The 21st century teacher: modern foreign languages

Using technology to enhance modern foreign languages teaching
This publication offers insight into how technology can be used by teachers of modern foreign languages, highlighting opportunities to extend subject pedagogy and ICT skills. Other publications in the series offer the opportunity to see how technology is used in other subjects and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice.
Using technology to enhance modern foreign languages

As technology becomes a greater part of everyday life, it is only natural that it becomes a central and essential part of 21st century learning. Learners are already engaging extensively with technology and expect it to be used in school.

How do teachers benefit from the integration of technology into all aspects of their role and enhance the learning experience of young people?

21st century teachers of modern foreign languages (MFL) use technology for numerous activities in a similar way to the teaching of other subjects. They embed technology throughout the learning experience for their learners, ensuring the use of technology supports the learning and teaching of the subject.

Like all teachers they will employ technology to:

1. Enhance teaching and learning by:
   - using a range of technologies to cater for different learning styles
   - using technology to enable learners to collaborate with peers and with partner schools and their students.

2. Improve administration and planning:
   - for learning and teaching, reusing and adapting documents
   - by using technology to access and share information and enhance your personal knowledge of MFL and understanding of professional issues around the subject.

3. Improve assessment and reporting by:
   - recording learner achievement and attainment electronically, tracking pupil progress and using the information in assessment for learning
   - communicating with parents electronically through email and the school learning platform.

The above are just a few examples and not meant to be a comprehensive list. The following pages give some practical advice how teachers of MFL (primary and secondary) use technology.
Learning and teaching

Bringing learners into contact with the culture of other countries where the target language is spoken is a priority for 21st century teachers. Cultural topics can range from cuisine, sport and famous people to regional diversity and festivals.

The internet offers access to opportunities for whole-class work (which can be done using the interactive whiteboard). Sites for primary teachers include Primary French and Languages online. Some sites also offer teaching ideas to help make the learning of languages fun.

The Teaching ideas site has a wealth of starting points for the primary classroom. Secondary teachers may use sites such as Asisehace.net to provide learning resources (such as podcasts) covering grammar or situational language. Students can use these flexibly at school or home.

Creating opportunities for communication
Teachers provide their learners with access to native speakers and authentic language situations through the internet and also to facilitate communication in the target language with their peers in this and other countries. They exchange emails, or use social networking sites, such as Thinkquest for collaborative work, discussion forums and to build friendships.

Email, blogs and learning platforms are all tools used by the 21st century teacher to communicate with students, providing feedback or guidance.

CASE STUDY

Using the technology to develop language skills

Pupils at Mid Calder Primary School, West Lothian, use email and blogs to write a story in collaboration with French pupils.

James Walker and the buried treasure was written, illustrated and published by pupils at this school, with alternate chapters in French and English. The pupils received a chapter from their partner French school, and worked together to pick out vocabulary and translate phrases. They then continued the story themselves and sent their chapter over to the French pupils.

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A blog was set up and the children produced illustrations for each chapter. Parents and other pupils voted for the school whose work they preferred. In groups, the children then used Windows Movie Maker to produce an animation for some of the chapters. This meant they could experiment and be creative while learning more of the target language.

The schools have developed a great partnership, and the pupils can use video conferencing and email to develop their speaking and listening skills further.

Read more at the CILT (National Centre for Languages) site.

Teachers who are making the most of technology identify authentic target language texts on the internet. Sites include Pequenet and Momes, which they can use for whole-class work.

Teachers can also use the internet to form partnerships with schools abroad for collaborative projects. The eLanguages site is a global online community of teachers sharing ideas and working together with their students on curriculum-relevant projects. Video conferencing is another technology that can bring students into direct contact with their counterparts in target language countries.

Technology is used by teachers of MFL for submission to competitions, such as the European Award for Languages.

Creating learning materials
Authoring software such as Task magic and Fun with texts helps teachers create learning materials. These can be used by students in a variety of ways: from home, school or as a whole class on the interactive whiteboard. Generic word processing or presentation software can be used by teachers to create learning activities, often with multimedia content.

Encouraging independent learning
Teachers facilitate students’ use of the school network or blogs to post assignments, or showcase creative work including presentations, text, voice recordings and video clips. Learners also use voice recorders and editing software to create podcasts.
Using editing software to improve pronunciation

A Year 9 teacher at Cramlington Learning Village used Audacity software with students to record a play they had scripted based on the use of high frequency words in language learning. Their peers and teacher listened and made suggestions for improving pronunciation and language. The students then acted on this feedback by editing their Audacity file with the required improvements.

Students then uploaded the finalised version of their work (in mp3 format) to the Go!Animate site and used it as a voiceover for an animation they made to go along with the script.

Speaking is an extremely difficult skill to improve because as soon as the words have left your lips, you are unable to redraft them to make them better. Using Audacity meant that students could edit individual sections of their voiceover to improve – right down to improving the pronunciation of a single word.

Find out more at Teachers TV: Hard To Teach – Secondary MFL Using ICT
Administration and planning

The 21st century teachers of MFL use technology to document their planning. They record pupil achievement in electronic format to inform parents. Plans, once stored electronically, are adapted for different groups of pupils, thereby creating an increased element of personalisation and differentiation.

