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# NET IDEAS: IT'S TIME TO CHANGE

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*The Internet is not receptive technology anymore, thanks to the so-called "Web 2.0" utilities. The introduction of the national programme "Escuela TIC 2.0" in our schools makes it more necessary than ever to incorporate some of these tools into our daily practice.*

In a well-known 1956 film, Bennell tried to warn motorists shouting *They are here already! You're next!* While he was speaking of the "Pod People"<sup>1</sup>, the same can be said nowadays about the introduction of ICTs in our lessons, since the academic year 2010/2011 will start with our 1<sup>st</sup> ESO students coming with their netbooks, and an IWB (Interactive White Board) installed in the classroom, thanks to the "Escuela TIC 2.0" programme. Andalusian authorities have expressed their commitment to continue the implementation of ICTs during the following years (crisis allowing) until the programme reaches every high-school student. It's true that things could have been done better and, maybe, for less money: it's quite difficult to understand that all students have been given a netbook, while only 1<sup>st</sup> ESO teachers will be able to borrow one, but that is no longer the point.

Now the time has come when, whether we like it or not, we must get ready to use systematically computer-based resources in our lessons. Some teachers already have some experience. Now everybody is next. However, using the Internet should not be taken as only a new obligation, since the two most important reasons for this need are, on the one hand, the fact that our students are "technology natives", and on the other, it seems needless to comment on the opportunity to improve our teaching practice.

Nevertheless, the rhythm at which those new tools appear makes some teachers, even those who have been using web-based resources for some time, have the feeling that they are not technology literate enough to cope with such a strain, let alone those who have acted as technophobes. The truth is, as far as technical issues are concerned, there is little to worry about, as web 2.0 utilities are quite intuitive and simple to use for anyone who can type on a text processor, read and write e-mails and surf the Net.

The real problem we face is the amount of utilities available and how to make the most of them from a pedagogical point of view. Let us comment on those (free) which may prove more useful for the new 1<sup>st</sup> ESO groups and give a hint on how they could be used. For those who do not feel that “techy”, why don’t you devote one month to get familiar with each of these tools before using them in your lessons?

- **Audacity** (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>): This software permits us not only to record our voice, but also to import any sound file, editing it in different ways, adding effects, combining different files, etc. It is very useful if we want to prepare original listening activities. Have you ever tried ‘jigsaw listening’?
- **My StoryMaker** (<http://www.carnegielibrary.org/kids/storymaker>): The application, created by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), is a very simple way to create visual stories in English, and export them into a *pdf* file, as if it were a book. It is quite useful as a way to start writing habits.
- **Glogster** (<http://edu.glogster.com>): That’s the place to create “glogs”, the evolution of posters, since together with text and pictures, we can also upload audio files and videos. Project work will never be the same. etc.
- **Teacher Tube** (<http://teachertube.com>): It is an excellent site to share resources with other teachers. Fortunately enough, this one is not limited to videos, as it also has text documents, audio files, etc.
- **Slideshows**: Sites like animoto (<http://animoto.com>), issuu (<http://issuu.com>) or prezi (<http://prezi.com>) will be very helpful to make more interactive and with a higher visual quality presentations than the usual Impress or PowerPoint ones. Together with that, they can be stored online, which saves us from the burden of carrying them on a flash memory and from compatibility problems between different OS platforms.
- **Online storage**: Talking about “cloud computing”, i.e., having our files somewhere in the net and not having the need to physically transport them, Dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com>) offers up to 2 GB of free storage online, and is a good alternative to those flash memories that are always forgotten the day they are needed the most.
- **Shared documents**: Collaborative writing can prove to be very useful in the early stages of writing. Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>) offers good tools, though it requires every user to have a different gmail account. A very reasonable alternative is TitanPad (<http://titanpad.com>), since we can create a “team account” (EtherPad), the teacher acting as administrator, and therefore, being in control of how the students progress.
- **Word clouds**: If we are familiar with those word clouds that highlight the most repeated words by presenting them in a bigger font, we can think on using them in our lessons, both to identify the main subject of a text we are reading or writing. It is very easy to create them with Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net>).



audacity.sourceforge.net



www.carnegielibrary.org



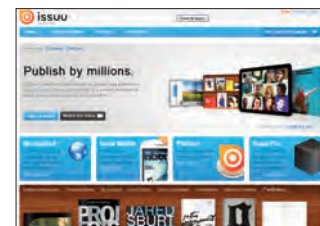
edu.glogster.com



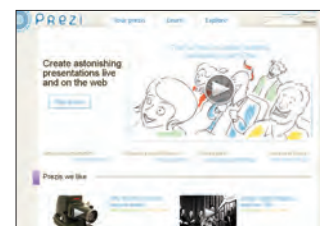
teachertube.com



animoto.com



issuu.com



prezi.com

- **Flashcards:** It is quite common to use flashcards to introduce and practice new vocabulary. Quizlet (<http://quizlet.com>) offers us the chance to use readymade or even create our own set of flashcards, with the advantage of automatic testing, games generation.

Once you get familiar with those utilities, you might feel like going one step beyond and integrating all of them together. In that case, you have different options such as creating your own blog ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com), <http://edublogs.org>) or webpage (<http://education.weebly.com>). However, to make the most and have your students play an active role in the creation, wikis (<http://www.wikispaces.com>) are the best option.

Learning from other colleagues is always a good idea. Some blogs I recommend related to the integration of ICTs in language teaching are <http://seanbanville.com>, <http://davekees.blogspot.com>, <http://edutechintegration.blogspot.com>, or <http://www.freetech4teachers.com>. However, it's **social networks** (especially Twitter – <http://twitter.com>) that seem to be the favourite among EFL specialists to establish PLNs (Professional Learning Networks) and share expertise and ideas with fellow teachers worldwide.

Bob Dylan used to say that “*the times are a-changing*”. In fact, that’s nothing new, as there has always been change and technological progress. It is true, however, that the “*e-changes*” seem to happen at much faster pace than analogical changes did, which makes it more difficult to keep up to date. But, can we allow ourselves and our students to be left behind?



[www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com)



[docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)



[titanpad.com](http://titanpad.com)



[www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net)



[quizlet.com](http://quizlet.com)



[education.weebly.com](http://education.weebly.com)



[davekees.blogspot.com](http://davekees.blogspot.com)



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[edutechintegration.blogspot.com](http://edutechintegration.blogspot.com)



[edublogs.org](http://edublogs.org)



[seanbanville.com](http://seanbanville.com)



[www.freetech4teachers.com](http://www.freetech4teachers.com)



[twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nothing to do with iPods, or does it?