

## **EdTech in ELT: Using Cloud Technology in EFL and ESL**

by [Christel Broady](#)

Language instructors may ask themselves: What will be gained by using technology? What technology could I use? And, is it even safe to use technology while protecting privacy regulations? Will the students and I have to purchase software or memberships to platforms? How much training does it require?

Traditional language classrooms are not places where a lot of technologies are used. After all, classroom time is used to teaching materials and skills, and monitoring the application of new concepts by students. Also, much of language activities consist of communication activities.

In this article, I would like to make a case to add an online component—cloud technology—to the already existing classroom. The digital cloud is an electronic way of storing and managing data. I am directing this article specifically to instructors whose students already use digital technology at home and who have access to handheld devices for school. However, the same recommendations can also be implemented in computer labs.

### **What Will Be Gained by Using Cloud Technology?**

#### **Benefits for Learners**

##### *Save Time*

The language classroom presents a large amount of new material that is offered sequentially. To achieve proficiency, learners must have ample opportunity for language practice and drill. With technology, individual students can access online materials, activities, and tasks for practice in or outside of class. Having them available online with a stated task cuts down on explaining what students are expected to do. It thereby puts more power into their hands.

##### *Remove Barriers to Learning*

In addition to putting class activities, lessons, and units online, instructors can provide models for pronunciation, and vocabulary and grammar use. Slower learners can take as much time as needed to review and practice concepts if they can access materials in their own time and outside of the classroom. Also, introvert learners who often do not participate much in person can participate in the virtual space.

##### *Access to Prior Class Material*

Especially in language instruction, it is very useful to have materials from prior lessons available over time. Many learners benefit from revisiting their class materials and their work to refresh their memory. Additionally, accessing one's previous language products and work is extremely empowering to learners. Such records are evidence of learning and achievement. This is particularly true for speaking records. Recordings of earlier speaking units are a reminder of how far students have come in their learning.

### *Collaborate Across Time and Space*

Because many students have demanding out-of-school schedules, asynchronous collaboration via the online classroom is of great value. Some student groups do not have transportation to visit each other after school. On their own time or at the same time, students can complete group and team projects, and provide each other feedback and peer evaluations in online classrooms.

### **Benefits for Instructors**

#### *Material Storage*

After the initial first-time effort of creating and uploading materials online, identifying useful links and such, an online classroom for each learner group is a way to cut down on work. Over time, instructors have just to fine-tune activities, monitor if links are still active, and add student-generated new materials to their classes. If done effectively, current learners can create materials for future groups of learners. Also, online classrooms can make a class paperless, cutting down on worksheets and handouts as well as long paper copy sessions. Online classrooms today provide the opportunity to easily reuse previous postings for future classes.

#### *Grading*

Online classrooms allow instructors to place homework and other grade-bearing assignments (such as tests) online. Grading, feedback, and reporting can be done within the digital classroom. It is easy to generate virtual report cards and keep track of all grades. Instructors can even create charts of or student performances over time.

#### *Being Up-To-Date*

Using and creating virtual resources makes it easy to update constantly changing classes. It is easy to replace old links and add new documents, audio files, videos, and more to an online classroom. No TV is needed to watch videos or movies. The presented target culture can always be current. This approach will make language classes much more interesting to learners.

#### *Communication With Students and Families*

Using an online classroom allows all involved parties to have a single destination for class-related items. Materials, activities, grades, and communication can all be located on the same platform. This one virtual storage place keeps track of conversations for future review; having virtual records has many advantages over paper records and correspondence. It is organized and can be copied for future classes if needed. One cool feature is that students and/or families can receive text messages or notifications from the online classroom if new assignments, materials, or communication are posted for them.

### **Cloud Technology FAQs**

## **What digital clouds could I use?**

There are multiple platforms from which instructors can choose. Some examples are [Moodle](#), [Nicenet](#), and [Versal](#). I recommend using [Google Classroom](#) because I think it is the most versatile and powerful platform. Also, there are many useful plug-ins, and Google Classroom interfaces with many other platforms.

## **Is it even safe to use cloud technology while protecting privacy regulations?**

Google Classrooms are safe and adhere to privacy expectations because instructors decide to whom and to which parts of their virtual classrooms they grant access.

## **Will the students and I have to purchase software or memberships to platforms?**

Google Classroom is a free platform for instructors, students, and families. No memberships are needed.

## **Is it available in my country?**

According to Google, the Classroom is available worldwide (local political Internet restrictions may apply).

## **How much training does it require?**

Depending on technological literacy, any instructor should be able to use Google Classrooms with minimal training. I recommend watching YouTube videos to get basic professional development on one's own time. Videos range from 2 minutes upward and can be watched in increments while trying out the platform.

## **In Summary**

Learners, families, and instructors alike benefit from an online component in a face-to-face classroom. The value lies in time, resources, real-time connections, and record keeping. Everyone is a winner, especially struggling students who need more time and resources to master concepts and materials.

## **Resources**

From eLearning Industry: [Google Classroom: A Free Learning Management System For eLearning](#)

From Educational Technology and Mobile Learning:

- [12 Ways Teachers can Use Google Classroom](#)
- [3 Easy Ways to Integrate iPad Into Your Google Classroom](#)
- [6 Great Things You Can do With Your Google Classroom](#)
- [Some New Interesting Updates to Google Classroom](#)

- [Google Released New Classroom Tools](#)

From ZDNet: [Google opens up Classroom tool for teachers worldwide](#)

[YouTube Videos](#) to Receive Google Classroom Training

---

*Dr. Christel Broady is a professor of graduate education and ESL teacher education at Georgetown College, past president of the Kentucky TESOL, former chair of the TESOL EEIS, and current VDMIS steering board member. An NCATE program reviewer, she also represented TESOL at CAEP and on the national workgroup for the Seal of Bilinguality in K–12 schools. She is the manager of “Broadyesl,” a worldwide ELT Community of Practice on [Facebook](#), Wordpress ([ESL](#) and [technology](#)), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).*