Using Technology in Foreign Language Teaching

Using Technology in Foreign Language Teaching

Edited by

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Salah Troudi

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Using Technology in Foreign Language Teaching,
Edited by Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Salah Troudi

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-6522-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-6522-7

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Using Technology in Foreign Language Teaching
Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Salah Troudi

Chapter One 8
Blended Learning in EFL: Adopting a Principled Approach to Integrating Technology
Claire Whittaker

Chapter Two 30
Blended Learning in Saudi Arabia: Potential for its Use in EFL at the Tertiary Level
Reem Al Ebaikan and Salah Troudi

Chapter Three 45
Self-access or Access to Self? Experimenting with e-learning in Oman
Alina Rebecca Chirciu and Tulika Mishra

Chapter Four 64
Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into EFL Classroom Practice at Majma'ah University
El-Sadig Yahya Ezza

Chapter Five 83
Critical Approach to Integrating ICT into Second Language Learning
Samira Boukadi

Chapter Six 106
IT and L2 Writing Skills: EFL Students' Perceptions of e-Feedback on their Essays
Susan Riley and Alireza ZareEkbatani

Chapter Seven 134
Challenge and Change in Online Reading: Learners' Perceptions of Textbooks and Reading Online: A Case Study in the UAE
Richard Peel

Chapter Eight 162
The Internet Chat Room: A Tool for Promoting Learner Autonomy
Jo Mynard and Salah Troudi

Chapter Nine 186
The Self Access Centre Webquest
Kirsten Gear

Chapter Ten 215
Fostering EFL Students' Language Development via Student-created Digital Videos
Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Samia Naqvi

Chapter Eleven 235
Is Small Really Beautiful?: Exploring Digital Literatures and their Relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT)
Sandhya Rao Mehta

Chapter Twelve 253
Online Language Corpora: Implications for EFL Teaching
Shaimaa Abd El Fattah Torky

Chapter Thirteen 285
Approaches to the Evaluation of Computer Assisted Language Learning Software
Vahid Nimehchisalem and Jayakaran Mukundan

Contributors 306

INTRODUCTION

USING TECHNOLOGY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

RAHMA AL-MAHROOQI
SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY, OMAN
AND SALAH TROUDI
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER, UNITED KINGDOM

Language learning is a complex and challenging endeavour. For students to achieve the desired proficiency in a foreign language, their institutions need to invest time, effort and huge resources in order to cater for different learning styles. To be cost effective, language-teaching institutions strive to provide intensive foreign language (FL) instruction to reduce the time period needed to learn the target language. This explains the keen interest in combining different methodologies with instructional technologies that promise to motivate learners and to respond effectively to their needs. In fact, generally, technology use in learning environments has presented itself as a necessity for continued lifelong learning with research suggesting that institutions that lag behind in integrating technology "will be unable to meet the needs of knowledge based societies and as a result will not survive the change in paradigm of education" (O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue, 2004, p. 320).

Computers were introduced to the language learning field in the 1960s (ibid) as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and many enthusiasts strongly advocated their use, espousing the many advantages they could bring to both language learners and teachers. More recently, information and communication technology (ICT) in the form of e-learning and the Internet have presented additional benefits to the learning environment as they enable the integration of virtually unlimited multimedia learning materials from external sources into the curriculum and make them available to students at any location in the world (distance

education) where there is a computer, mobile phone or tablet device with Internet access (Alsunbul, 2002).

The application of computer technologies in language instruction provides a student-centred learning environment. It enables course administrators and teachers to vary lesson presentation styles to motivate students of varying interests, provides learning opportunities outside the classroom (hence increasing learner interaction with the language), and is perceived to cater more for individual differences. According to Yaverbaum, Kulkarni and Wood (1997), integrating multimedia into the traditional learning environment not only enriches the styles of presentation, but also has the advantage of increasing language retention.

In order to achieve the full benefits of ICT in any FL teaching institution, however, certain conditions have to be met. These include the availability of computers and e-learning professionals, and the presence of a solid infrastructure, which is paramount to the success of any IT integration (Pirani, 2004). The infrastructure includes, among other things, computers, fast Internet connection, secure platforms, expertise and continued teacher training, the last has been found critical for the success of technology use in the language classroom (Pirani, 2004; O'Neill, Singh, & O'Donoghue, 2004; Baylor & Ritchie, 2002). It is but natural that if instructors lack skills in using technology, they will opt not to use it at all even if it is available. In addition, teachers' attitudes towards technology use in the language classroom have also been found a main determiner of the degree of technology integration in the curriculum and of its success (Albirini, 2006; Al-Senaidi, Lin, & Poirot, 2009). Similarly, learners have to have the right disposition and attitudes towards the use of e-learning or any online sources. However, research has found technology use in language instruction appealing to students as they are digital natives. Because technology use reduces teacher-centeredness, it is capable of reducing student language learning anxiety as it gives them the chance to practice language comfortably without being embarrassed of making mistakes, which would reduce their "affective filter" (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; McLaughlin, 1990). Those who have actually used IT or ICT in their language teaching know how difficult it is sometimes to function and to benefit from the available programs and resources if one or more of these is absent. Integrating IT is fraught with frustration in such circumstances (Becta, 2004; cited in Al Sanaidi, Lin, & Poirot, 2009).

