

## AUTHORING TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING THE CONTENT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

The advances in technology and rapid spread of internet pave the way for using technology in language classes more easily. Enriching online or traditional language education with the use of authoring tools is an important aspect in presenting the content to language learners more effectively. Both online and traditional language education have some sorts of well-known tools supporting teachers, particularly language teachers such as Articulate, Captivate and Camtasia. However, these tools are costly for developing the content and require advanced computer skills. On the internet, there are many freely available authoring tools most of which are actually easy to use with basic computer skills to enrich the content. For example, jing, voxopop and wallwisher are some of those freely available tools. The purpose in this study is to behave like a web watcher and explore some of the authoring tools freely available on the internet for English language teachers. This type of investigation is useful for language teachers to have knowledge about the opportunities through which they can enhance the language content they present to their students.

**Key Words:** Language Education, Content Development, Authoring Tools

### INTRODUCTION

Today, the use and variety of computer and internet technologies in educational settings to support teaching has become increasingly popular (Warner, 2004, Basal, 2011). It is accepted by many scholars that using educational technology in teaching has a potential to enrich the learning (Jonassen & Reeves, 1996; Means, 1994; Chun & Plass, 2000; Çağiltay, Çakiroğlu, Çağiltay & Çakiroğlu, 2001). Language teaching requires technological advances more than other social fields largely because of the opportunity to use voice and video belonging to the native speakers of the target language and to use it in language classes (Kartal, 2005:82). Seljan, Banek Zorica, Špiranec and Lasić-Lazić (2006) suggest that new technologies have limitless potential to be used in language education. The important thing is how to use these technologies in language classes and how to guide students in language teaching with technology (Paulsen, 2001).

Teachers are concerned about the effective integration of technology to achieve meaningful learning for their students (Koehler, Mishra, Hershey, & Peruski, 2004). Moreover, as language teachers realize the potential of technology in language teaching, its uses increase (Butler-Pascoe, 1997). Internet is full of freely available tools for language teachers. Integration of materials developed by using these tools can have positive effects on improving the content presented to the students. Moreover, since language learning is not limited in a classroom experience, supporting English language teaching with web technologies is crucial (Cephe & Balçıkanlı, 2012). It is therefore important for language teachers to have knowledge about the education technology that they can use in their teaching environments.

Today's students are not threatened by the use of technology since they are *digital natives*. Students' interests and abilities have undergone a tremendous change with the continuously available information on the internet and the unceasingly growing number of computers connected to the internet (Marzak et al., 2001). They use social media, watch videos from the net and communicate with their peers through the internet. For teaching

to be relevant, effective and meaningful, language teachers like all other teachers should change their lecture design and integrate technology into their lectures. To put it succinctly, the materials that they use during the lectures should include technology. It is clear that when learning environments have potential to draw learners' attention, more meaningful learning brings about (Cephe & Balçıkanlı, 2012). To this end, integration of technology is one alternative to make the content more attractive and motivating for students.

Material development is an important aspect of language teaching. In e-learning platforms and traditional classroom settings, lecturers are the content creators within the limits of their experiences and text books (Başal, Ergüzen & Gürol, 2011). Teachers have always been material developers for their classes even if they primarily use some kinds of text books published by well-known publishers. They use some authentic materials which they prepare other than the course book. With the spread of internet, a rich resource for language teaching, language teachers have started to use sources from the internet in their classes. Internet offers a variety of authentic materials for use both by teachers and students (Chen, 2008). Internet has changed the materials from being text-based to more interactive ones. In other words, the development of internet has brought about a revolution in education, particularly in language teaching. In this revolution, teachers are the key players to integrate any innovation to their classes (Pettenai, Giuli, & Khaled, 2001). In this revolution, developing content with the tools obtained from internet is no exception. In fact, these tools are a *wonder drug* for enriching the content.

Using materials that can enrich and ease learning in education is crucial (Basal, 2011). Language materials used in language classes are generally text-based. This is actually true in online education, being materials text based in the form of pdf or word document. In fact, according to Jones (1999) and Soo and Ngeow (1998) in the early days of computer assisted language teaching, materials were also text-based, however, this is not the case now (cited in Blake & Delforge, 2004). Moreover, in traditional language classes, the situation is no different, the content being mostly course books. Language teachers use web-based resources providing multi-media to create authentic materials to increase student motivation (Arnold, 2007) and benefit from it to create a learning environment with a combination of video, graphic, audio and other interactive properties (Muehleisen, 1997). Moreover, both teachers and students hold positive attitudes towards technology use (Felix, 2008, Basal, 2011). Since our students are already digital natives, we should engage them in learning by employing familiar tools that they enjoy using. If the technology that the students use in their real life is integrated into their learning environments, they are more likely to enjoy from the lectures.

Teaching tools freely obtained through internet have actually becoming more advanced and reliable. Nowadays, using these tools in language teaching is becoming popular among language teachers. One of the problems for language teachers when integrating technology into their classrooms is lack of technical knowledge and the cost of softwares. These two problems can keep away language teachers to use them in their lectures, especially those having basic computer skills. However, there are tools on the internet which are free to use and require basic computer knowledge. These freely available authoring tools help teachers create interesting and interactive materials for use in their classes.

Authoring tools are programs that aid teachers in developing computer-based learning materials. In English language teaching, teachers can make use of authoring tools to create web-based materials including tests, quizzes and exercises. They can also enrich the teaching material with audio and video. Moreover, language teachers can easily combine text, video, audio and image for creating more interactive and interesting materials. Since internet is a huge and complex compilation of things, it is sometimes hard to find appropriate tools for teaching English. This study aims to introduce some of the freely available tools for use in language teaching from the internet and give some ideas on how to use them in language classes.

