
Transform your teaching with low-cost tech tools

Webinar handout

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Introduction

The aim of this webinar session is to explore the challenges faced by English language teachers and how affordable technologies can help overcome these barriers. The objectives are to understand the concept of the digital divide in ELT, identify key challenges faced by teachers, and explore practical solutions using low-cost EdTech tools. Challenges include lack of motivation, limited access to digital tools, and inadequate training and support. The digital divide is defined as a division between people who have access to and use of digital media and those who do not (Echauri, 2004). Despite these disparities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Echauri, 2024).

Importance of low-cost edtech devices

Low-cost EdTech devices are crucial in ELT, especially in under-resourced environments. Their simplicity and affordability make them accessible and practical for many schools and teachers. Devices such as Android phones, Bluetooth speakers, and SD cards can deliver audio-based lessons and interactive activities. These tools function effectively even in areas with limited internet or unstable electricity. They support learner-centred pedagogical approaches and help bridge access gaps. The benefits include scalability, since many schools already possess Android phones and inexpensive speakers; offline capability, since SD cards enable audio use without internet and avoid streaming issues; and versatility, since they can be used for listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary recycling, and recording student output (Bernavides Villacís, 2025).

Practical classroom applications

Practical classroom applications include listening and speaking activities. For listening, teachers connect an Android phone to a Bluetooth speaker. Pre-listening activities introduce the topic and vocabulary, while-listening activities involve playing short audio clips and having students take notes or answer questions, and post-listening activities include discussing answers, clarifying doubts, and reinforcing learning. To connect devices, the speaker is turned on and put

in pairing mode, Bluetooth is enabled on the phone, and the speaker is selected from available devices. Preloaded audio files can then be played for the class. SD cards can be inserted into phones, formatted if necessary, and used to store audio files or student recordings. Content can be distributed via SD cards or USB drives. For speaking activities, students record one- to two-minute clips on a given topic. These recordings are played back through the Bluetooth speaker for feedback. Teachers provide oral and written feedback, sometimes using the chalkboard for corrections. Classes may vote to evaluate speakers, and pronunciation can be assessed through exercises such as minimal pairs.

Challenges and Solutions

Despite the benefits, implementing low-cost EdTech tools in classrooms comes with challenges. Classroom management can be difficult with energetic learners. Pairing or using devices may present technical problems, and idle time can occur during technical issues. Solutions include limiting the number of speakers to three or four per session, assigning group representatives or rotating speakers, ensuring devices are fully charged before class, and testing all activities and devices beforehand.

Conclusion

Low-cost EdTech tools offer practical and scalable solutions to bridge the digital divide in ELT. By leveraging accessible technologies like Android phones, Bluetooth speakers, and SD cards, teachers can enhance language learning even in resource-constrained environments. Reflection questions include: which low-cost EdTech tool will you use in your classroom and why, and can teachers truly navigate the digital divide?

Resources

Resources on using digital technologies: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/using-digital-technologies>

An online course on digital competencies:
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/training/courses/digital-competences-teaching-english>

References

Echauri, G. (2004). Definition of the digital divide. *Journal of Digital Inclusion*, 2(1), 45–58.

Echauri, G. (2024). Digital Inequality with Emerging Technologies like AI. Platypus. <https://blog.castac.org/2024/11/the-evolution-of-the-digital-divide-new-dimensions-of-digital-inequality/>

Bernavides Villacís, G.W. (2025). How Affordable Technologies can Support English Language Acquisition. *Ciencia Innovadora*, 3(3), 173–188.

A recording of Elsie's webinar can be watched here: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/teaching-equality-webinars>