Having addressed both the benefits and the obstacles of using technology in learning environments, the increasing and rapid growth of information and communication technologies cannot go unnoticed in the

field of foreign language teaching as the benefits have multiplied and the new generations, being digital natives, are technologically savvy. Hence, it is important to continue to explore the conditions under which technology can best be utilized so that its potential benefits are harnessed and the obstacles tackled. This exploration is the main aim of this edited volume as it seeks to debate the issue of IT integration in language teaching with the intention of discussing its advantages and disadvantages from the point of view of actual users and professionals from different contexts. There are thirteen chapters in the book. Each is unique in its own way, but all examine IT use in general and in countries like the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, and Malaysia. A main feature of the volume is that the majority of the chapters are research studies conducted in different educational institutions and using a variety of research methodologies. This is an indication that the use of IT in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is a promising research area which can contribute to a better understanding of the current processes of learning and teaching. The book comes at a time which is witnessing a surge in interest in IT in EFL (Morreram, 2013; Tomlinson. B. & Whittaker, 2013), and will hopefully be a useful resource for foreign language professionals, researchers and postgraduate students.

The following section provides a summary of the chapters in the book.

Claire Whittaker provides a synthesis of relevant literature on how to achieve a principled approach to integrating technology into course design. She addresses a number of frameworks and principles involved in the process of designing blended learning courses and incorporating technology in a principled manner.

Reem Al Ebaikan and Salah Troudi's chapter discusses the potential of adopting blended learning for EFL teaching and learning in the Saudi tertiary context. They introduce the concepts of blended learning and e-learning, explain related terminology and provide a short synthesis of recent literature in the field of blended learning. Given the specificities of women's educational experiences in Saudi Arabia, the potential of blended learning for EFL teaching and learning with reference to literature is discussed. This chapter also emphasizes the essential role of the face-to-face portion of blended courses for introductory English courses.

Alina Chirciu and Tulika Mishra explored the relationship between self-access learning and self-directed learning in the field of English language education in Oman, by presenting the case of a higher education institution and its implementation of an e-learning platform which took place during one academic year. The study drew on data from multiple sources, namely four interviews with decision makers in the institution as

well as students and teachers' testimonies regarding their perceptions of the e-learning environment as an effective learning tool.

In a survey-based study and through an analysis of variance (ANOVA) El-Sadig Yahya Ezza confirmed the hypothesis that there is no significant gender and age difference between EFL Saudi teachers in ICT knowledge, skills and use in the classroom.

In an exploratory study investigating EFL teachers' perceptions of the use of ICT at tertiary level in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Samira Boukadi reports that while there is more or less complete agreement on the role of technology in enhancing learning, teachers lacked proper training to be able to use the technology to its full potential in the classroom. The study also revealed that it was important for teachers to be consulted in pedagogical decisions about use of technology. Top-down models of educational management do not allow for teachers' voice in pedagogical matters.

Susan Riley and Alireza ZareEkbatani used an exploratory design to investigate EFL learners' perceptions of electronic indirect coded feedback (e-feedback) on their writing in the Iranian context. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews, electronic diaries, and online progress logs. E-feedback was perceived as offering an effective means of actively engaging learners with feedback, aiding them in moving to a higher writing level, and increasing self-efficacy for the IELTS writing test. Specific writing was seen to improve (a) locally in the use of English grammar, punctuation signs, spelling, collocation knowledge, vocabulary, and paraphrasing; and (b) globally in developing topic sentences, organising ideas into templates, brainstorming ideas to find blueprints, and to some extent writing speed.

In an educational context where the use of technology has become the norm, Richard Peel sought to gauge students' opinions of the usefulness of both textbook and online reading in the blended learning environment of his institution in the United Arab Emirates. The study, via focus groups, elicited students' feelings towards both traditional textbooks and online reading (via the Internet and through programmes such as BlackBoard Vista [BBV]), and tried to ascertain possible reasons for such evaluations and suggest recommendations for the future. The results revealed that though students acknowledged the usefulness of online reading courses in certain contexts, they also strongly felt that textbooks remained an important reading resource.

Jo Mynard and Salah Troudi investigated the role that Internet chat rooms might have in the promotion of autonomy for learning English. In an interpretive study conducted in the context of a tertiary institution in the

United Arab Emirates, the authors used a multiple data-collection design to track ten freshman students over a period of one semester to investigate evidence of autonomous language learning while they engaged in classroom-based chat room tasks. Using a grounded approach to analyse the data, the researchers found instances of decision-making, independent action, detachment, critical reflection and transferring of learning to other situations.

In a discussion chapter Kirsten Gear addresses the potential of using WebQuests to promote student-centred learning in a self-access centre in Oman. Given the low-to medium tech environment on the context, WebQuests were argued to be conducive for autonomous learning. Gear argues that WebQuests qualify as one of the most effective methods to use authentic materials in a student-centred manner as learners chose what, how and why to study within the precincts of the existing curriculum, a process which not only democratises the classroom on a student-centred platform by humanising teachers, but also performs the dual function of professional development for both its creators and users.