## FREE TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING

The internet, hosting many freely available tools for language teaching, is one of the most powerful ways for teachers to develop dynamic, interactive and motivating materials for their students. If teachers make use of these tools, *their voice* can surpass the classroom. These tools can be used in traditional education as well as distance education. With the use of these tools, web-based distance education will possibly be more interesting, entertaining and motivating and traditional education not be limited within the classrooms. The following are some of tools that can be used in language teaching.

**[www.wallwisher.com](http://www.wallwisher.com)** : Wallwisher seems like a virtual sticky notice-board, allowing students to express their ideas easily on a given topic. Unlike real notice-boards, students can post stickies with images, link and even videos. Teachers can arrange access rights so that only their students can post something to the wall. This can be an interesting activity for brainstorming on any pre-determined subject. Teachers can also give students assignments of preparing *a wall* on a subject and grade it. With wallwisher teachers can create video tasks, theme-based, grammar and debate walls.

**[www.livebinder.com](http://www.livebinder.com)** : Livebinder is a web-site whereby you can compile web pages on any content and arrange them in many ways. Teachers can determine different web pages on a given topic and arrange them like an index. In other words, teachers can google the most appropriate web sites from the internet including video, text, image, quizzes and create a lecture by combining them. This can be said to be a guided tour on the internet related to the subject of the lecture.

**[www.jogtheweb.com](http://www.jogtheweb.com)** : Jog The Web is similar to livebinder, allowing teachers to create a guide to a series of web pages. Teachers can create a jog to present a lecture topic from several web sites. This jog can include video, images, text and exercises. The teacher can add comments and teaching points, guiding questions to the web pages chosen. Language teachers can deepen the understanding of the students on the lecture subject by using a vast variety of web sites and break the limits of text-based materials.

**[www.lessonwriter.com](http://www.lessonwriter.com)** : Lessonwriter is a website for creating English teaching materials. Teachers can just paste a reading text into the lesson writer and lesson writer automatically generates vocabulary, pronunciation, word roots and grammar support to help students. Teachers can add exercises and questions to the pasted reading text. Teachers can also change the level of the lesson automatically. Lesson writer also gives a lesson plan to the teacher.

**[www.mailvu.com](http://www.mailvu.com)** : Mailvu is a web site which allows users to create a video message and users can email the video to anyone. Teachers can give assignments to the students. For instance, they may want from their students to record their daily routines and students can send it to their teachers for feedback. Teachers can record a video on the any subject which they think that students may have difficulty in understanding and send them to the students.

**[www.voxopop.com](http://www.voxopop.com)** : Voxopop is a web based audio tool that enables users to record their speaking on a given topic. It allows teachers and students to share ideas. It is a great tool for creating online discussions. Teachers can choose a topic and record their voice related to this topic and students can contribute to these discussion with their own voices. This is a great brain storming activity. Students also can have the opportunity to listen their teachers and peers, contributing to improve their listening and speaking skills.

**[www.techsmith.com/jing](http://www.techsmith.com/jing)** : Jing is an easy-to-use screen capturing tool. It is always ready for use on the top of your computer screen. You just select the area to record. Jing allows its users to create images and videos of what they see on their screen and share them with the world instantly and easily. Language teachers can easily record a lecture from a presentation on the screen or their web-cam and use it to enrich the lesson content.

**www.present.me:** Present.me is a simple tool to record your PowerPoint presentation. With this tool you can record your narration in every slide than share it. Language teachers can prepare a PowerPoint presentation and then narrate it for use after the class.

**www.280slides.com :** 280 Slides is a web based presentation tool similar to present.me. It enables you to create presentations with a series of slides and embed rich web based media into the slides such as video, audio and images. With this tool, the teachers' presentations can be more engaging and informative for their students.

**www.wordle.net:** Wordle is a simple tool that enables you to create colorful graphic representations of text based on word occurrence from any given text. Teachers can just copy and paste the text or word lists and then Wordle will analyze the text and create a colorful representation with more frequently occurring words appearing much larger than less frequent words. You can adjust colors and designs. Teachers can use this tool to teach commonly used words on any topic. There are many similar tools on the internet for preparing a word cloud; however, this is the best of them depending on the researcher's experiences.

## CONCLUSION

Today's language teachers should find ways to attract their students' attention, making the lecture more attractive, motivating and interactive. Language education uses mostly text-based materials. However, students of this century are digital natives who are learning things new ways. Technology and internet are an integral part of their lives. In other words, it is hard to teach them any content with text-based materials. It is therefore the language teachers' responsibility to provide them more attractive learning materials that they enjoy dealing with.

On the internet, there are many freely available tools which have the capacity to enrich the lecture content in a way students may like to learn with. Language teachers, as material developers, should employ these tools to engage students in learning. Since these tools require basic computers skills, every teacher can easily use them for developing lecture materials without being a computer expert. When appropriately implemented, these tools can provide engaging materials for students. Moreover, in traditional language classrooms, with the use of content prepared with these tools, the lectures are not limited to classroom hours.

Language learning environments should include the presentation of the content in an attractive way both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Language instructors, to some extent content developers, should therefore seek ways to construct the content more enjoyable for their students. To this end, they should know how to integrate technology in their language classes and have knowledge on the opportunities the internet offers. It is clear that freely available tools on the internet are one of these opportunities. When language instructors use these tools, the presented content will probably be more attractive and motivating for the language learners. Moreover, these tools provide students a more comfortable means to learn and increase engagement and motivation in language learning.

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