

# Ways ESL Teachers Can Use Computers in their Classrooms

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An often discussed topic among faculty members is computers and yet there are some teachers who still have not started using them. If you have not started using computers, it is time to try.

## Introduction

Many schools are fortunate to have computers in the classroom. ESL classes and computers need to be interwoven. Before planning the next lecture, go to a web search engine, type in a topic that is going to be used in class, click "enter," and when you find something that interests you print the page. The printed page can be photo copied for the students. Follow the steps below and enjoy the happy and satisfied faces of your students who will be grateful to you because they will have learned English and also how to use computers. The units will be more interesting, vocabulary will expand, grammar will become fun, real life experiences will be faced, problems will be solved, grading will be more versatile, and so much more.

## Your Units Will Be More Interesting

Let us say today's lesson covers the weather. Type in weather and enter the search engine. Download certain material from the free downloads. Some material requires permission which is just a click away and the instructions for it are given on the same page. If you download a weather report, your students will get to see what the weather is like in other parts of the world and can instantly ask questions and take part in class activities or create their own. Have them use the language naturally. They can talk about what the weather is like in a distant place; what the current temperatures are; calculate the degrees from Fahrenheit to Celsius; and other activities. This especially welcomes and includes the students whose knowledge of English is at a lower level.

## Vocabulary Will Expand

The students' vocabulary expands enormously with brainstorming the driving conditions, traveling, car rentals, and other things. However, with the use of downloading it expands even further as visual data is present and this triggers responses. The student's book that you are using could be the best one on the market but the language needs are different for each individual and the authors of the books can not reach out to everyone 100%. The interests of your class will take you in the best direction possible. The students will start caring more about the course and wanting to participate even further. When allowed to be involved in various aspects of class procedures, the students become more constructive and creative. Motivation is maintained in this manner which is sometimes a problem even for the most experienced teachers.

## Grammar Can Be Fun

When the students are motivated, they will also want to expand their knowledge of grammar units and language points. Have them try out grammar exercises on the Internet. You can show them how by typing in the word "grammar" or a specific grammar unit and clicking "search." Different choices called "links" will appear and by clicking on them their pages will open. If, let us say, your students mix passive voice and reported speech, there is an instant solution to the problem. They can click on the explanations link and read about the particular grammar unit before doing the exercises rather than having to ask the teacher who then knows who forgot their grammar. It is quick and reduces so much stress for everyone. The students find a

way to solve their problems and the teacher gets the right answers. Additional practice is only a click away and what is remarkable is that it can be repeated as many times as each individual wishes without anyone knowing how many times it was.

## **Students Will Adapt to the Real Life Situations**

Our students need to practice critical thinking which can be encouraged and achieved via homework assignments and class discussions. If you have an Internet connection then you can do things simultaneously; however, if you do not, you can have students with computers bring in material for the next class period or bring in material from one of their other classes. It needs to be student generated material. Including the students in the whole learning process is very important. Once they are familiarized with the Net, they will start using it for their personal interests and needs. They will also be saving you the time you would use to gather class material.

Even having guest speakers becomes easier. If their schedules change and they do not have the time to travel to the school then they can be online guests. Computers have become a solution for business travel and constraints on time. Guest speakers are attracted to use this type of communication while the teachers are able to satisfy their students' interests.

## **Assessment Will Be Versatile and Easier**

When the students are creative, assessment becomes much easier for the facilitators. The students start becoming aware of their progress. What needs to follow is a path that will lead them to further improve and eliminate their English mistakes. Students can keep personal records which can be compared to the teachers'. Just be patient and be there to correct the mistakes. Students appreciate that you are not there to punish them (grade wise) for their mistakes. Attach various details to the final assessment score to get a more objective evaluation.

The students can also create quizzes with you to feel that their input counts and that they are a part of the whole assessment process. While making the quizzes, they will be learning the necessary material without being aware of it. They could also correct the quizzes. In a few months they might use software to create crossword puzzles or other activities by clicking on the toolbar icons. Many educational materials become just a click away. Progress flourishes, problems are solved, and the students are pleased because their feedback is heard and accepted. In due course you'll have expanded their knowledge of English along with their computer skills without any feeling of pressure or stress.

## **Conclusion**

Take it a step at a time. Just remember you are there to help the students learn English in an innovative way and the computers are your tools. Share your knowledge and have the students share theirs. Have them help you create class materials, let them teach you something about technology, and let them be the class facilitator from time to time. Try everything else that comes to mind that would help your students expand their knowledge of English. Welcome their ideas and praise their creativeness. Then share your new knowledge and the experiences with a colleague who might not have started using computers. Discuss your achievements and offer your support. Also, if you need help, the Internet is always there when no one else is.

## **Useful Internet References**

- <http://google.com>
- <http://iteslj.org>