In a multi-method exploratory study Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Samia Naqvi investigate how a student-created digital video project enhanced language learning opportunities, collaboration and social skills among Omani college students. The results showed that the students enjoyed the experience and improved their language proficiency as a result of learning new vocabulary and engaging in reading and writing activities while doing the project. Student autonomy also improved as well as their critical thinking skills.

Sandhya Mehta looks into the creative possibilities of using the technology of texting and its associated forums such as twitter to explore the ways in which literature is being re-defined in the new millennium as an explorative medium rather than a fixed product. Using theoretical studies as well as primary texts, this study focused on emerging literatures which have been made possible through technology and explored the ways in which these new texts could be used in a literature classroom. The implications of these new literatures on second and foreign language contexts were discussed to examine how core literary and linguistic concepts could be advanced through more creative forms of literature which emphasise the process of creating a text rather than studying its final product, as well as enable an appreciation of the creative possibilities of language.

Examining online corpora and their implications for foreign language learning, Shaimaa Torky sheds light on how corpora consultation can be integrated into language learning situations. She provides examples to

illustrate how this integration can be made effective in investigating features of language genres and to raise students' awareness of language features such as the difference between formal and informal discourse. The chapter also identifies obstacles that can hinder the integration of online language corpora and concludes by arguing for an eclectic use of these sources.

Working in the area of materials and starting from the premise that CALL materials and software packages have particular features (like record, playback and compare as well as ease of installation and use) that are not relevant for evaluating language coursebooks, Vahid Nimehchisalem and Jayakaran Mukundan review the paradigm shifts in CALL software development and evaluation. They also present a summary of the various evaluative criteria and instruments suggested by different ELT scholars for software evaluation.

References

Albirini, A. (2006). Teachers' attitudes toward information and communication technologies: The case of Syrian EFL teachers. *Computers & Education, 47*, 373-398.

Al Sanaidi, S., Lin, L., & Poirot, J. (2009). Barriers to adopting technology for teaching and learning in Oman. *Computers & Education, 53*, 575-590.

Alsunbul, A. (2002). Issues relating to distance education in the Arab World. *Convergence, 35*(1), 59-80.

Baylor, A. & Ritchie, D. (2002). What factors facilitate teacher skill, teacher morale, and perceived student learning in technology-using classrooms*? Journal of Computers & Education, 39*(1), 395-414.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practices of second language acquisition*. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.

Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. (1983). The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom. Oxford, England: Pergamon Press.

McLaughlin, B. (1990). *Myths and misconceptions about second language learning: What every teacher needs to unlearn*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural; Diversity and Second Language Learning.

Motteram, G. (2013) (Ed.) *Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching*. London: British Council.

O'Neill, K., Singh, G., & O'Donoghue, J. (2004). Implementing elearning programmes for higher education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Information Technology Education, 3*, 313-323.

Pirani, J. (2004). Supporting elearning in higher education. Educause Center for Applied Research. www.educause.edu/ecar/.

Tomlinson. B. & Whittaker, C. (2013) *Blended learning in English language teaching: Course design and implementation*. London: British Council.

Warschauer, M. & Kern, R. (2000) (Eds.). Network-based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yaverbaum, G.J., Kulkarni, M. & Wood, C. (1997). Multimedia Projection: An Exploratory Study of Student Perceptions Regarding Interest, Organization, and Clarity. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia, 6*(2), 139-153. Charlottesville, VA: AACE.

CHAPTER ONE

BLENDED LEARNING IN EFL: ADOPTING A PRINCIPLED APPROACH TO INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY

CLAIRE WHITTAKER
MCILWRAITH EDUCATION, UNITED KINGDOM

Abstract

In recent years there has been a shift in emphasis in publications away from highlighting how various technologies can be employed in language teaching by listing ways to use them (e.g. 10 ways to use a blog) to giving pedagogy a central role and organising activities around such areas of language learning as the four skills, grammar and vocabulary. Along with this shift has come a greater emphasis on integrating technology in a principled way (Walker & White, 2013) or by using a principled approach (Hockly, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Whittaker in Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013); and to achieve this end questions and checklists have been produced to support teachers. This chapter will consider advice given in the literature on how to achieve this principled approach to integrating technology into courses by determining the degree of overlap, the drawbacks, and suggesting how we can proceed from this point.

Background

My interest in blended learning course design dates back to 2003 when I was the Training and Systems Manager with the British Council on a Military English Support Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). One of my main tasks was to redesign the blended learning courses (which combined a face-to-face component with a computer component and a self-study component) that were being used to teach English to military personnel in the Armed Forces of BiH. The primary driver for this change was the need to ensure post-project sustainability in terms of cost (the

courses should be inexpensive to run once international funding was removed), content stability (the content should be valid for a significant period of time), and instructor fit (unqualified military instructors who taught on the courses should be able to deliver the redesigned versions).

