a user friendly tool for those who are not at ease in using technology in the classroom - and it is free. Using this approach in a progressive way by incorporating technology into the classroom is an effective way for ESL/EFL teachers to update their teaching techniques at their own speed, building confidence and skills as they progress. For teachers who are unwilling to use technology due to be short of skills or confidence or high levels of anxiety, getting started with simpler tools may be an effective way for them to explore and incorporate new technologies. Simpler technologies allow users to minimize their risk and "performance anxiety" as they learn. When the users become relaxed with more advanced features, they can engage in higher level uses. This may lead them to being open to trying more sophisticated technologies in the future. Skype is an excellent tool to help teachers build technology skills. It also happens to be an effective tool to teach languages, as it incorporates high levels of verbal interaction between users, in this case between teachers and students.

### **Skype and its Features**

Skype could arguably be considered as a less sophisticated learning tool than other web or video conferencing tools, it also has some advanced features that make it useful for teaching English. These include:

#### **Conference Calls**

Skype can be used to make conference calls with a number of users (Family Matters, n.d.). Up to six users may be on the line at one time. At the time of writing, the conference calling feature included audio only. Video calls can only be made between two parties.

## **Instant Messaging or Chat**

Skype has a chat function that can be used for a variety of purposes. Users may chat while in a real-time audio or video call. This is useful if the connection breaks up. Users may indicate that they are unable to see or hear well using the chat function. In addition, if another call comes in while a user is in a real-time call, he or she may send the other party a quick instant message to let them know that they cannot be answered at that time. The chat function helps to smooth out online communications, allowing users to briefly acknowledge one another or explain a situation, rather than simply terminating a call. This is particularly useful for ESL/EFL students who may find writing easier than speaking.

## **File Sharing**

Users can send files, which is much like adding an attachment to an e-mail, except that the sharing takes place in real time, during a call. Users can send almost any kind of file such as a .pdf, a Word document. The party on the other end can open it as soon as they receive it, allowing users to discuss it during their call. Teachers can use this feature to share activities or resources with students during a lesson.

## **Screen Sharing**

This feature allows users to share a portion of their screen or their entire screen, with others on the call. This is particularly useful for giving presentations. One user may enable a presentation in full-screen mode, while sharing their screen with other users. Teachers can use the screen sharing option to give slide presentations to students during a lesson. The screen sharing function is only activated once the user is in a call. The downside is that one can only “learn by doing” for this feature. To access this function, click on the “call” tab on the menu at the top of the screen. That displays a drop-down menu. From there the user must choose “share screen”. The user will be asked if he or

she wants to share part or all of their screen. An important tip: I open my presentation before the call and then have it running in the background. I choose to share my entire screen and then I quickly flip to my slides and run my slides in full-screen mode. There will be a moment where the party on the other end will see the user's entire screen before the slides begin, so ensure there is nothing else open on the desktop such as personal e-mails, etc. Screen sharing requires practice, and it is a powerful feature for learning.

### **Using Skype for Marketing ESL/EFL Programs**

Skype can be used to create and maintain relationships with prospective students. This may be of particular relevance for programs that recruit international students. One example is to have a Skype account that students can call to ask questions. These calls can be answered by ESL/EFL school staff, just as the phone is.

Another way to use Skype for marketing is to conduct pre-arrival orientation tutorials with students. This can be done on a one-to-one basis, but also with groups. The orientation session can review a variety of pre-arrival information: an introduction to the school, an introduction to some of the key staff the students will meet when they arrive (including a photo to make it more personal). It can include information about airport arrivals and pick up, a list of things to bring with them (such as a warm sweater or coat), the schedule for a typical day of classes, etc.

### **Conclusion**

Skype is an excellent tool for ESL/EFL educators who are hesitant about using more sophisticated learning technologies. Because Skype originally began as a voice-over-Internet-protocol (VOIP) service, as a cost-effective alternative to traditional phone calls, its application as a personal communication tool makes it more attractive to those who struggle to incorporate technology into their classrooms. Its advanced features like screen sharing, file transfer, instant messaging makes it as a user friendly teaching, learning tool which turn provides an attractive, interesting learning and teaching opportunities.