

BETTER ENGAGING A PART TIME FACULTY IN THE USE OF INTEGRATED DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

An educational institution grows strong not just because of its buildings and facilities, but because of its highly trained and motivated teaching faculty. To achieve this, teachers must be constantly guided by the school's expectations of them.

As colleges continue to follow the global trend towards being more reliant on a part time faculty, holding regular faculty workshops/seminars is an effective way to keep such a diverse faculty engaged, supported and well trained, while also allowing for more communication and discussion within the team. From 2017 The English for International Communication (EIC) program at Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages (KIFL) has offered monthly lunchtime workshops for its EIC teaching faculty. As the program curriculum has become increasingly integrated with the use of digital technology, these workshops have focused on ensuring that teachers can make effective use of such technology, including training in Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom and Seesaw, digital applications along with the practical introduction of VR into the language learning classroom.

Such meetings have also provided the added benefit of not only responding to individual teacher's problems or concerns, but also allowing for an active discussion of how such technology can be practically integrated into the classroom curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important elements in the success of any educational institution, principally by ensuring that teachers feel better engaged and can experience a better sense of unity within the faculty. This should in turn promote the sharing of new ideas and allow for a better response to the difficulties teachers may be facing in the implementation of curriculum changes, thus “it is important for the success and effectiveness of academic institutions to become more aware of the communication system” (Ezzeldin, 2017).

Crucially such meetings should also serve as a means for teacher’s part time and full-time faculty to express their opinions and concerns regarding the curriculum and where future curriculum changes are required. Particularly as educational institutions continue to incorporate digital technology into the curriculum. Regarding the success of the curriculum and improved teaching practice such meetings can also offer a valuable opportunity for teachers to cross pollinate the knowledge and experience they have gained through their work at other institutions and contribute this knowledge towards the success of the institution. Finally, one must also note that such meetings result in teachers feeling more invested in the decision-making process taken and thus feel an increased sense of ownership in the success of the school.

Role of Technology

As the needs of learners change due to the advances in technology and the pace of change quickens, it is vital that such learners are equipped with the necessary skills to operate in a new digital world, whether that be in our schools, our offices or our homes. Coupled with this as a new generation of students who when they enter college are often more digitally aware than previous generations and find the use of digital technology more intuitive than their teachers.

For teachers today it is no longer enough to merely ask students of any discipline to make a PowerPoint presentation for a passive audience. Indeed for the foreign language student, it is vital that a practical use of digital technology is integrated into the language curriculum they are being asked to follow. If such technology is integrated correctly it will help students better understand the working world they are entering. Thus the teaching of such technology should not be a standalone subject limited to the basic word processing skills, rather it should be integrated in a way that is both practical and supports the curriculum in an effective and meaningful way. Whether that be through the use of LMS systems for sharing presentations or quizzes, the creation of digital content using tools such as iMovie or the use of Virtual Reality (VR) to enhance the learning experience.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

The technology support workshops offered by the EIC department at KIFL have been designed with a focus on using technology to support the major tenants of the English curriculum via the use of digital technology. Indeed, for the integration of technology to be successful, it must be based on the wants and needs of the students and the specific course

goals. With the introduction of technology serving to improve the individual goals of the course.

The Second Year EIC program at KIFL is centered around 4 key tenets:

Communication – A principal aim of the EIC curriculum is based on the “idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate via real meaning”. This is based on the notion that when students are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used. Thus a focus is made on allowing the students to use the language they are learning in the correct context.

Creativity – The aim here is to encourage the students to be innovative in the work they are asked to complete, with the aim of not only encouraging creativity but also increasing the students level of interest and challenging them to learn new skills. In the belief that by not only encouraging students to be better communicators, the goal must also be to challenge students to change the way they learn and to be able to put this into practice in the future.

Collaboration – A focus is placed on having students use their “people skills” to complete a task, thus by asking students to work with their peers, they will be a part of a community whereby everyone will lend support to one another. Students are therefore introduced to a range of digital tools that offers them the opportunity to collaborate in and out of class, with the hope that by encouraging students to work together “success will breed more success” (Ibrahim et al., 2015). For example: by introducing Google Drive students are given the opportunity understand to share and collaborate on a project, ideally resulting in students feeling more “in charge and empowered in terms of their own learning process”.

Critical Thinking – This follows the notion that as classes which involve elements of critical thought also tend to be generally more interesting and engaging. Coupled with this is the fact that as students are already operating in a digital world via their use of social media and other digital devices, it is critical that students should be able to critically gather what information is relevant and what is not.

Meeting format

Meetings are held on a monthly basis during term time, when dealing with a part time faculty the timing of such meetings is very important. Thus consideration is made regarding when is the most convenient time to hold the meetings. Using a flexible schedule of holding the meetings on the days when most EIC classes are held and alternating this day every month.