Wanting to approach this redesign task in an informed manner, I turned to the literature for advice, only to discover at that time a distinct lack of information on the how to blend, apart from stressing the importance of approaching it in a principled way (Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Neumeier, 2005; Sharma, 2006; Mayes & de Freitas, 2007). Fortunately, the situation has improved, with recent publications providing more comprehensive guidance on how to integrate technology in a principled way (Walker & White, 2013) or by adopting a principled approach (Stanley, 2013; Hockly, 2011). Despite this improvement, definitions are not given on what is meant by the terms 'principled approach/way', but it is assumed that they mean employing a systematic approach to the design process that is driven by pedagogy, that adds value to learning, and that is underpinned by language learning theory.

In my opinion, this surge in interest in integrating technology in a principled way is a welcome addition to the literature, since I have worked with tech-savvy teachers who, despite having sound knowledge and experience of using a wide variety of websites, tools, apps, etc. in their language teaching, lack know-how on how to design blended learning courses and incorporate technology in a principled way. Interestingly, in recent publications, blended learning, which can be defined as 'a language course which combines a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology' (Sharma & Barrett, 2007, p. 7), is not as widely referred to as it once was with authors now referring to integrating technology or incorporating TELL (technology enhanced language learning). It is not clear what the rationale for this shift is, but for the purpose of this chapter I shall not distinguish between these terms and assume that the advice given on adopting a principled approach is relevant for all. This chapter, then, will consider in chronological order, dating back to 2005, the advice given in the literature on blended learning course design or incorporating technology into language learning in ELT, critique it from a practitioner's perspective, determine the degree of overlap and the drawbacks, and suggest how we might proceed from here.

Neumeier's framework (2005)

The first comprehensive guidance on how to design a blended learning course that I am aware of was provided by Neumeier (2005), who

developed a framework of parameters (Table 1), which originated from a 33-hour job application course in a German university. Neumeier defined blended learning in relation to her study as being "a combination of face-to-face (F2F) and computer assisted learning (CAL) in a single teaching and learning environment" (2005, p. 164). The hope was that this framework would "help course designers and practitioners to move closer to answering the initial question of which combination provides the optimal basis for language learning and teaching given the particular conditions at hand." Neumeier (2005, p. 176).

Table 1: Neumeier's framework (2005)

Parameter	Individual descriptors
1. Mode (typically F2F and CALL)	• Focus on mode • Distribution of modes • Choice of modes
2. Model of integration	• Sequencing of individual modes • Level of integration
3. Distribution of learning content and objectives and assignment of purpose	• Parallel or isolated
4. Language teaching methods	• Use of teaching methods in each of the modes employed
5. Involvement of learning subjects (students, tutors and teachers)	• Interactional patterns: individual vs. collaborative language learning activity • Variety of teacher and learner roles • Level of autonomy
6. Location	• Classroom, home, outdoors, computer room, institutional settings

Frustratingly, I only discovered Neumeier's (2005) framework after we had resigned the blend in BiH, but reading it was a revelation, since Neumeier had so clearly articulated many of the considerations that we had taken into account during the redesign process. In my opinion, this framework is still relevant today and its strength lies in the fact that it

originated from an actual course that Neumeier designed and moreover that it is underpinned by theory. Admittedly, it could be developed further, for example, with reference to the third parameter, consideration could be given to how the modes (F2F & CALL) complement each other in terms of their learning aims and how content is linked between the two. Moreover, it could be made more accessible to a novice blended learning course designer by simplifying some of the terms and by providing more examples from the course that it originated from to illustrate the descriptors. Despite this, it still provides an excellent starting point for any practitioner.

Sharma & Barrett (2007) – Four guiding principles

In 2007, Macmillan published a key text for ELT practitioners by Sharma and Barrett on blended learning that went by the same name. Despite the fact that blended learning had been widely used in corporate training and higher education, this publication, to my mind, cemented the use of the term in ELT and heralded its central role in the field. This publication was aimed at teachers with little experience of technology and it offered an introduction to each technology, (e.g. IWBs, The Web, office software) with a description of what it was and how to use it.

In this publication Sharma and Barrett (2007, pp. 13-14) suggest following four guiding principles when considering a blended learning approach. The first principle is to "separate the role of the teacher and the role of technology" as these roles are not interchangeable, though they are complementary. The second is to "teach in a principled way" by focusing on the learners' needs and by making sure that the instruction is pedagogically driven rather than simply using technology because it is there. The final point has been more recently restated by Stanley (2013, p. 3), who refers to the 'because it is there' approach as the Everest syndrome, so coined because it was Mallory's reason for wanting to climb Mount Everest.

The third principle is to 'use technology to complement and enhance F2F teaching' and Sharma and Barrett stress that integration is key and that there is 'a close correlation between the content of the lesson and the online materials'. This seems to reflect Stracke's (2007) findings which indicate that a lack of connection/complementarity between the two modes (F2F and CALL) is a reason that students leave blended learning courses. For the last principle, Sharma and Barrett (2007, p. 14) quote Jones (1986), who observed that "it's not so much the program; it is more what you do with it". To illustrate this, they provide three examples of how to

use a CD-ROM, from an individual using it alone at home, to follow-up practice in self-study or at home after a class, to actually using it in class as part of a presentation.

