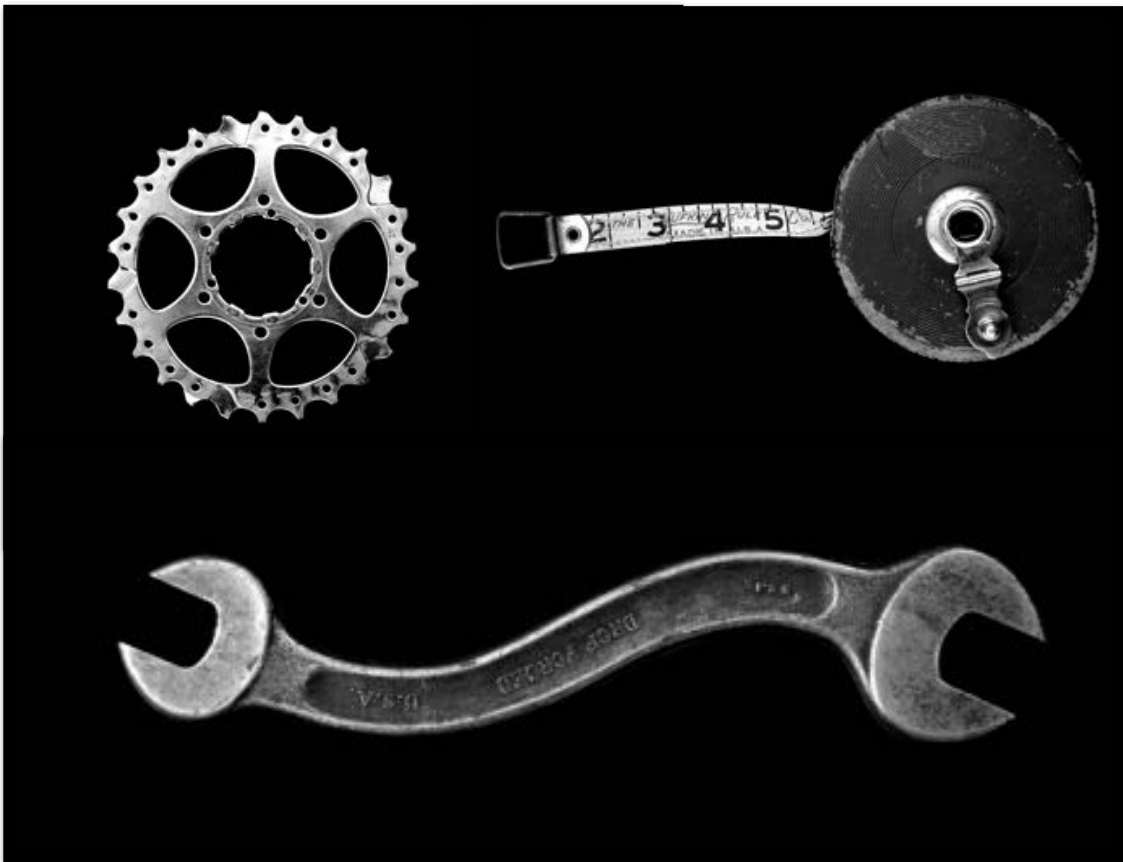

Digital tools

ITILT mini-guide



Interactive Teaching in Languages with Technology

itilt2.eu

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Introduction

digital tools for language education

What do we mean by digital tools?

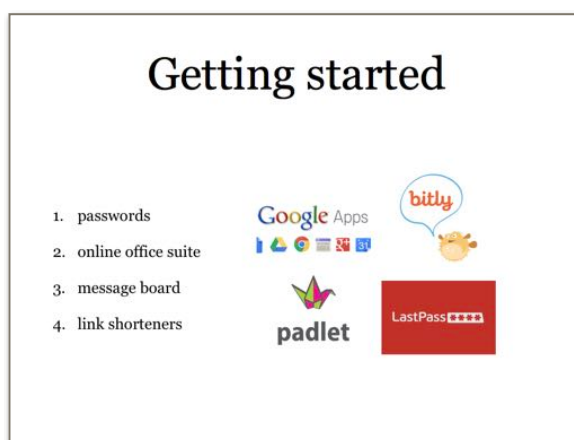
By digital tools we mean software and platforms for teaching and learning that can be used with computers or mobile devices to work with text, images, audio, and video. Tools for language learning and teaching may include:

- programmes for editing digital materials (e.g., audio, video), and
- platforms for collaborating and sharing resources.

