FLEX YOUR TECHNOLOGY MUSCLES PART 2

The topic? Technology tools to encourage communication. Some are familiar (storytelling, podcasting) and some are new (Twitter, Second Life). All can be used to expand the cultural horizons of our students, extend our classrooms, and help students learn "real-world" ways to connect with other languages and cultures. They can also be used to build community within language programs, across school and district lines, and with peers around the world.

The activities? This FLEX session is a chance for you to explore and discuss ways to use these technologies for yourself and your classes.   We'll do short introductions and then let you practice on your own. **Note: Because Second Life takes some time, we'll show you what it looks like and then let you decide whether to work with it here.**

There are links to useful handouts and sites on the *FLEX Links* page, which is a "Quick Link" from the Multimedia Language Laboratory home page (http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/langtech/).

Interested in learning more about technology but feeling overwhelmed? The online article "Build Your Own Personal Learning Network" (*http://www.edsupport.cc/mguhlin/share/index.php?n=Work.Pln*) offers concrete suggestions for using technology tools to gather information, reflect on your learning, and join a worldwide community of learners.

International Media: Podcasting and PBS Worldview

Interested in one-to-many communication? International TV programs, films, and videos are always of interest. Internet radio and podcasting are newer and offer greater possibilities for individualization. Podcast creation by students encourages oral communication.

- In October the Community Idea Stations (PBS) are launching Worldview, an over-the-air digital channel with international programming. **See the demo video and explore the press kit**.

- Use iTunes (or a podcast directory for Spanish) to find one or two podcasts that you might use in class or recommend to colleagues and students.

- Explore ways of creating podcasts that you and your students can use.

Communication and Connection: Skype and Twitter

Skype is an application that can be used in a remarkable number of ways.
Because computers can be set up to record Skype calls, Skype can even be used
for traditional "language lab" activities like pairing and small-group conversation.
Skype also encourages (and logs) typed chat for informal written practice.

- Create a Skype account.

- Ask one or more colleagues to participate in a Skype call. (You can even
  record the call for use as a podcast.)

- Sign up to find language partners on The Mixxer (*http://www.language-exchanges.org/*)

- Other things to explore in Skype
  - Use the Help function to get instructions when needed.
  - Conference (multi-party) calls
  - Group chats
  - Skypecasts (*https://skypecasts.skype.com/skypecasts/home*)

Twitter (http://www.twitter.com) is one of several applications (two more are
Pownce and Jaiku) that facilitate microblogging, which is the posting of short
messages to the Web. Microblogging evolved from the "away" and "status"
messages of instant messaging and social networking applications like Facebook.
"Tweets" can be read and sent via instant messaging programs, e.g., AIM, gTalk,
and via cell phones capable of text messaging (SMS) but they don't necessarily
assume a response. In other words, they are a one-to-many form of
communication that can be completely mobile.

- Go to *http://www.twitter.com* and sign up for a Twitter account.

- When you're logged in, go to *http://twitter.com/FLEXVA* and choose to
  follow that account.

- Go back to your home page and send a tweet about what you're doing.

- See if you can immerse yourself culturally by finding twitterstreams from
  the foreign press. Hint: for French, go to *http://twitter.com/sharongs*
  and see what Sharon Scinicariello has found.

- Think about classroom applications for Twitter.
  - Have a class account that follows all your students, who tweet in the
    target language, of course.

- Have students tweet one-sentence summaries of readings, new vocabulary, etc.

Digital Storytelling

Stories told by combining still images and audio narration can be extremely powerful, e.g., "The Civil War" by Ken Burns.   The difference between digital storytelling and other forms of multimedia communication—many of which use exactly the same technologies—is that digital storytelling emphasizes personal voice, emotional directness, and a distinct point of view. Digital storytelling is, therefore, an excellent way to help language learners talk about their lives and interests in an extended fashion.   A familiar tool for digital storytelling is narrated PowerPoint, but PowerPoint favors text-based communication. Digital storytelling prefers visual images and sound. On the Mac, both iMovie and Garage Band are ideal tools. (iMovie even has a "Ken Burns effect" for still images!) Less well known is Microsoft's Photo Story, a free download. A number of useful tools are also appearing on the Web. VoiceThread (*http://voicethread.com*) encourages classroom use by making it easy to set up a private class account in which all your students may have different identities. Even better, VoiceThread encourages multiple voice comments for single images and stories.

