

Quia as a Powerful Teaching Tool

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Annotation. The article deals with an actual problem of using Information and communication technologies in teaching English. Key problems of contemporary language education are observed in the article, the ways of their solving are examined and the main features of Quia (a platform for creating on-line activities) are defined. The paper reveals benefits of using Quia in ESL classroom as well.

Key words: Information and communication technologies (ICT), English as Second Language (ESL), second generation of the Internet, Quia.

I. Introduction. For some time it was unknown to what extent technology would be beneficial to English as Second Language (ESL) teaching methods, but recent studies have painted an overall good picture of the newest techniques being used in ESL learning environments.

Nowadays English teachers face a lot of problems in their professional activity. Among them such as:

- lack of students' motivation;
- low level of students' language skills;
- lack of time during the classes according to the curriculum;
- lack of time for preparing individual study tasks;
- lack of time for checking tests and other activities results;
- lack of time to give instant feedback after the tests;
- teaching multi-level classes;
- difficulties in holding the interest of every student in the class.

II. Setting the problem. Consequently, teachers around the world are looking for new effective ways to develop and optimize their professional activity as well as to collaborate with contemporary students. As a matter of fact some of these problems can be solved by using information and communication technologies (ICT) in English classroom. This problem is being discussed widely nowadays by Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly [1], Michael Russell, Walt Haney [4], Mary Sprat, Alan

Pulverness, Melanie Williams [5]. But here appears the next question: how to find appropriate and helpful tools to save the time (students' and teachers'), motivate students, create individual learning environment and at the same time to make English classes more effective, interesting, productive, motivating, intense, valuable, engaging and successful for every student. As it is almost impossible to know about all the sites in the net and all the programs in the world, educators should share their experiences between each other, spread information about using this or that technology in the ESL. Therefore the objective of the article is describing the benefits of using the second generation Internet potential and its greatest service Quia as a powerful teaching tool.

III. Results. Quia is pronounced *key-ah*, and is short for Quintessential Instructional Archive. Quia provides a wide variety of tools, including:

- templates for creating 16 types of online activities, including flashcards, word search, battleship, challenge board, and cloze exercises. Quia activities are designed with different learning styles in mind to suit the needs of all your students.
- complete online testing tools that allow you to create quizzes, grade them with computer assistance, and receive detailed reports on student performance.
- access to over 3 million online activities and quizzes in 300 categories. All of the shared activities have been created by teachers from around the world.
- a schoolwide network that allows effortless collaboration with your fellow teachers.
- an easy, centralized classroom management system including a master student list, archive of student results, and the tools to conduct schoolwide proficiency testing.
- a class Web page creator that includes a course calendar and an easy way to post your Quia activities for students and parents.
- on-line surveys for gathering student and teacher feedback.

So, what is Quia? Quia is:

- a collection of tools for creating your own online content – entirely customized, always relevant, for every student's age and level.

- a great time-saver: offering ready-to-use content, automatic grading, and the ability to reuse everything year after year;
- a proven education tool that engages students, makes them excited about studying, and increases their grades;
- an adaptable website – thoughtfully built with teachers’ needs in mind, and flexible enough to support your creativity;
- an easy-to-use way to better leverage available technologies while integrating your curriculum into a safe, educational, on-line environment;
- a space where teachers can build an on-line collection of educational materials your are proud of.

The Shared Activities area is a great starting point for new users, with more than 3 million activities ready for students to play. There are activities in 300 categories, and more are being added every day. All of the games were created by instructors using Quia's templates and serve as an invaluable source for material and ideas for ESL classroom. In the Shared Activities area teachers will find:

- age-appropriate activities for all levels students, from alphabet and counting activities to university-level economics, history, and science.
- search capabilities by textbook, keyword, category, teacher, and even popularity.
- links for copying and customization of activities so educators can instantly share the materials with their classes.

Teachers can create their own activities on Quia Web using any content you like. Choose from 16 types of activities, including flashcards, memory games, word search puzzles, hangman, and even games modeled after popular television gameshows. Creating own activities is easy and fast. Many users also report creating flashcards and memory games to help with self-study for standardized exams or to learn a new language.

The full list of activities that can be created by teachers counts 16 types, such as: Matching, Jumbled Words, Concentration, Ordered List, Word Search, Picture

Perfect, Flashcards, Pop-Ups, Challenge Board, Scavenger Hunt, Columns, Cloze, Hangman, Rags to Riches, Patterns, Battleship

Practice makes perfect, and when students do their homework, their performance improves. In Quia activities teachers can track how long each student spends for homework, understand practice habits and plan review sessions before assigning a quiz. Educators can also use activities as homework assignments and hold students accountable for practicing in the lab.

Teachers around the world consider Quia to be their complete online testing solution as it provides hassle-free quiz creation. And not only are Quia's quiz tools easy to use, but quizzes can be customized to fit any teacher's needs. So, educators can create questions from scratch in seconds, or import questions from Quia activities or outside sources; choose from 10 question types, including Multiple choice, Fill-in, True-false, Initial answer, Pop-up, Short answer, Multiple correct, Essay, Matching, Ordering. It is possible to include any files, audio or pictures into quizzes, if it is needed. Quia's Question Bank lets teachers label and store questions, allowing them to make quizzes with particular questions or random selections from a subset (that means that the educator will never have to type the same quiz question twice!).

Using Quia teachers can assign quizzes to their classes, so students can easily see what is expected of them. A convenient thing about using Quia is the fact that students can take teachers' quizzes from any computer with an Internet connection, or even on paper print-outs. In addition educators can select from a wide range of options for controlling student access during testing (time of access to the test, timing the process of doing the test, randomize questions order, number of attempts permitted, a kind of feedback).

Being a widely practicing teacher I should claim that the most important feature of Quia is instant grading and reporting. When your students take quizzes, most questions (like multiple choice, fill in or matching questions) are graded automatically for the teacher. Essay and short answer questions can be manually graded and teachers can give students individualized feedback on their answers. Plus, Quia automatically tracks students' test scores throughout the year for the teacher.

So, as a powerful teaching tool Quia allows teachers and student to create their own online games & activities, online tests & assessments, track students' results, view detailed grading reports, manage classes online, complete online learning environment.

IV. Conclusion. To sum up we ought to claim that educators should integrate ICT into their lesson plans as much as possible. The reason for this is that ICT have been shown to activate both sides of the brain, and the study of foreign languages has been shown to be most successful when the whole brain is used. Therefore, there are both practical and scientific reasons to incorporate computer software and Internet use in lesson plans. But in the process of integrating technology into the classroom, teachers should not forgo solid lesson plans and cutting edge, interactive instruction. The generally agreed upon conclusion is that innovative technologies are vitally useful, but they will never replace the value of a powerful teacher-student relationship.

Recourses:

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