"ICY TEA? NO THANKS, I PREFER HOT COFFEE."

Oleh

ANGELIA LEE SOR GEK,
FRAULEIN ANGKING

Unit Bahasa Inggeris
Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang
leeangeliasg@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Information and communication technology! E-learning! (read eeeee-learning) and interactive learning are the current catch phrases in education today. For many teachers, these terms are vaguely understood and sadly, greatly feared!

This paper looks at a possible way for teachers to get ICT savvy without having to get brain transplants first! The key is for teachers (all teachers although English teachers are the focus here) to get on-line and to use the many tools already available on the www. What we need to do is to help teachers to critically assess sites and materials available on-line. We need to show them good sites to go to and to network with the large community of schools and teachers on the www.
Going on-line also brings the added bonus of giving our students a REAL reason for learning English. A group of six children of between 9 – 13 years of age from Kuching actually participated in an online shared Christmas Story writing project hosted by gigglepotz.com.

So, ICT or hot coffee for your classroom?

INTRODUCTION

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) like its homophone (near, namesake) "icy tea" has been much discussed. And, like the beverage it has its share of ardent advocators as well as critics. So, what IS this thing that's causing such fervour in some circles and in others, fear? A definition given by MCEETYA (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia, 2001) states that ICT refers to "technologies used for assessing, gathering, manipulation and presentation or communication of information." So, intimidating acronym aside, all ICT boils down to is, collecting, examining, using and spreading information! Now that we've got that out of the way, how do we as teachers use it to enhance our teaching and to bring our students to higher levels of achievements?

It was in an effort to find answers to this question so that we could participate in an Inter college Pedagogical Exposition in 2001 ("Expo Inovasi Pedagogi", organized by the Teacher-training Division of the Ministry Of Education in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, October 2001), that we turned to the Internet and the World Wide Web (www) for answers. Our search led us to conclude a number of things about the integration of ICT into a classroom (although our primary focus was on the English Language classroom, the facts we uncovered can be used across the curriculum).

Well, the first thing we discovered was that there is no magical short cut but the good news is teachers don't have to get brain transplants either. The road to integrating ICT into our classrooms is to USE the technology. Yes, it's that simple (or that difficult, if you choose to allow your techno phobia to get the better of you). So you must have a computer at home, you must use a word processor for writing, spreadsheets for class records and presentation software. The more we use the technology the friendlier it becomes and we become techno literate. We have to get started now and there are no two ways about it - 'new' technology becomes obsolete three years after it is introduced (March, 1999). So we either pull up ours socks and get a start on this technology or, risk being left behind as museum exhibits right next to the extinct dinosaurs and dodo bird.

> *"Educators must prepare for a technology permeated future by keeping up with change. They must learn to adopt effective strategies, such as reading technical and educational publications, attending training sessions, and perusing Internet web sites, for keeping as current as possible on new and anticipated technologies as well as methods of using them.… Technology is coming to represent both a constant resource and a continual reminder that educators never can be satisfied with their methods, skill levels, or results"*
>
> *(Roblyer, 2000).*

In our exploration of the www we also discovered that we have to get our computers connected to the Internet. We must connect to the www – word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software are only just the beginning. A teacher who wishes to be effective and remain effective has to surf the www. If you have never gone online and are worried about your first forays into the wide, wide world of the www, worry not. We found many web sites that offer helpful and easy to follow online tutorials for novice surfers –
http://webquest.sdsu.edu/searching,
http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/genre,
http://www.ozline.com/learning/stumble_js.html
http://school.discovery.com.

All the sites quoted above will guide you safely through the web and, according to Bernie Dodge (2001), you will emerge as a "web Jedi master." The three sites are not the only ones available for novice surfers. However, we find these three to be among the most novice friendly. Also, if you wish to REALLY become acquainted with web terminology, Kathy Schrock at Discovery School.com (http://school.discovery.com) is an excellent site to hit.

