Technology for Teaching
Effective Use of Screencasting in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Whether your school has adopted a Bring Your Own Device or a 1:1 initiative, almost every high school student has access to some digital device. Instead of fighting the trend, for we all know they have them and with them, let's leverage those devices to assist in their learning foreign language.

For this article, we will focus on the most popular iDevice, the iPad. Of course, many students will have iPhones, which can use the same apps and activities. As strange as it may seem to some of us, the iPhone or other smart phone is a real extension of today's student's anatomy. They feel as lost without it as we feel without a watch.

Let's address the skills we want the students to acquire in regards to the target language. Whatever we do in class, it only matters if it improves the students' ability to **speak, write, read and think in the target language**.

Screencasting apps

Free apps like ScreenChomp, Educreations and ShowMe allow a student to import an image (or not), write on an interactive whiteboard, and record his or her voice. Imagine your students choosing a picture of their families (or one from the internet, if they are more comfortable with that), labeling their family members with name and relationship, then recording their oral descriptions of their physical or personality attributes.

They can then send them via email to the teacher who can provide constructive feedback. Every student will be speaking in French or Spanish or German (or whichever language you teach), using two very important skills: writing and speaking. More importantly, it will be more relevant because they choose the image they must describe. You can also have them share with a partner or with the class.

Written Expression

Using Pages, Apple's word processer, or another note-taking app (I like inClass and Evernote), students can create skits where they collaborate on authentic interpersonal communication in the target language about the concept being studied. Imagine French students who are studying foods and restaurants creating their skit about going to Le Yaca on a field trip. The teacher can provide a real menu from a real restaurant. They can and will be more involved in a skit involving a real location.

Camera

Use the camera to record video as the students perform skits. When the students own the work, they will more enthusiastically participate and more thoroughly acquire the material. Skits are a

perfect way to assess learning at the end of a unit in addition to the more traditional test or exam. Video is more authentic for performance based assessments than a static test.

Edmodo

Edmodo is basically Facebook for education. Our students are digitally social. They live and breathe it. So, Edmodo is a platform for authentic communication in the target language.

The rule will be that only the target language is allowed within your group (class). Naturally, you will have to be an active facilitator to ensure appropriate participation. Notice, however, that the teacher is the facilitator. Post a discussion question based on the day's lesson. Make sure it is something that is personal and meaningful to the student.

Allow students to post positive messages about themselves in the target language, such as running for class president (and their platform) or adopting a new puppy. Whatever it is, hook them with expressing themselves in the target language.

You can create polls, post materials and even load whole folders of notes and project descriptions. This can be your new class website, with the meat of the group like a blog. The beauty of Edmodo is that because it is social media, students help students. They answer questions about assignments and homework before the teacher has a chance to. If they're communicating in the target the language (which is the rule for your class), they are learning in an authentic, meaningful environment.

Leverage the technology to your advantage and inspire the students to greater fluency.

Links to Apps:

ScreenChomp: http://www.techsmith.com/screenchomp.html

Educreations: http://www.educreations.com/

ShowMe: http://www.showme.com/

inClass: http://www.inclassapp.com/

EverNote: https://evernote.com/evernote/

Edmodo: https://www.edmodo.com/