Many tools designed for other fields of education, or not specifically for educational purposes, are nonetheless eminently suited to language education. Similarly, many language teachers use digital tools for different purposes, for instance to

- prepare teaching materials and set homework assignments;
- collect samples of learners' work and provide feedback; and
- streamline other aspects of their professional lives.

A selection of tools the ITILT team of language teacher educators has found particularly versatile for all types of teaching is provided in the next section.



[View 12 plus 1 basic tools online](#)

Basic tools


A slideshow including a dozen key tools can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2hX1Pgc>. The tools are all free, though not all open source, and cover the following aspects of digital tool use in language education:

- getting started,
- writing and feedback,
- collaboration and sharing,
- audio and video,
- social media, and
- low-tech classes;

(You can even learn how to create a short link at bit.ly)

9. VLC

For language teachers, you need the digital audio player **VLC**, which plays any format you can imagine.



Another useful digital audio editor is **Audacity**. Most language teachers use this tool to create short audio clips for class, and it is also good for editing learner recordings.



Why are digital tools important in language education?

Digital tools are relevant for language learning and teaching because they can be used to adapt digital resources to provide **input**, that is, samples of the target language or L2 which are suitable for exploitation in class.

We use the terms **L1** to refer to a learner's first (native) language or mother tongue, and **L2** to mean any language learned after the first, the **target** of language teaching. Sometimes we also distinguish **second** languages, learned in an environment where the target language is commonly spoken (e.g., Turkish in Turkey), from **foreign** languages, usually referring to classroom learning where the ambient language is different (e.g., English in France). Often, however, the umbrella term **second language** covers both contexts.

Digital audio and video editors allow teachers to focus on selected sections of a longer recording, for example. Similarly, both oral sources and written text can be adapted for comprehension activities using transcription tools and hyperlinks to dictionary or

encyclopedia references. The importance of input and its role in second language acquisition and learning is discussed in the first ITILT mini-guide on **Digital Resources**.

Research has shown, however, that learning a second language may involve more than input: **interaction** and **feedback** are also beneficial to learners. Some of these findings and implications for teaching are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Output and interaction

	SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS
OUTPUT & INTERACTION	Instruction should allow learners freedom to produce the target language spontaneously in interaction (Ellis, 2005)	DO create frequent opportunities for learners to produce output and interact spontaneously
	UG theory suggests rich natural input is sufficient for acquisition, while cognitive and (socio-)constructivist models emphasise interaction, scaffolding and feedback; these approaches are not necessarily incompatible (Myles, 2002)	DO provide scaffolding for learners to produce language, as well as feedback on performance

Whyte (2014)

Teachers should design activities which allow learners to produce **output**, or express themselves in the target language by writing, speaking, and interacting with one another. Learners should have support, or scaffolding, to help them use the L2, and teachers should give them **feedback** on the language they produce.

Communicative language teaching (CLT), particularly approaches following Krashen’s natural approach developed in the US in the 1980s, are based on the belief that input alone is “necessary and sufficient” for learning a second language. More recent methods assume that both interaction and feedback improve the efficiency of language teaching.

In Table 2, further recommendations regarding feedback are provided.

Table 2: Explicit instruction and feedback

	SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS
EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION & FEEDBACK	Errors may be specific to a given L1 or general to all second language learners; they are an inevitable part of interlanguage development and do not respond to immediate explicit correction (Lightbown, 2000)	DON'T attempt to correct all learner errors explicitly and DON'T assess learners' progress only in terms of controlled production in decontextualised conditions
	Instruction should also involve controlled production, allowing learners to focus on form and develop explicit rule-based knowledge (Ellis, 2005)	DO create opportunities for focus on form in meaningful contexts
	Teachers should focus on vocabulary, taught in context and with structural information; grammar instruction should be minimised, and focus on word order, not inflections (Cook, 1998)	DO focus on meaning and teach vocabulary in context
	Specific instruction in pronunciation is important for retention, and writing instruction is also necessary since L1 literacy skills are not automatically transferable (Cook, 1998)	DON'T neglect pronunciation and writing skills, which require attention as well as listening and speaking

Whyte (2014)

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a language teaching method which allows learners opportunities to interact and produce language in meaningful contexts, and to correct errors and provide feedback in terms of specific tasks. Thus it respects many of the principles for effective teaching established by second language research.