Despite Sharma and Barrett's (2007, p. 8) warning that "a blended learning course run without a principled approach may be seen as an 'eclectic' blending together of course components, and can end up as rather a mish-mash", these four guiding principles do not provide practitioners with a particularly robust basis on which to build a blended learning course. Furthermore, although I presume the principles were drawn from experience, since both authors had extensive teaching backgrounds, they are not accompanied by clear examples drawn from practice, which is a shortcoming in my opinion. However, as one of the first publications on blended learning in ELT, and one that played such a key role at the time, it is hard to be too critical.

Dudeney & Hockly (2007) – Course design for online learning: Considerations

In the same year that Blended Learning was published, How to… teach English with technology by Dudeney and Hockly was released, which also described the new technology tools (e.g. websites, email, chat & blogs) and showed teachers how they could use them in the classroom. With reference to online learning courses (it is not entirely clear if by this the authors mean 100% online or blended), they put forward a list of questions (Appendix 1) under 5 headings: delivery mode, task design and materials, learners, teacher/tutors, assessment and evaluation. They state that "for a course or study programme to demonstrate good practice in online learning, [these] questions need to be answered satisfactorily at the design stage" (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007, p. 140).

This is a comprehensive and practical list of questions, one which I have often returned to, and which I drew on to produce my own list in 2013, which is discussed later in this chapter. One of its key strengths is the inclusion of four questions under the heading 'assessment and evaluation', since to my mind this is an area of blended learning course design that is often overlooked. One of the four questions under this heading is 'How will learners' coursework be assessed and graded?' This, I feel, is an important question as feedback that I have received from teachers is that if the online work is not assessed then their learners do not consider it to be an integral part of the course and treat it as an optional rather than compulsory component. Moreover, Biggs (1999), in Mayes and de Freitas (2007, p. 14), says that "the task of good pedagogical design [is]

one of ensuring that there are absolutely no inconsistencies between the curriculum we teach, the teaching methods we use, the learning environment we choose, and the assessment procedures we adopt". Therefore, if we overlook the final stage, can we claim to have achieved a good pedagogical design?

A further question under the same heading asks 'How will the success – or otherwise – of the course itself be evaluated?' which I interpret to mean how will the 'effectiveness' of the course be measured. If this interpretation is correct, then this question is key, because little has been written on the actual effectiveness of blended learning, although a recent meta-analysis of effectiveness studies on computer technology-supported language learning conducted by Grgurović et al. (2013, p. 165) concluded that "second/foreign language instruction supported by computer technology was found to be at least as effective as instruction without technology, and in studies using rigorous research designs the CALL groups outperformed the non-CALL groups". However, with regard to blended learning, they call for more research because of the contradictory results they observed regarding its effectiveness in promoting language development and because of its growing importance in language classes.

Hockly & Clandfield (2010) – Initial questions and scenarios

In a later publication, Hockly and Clandfield state that "there are some initial questions to ask yourself when designing and delivering your blended or online course" (2010, pp. 11-12), which are:

- How much of your course will be online?
- What parts of your course could be best offered online?
- How are you going to offer the online part of your course?

According to Hockly and Clandfield, once you have considered these questions and answered them to your satisfaction then you are ready to design your course.

These authors (2010) continue by providing four course scenarios, namely, mainly face-to-face, half-and-half, mainly online, and fully online. With the support of a blank course plan (Table 2), they then demonstrate how to build courses based on those scenarios and this could be with the use of a coursebook.

Table 2: Blank course plan, Hockly & Clandfield (2010, p. 12)

	Receptive skills (reading & listening)	**Productive skills** (writing & speaking)	**Language work** (grammar & vocabulary)	**Review activities**
Week 1 Topic:				
Week 2 Topic:				

This seems to be an extremely practical method to adopt, as often knowing where to start is the biggest challenge for course designers, and the examples Hockly and Clandfield (2010) give for each scenario are detailed enough to provide practitioners with a clear idea of how to proceed. A similar approach to integrating technology into the syllabus by using the coursebook (which may actually form the syllabus) as the point of departure in the design process is also proposed by Walker and White (2013) and Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum (2013). Adopting this approach 'means that the resources the teacher chooses and the learners use build on each other in a principled and structured way, rather than being a heterogeneous assortment of 'fun' activities' Walker and White (2013, p. 159). It should also be noted that there are alternative points of departure such as 'a theory, pedagogical model, course or syllabus, task, exercise, language skills, technology, or some kind of mix' (Levy and Stockwell, 2006, p. 12); but I would hazard that in ELT the most common is a course or syllabus in the form of a coursebook.

Using the coursebook as the point of departure was the approach that we employed in the redesign of the blend in BiH as we mapped activities from CD-ROMs to the coursebooks (which formed the syllabus) based on either grammar or topic links to demonstrate a connection or degree of complementarity between the two components. At the time we considered this to be an important design consideration based on Stracke's (2007) findings that a lack of complementarity was one of the reasons students left the blended learning course they were attending.

