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Technology In The Classroom
Mejiro University Presentation

Justin Nightingale

Due to a software engineering background, technology has consistently reared it's head into my classes at the primary school in an attempt at making the usage of English a more attractive prospect to students whom, unlike adults, are not usually self motivated in language acquisition.

The iPad has been my tool of choice since the first generation model in 2010. Now in it's 6th generation, it's lethargic interface, limited app store and connectivity limitations have been addressed but its closed 'Apple eco-system' continues to make it an expensive proposition for schools to use as a core component of the curriculum.

I was asked by Mejiro University in Tokyo to present how an iPad can be effectively used as a component in an English curriculum while not allowing the technology itself to become the focus of the lesson. Presentation time: 30 mins. Key points summarised as follows:

ABC

The desire for nursery age school children and the lower grades of primary school to actually learn and write the alphabet is usually outweighed by the overwhelming desire to be simply entertained which is where my first ABC app recommendation comes in:

Learning: "Talking ABC" by Jutiful(iPhone/iPad)(300 yen).

Each letter is displayed full screen. Upon touching the screen, the letter smoothly morphs into an animal beginning with that letter while displaying exaggerated and amusing character traits: a sneezing dinosaur, a bear with indigestion… noises. As the teacher swipes to the next letter everyone has to say the letter before they receive their animation reward.

For ages that are ready to learn stroke order, the following has worked well:

Writing: "Intro To Letters" by Montessorium (500 yen).

Taking advantage of the fact that Japanese children are well versed in using their finger to write kanji in the air during Japanese language lessons, this app directs children to write with the correct stroke order. Seeing the instant obedience of 40 waggling fingers in the air is impressive.

Flashcards Part 1

With the subtext of wanting to gently goad members of the audience to depart from their beloved paper flashcards, I presented two easy ways to adapt to using the iPad for this purpose.

For those creating vocabulary flashcards with audio/visual elements from scratch, staying in the Apple eco system is recommended:

"Keynote" by Apple(1000 yen).

This is a fully featured slide presentation tool(very similar to Microsoft's 'Powerpoint' and able to import its files)that has a companion app for the Mac – a key point. Upon creating a new slideshow on the Mac, it is saved to the iCloud and

automatically made available to the iPad app immediately thus making that just-before-the-lesson flash of inspiration a realistic proposition. You can also drag and drop pictures, sounds and videos and they too will be synced.

Flashcards Part 2

For those that have a collection of paper flashcards they'd like to preserve, iPad scanning apps can convert these into high quality PDF files just by using the built in camera：

"CamScanner" app by Softonic team（iPhone/ iPad & Android）

Flashcards are laid out on the floor in the order you'd like the PDF pages to be assembled, ready for you to take a picture of each page. The background surface and lighting don't seem to affect the end result as long as the room is reasonably bright. This app will automatically correct the colour, contrast, brightness and - more importantly - the angle at which the the pictures were taken so the perspective is always 'head on'. Once the edges of the pictures are automatically trimmed, the pictures are processed and bound into a PDF with a quality that defies its origins. User interaction is kept to a minimum.

This created file can then be sent to another installed app to present the finished PDF：

"Kindle" by Amazon（Free）.

A hidden feature of the Kindle app – it's one of the best PDF presentation tools I've come across.

Natural English

Making English real for children using TPR works well with class sizes of 5 -15 but when you have 40 and a room full of desks and chairs, it just becomes a blur of chaos. The following app has allowed me to extend that concept in a virtual way while giving the children freedom to express themselves from the safety（my safety）of their seat：

"Forest flyer" app by SAGO（iPhone/iPad & Android）. Other titles also available.

You're a bird given complete freedom to fly around a forest and interact with animals and objects you come across. Skating on an icy lake, reading a newspaper in a tree, pumping a water pump and making it rain, etc, this explorable world is surprisingly large and keeps the children transfixed.

I have to admit, as is often the case, how I use this app is not what I had originally planned. My idea was to point to trees, the sky, animals and for them to repeat in a fairly simplistic style. When（while using the app connected to the overhead monitor） it became clear that the children wanted to direct the bird in what he does and not just to follow the teacher's lead, I saw an English chance. The following is an example dialog：

Teacher：What should I do?
Student：Let's go right.
Teacher：Why?
Student：Because I want to see the duck.

Due to the wild enthusiasm of wanting to see new

things within the forest, I was able to guide them into using such dialogs with surprisingly little coaching. It works best with 4th and 5th grades but even 3 rd graders have surprised me in what they can say – just to see that duck.

Links

The following is a link to the video that was shown during the presentation. The first half deals with flashcards, the second half shows the 'Forest Flyer' app in action：

https：//www.dropbox.com/s/khtjji 3 rcoz 4 b18/English2014. m 4 v?dl= 0

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