Our exploration also made us aware that there are a mind-boggling number of educational and so-called educational web sites available on the www. We feel that it is here that the

teacher will encounter real problems – which web site is suitable? So, after becoming acquainted with the fine art of surfing, the next thing teachers will have to do is to critically evaluate the worthiness, reliability and credibility of many web sites in the www. This is where the teacher's knowledge of his/her subject matter and learners come into play. Other educators may make informed suggestions but it takes the teacher himself/herself to make the final decisions as to what will or will not work in his/her class of learners.

For our project, we evaluated web sites based on their content, language suitability, and accessibility, speed at which the pages downloaded and how frequently the web sites are updated. We also looked for endorsements from other web users. We discovered that real people populate the virtual world of the World Wide Web. There is a growing legion of teachers and educators as well as students of all ages who are getting online and they are ready to share their experiences and to learn from other individuals. We have to build a network with these teachers and classrooms. There is much to be learnt from the success and tribulations of those who are more experienced than us. We found that when we sent e-mail to the Web Master/Administrator, we sometimes got replies and if we left questions, we got useful suggestions and hints as well. We continue to exchange e-mail with several Web Masters who are making a real difference in the www by their contributions.

We discovered that ICT is not as frightening as it sounds or appears to be to the uninitiated. We also discovered that there are many tools available for teachers to use on the www – best of all they are free! We found web sites where we could make interesting worksheets for example, multiple choice questions, word mazes, and crossword puzzles. In short, we found a whole array of tools that a net savvy teacher could utilize for his/her teaching. We decided that we should show teachers that the only way to use and integrate ICT into the classroom is by actually using it. So, for our college entry, we proposed a class web page that a teacher can use to organize and teach his lessons. We came up with a class web page for an imaginary Year 5 class that we referred to as "5 Mawar".

"5 Mawar"

 The suggested lesson and class web page seek to show that a teacher does not have to be a techno genius – just techno literate. The main software used are Microsoft Word, Microsoft Powerpoint, and Microsoft Front Page. There is no sophisticated software here that was written by an IT expert. As was pointed out in the Introduction, a teacher has to use technology. A teacher who is already familiar with word processing (Microsoft Word) will easily learn the ropes on how to use Microsoft's Front Page for web building. You don't need to be familiar with html (a language used in the Internet), you just need to be familiar with word processing. Also, teachers can use the '5 Mawar" web page as a template to help them build a web page for their own classes. Or, teachers can use the many templates available in Microsoft's Publisher.

The integration of ICT in this suggested lesson happens not just during the one-hour lesson – what our Expo entry sought to show is that ICT can be an integral part of how the language

teacher organizes and manages his/her classroom. For this, the teacher uses a class web page. The class web page has the following pages:

An index or home page – this page gives a short introduction of the class and of how the class is organized Our 5 Mawar home page has this introductory message, "This is our class home page. We use this web page to help us study English. We learn English by doing exercises, listening to our teacher and friends, and best of all, by using this class web page."

This is a page where students have a chance to review the activities of previous lessons. This allows students to go back and re-do activities that they may have enjoyed and wish to repeat, or that they were not able to complete with great success earlier on. There are sub-pages under this page and they are organized according to the areas of interest/topic. For the purpose of the Expo in 2001,we simulated a web page where two areas of interest have already been covered – "Plants" and "Animals".

This page helps students keep track of what they have learnt. It provides them with tangible evidence of their lessons and their learning – not just dog-eared exercise books and tattered workbooks. They get to see, at the click of a mouse, the work that they have done. This will give them a sense of achievement and with this, the motivation to persevere, to work hard (or, harder). The students get to see the little steps and giant leaps that they are taking. They can watch their knowledge build, re-organize previous knowledge and make new connections.

For teachers, this page is an excellent record of what he/she has done in the class. The teacher will have a record of his/her performance that can only be the envy of other teachers. The web page will showcase the teacher's use of ICT to enhance learning as well as provide an indication of the close collaboration and co-operation that exists between the teacher and the students.

