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Technology In The Classroom

Justin Nightingale

I was asked by Seigakuin University to present some lesson ideas to primary school teachers with a slant on technology and the ubiquitous iPad. Presentation time: 60 mins. Key areas summarised as follows:

Warm up games

My general pattern in 45 minute lessons has developed into the following: 5 minutes warmup, 15 minutes w/s or book and the remaining time used for a relevant TPR activity. Here are my current warm up favourites:

1. Magic Finger
Think "Mexican wave" that you are conducting with your finger from left to right then right to left with. To start, point your finger towards one side of the class. While slowly swiping your finger over the students, make them throw their hands up in the air (as they are pointed to) while saying the target language: "I like sushi", "I don't like natto", "I'm a boy", etc.

Once they get the hang of it, speed up, spin around, point to yourself and (for the experienced only) use both hands. Grades 1–4.

2. iRace
Fill your iPad with target slides. They can be letters, numbers, pictures, colours, shapes, vocabulary – anything that can be produced verbally.

Get the students to form two lines with 10–20 students in each. This is a fast game so everyone will have a speaking chance without waiting long. As you swipe through each slide the first student in each line will verbalise the slide with a point being awarded to the fastest. At 30–40 cards a minute, 5 minute games take quite a bit of preparation but with a bit of randomisation each lesson its highly reusable.

Grades 1–6.
3. Dengon
Still going strong and always popular. Again, make two long lines of students and whisper a key phrase to the first person in each line and watch as they whisper the phrase to their compatriots, one by one, along the line. First line to finish gets a point.

Raz Kids

I'll be going into more detail regarding my trials with this reading system on the iPad and grade 6 in a separate paper. To summarise, Raz Kids is a virtual library filled with 800+ picture books all accessed over the internet via a browser or an iPad app that is primarily aimed at L 1 children but which contains a sufficient range of reading material to allow it's use with L 2 children, too.

As a child at school I watched children's stories on the class TV with a 'bouncing red dot' going over the subtitles to guide our reading. In a similar vain, the iPad app present 3 modes for each book which are used in order:

1) Guided reading – while the words are read by a native speaker, the words themselves highlight and the pages turn automatically.
2) Self reading – pages are turned by the user.
3) Quiz – multiple choice Q/A about the story.

There are 26 base levels of difficulty（A to Z）and only when a chosen book in each level is read perfectly to the teacher can they progress to the next level.

The main motivation to continue is the desire to use accrued points（by reading books）and 'spending' them in the virtual shop to decorate a virtual room with.

A good overview can be found here：https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L 1 gioIYERwo

A three minute video of the app being used by a few coerced–volunteers：
https://www.dropbox.com/s/lld38d 1 v 6 evpvni/razkids.mov
（Click "No thanks, continue to view" if you don't have a Dropbox account）.

OXO

Continuing my theme of coaxing oral production by relying on the written word as opposed to aural cues, my brand of OXO forces the participants to listen to where their opponent has placed their X or O. Both players are given the identical sheet. Each OXO grid is filled with words or letters. Without looking at the others' sheet and only listening to their voice, the game is played as normal.

Grades 3 -5.
An example can be found here（Those without a Dropbox account click, "No, continue to view"）：
https://www.dropbox.com/s/414p864cc12n 9 vz/OXO.pdf

Pronunciation Tree

Used successfully with students from ages 8 to 80. Tailored to Japanese users, it focusses on common grapheme and phoneme pairs that cause the most sagrin：B/V, L/R, SH/CH, etc.

An example can be found here（Those without a Dropbox account click, "No, continue to view"）：
https://www.dropbox.com/s/c43dg15jj 9 m 3 n75/PronTree.pdf

To basic premise is to progress from left to right, tracing a path along the network guided by the teachers voice. Each node in the network has 2 choices（for example, "bat" and "vat"）. If you hear and choose correctly, you'll progress from left to right along the network and arrive at the correct number on the right hand side which you duly shout out when the teacher has finished. Once confident, students can pair up and take the student/teachers roles.

（じゃすてぃん・ないてぃんげーる　聖学院大学総合研究所特任講師）