

Making IT or faking IT?

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After over a decade of so-called 'normalisation' of computers in education, why are we no closer to real integration of technology in the TEFL classroom? This workshop examined reasons why teachers seem so loathe to use technology with students, and posed an ICT (Information and Communications Technology) skills set of relevance to both practising classroom teachers, and to trainers and Directors of Studies who wish to implement a principled ICT training programme with their trainees/staff.

There are a couple of extremely effective **teacher development groups** dedicated to exploring technology in the EFL/ESL classroom*, but these groups of self-motivated early adopters of technology are far from the norm. Why is this so? A cursory look at most syllabi for teacher training, at both pre- and in-service level, indicate that very little attention is given to training new or experienced teachers in how to apply technology to the classroom. Two respected examinations boards state the following as the aims for technology/CALL in in-service training courses:

“Uses of resources and technology (including audiovisual aids and CALL) & familiarity with published and, where available, online reference and other professional materials which may foster personal and professional development.” [Trinity Diploma syllabus]

“Using aids and equipment effectively – demonstrate understanding of the role of a wide range of technical aids and media including Information and Learning Technology... for classroom teaching, materials and classroom research.” [Cambridge DELTA syllabus]

Neither of the above syllabi extracts give trainers any real idea of what CALL/ICT areas to cover with trainees. As teacher trainers themselves have typically received little or no ICT training, this is an area which is hugely neglected in teacher training, and the result is teachers joining the profession with no knowledge of how to apply ICT to their classrooms, and little inclination to try (unless they find the area interesting on a personal level, and are self-motivated enough to try things out). Typically institutions themselves provide little in the way of extra training or support for ICT adopters in our profession. There are of course exceptions to this – the Polish government has put together an ICT syllabus for both pre-and in-service training of teachers, as have some other countries, and examination boards such as Trinity College London are now providing a special ICT in the Classroom course for EFL/ESL teachers (see <http://www.trinitycollege.co.uk/site/?id=705>).

Any teacher training programme, whether externally imposed by an examinations board, or in-house training, needs to seriously consider including a **coherent and relevant ICT syllabus**. Although exactly what is needed in this syllabus will vary depending on the local context and needs, and the individual needs and current skills level of the trainee teachers, there are some basic ICT areas that teachers these days should be familiar with. After all, many of our students are already conversant with, and using, these technologies in their everyday lives.

Below is a rough outline of some elements of an ICT syllabus, which is by no means complete or definitive, but which may serve as a basis for teachers, trainers, or Directors of Studies to work from. The syllabus consists of two main areas: **computer literacy** (or computer skills) and **methodology** (or the *practical* application of ICT to the classroom). You may want to add to this list yourself!

| Computer literacy | Methodology |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-processing skills (making worksheets, adding images etc.) • Email (opening file attachments, file formats) • Internet search skills and search engines • PowerPoint and presentations • Simple authoring tools (e.g. Hot Potatoes, Survey Monkey) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security (protection against viruses, firewalls etc.) • ---- • ---- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet-based activities (e.g. Treasure hunts, WebQuests, exploiting online materials) • Email (e.g. how to set up and implement a key pal exchange; email for homework etc.) • Chat (using text and/or audio chat with classes) • Blogs, wikis and podcasting • Online dictionaries and corpora / concordancing • Online professional development (teacher development groups, online courses and resources for teachers etc.) • ---- • ---- |

* For teachers interested in developing their own ICT skills, and how to apply these to their classroom practice, we particularly recommend joining either or both of the following groups:

- **Webheads** – http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/ - dedicated to exploring uses of technology in f2f (face-to-face) teaching.
- **Learning With Computers** -<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/learningwithcomputers/> - set up in March 2006 for those who are less confident with technology in the classroom, but would like to learn more.

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