"Grammar"

This is a page where students can make quick references to check the rules regarding common tenses and/or do grammar exercises. This page has two sub-pages – "Tenses" and "Grammar exercises". The grammar exercises have either been copied (with permission) or have been linked to web pages on the www. The regular teacher may add exercises he/she has designed and link them to this page so that students get a wide variety of materials to work on.

This page is not meant to replace the teacher as a point of reference. The teacher is always present and ready to provide personal assistance. This page seeks to provide students with a way to find out or revise grammatical rules on their own – to do some self directed and self-access learning. This will encourage students to take charge of their own learning as well as make them more independent and resourceful learners. Learners who are self directed are more likely to retain the knowledge they acquire than teacher directed learners. Also, each student is special and has his/her own individual needs and learns at his/her own pace. This page allows students to check grammar rules and work on as many exercise as they wish.

"Our dictionary" This is a page that students, with the teacher's assistance, build as they are learning. This page, like the "What we've done" page is organized according to the areas of interest. As with the "What we've done" page, there are two sub-pages here, "Fruits" and "Animals". The dictionary contains pictures of animals and fruits drawn by the students. The teacher helps them scan the pictures to place on the class web page. The dictionary also features students saying the words. So, the dictionary contains pictures, definitions as well as sound.

The class dictionary grows as the students learn new words and terms. They will be able to see this dictionary grow and hence feel a sense of achievement and pride. There is nothing more motivating than success. With success students will become more confident and therefore more prepared to take on new challenges. The teacher can then take his/her students beyond the confines of their classroom into the global classroom of the www.

The active contribution of the students to this page is an example of constructivism in action. The theory of constructivism is described as:

> *".. one of the several theories of learning, building upon what cognitive theorists discovered about how mental structures are formed. John Dewey was one of the founders of this theory. He believed that in order for learning to occur, education needed to move away from behavioural methods and create models of teaching ad learning where students were actively involved in the learning process."*
>
> *(Poole, 2000)*

"Our bookworm" This is another page that students help to build. This page allows students to share their experience with print – with books. They tell each other about good books that they have or are reading. This is an incentive to get students to read extensively. The contributions to this page can either be exclusively from the students or from the students and the teacher. Students should be asked to take turns to make contributions to this page. The books discussed here may be electronic books they have read online, on CD-ROMs, or, regular printed books, the old fashioned kind.

"Our journal" This page is an online journal where students talk about what they have learnt, what they enjoyed doing and they can contribute suggestions as to how to make their lessons more enjoyable and effective. The teacher can leave the entries permanently online or, periodically save entries into sub-pages that can be viewed when so desired. Once again, the entries are classified according to the area of interest. There are other ways of doing this. A teacher may choose to classify the entries according to calendar months. What is important is that the teacher takes note of students' problems and suggestions and not just look for praise about the lessons in the entries. If a suggestion is useful, the teacher should implement changes as soon as possible. If criticism has been directed against any activity or exercise, then it should be removed and not repeated in future lessons.

"Today's lesson" This is a page where students go to in order to see what the day's lesson is about. Whatever material the teacher has used during set induction and/or presentation will be placed here for students to review. Students may choose to go straight to the task for the day – to the sub-page, "Today's

task". In "Today's task" students can read the instructions that the teacher had earlier given orally and they can print a hard copy of the instructions. From this page also, students can go online, if the day's lesson necessitates online work.

| "The Internet" | This is the page where students go to when they have the time, after they have completed their work. This page has two things – a selection of websites to visit as well as an e-mail composer. The |

websites that are listed have been suggested by the students or, have been found to be suitable by the teacher. This page contains a reminder of the possible dangers that students may encounter in the www. We cannot use the excuse that the web is filled with pornography and casinos to keep our students confine to the four walls of their classrooms. Students have to be aware of the dangers and to learn simple safety measures to be taken while surfing. The www provides students with a reason for learning the language. Forget about trying to preach the advantages of learning English to students who don't use the language outside the English Language classroom. The www will give proof of the need to learn English. It will also be the catalyst to spur students to work harder at their English.