In the following chapter, we show how these principles influence our use of digital tools.



Tools in focus

an example of digital tool use

The ITILT project's approach to integrating technologies in language education is through task-based language teaching (TBLT), where teaching and learning activities are organised in a task sequence. So instead of listing digital tools for teachers to use, we propose in this mini-guide to show how tools can be integrated into tasks. More on TBLT can be found in the [ITILT project handbook](#) and in references in the final section of this mini-guide.

Overview of the story slam task

Among the French classes involved in the project are students in an undergraduate university course on media and communication for English majors. Both the idea for the task, and the resources for preparing for it come from the US storytelling organisation The Moth (themoth.org). See the **Digital Resources** mini-guide for more information.

The task sequence involved the following activities and the main task was to prepare a story to tell in class. Three class were set aside for story slams over the semester of twelve 90-minute sessions: 8 or 10 students would each tell a personal 5-minute story related to the day's theme. Here we focus on the tools used in activities 3 and 4.

Table 3: Story slam task sequence

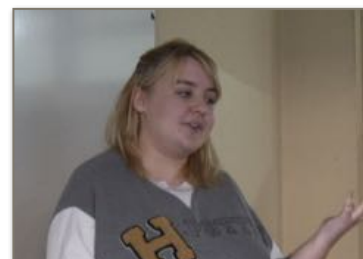
	Activity	Website	Link
1	Learn about the Moth story format	The Moth	https://themoth.org/stories
		Transcript editor:	http://storyscribe.themoth.org/
2	Prepare a story on a chosen theme and deliver it in class	(Optional: be part of the Moth jury to choose winners for grand slam in last class)	
3	Record your story as you tell it in class, and upload it to share with the teacher		
4	Listen to recording with individual feedback from the teacher, and consult general suggestions for improvement		
5	Write a reaction to this experience, including response to feedback, in a final reflective paper		

The digital tools used for the third and fourth activities are as follows:

1. During the storytelling task

a) **Smartphones:** students each used the voice recorder function of their smartphones to make an audio recording of their story as they told it live in front of the class.

b) **Evernote:** the teacher used Evernote to note any language errors (under the standard headings of pronunciation, grammar/vocabulary, communication) for each student.



2. After the task

a) **Soundcloud:** students uploaded their audio files to this open audio sharing platform

b) **Google forms:** each student sent the direct link to their recording via a form created using this survey/questionnaire tool

3. Teacher feedback

a) **Wordpress:** the teacher created a post on her blog using this blogging platform to report on common errors and provide suggestions for sites and activities to improve in specific areas.

b) **Gmail canned responses:** the teacher created a template for e-mail messages to individual students, including the link to their Soundcloud recording, another link to the blog post with general feedback, and a reminder of course requirements.



View the stories on itilt.eu.



Students on the jury to choose winners for grand slam in the last class used templates like this to assess the stories they heard:

Story slam Panel feedback form							
SPEAKER'S NAME (First name, LAST NAME)							
Story theme							
JUDGE'S NAMES (First name, LAST NAME)							
Date:							
Winners (best two storytellers for Grand Slam)							
STORYTELLER'S NAME		1	2	3	4	5	6
THEME (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the story fits closely with the theme the story takes an interesting approach to the theme 						
TIMING (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the story is not shorter than five minutes the story is not longer than five minutes 						
CONFLICT & RESOLUTION (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the story gets started right away the story has a problem that is resolved by the end 						
TOTAL							

Key qualities of story slam tools

Looking back at the principles of **providing opportunities for output** and **offering feedback on performance**, we can see how these tools help the teacher meet the recommendations given in Tables 1 and 2.

