



# TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

## Emerging EdTech Tools at TESOL 2018

by [Aaron Schwartz](#)

Like many members of the Computer-Assisted Language Learning Interest Section (CALL-IS), when I go to the TESOL convention, I tend to spend most of my time in the Electronic Village (EV) and Technology Showcase. TESOL 2018 was no exception. This year's EV was located in the main exhibit hall, near the various vendors and sponsors, poster sessions, and Job MarketPlace. The event introduced some new technologies but also demonstrated some updated features and new strategies for some old favorites. However, the three related technologies that are the most exciting in 2018 have emerged as video, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR).

### 1. Video

Over the years, video has become a much larger part of the educational technology landscape, even showing up in assessment. Reps from [Duolingo](#), a popular language drilling app, were present at the convention to promote their standardized assessment, the Duolingo Test. Duolingo Marketing Representative Jeff Tousignant encourages universities to adopt this test, which disrupts the traditional assessment model. Test-takers take the assessment on their own device and record a short video interview, which is shared with institutions as part of the test. This allows programs to focus on the oral fluency of incoming students in ways that they haven't been able to before.

As part of the Technology Showcase, the CALL-IS and Video and Digital Media Interest Section (now known as Video Professional Learning Network), put on an InterSection panel that focused on some of the specific contexts for video usage in language teaching in today's environment, asking the question "Is Video Making It a SMALL World?"—where MALL stands for mobile-assisted language learning. Suzi Lee, lecturer and instructional designer from Georgia Tech, led a helpful presentation about the specific considerations that video lesson creators need to think about when those videos will be distributed to a wide audience, such as in the case of a massively open online course (MOOC). While Lee mentioned specific technologies, like [Coursera](#) and [EdX](#) for managing the courses and software tools like [Moovly](#), [Powtoon](#), [GoAnimate](#), and [VideoScribe](#) for creating innovative content, the emphasis of her presentation was about techniques that promote engagement with learners, particularly those who are viewing content on the small screens of mobile devices.

As part of the same panel, James May from Valencia College demonstrated the democratizing effect that smartphones have had on video production. He pointed out how any teacher or student who has one of these ubiquitous devices can record, edit, and publish video content—even host a video livestream—using the free [YouTube app](#). He also mentioned [Adobe Premiere Clip](#), a free app that effortlessly syncs users’ videos with music, a hint of what’s possible with the full featured paid app Adobe Premiere Pro. When participants asked May about specific apps, May repeated the refrain, “it’s not about the app, it’s about the application,” reminding participants that the apps that teacher use with students are tools to accomplish course goals. He brought up how technologies like QR codes or apps like [FlipGrid](#) could be used to add video elements to traditional assignments, like gallery walks and discussion boards.

As part of the ongoing discussion about video, one presenter, Teresa Nguyen, spoke to TESOLers as part of the Developers’ Showcase. Nguyen, who teaches at Golden West College, showed teachers how to create their own YouTube channel, using her channel, [ESL Garage](#), as an example. She stressed how videos created by teachers can be creative, authentic, and engaging for students. Her channel features a mix of instruction, real-life situations, and scaffolded movie and tv clips, each followed by a review and short quiz.

## 2. Augmented Reality

James May also provided examples of several smartphone apps that take advantage of AR, an increasingly pervasive technology that makes use of our smart devices to overlay digital content over the real world, can be used to create opportunities for language creation through written and spoken narratives and descriptions of student-generated digital content. Some video-intensive AR apps that he mentioned are [Face Swap](#), a fun app that lets users take a face from any photo and put it on themselves, and [Sock Puppets](#), an app where users record their own voices to create video where animated sock puppets speak their words in digitally altered voices. May also discussed how to use simple fabric, a greenscreen app, and old favorite—[Google Street View](#)—to allow your students to travel anywhere in the world with accessible technologies.