GIGGLEPOTZ.COM - AROUND THE WORLD CHRISTMAS STORY

A group of six children participated in an online story-writing project hosted by Gigglepotz.com. The children were, Louisa Lee, Lydia Lee, Leon Tay, Calvin Tay, Darren Chin, and, Julia Chin. This project was undertaken to show that it is possible to get our students to work with students from other countries on a global project.

This was a shared story-writing project. This meant that each participating class contributed a chapter each to a book that would have 7 – 10 chapters depending on the number of schools that signed up. To sign up this group of six children of differing ages (from 9 – 13 years of age), permission was obtained from the administrators of Gigglepotz.com, We are very proud to say that ours was the only Asian country to participate. We wrote Chapter 5 of Book One. The other schools that co-wrote Book One were:

1. Reid Street Primary School, Darlington, Co Durham, England
2. Hicksville Middle School, New York, USA
3. Walter Zadow Primary School, Arnprior, Ontario, Canada
4. Lewis King Elementary School, Quebec, Canada.
5. Cumberland Elementary School, Wisconsin, USA
6. Billingsport Elementary School Paulsboro, NJ. USA
7. Our Lady of Lourdes National School, Hospital Hill, Bunclody, Ireland

Another milestone in this project is that it was conducted entirely online. It was written between November 22 and November 25 2001. This was therefore during the holidays. So we kept in touch via e-mail. The children had already been given a common e-mail account ourclass01@hotmail.com and so they read the previous four chapters via this mailbox and they sent their contributions to leeangelia@hotmail.com .In this manner, the 'class' complete Chapter 5 and was able to do it within the three days given.

All the children expressed excitement and a sense of achievement at having contributed to a global story. They also expressed pride at having their work published online. The book we co-wrote with seven other schools is still available for reading and downloading at http://gigglepotz.com/aroundstory.htm

CONCLUSION

There are no short cuts to integrating ICT into our classrooms. Teachers have to be techno literate. Teachers have to go through the process of leaning how to use computers and of how to use the Internet. Teachers must have e-mail accounts.

We must remember a number of VERY important facts about technology. According to Tom March, it takes teachers five to six years to integrate technology into their classrooms from the time the technology is first introduced to them. Herein lies one of the biggest paradoxes of IT/ICT integration; it only takes three years for any 'new' technology to become obsolete. Then there is the question of investing in software and hardware. Have you seen the amount of technology that's available? A teacher cannot, should not try to learn or manage them all.

So our suggestion is that teachers should not drag their feet any longer. Go on give ICT a try. You'll soon find that it will perk up your lessons and students much like the caffeine in tea or coffee perks teachers up each morning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beal, J. (2000) . Explore teaching and learning in an online environment in junior primary schooling. http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/judybeal/judykath.htm

Gigglepotz (2002) . Webquests for learning. http://gigglepotz.com/webquests.htm

IntegratingIT (2002) . Integrating Information Technology for the classroom, school and district. http://www.integratingit.com/

March, T (1999) . Ten stages of working the web for education, http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools/may99/march.htm

March, T (2002) . Working the web for education. Ozline.com. http://www.ozline.com/learning/theory.html

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia (2000) Recommendations of the report. MCEETYA. http://online.curriculum.edu.au/anr2000/index.asp?pg=ch10_recom.htm

Payton, T (1997) . Integrating technology in the classroom. http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/slides/integrate/

Schrock, K (2002) . Kathy Schrock's guide for educators. http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/

Warner, M (2002) . I.C.T. ideas. Teaching ideas for primary teachers.http://www.teachingideas.thenexus.co.uk/ict/contents.htm