As part of their planning, teachers of MFL use technology to create resources, for personal use and to share with colleagues. These resources are placed on the school network or learning platform. Materials are tagged or hyperlinked from master planning documents, so that colleagues can find relevant resources easily and efficiently. Colleagues then use and adapt these resources, thus creating a growing resource bank.

When planning, teachers use the internet to identify online activities for students. Sites such as Languages online provide a range of interactive activities that students can pursue independently. Teachers also create their own resources and share these online with the wider community. For instance, teachers at the Ashcombe School offer a range of resources on the school website, including activities that can be used with the iPhone.

The Primary resources site has a variety of resources that primary teachers can use and adapt for their own purposes.

Teachers of MFL use email and discussion forums to share ideas, create and update schemes of work, review resources and contribute to ICT policy development. They download relevant policy documents and use technology to share opinions and frame responses where necessary.

They regularly update online areas where student work is showcased. The All Saints Languages Blog is an example of this.

Whether it be participating in formal online professional development, or attending ICT training to update skills, 21st century teachers keep their knowledge and skills up to date. They engage informally online with colleagues nationwide, using, for example, Box of tricks, Flashmeeting or Talkabout Primary Languages.
Assessment and reporting
The 21st century teachers of MFL contribute to the school learning platform/website, which informs parents and learners about the work that takes place in the classroom. It also links to useful resources that learners might use at home to develop language skills (such as Voki.com, which allows users to create speaking avatars).

Teachers use proprietary software to predict future performance and set targets for improvement. They use ICT to inform parents of their children’s progress and levels of attainment. They also use proprietary software for continuous assessment of performance. Students can use the software for self-assessment and to track their own progress. Teachers monitor individual performance, providing feedback, setting personal targets and matching to National Curriculum levels. The software stores pupil data, video, text, audio and assessment details, as a continuous learning portfolio. The software also provides an easily accessible instant overview of progress over time for student, teacher, and parents.

In the classroom, teachers use learner response/voting systems (handheld interactive personal response devices) for formative or summative assessment. These give immediate feedback to students and monitor individual performance. Teachers also use technology such as video recorders, blogs and wikis to gather material for continuous assessment of students’ target language skills and competence. Student work, text, audio files, animated posters or video clips, can be presented on the whiteboard and used to develop criteria-based peer assessment skills in whole-class discussion.
## Are you a 21st century teacher of MFL?

### ABOUT YOU
Consider what you do towards developing your range of professional teaching skills with technology.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Regularly</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you use technology to access and share information and enhance your personal knowledge of the language/languages you teach and the culture of target countries and understanding of professional issues around MFL?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you use technology to access information and concepts using the authentic voices of your target language communities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you support your learners to record and share audio and video to support and refine all four language skills and provide feedback, including peer assessment, e.g. podcasts?</td>
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<td>Do you use technology to enable contact and collaboration between learners and with partner schools and their learners?</td>
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<td>Do you extend learning by providing MFL activities and resources on the learning platform or website?</td>
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<td>Do you audit the range of resources, software and hardware used in the teaching of MFL and identify any gaps in provision?</td>
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Discover more online

For further help and ideas on how to turn your checklist into actions, try reviewing some of these resources.

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<tr>
<th><strong>CILT, The National Centre for Languages</strong></th>
<th><strong>MFL Sunderland</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Provides independent advice on all aspects of language teaching, learning and use and aims to improve the teaching and learning of languages.</td>
<td>Written by MFL teachers for MFL teachers. Both primary and secondary. There are resources, links and support, including an online forum.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Languages ICT</strong></th>
<th><strong>MFL Resources and Teacher Resource Exchange:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Advice, guidance, resources, and many case studies exemplifying best practice with ICT in teaching and learning of MFL.</td>
<td>Resources created by teachers for teachers.</td>
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<th><strong>Primary Languages</strong></th>
<th><strong>E-Twinning</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>The national gateway to advice, information and support for the teaching of primary languages.</td>
<td>Use ICT to form a partnership for collaborative project work with schools in Europe.</td>
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<th><strong>Association for Language Learning (ALL)</strong></th>
<th><strong>MYLO: The Open School for Languages</strong></th>
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<td>Up-to-date useful information for all those who teach MFL. Special one-stop-shop, including case studies, dealing with the New Secondary Curriculum [<a href="http://www.all-nsc.org.uk/nsc/">www.all-nsc.org.uk/nsc/</a>]</td>
<td>An online learning tool aimed at Key Stage 3 offering a range of innovative learning activities. Covers French, Spanish, German and Mandarin.</td>
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<th><strong>BBC Schools and BBC Languages</strong></th>
<th><strong>Learning and Teaching Scotland MFL</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Invaluable resources for teachers of languages at primary and secondary levels.</td>
<td>Excellent advice, resources, including blogs and podcasts.</td>
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<th><strong>Ictopus</strong></th>
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<td>A support service for primary education offering free good quality lesson ideas and teaching suggestions using technology in MFL.</td>
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