Hockly and Clandfield (2010) also urge course designers to decide if they want to use a set of tools that are all in one 'place', such as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). They state the benefits as being that 'learners' work, grades and contributions can be easily monitored. …it is also easier to build a sense of online community…' (Hockly and Clandfield, 2010, pp. 16-17). Stanley (2013) also suggests the use of a

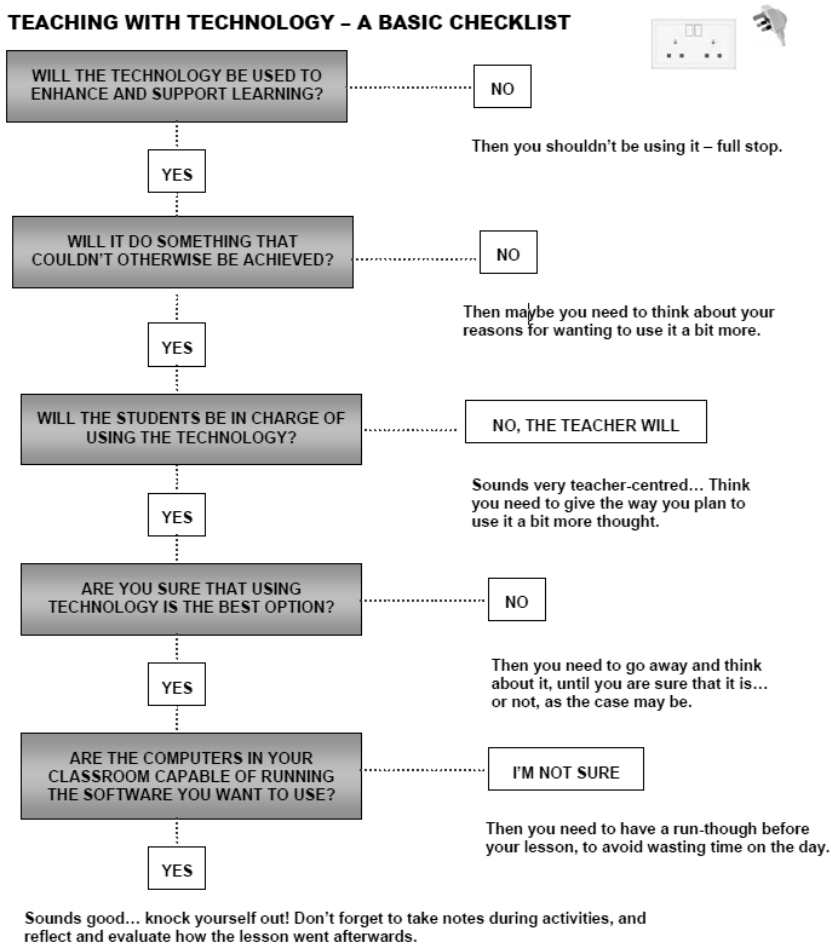
VLE for similar reasons and to adopt a blended learning approach to integrating technology into a course, for which they give Sharma & Barrett's (2007) definition that was quoted earlier. This seems to be happening in practice, since the decision to host the tools and activities in one place in a VLE was a popular choice in the 20 case studies outlined in Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013), see below, with seven course designers choosing to use Moodle in their blends.

Lyon-Jones (2011) – Teaching with Technology - A Basic Checklist

Lyon-Jones (2011) presents a basic checklist for teachers wishing to use technology in the classroom, which does not appear to come with an accompanying text expanding on its content (Diagram 1).

Compared to the other suggestions that are provided in the literature, the checklist seems perhaps too succinct and of limited application. That said, Lyon-Jones (2011) raises an interesting final question, not commonly addressed and which may be better placed nearer the top of the checklist, which highlights the contextual limitations that can ultimately shape a blend. Comments have also been made by Senturk in Stanley (2011) regarding the need for further questions if the answer to the first one is yes; whether the students always need to be in charge of the technology in question three; and whether questions two and four are actually the same.

Diagram 1: Teaching with Technology - A Basic Checklist, Lyon-Jones (2011)



Hockly (2011b) – Integrating Technology: Eight Questions to Ask Yourself

In this article, Hockly (2011b) acknowledges that teachers have little or no training in how to integrate technology into classroom practice, although, having recently run a course on blended learning course design, I believe that the situation is gradually changing. Hockly (2011b) states that the 'million dollar questions' for teachers are:

- How do I integrate technology into my classroom?
- Why am I using it?
- How do I make it work well?
- When do I use it?
- Where to start?

The second question is particularly interesting, because as practitioners we should be ensuring that we put 'pedagogy before technology' (Beetham & Sharpe, 2007, p. 3) and integrate technology for pedagogic reasons. The reasons given in the literature for blending in ELT, which are presumably built on the assumption that technology is incorporated primarily for pedagogic reasons, are saving costs, the ability for learners to be able to work at their own time, convenience and pace, flexibility, learning expectations, and Ministry of Education (or similar) directives from policy makers (Sharma, 2007; Hockly, 2011). Further reasons unearthed in Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) were motivation, autonomy, collaboration, market reach and experiential learning.

Rather than directly building on her earlier work in this area, Hockly (2011b) seemingly poses a different set of questions for teachers planning to integrate technology into classroom practice while considering the overall syllabus (Table 3). There are similarities, however, between the content in Hockley's (2011b) questions and suggestions in the literature that precedes it specifically with relation to the syllabus, skills, roles and location. An interesting addition, to my mind, is that of 'time & effort' and I think this also needs to be considered from a teacher's perspective in terms of how long a task/activity may take to design vs. how long it takes a student/students to complete.