Resources	Activities	Other possibilities
Soundcloud audio sharing platform	learners created their own accounts, uploaded their story audio and shared with the teacher	Free account creation, use pseudonym or private setting if desired, hide/delete when course is over. Also possible to share with others.
Google forms survey & quiz application	learners entered name, e-mail and direct link to recording on SoundCloud	Easy to create form and save responses to spreadsheet. Avoids problem of searching for student work, overloaded inbox. Timestamp to check submission time.
Gmail canned responses mail.google.com => Settings > Labs > Canned responses	Teacher composed canned response with link to pronunciation feedback page, space for individual feedback, and grade	Helps to avoid forgetting repeated details, and maintain level of feedback during grading process

First, the learners have an opportunity to **produce language in a meaningful context**. The audience has not heard their stories in advance, so the information conveyed is new. The students listening are also in a context which favours engagement with the content of the stories: they are not asked to evaluate the storytellers or listen for language errors - instead they need only listen to brief personal stories which have been planned and rehearsed for the occasion. Only a small panel of student judges is required to assess the quality of the stories, but the criteria used are formal (timekeeping, relevance, structure - see p. 9) and not focused on L2 proficiency.

Comparing these stories with other kinds of student presentation recorded at home, it is clear they correspond more closely to naturally occurring speech - there is no reading aloud, and even memorised language is produced more fluently in the presence of a live audience.

Tech tip: having students use their own phones and take charge of uploading to their own accounts has several advantages. The teacher spends less time on these details, the learners are more autonomous, and they have ultimate control of the recording in terms of their digital footprint.

Using Soundcloud to share learner recordings also has consequences for **feedback**. The teacher listens to each story twice: once live in front of the class, and a second time online, as an evaluation exercise alongside other student performances. This allows some perspective,

- helping distinguish patterns of errors and separating isolated mistakes from more systematic problems; and
- allowing comparison across learners at distance from factors related to personality and social skills which may influence impressions of L2 proficiency.

This helps the teacher provide focused individual feedback and also offer more general comments in relation to problems shared by a number of students in the class. This fulfils research recommendations not to neglect **pronunciation** (see Table 2).

When students receive feedback, it is easy for them to listen to their recording to check their understanding of the teacher's comments. Without the digital tools used here, learners may have difficulty accepting, understanding, and benefiting from feedback on a past oral performance. Public oral feedback in class may damage confidence, while written feedback without access to the performance can be difficult to interpret and act on.

Since the feedback is on their own stories recounted spontaneously, it can be considered to be **focus on form in context**, which is thought to be an optimal condition for effective learning. Activity 5 in the task sequence also encourages learners to engage with feedback by asking them to identify key problems and suggest their own programmes for improvement.

The final consideration with the tools shown in this example concerns **efficiency**.

Teachers are often concerned that the integration of new technology will place a **greater burden** on themselves, requiring more preparation time and more feedback. It is true that learning to use new tools can be **time-consuming**, and that new ways of collecting learner productions can mean **more work** after class.

A number of features of this task are worth considering as ways to reduce unproductive use of teacher time:

- the use of a Google form to record student names, e-mails, and Soundcloud links again shifts the onus of making audio recordings available for evaluation on to learners. The Google forms tool automatically creates a spreadsheet to record information entered into the form, which the teacher can then use to record comments and grades. No time is wasted searching e-mail for student messages or Soundcloud for student accounts.
- the Wordpress blog post also offers an opportunity to save time by aggregating feedback for the whole class in one easily accessible place. For teachers working in relatively stable teaching conditions, such posts can be updated for other classes and subsequent student cohorts.
- the canned response feature of Gmail allows the teacher to create an e-mail template for providing individual feedback on recordings to each student. Used in combination with the Google form spreadsheet, it makes it easy to personalise messages with the student's own SoundCloud link, for example, but also avoid forgetting general information which all students need to know.

In the following chapter we consider further examples of the types of digital tools available for interactive teaching in a task-based framework drawn from the ITILT project.



Chapter 3

From the ITILT project

teacher views of digital tools

Classroom tasks

This section of our mini-guide highlights the use of digital tools in a number of task sequences designed for different educational and proficiency levels.

Cultural background and perspectives on the world
(Secondary English, Belgium)



Google hangout for
global collaboration

<http://www.itilt2.eu/>

This task sequence used a telecollaborative exchange between US and Belgian students to explore the influence of cultural background on our view of the world.

The classes used two quiz tools in addition to Padlet for asynchronous collaboration, and the Google video communication tool Hangouts for synchronous interaction.

