

Lecture № 13

Technology-based courseware

Plan

1. CD-ROMs and DVDs
2. Evaluating CD-ROMs
3. Computer-based testing
4. Electronic portfolios
5. Interactive whiteboards

Computer-based testing, online testing, e-assessment ... all of these terms refer to a phenomenon which has become increasingly visible in English language teaching in the last few years, that of taking tests via a computer rather than on paper. EFL learners can now take a range of different tests and examinations via computer. Here are some examples: learners can be given a diagnostic test on a computer before they start a course. This assesses their language level in the skills of reading, writing, listening and even in discrete-item pronunciation, as well as in grammar and vocabulary. This programme, although for more thorough diagnostic testing, most institutions will also include a spoken interview and ask for a sample of the learner's writing.

For the large international examination boards there are obviously several important advantages in being able to offer examinations online. By offering increased flexibility in location (learners can take an exam in many more centers geographically online) and in timing (an exam can be offered more frequently online), their market is considerably expanded and convenience to the customer improved. With computer-based testing, the mechanics of marking and feedback can be automated to a much greater extent. And results provided to candidates more quickly than with a paper-based exam. Marking of certain items is also much more reliable by computer than by hand, although examining speaking and writing skills still requires human intervention. The long-term costs of developing and running online exams are also considerably lower than those for face-to-face examining.

The main disadvantage of computer-based testing in our field continues to be that of ensuring reliability in the marking of extended pieces of writing and in assessing speaking. In these sense, nothing has changed from paper-based testing, as examiners are still needed and inter-rater reliability is difficult to guarantee. One other disadvantage is that initial investment costs in computer-based testing tend to be high, as software especially designed for specific computer-based tests is developed and an item bank of 'questions' and resources is built up.

For the language teacher, the main experience of computer-based testing is likely to be that of using computer-based progress tests or in preparing learners to take one of

the internationally recognized exams online – and again, there are several CD-ROMs on the market that provide learners with exam practice that mimics the real thing.

Perhaps the most famous authoring tool in our field is Hot Potatoes. This is a small Windows or Mac program that creates a variety of exercises and can be freely downloaded for educational purposes (<http://hotpot.uvic.ca>). This program will install on your own computer and allow you to create web-based exercises of the following types:

- multiple choice
- short answer
- jumbled sentence
- crossword
- matching/ordering
- gap-fill

It also allows you to include audio files in MP3 format and will even allow you to store your exercises on a central server so that they can be accessed from any where with an Internet connection. To get started, install the program and find it in your program folder. When you first start it up you will be presented with the following screen.

Related to the area of online and computer-based assessment, re electronic portfolios, also called e-Portfolios or digital portfolios. A traditional paper-based portfolio is a collection of a learner's work, and an e-Portfolio simply means that this work is presented in electronic format, and can thus include various electronic media such as video, audio, blogs or websites, as well as documents. A n e-Portfolio can show case a range of the owner's skills, and display achievements not just from formal learning situations, but also from extra-curricular activities or work experience. The portfolio may also include reflections on the learning experience itself. An interactive whiteboard (IWB) is made 'interactive' by being linked to a computer which uses special IWB software. The three essential components needed to use an IWB are the whiteboard itself, a computer which has IWB software installed and a data projector (or 'beamer') which projects the image from the computer screen onto the whiteboard. What makes the interactive whiteboard different from a normal whiteboard is that the teacher uses a special pen (or their finger with some makes of board) to manipulate content on the whiteboard itself, rather than using the mouse to manipulate images on the computer screen, which the teacher can also do. The latest IWBs can also be used with a wireless Tablet PC (a smaller, hand-held computer) instead of a larger desktop or laptop computer. This has the added advantage that it can be passed around so that learners can manipulate the IWB from the tablet PC.

Problematic questions:

1. Define the role of CD-ROMs and DVDs in FLT in your country

2. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of evaluating CD-ROMs
3. How will you use Computer-based testing in FLT?
4. Describe 2 techniques of the use of Interactive whiteboards

Literature:

1. Bauman, J. (2014). Extend class discussion activities via cyberspace. In K. Ryan (Ed.), *Recipes for Wired Teachers*, Tokyo: Japan Association of Language Teaching.
2. Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly. *How to teach English with technology*. – Pearson Longman, 2015