Table 3: Integrating Technology: Eight Questions to Ask Yourself, Hockly (2011b)

Integrating Technology: Eight Questions to Ask Yourself	
1. Outcomes	What do students learn? Be clear on the aims of the lesson. Once you are clear ask yourself what the use of this particular technology brings to the learning outcomes, and how it enhances learning.
2. Added value	What does the technology bring to the activity? Check if the technology you are using enhances the activity in some way.
3. Time & effort	Is the time spent on the tool worth it? Will it be for long-term or short-term use? Ensure that using a tool is not going to take up more time and energy than the language actually being produced.
4. Syllabus	What's the fit? Take a look at your syllabus and think about what tools you could use, at what points in your syllabus, and to achieve what results.
5. Skills	What do teachers and students need to know how to do? Think about the technical and digital skills both you and your students need to be able to successfully use the technology/tool.
6. Location	Where and when will the tool(s) be used? In the computer room, at home, if using mobile devices inside and/or outside the classroom?
7. Role	Do students consume or produce? Ensure that your use of technology across the syllabus balances consumption with production.
8. Resources	What tools are available? Have a range of tools and repertoire of techniques to draw on. Design effective task types for the tool.

Stanley (2013) – The Five W's and an H

Stanley (2013, p. 4) calls for a principled approach to using technology "that has learning at its heart, where teachers question how and when to integrate technology into the classroom." To adopt this approach, Stanley (2013, pp. 4-5) poses six questions that practitioners should ask themselves and which expand on the guidelines and checklists produced by Hockly (2011) and Lyon-Jones (2011). The questions are:

- Why use the technology? 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 for? What language level is required to use it? How much teaching/technical experience/training is required to use it effectively?
- What is the technology best used for? It is worth considering whether 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/ connected classroom (i.e. with one computer and the internet)/ 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 of them is 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 learners, rather than 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 technology into your class. Will using the technology be a more efficient use of a teacher's, or the learners', time?

Stanley (2013) is not explicit on how he expanded on Hockley's (2011) guidelines and Lyon-Jones' (2011) checklist, and although parallels can be drawn between them I query the need to present the advice in yet another format without making clear the reasons for doing so.

Whittaker in Tomlinson & Whittaker (2013) – 24 design related questions

Up to this point in time very little of the advice seemed to have originated from practice, i.e. the actual creation of blends, and furthermore there was a complete dearth of detailed descriptions of blends in ELT in the literature. This has been addressed in the British Council publication entitled Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Course Design and Implementation, which provides detailed descriptions of 20 blends from a range of ELT contexts and poses 24 design related questions for

practitioners to consider when developing their courses (Appendix 2). The questions are organised under four headings:

1. Context
2. Course design
3. Learners, teachers and tutors
4. Evaluating and developing the blend

The questions were shaped by the advice provided in the literature on adopting a principled approach by Neumeier (2005), Sharma and Barrett (2007), Dudeney and Hockly (2007), and supplemented with supporting evidence from the case studies. Where I believe this publication differs from the suggestions that predate it, and where its strength lies, is in the fact that suggested answers and examples are provided to the questions with information drawn from the case studies. This not only demonstrates that the questions were being asked in the design process, but also provides course designers with more guidance and support than simply by providing a list of questions alone. For the purposes of this chapter, rather than re-examine the 24 questions I will consider the advice that the authors explicitly provided in their case studies on designing a blended learning course, which is an angle that has not previously been considered.

Advice from practice

The guidelines for the contributing authors to Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) suggested that they follow a basic structure that included a section on the lessons they had learned whilst designing their blends and the advice that they would give blended learning course designers. Not all the authors included this section in their case studies, but the advice from those that did can be collated under 7 headings: course development, integration/complementarity, tools, tasks, scaffolding, roles, and training (Table 4).

Table 4: Advice from practice, Tomlinson & Whittaker (2013)

Advice on…	Supporting statements from case studies
Course development	• Use an existing face-to-face course as the basis for the blend (Pardo-Gonzalez) • Add technological changes gradually. You cannot juggle with too many variables at the same time (Pardo-Gonzalez) • Blended learning needs to be seen as an on-going and gradual process in which the course evolves. It is not a final product. (Pardo-Gonzalez) • Think carefully about how long it takes to build effective online resources (Peachey) • Constantly evaluate, reflect and learn from your course so that you can use what you have learned to make the next course better. (Peachey) • Consider how the course will evolve and change as well as how improvements will be decided on (Russell) • …ensure that design decisions … are made with full readiness to move with the evolution of the technology (Beagle & Davies)
Integration / complementarity	• Integrate technology rather than simply use it (Pardo-Gonzalez) • There should therefore be a definite topic and skills link between class-based and online work, which learners need to be made aware of (Fleet) • Integrate the wiki into the class routine to encourage participation (Ingham) • Make sure you think about how the online and face-to-face elements will support each other and how best they can do this (Peachey) • Web-based activities should not only complement classroom aims but also add value by compensating for the limitations of the classroom (Fleet) • Ensure that everything you want the learners to do is integrated into the system of assessment (Sokol)