- [Padlet](#)
- [Quizlet](#)
- [Kahoot](#)
- [Google Hangouts](#)

Using Padlet for our introduction was ideal for the project. I really love the comment function in the tool, enabling students to react to the posts of other students. However, some of the video files were too big to upload to Padlet, we had to use a workaround by uploading the videos to Google Drive and linking to the videos on Padlet.

BELGIAN TEACHER

A website on the city of Lille (Secondary French, Belgium)



Lille website creation

<http://www.itilt2.eu/>

Another Belgian task sequence, this time in French, also used the Kahoot quiz creator in addition to a different tool to support oral production, [CuePrompter](#).

The pupils were to give an account of the whole project, describe the different stages, their experiences working together over several weeks, and the day trip to Lille. So it was a long story, but they didn't have to learn it by heart: with the tool CuePrompter they could read their text while still looking more or less into the camera recording the video.

BELGIAN TEACHER

Tablet applications: Book Creator (Primary English & Welsh, France/Germany/UK)

A number of primary teachers in the ITILT project used the iPad application BookCreator to allow learners to combine pictures and record their own audio to tell stories.

ChatterPix & BookCreator <http://www.itilt2.eu/>



EFL e-book creation <http://www.itilt2.eu/>



Welsh book creation <http://www.itilt2.eu/>



it is an excellent example of teaching to use technology. The teacher manages the whole class effectively to allow her to focus on small groups of learners at a time, both demonstrating the iPad functions and providing opportunities for learners to participate. The learners are taught to use the iPad, to take care while framing each shot, as well as to work together and take turns harmoniously.

FRENCH TRAINER

In this task we learnt new sentence connecting words. We know the main Welsh words we were using but sometimes we didn't know how to write them in a sentence.

We took turns using the iPad – writing and recording – so that everyone had a chance to use it.

We used Google Translate to help us make sure of spelling and to hear how to pronounce certain words that we were unsure of.

WELSH PUPILS

Recommended tools

These examples show how tasks can be developed from using a variety of tools to create activities following a broad TBLT format.

More recommendations from teachers and partners in the ITILT project are shown below:

ITILT participant suggestions

Table 4: Tools from ITILT participants

RESOURCE	LINK	ACTIVITY	COMMENT
Calendly	https://calendly.com/	appointments	set up 15, 30 or 60 minute slots (or custom time periods) for meetings with students. Use for one-on-one conferences, exams, presentations. Integrates with online calendars, e-mails participants, and allows for cancellation and rescheduling
Google forms	forms.google.com	quiz or survey, submit assignment	use in browser or mobile devices, in class or for homework
Kahoot	https://getkahoot.com/	quiz or survey	for teachers to create their own quizzes or surveys, to use in class with a computer and smartphone
Mentimeter	https://www.mentimeter.com	interactive presentation tools	
Padlet	https://padlet.com/	digital canvas	For brainstorming, moodboard etc
Plickers	plickers.com	quiz or survey	for teachers to create their own quizzes or surveys, to use in class with a computer and smartphone

RESOURCE	LINK	ACTIVITY	COMMENT
Resource Lists	ITILT workshop resources	various	Resource Lists created for iTILT Multiplier events
SoundCloud	soundcloud.com	teacher or learner audio recordings	free sign-up but small data allowance, so get learners to create own accounts or delete files regularly

ITILT participant feedback: a Belgian secondary EFL teacher

During this project, sometimes it felt like I was **losing precious teaching time**. Not all things went smoothly all the time and that's when you start breaking a sweat. I guess this happens now and then when you try new lesson ideas, so it was bound to happen during a whole lesson package without any textbooks or workbooks to back me up

At the same time this felt **liberating**. Not having to teach this or that word or expression and just seeing where the pupils ended up and trying to push them a little bit further. I also feel **I won't lose as much time the next time** I do these lessons.

“when all the little pieces of the puzzle

finally came together

during the last lessons, both my pupils and I were

glowing with pride”

All the ICT tools I used are teachable in 10 minutes max. The pupils get it in under 5 minutes, older colleagues might need 15 minutes sometimes... But it's really easy. As it should be, since all these **web 2.0 tools are designed for user comfort**.