- On an MMLL PC, go to Start > All Programs > Language Lab Applications > Photo Story 3 for Windows and create a story. You may search for pictures on the web, use the Sample Pictures in the My Documents folder on the computer, or download the set of pictures on the FLEX Links page (storytellingpix.zip).

- Go to VoiceThread at *http://www.voicethread.com*, create an account, and use your pictures to create a story.

Tutorials:

- Photo Story 3 tutorial: *http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/gettingstarted.htm*

- VoiceThreads for Education: *http://voicethread.com/view.php?b=3352*

Tools:

- Photo Story 3 (Windows only; free download from *http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/digitalphotography/photostory/default.mspx*

- VoiceThread (*http://voicethread.com/)*

- o VoiceThreads in the Classroom
  (*http://voicethread.com/classroom.php*)

Useful Resources:

- Center for Digital Storytelling: *http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html*

- Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling: *http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/default.htm*

Second Life

Second Life (*http://secondlife.com/*) is a three-dimensional virtual world created by Linden Research, Inc. Inhabitants may buy property, build environments, construct or buy objects to use. You may have heard about politicians holding meetings in Second Life; many academic conferences now hold virtual sessions there as well. Second Life has very recently incorporated voice chat, which makes it far more useful for language learning and cross-cultural exchanges.

Caution: Second Life has many wonderful features, but you may also encounter many things you find objectionable. There is a special version of Second Life for teens (*http://teen.secondlife.com/*) that some K − 12 educators are using.

Getting comfortable in Second Life may take a bit of time, but this is a good time to explore: the Festival of European Languages takes place September 26 from 8 a.m. − 2 p.m. SLT (SL Time is Pacific Time). Here is the press release:

European Festival

Belle Isle is hosting a Festival of European Languages, September 26, from 8am to 2pm SLT, celebrating cultural diversity. The centerpiece of the Festival is a huge map of Europe, which gives visitors landmarks to a number of language/cultural sites (including Esperanto and Basque). Which ones you get depend on where you happen to be standing on the map. Birdie Newcomb, one of the organizers of the Festival, calls this the "Eavesdrop School of Languages" approach, encouraging students or the curious to go beyond the classroom, encountering real people in situations where one may overhear conversations, and, eventually, participate in another language.

In addition, speakers on language and edtech tools hold forth at Belle Isle's Harbor Theater. At the Pavilion and the Events center, one can see activities celebrating cultural uniquenesses - ethnic music, dancing, and, at 6pm GMT, a fashion show of traditional costumes and SL designer styles. At the vendor booths around the grounds, one might find language courses, edtech tools, multi-lingual translators,

informational displays, and cultural tchachkes (souvenirs) to take home.

The Festival schedule runs from 4pm to 10pm GMT (8am to 2pm SLT), so that Europe and America can both join in. The SLURL is (Belle Isle, 128, 128, 25). For more information, IM Festival organizers Maxie Schneider or Birdie Newcomb.

A Rough Guide to Festival Events
8am SLT (4pm London)   Welcoming
9am/5pm   Russian/Baltic states/Finnish
10am/6pm   Eastern Europe/Greek
11am/7pm   Italian/German/Scandinavian
12 noon/8pm   French/Belgian/Dutch/
1pm/9pm   English/Spanish/Portuguese

Email: birdie.newb...@gmail.com.

Looking for other virtual worlds? There are others. Metaplace (*http://www.metaplace.com*) has just been announced. Its press release says that it allows users to create their own worlds.