Every year, the EV features at least one section of “EV Classics.” These are fair presentations that were well reviewed and well attended in previous years, where the presenter has been invited to revisit a favorite topic. One popular presenter is Randall Davis, proprietor of Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab, a website that has been aiding students with English pronunciation for 20 years. As part of his Classics presentation, Davis took the opportunity to share new ways he and his students interact with digital media. He makes use of [Instagram](#)’s Video Diaries feature to have students create short stylized videos, sock puppet shows (previously mentioned), QR codes, and [plickers](#).

QR codes, those squares that you can scan with your phone and link to a website, file, photo—anything with a link, should be familiar to most of us by now. However, plickers are a new type of classroom response system, similar to [Socrative](#) or [Poll Everywhere](#), but unlike these tools that require each student to have their own device, plickers are square graphical codes that are printed on pieces of paper or cards. Each student has a card and can signal an answer to a multiple-choice question to the teacher by rotating the code to the desired position. The teacher

then uses a smartphone with a camera to scan the room and as the students' plickers appear on the screen, their answers appear over their heads. This can be used for quick formative assessment or polls to get a snapshot of the students' attitudes about a particular topic. Plickers is unique because even in relatively low-technology situations (where students might not all have their own devices), the teacher can make use of AR to interact with the class.

### 3. Virtual Reality

In addition to AR, VR is making an impact on education. Now that VR content can be delivered through the use of smartphones affixed to simple cardboard or plastic headsets, many content providers have started to create VR versions of images, presentations, and video content. [Nearpod](#), notably, was one TESOL vendor that has easy to access VR lessons. EV presenters Christine Rosalia and Victoria Vazquez from Hunter College–CUNY shared their experiences using nonfiction VR with their language learners.

As part of the CALL-IS/VDMIS InterSection, Tony Eben from the University of Tampa described an innovative use of AR and VR technologies in the training of preservice teachers. Eben encourages the teachers he is educating to seek pedagogically sound ways to apply AR and VR to language learning. He makes the tools [HP Reveal](#), [Metaverse](#), and [ThingLink 360](#) available for creating content and lessons specifically aligned with their students' learning objective. Eben understands that though most of these teachers qualify as “millennials,” and they are able to search the web and engage with social media, they are not digital natives in the sense that they are immediately comfortable creating digital materials for their students. These emerging technologies allow teachers to engage with their learners and learners to engage with the language in novel ways that encourage vocabulary and reading exploration, and differentiated situated instruction.

### Extra: Mobile Apps

Teresa Nguyen was also present at the Mobile Apps for Education Showcase, where she demonstrated a variety of mobile apps that she uses with her students. She introduced [Tandem](#), a language exchange app for matching language learners with native speakers, and [OverDrive](#), which allows users to download PDFs of books and recordings of audiobooks from their local library directly to their mobile device. This app requires a library card and gives students a reason to go discover (and stay connected with) their local library. She also mentioned [Word Association!](#), a phone-based matching game for increasing vocabulary and making associations between common words.

The Mobile Apps showcase also featured a presentation from Judy Hu about a location-based app that she and her colleague, Dana Saito-Stehberger, use at the University of California Irvine for creating scavenger hunts and campus tours. They used [Goosechase](#), a cross-platform (Android and iOS) user-friendly app for developing location-based games and activities that can be completed by individuals or teams. The teacher/designer sets up place-based missions in which the goal could be submitting a photo, recording a video, writing some text, or sharing your geographical coordinates—all simple tasks with today's mobile devices. Goosechase has a paid business version, but people with .edu email accounts can get the limited free version for

education, which encourages team play and contains a game library, including games like “syllabus hunt,” which is designed for K–12 teachers but is adaptable to higher education contexts.

If you were unable to attend any of these sessions and want to know more, presenters’ contact information can be found in the [TESOL Program Book](#) or [App](#). Many of the sessions from the EV and Technology Showcase can be found on the CALL-IS’s [YouTube](#) channel, and a full schedule with descriptions is available on CALL-IS’s [2018 wiki](#).

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