The peer evaluation, using Google forms, **gave the pupils a sense of responsibility and fair play**. Since they could ‘peek’ now and then during the lessons, they saw what other groups were working on and soon found out if they needed to ‘up their game’. Afterwards, it certainly didn't feel like wasted time, on the contrary!

The wide range of tools available online and their sometimes ephemeral nature makes it unwise to recommend specific sources. The website creator used by Belgian ITILT teacher just quoted is already no longer in service. It is no doubt more efficient for teachers to curate their own evolving collections of tools, particularly in collaboration with other colleagues.

Ways to do this are suggested in our third mini-guide **Digital Networks**.

Don't forget: play safe

Teachers using digital resources for teaching should be careful to **play safe**, by making sure any learner productions placed online are protected, that is:

- shared privately, or
- anonymised if shared publicly, and
- with parental permission (minors) or informed consent (adults).

It is also important to play fair. Check the ITILT **Digital Resources** mini-guide for more on the licensing of online materials.



Chapter 4

Going further

links and references for digital tools

The final section of this Digital Tools mini-guide has links to more tools, and some further reading on TBLT for those ready to go further in this area.

Tools in language education

Table 5: updated sources for digital tools

NAME	PROJECT	TYPE OF TOOLS
ELT chat	Twitter conversation	Summaries of discussion topics
Mura Nava	Quick Cups of COCA	corpus tools
Nik Peachey	Peachey Publications	edtech for languages, newsletters, tutorials
ProfWeb	Outils numériques pour les langues	Tutoriels
Richard Byrne	Practical Ed Tech Handbook	website with edtech tools, focus on classroom technology for schools
TELT	Teacher Education in Languages with Technology	Curated collection

Task-based language teaching

Table 6: principles of task-based language teaching

AUTHOR	TITLE	LINK	DESCRIPTION	COMMENT
Anderson	Why practice makes perfect sense	article	article supporting PPP instead of TBLT	read this article, then Ellis, to see differences between PPP and TBLT

AUTHOR	TITLE	LINK	DESCRIPTION	COMMENT
Biebighäuser, Zibelius & Schmidt (2012)	Aufgaben 2.0 : Konzepte, Materialien und Methoden für das Fremdsprachenlehren und -lernen mit digitalen Medien.	book	book on technology-mediated TBLT	chapters describe and analyse school projects
Conti	Examples of Pre- and Post Task activities	article	activities for before and after more cognitively or linguistically demanding tasks	suggestions to facilitate the performance of the target task
Ellis	Task-based language teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings	article	article explaining why TBLT is often misunderstood and misapplied	compare with Anderson on PPP
Erlam	I'm still not sure what a task is': Teachers designing language tasks	University of Auckland	research article reporting on learning to teach with TBLT	good overview of task criteria
Gonzalez-Lloret	Practical guide to integrating technology into task-based language teaching	Georgetown Edu	e-book with principles and practice for tech-mediated TBLT (\$7)	Short e-book with readable overview of the field for language teachers
Heinz, S (Eds.) (2013)	Praxis Fremdsprachunterricht Englisch: „Mobiles Lernen“.	articles	This is a special issue of this teacher magazine focusing on the topic "Mobile learning"	This special issue features several articles describing interesting school projects on the use of mobile technology in the EFL classroom
Mueller-Hartmann/Schocker-v. Ditfurth (2011)	Teaching English: Task-Supported Language Learning.	book	A very practice-oriented book on task-supported language learning	many examples of task-based activities and advice on modifying textbook activities towards TBLT
Musicuentos	Black Box video	YouTube channel	short videocasts explaining language learning theory and methods	

AUTHOR	TITLE	LINK	DESCRIPTION	COMMENT
Peschel & Irion (Eds) (2016)	Neue Medien in der Grundschule 2.0. Grundlagen – Konzepte – Perspektiven.	book	technology in the primary school context	general education examples can be adapted to the foreign language context
Schmidt & Strasser (Eds) (2016)	Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch: „Digital Classroom“	articles	This is a special issue of this teacher magazine focusing on the topic "Digital Classroom"	This special issue features articles on the use of a variety of technologies in the EFL context, such as mobile phones, Ipads and interactive whiteboards



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Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
L1	first or native language
L2	second or foreign language, target language
CLT	communicative language teaching
SLA	second language acquisition
TBLT	task-based language teaching



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