The meeting will start with the introduction of the “main theme”, typically followed by instructions of how to set up or initiate the digital technology that is being introduced that day followed by practical examples of how such technology is being introduced to support the curriculum. Finally, time at the end of the meeting is given to teachers to think of creative ways that they can imagine the new apps/digital programs can be implemented. One of the important aims in setting up such meetings was to ensure that an environment that was not only meaningful but that was also designed to allow as many people as possible to speak out.

Workshops

Within the 2019 – 2020 academic year, workshops took place introducing the following digital applications:

iMovie

During the course of the workshop teachers were given a set of examples of how they might use the video editing application iMovie to better enhance the English language class.

The following methods were suggested to teachers.

- Creating video presentations: This has been found to be the primary use of iMovie within EIC program. Using a mixture of audio, pictures and text video based presentations are a welcome move away from the usual passive Power Point based class presentation.
- Self instruction videos: Allowing students to create their own instruction videos, for example: cooking instructions or giving directions. With videos being shared via Seesaw with other members of the class.
- Off campus videos: As an alternative to Power Point presentations students have used this to take videos describing their home town or introducing a popular tourist spot.
- Digital story telling: Students have to make short stories, using additional features of iMovie as to include music and sound effects.

Seesaw

Seesaw is a platform that enables students to become better engaged in the learning process, enabling them to not only share materials that they have created, but also to collaborate with other other students and to reflect on the work they have uploaded. Firstly, teachers were shown how to can create a class account, allowing students to register by simply entering the “class code” the teacher has shared.

During the workshops teachers were provided with various examples of how they might use Seesaw in class.

- Short videos of language skills: Enabling students to record conversations or dialogues. For example: A class made “news program”, including interviewing and discussion of a topical news issue, can be made and shared with others in the class, while the comments section allows students to comment on the issue.
- Document the progress of a group project: Students work individually or in pairs or in a small group to record their work. Providing an opportunity for the students to edit work on editing and getting feedback on the use of their language. For example: A class newsletter can be edited by other students and checked for feedback by the teacher.
- Class blogs or student blogs: Students can use Seesaw as a place to post topics for discussion or to share their work. A seesaw blog gives students a very simple way to publish work to a broader audience in or out of class. For example: students can response and post to a “topic of the day”, enabling students to easily respond.

- Exam practice: Students can practice and perfect their language ability prior to a language test. For example: students can verbally record their answers to a set of pre-given questions. On reflection they can listen and revise their answers.
- Share presentations online: For example: Using the screen recording feature available on the iPad students can verbally narrate a story or presentation linked to presentation programs such as PowerPoint or Haiku Deck.

Google Classroom

Teachers were introduced to Google's LMS allowing teachers to digitally create and manage assignments as well as to provide feedback to their students. During the course of the workshop teachers were also shown how to use Drive, Docs and Slides. Every teacher at KIFL is supplied with a Google account which they use for emailing and for access on the Google Drive which they use for sharing information. During the course of the workshops teachers were shown the basics of how to create a Google Classroom and invite students to join the class. On a more practical note they were also shown how to:

- Create assignments in Google Classroom: Including adding content to assignments, using templates for assignments, as well as checking and returning assignments.
- Communicating with comments via Google Classroom
- Adding a shared document to Google Classroom.
- Creating auto-grading quiz's with Google Forms.

Kahoot

Kahoot, the game-based learning platform, was introduced to teachers as a digital tool that would enable them to create quizzes based on their class materials. In the course of the workshops teachers were shown:

- How to create a quiz based on the English magazines that their students receive as part of their reading and writing course.
- Searching for quizzes based on the topic they are teaching in class, and using that to better engage the students in the topic.
- Explaining to teachers how they can ask their students to make their own quizzes.

Google Cardboard

Google Cardboard was introduced to teachers as an inexpensive and relatively easy way to bring VR into the classroom, by combining the cardboard headset with the students iPhone. The workshop focused on the following practical uses:

- Taking students on a virtual field trip via Google Expeditions. Teachers were shown how to direct a field trip to places all around the world. This would prove to be a more engaging and worthwhile experience for the students.
- Asking students to watch and narrate a 360-degree video via YouTube. Teachers were shown the example of taking their class on a sightseeing tour of Paris. With the presenter narrating the tour and pointing out local landmarks and in turn creating their own landmarks.
- Taking 3D images. Teachers were shown the example of asking their students to take a 3D image via the Cardboard Camera app on their iPhone. Students could then make short presentations of local landmarks.

CONCLUSION

The value of such workshops must be viewed not solely on the the “introduction” of digital technology, but how it can be practically and effectively integrated into the language curriculum. In the case of KIFL, how it can be used to promote the key skills that aim to be taught as part of the curriculum, encouraging communication, collaboration and the promotion of critical thinking. This allows students to take advantage of of the technology in a useful, meaningful and innovative way.

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