Tools	• Find the appropriate tools for your course. Not all tools are for all courses. (Pardo-Gonzalez) • Check to see if you can exploit freely available resources before you start to build (Peachey) • Carry out an IT audit to see if your proposed tools will run on your and your client's system (Russell) • Notice what is lacking in the traditional classroom which may be compensated for or improved by your blend. Then, investigate the affordances of various tools and select the most suitable approach for your context (Ingham)
Tasks	• Build online tasks around social interactivity (Peachey) • Each task in the course should be short enough to ensure that learners can do it without distraction (Sokol) • Ensure that the online tasks are challenging enough to provide enough room for thinking even to stronger learners (Sokol) • Build online tasks that can go beyond what can be done in a book or in a classroom (Peachey) • Build in learner autonomy and reflection (Peachey) • Make sure that the tasks are open (allow for a number of various correct answers) and that learners have a possibility to choose tasks (Sokol)
Scaffolding	• Use the classroom time to provide for an appropriate level of scaffolding for each learner if the technology fails to do it (Sokol) • If students have limited online learning experience, it is advisable to scaffold their participation by initially making involvement a course necessity and providing guided tasks (Fleet) • [when using a wiki] use a mix of scaffolded, guided activities whilst still allowing freedom to create new items (Ingham)
Roles	• Students and instructors will change the roles they have in a face-to face classroom (Pardo-Gonzalez) • Learners do not only learn from the trainer [but from each other too] (Keedwell) • Think carefully about the amount of online tutor support necessary and how to avoid tutor overload (Peachey)
Training	• Instructor training in the blend is also an on-going process (Pardo-Gonzalez) • It is important to train students to comment on their peers' work [when using a wiki] (Eydelman) • With regard to blended learning 'Just as students have to relearn how to learn, faculty have to relearn how to teach' (White et al.)

Clearly there is a high degree of overlap between the advice given above and the 24 design related questions posed by Whittaker in Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013), as they originate from the same source. However, what becomes more apparent when considering the advice from this angle, i.e. by taking it as the starting point rather than building on the advice found in the literature, is the emphasis on the following:

- the iterative nature of course design and the fact that building a blend is a gradual process;
- the importance of the links between the f2f and online work;
- the importance of choosing the correct tools and designing tasks accordingly;
- and lastly the human element of the design i.e. the need to train both teachers and learners on how to teach/learn on a blended learning course and the need to support the latter by scaffolding activities.

Commonalities, lacks and moving forward

Taken in its entirety, the advice being given on adopting a principled approach to language learning with technology is quite comprehensive. Furthermore, there is a degree of overlap, although because of the differing styles of presentation it is not immediately obvious and nor is it as extensive as one would imagine. From what has been outlined in this chapter, it would appear that the overlap mainly occurs in relation to teacher and learner roles, location, i.e. where the online work will be carried out, time, either spent in each mode (F2F and online) or using the tool, and the skills/training teachers and learners require.

From this point on, rather than providing practitioners with additional advice in the form of yet more questions, maybe we should begin to consolidate what has been written and start honing it to produce one comprehensive list that can then be trialled and tested and hence enhanced further. Moreover, I would encourage authors, when giving advice, to refer back to preceding work, to shore up their questions with language learning theory and research findings as far as possible, and to draw on examples from their practice to illustrate what they mean. This may also enable us to hear the learners' voice in the advice that is given, which at present is silent.

One key area to which scant attention has been paid in this recent proliferation of advice is the underlying language learning theories, such as behaviourism, social constructivism, and the more recent theory of connectivism, which is described as 'a learning theory for the digital age'

in Walker and White (2013, p. 6). The only references to it lie in the inclusion of a 'language teaching methods' parameter in Neumeier's (2005) framework and the question 'What methodology will the blend employ?' in Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013).

A focus on language learning theories features more prominently in the academic literature on CALL, TELL and e-learning. Levy and Stockwell (2006, p. 5) state that 'using theory as a point of departure is generally to be recommended…' to guide CALL, and according to Mayes and de Freitas (2007, p. 14), with reference to e-learning, "for good pedagogical design, there is simply no escaping the need to adopt a theory of learning…." In their recent publication on TELL, Walker and White consider the role(s) technology plays in learning and "aim to provide reflection on the relationship between various uses of technology and theories of language learning", since with this understanding teachers will be able to integrate technology into teaching and learning in a principled way (2013, p. xiii). If we work on the premise that adopting a principled approach means employing a systematic approach driven by pedagogy, that adds value to learning and is underpinned by language learning theory, then we, as practitioners, need to follow the academics' lead and push language learning theory to the fore in our advice on adopting a principled approach.

Conclusion

The amount of information that is now available to practitioners wishing to integrate technology into their course in a principled way has certainly increased over the last few years. It has also begun to play a more prominent role as the use of technology becomes more widespread and as the question 'should we use it?' is supplanted by 'how should we use it?' While the advice, if taken as a whole, is quite comprehensive, the different approaches that the authors take to presenting it, their limited reference to each other's work, to practice, to language learning theories and research, are lacks for the most part that need to be addressed to make it more robust.