

Chapter XXXV

Teaching English as a Second Language with Technology: Making Appropriate Pedagogical Choices

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ABSTRACT

All U.S. states have standards that require the inclusion of technology into the classroom (Rodriguez & Pelaez, 2002; Abdal-Haqq, 1995; Wright, 1980). Kindergarten-12 teachers face burgeoning state-mandated curricula that they are required to teach each year. These curricula leave little room for specific computer literacy or technology instruction. Therefore, teachers must achieve both sets of expectations, (i.e., standardized curriculum and technology standards integration), simultaneously and without losing sight of the main content-area focus. This situation is more complex for ESL teachers. ESL instructors' goals are two-fold: (1) the content or subject of instruction, and (2) language acquisition. This chapter will outline the various constraints and challenges that K-12 teachers face when attempting to include technology into their classrooms. Then, a variety of ways to integrate technology while maintaining a content and language acquisition focus by providing practical, accessible, and user-friendly resources, activities, and tips for inclusion will be proposed. Finally, learner encountered resulting from a productive mixture of content and technology in English as a second language (ESL) classes will be shared.

INTRODUCTION

K-12 levels of all schools in the United States are required to integrate technology into the curriculum. Although all states have standards that require the inclusion of technology into the classroom (Rodriguez & Pelaez, 2002; Abdal-Haqq, 1995; Wright, 1980), the types of technology and the level of sophistication are not delineated.

Teacher education standards also mandate a degree of computer literacy awareness (Wright, 1980) in the hope that the teachers will thus be equipped to integrate technology into their K-12 classrooms on a regular, if not daily, basis.

The pressure teachers feel is compounded because K-12 teachers in the U.S. must incorporate changes to the extensive state-mandated curricula that they are required to teach each year. Some curricula have hundreds of standards or detailed subject matter topics that need to be taught within a given year so that learners can perform successfully on state-mandated, high-stakes standardized tests. These curricula leave little room for specific computer literacy or technology instruction. Therefore, teachers must achieve both sets of expectations, (i.e., standardized curriculum and technology standards integration) simultaneously and without losing sight of the main content-area focus.

This chapter will outline the various constraints that K-12 teachers face when attempting to incorporate technology into their classrooms. The chapter will then outline a variety of ways of integrating technology while maintaining a content focus by providing practical, accessible, and user-friendly resources, activities, and tips for inclusion. Finally, it will highlight the learner outcomes that were encountered as a result of a productive mixture of

content and technology in English as a second language (ESL) classes.

THE CHALLENGING CONSTRAINTS TEACHERS FACE

The mandate to include technology in K-12 has been a challenge and source of constraint for teachers. All K-12 teachers, be they new teachers a year or two out of colleges or the 20-year veterans, face issues regarding their personal knowledge and computer skills, environmental or context-related challenges, technological and financial issues, as well as time constraints (Hughes, 2003).

Personal Knowledge and Skills

Although computer literacy courses have been accessible to learners in the U.S. K-12 since the mid-1980s, the daily use of computer technology for teachers became a real expectation in the mid-1990s (Barker & Howley, 1997).

One of the main challenges for all teachers during this period was to become computer literate and savvy. Personal knowledge and computer skills had to be developed (Adkins-Bowling, Brown, & Mitchell, 2001; Johns, & Torrez, 2001), because the teachers' technology knowledge directly impacts their willingness to employ it in the classroom (Hughes, 2003). In order to facilitate teacher training, since the mid-1990s there have been numerous local, state, and federal grants available to provide computer instruction for teachers in the commonly used software packages, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, and others. Teachers have primarily employed this training to facilitate e-mail for internal communication purposes with other teachers, administrators, and teacher aides. They have also used

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