

Supplementary Notes

Promoting e-Learning in the Senior Secondary English Classroom

*[Supplementary notes to Chapter 4.3.5 **Information Technology for Interactive Learning** in the English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)(CDC & HKEAA, 2007 with updates in November 2015), pp.97-98]*

e-Learning refers to an open and flexible learning mode involving the use of electronic media such as digital resources and communication tools to achieve the learning objectives. When planning to incorporate e-learning elements into the school-based senior secondary English Language curriculum, schools can take the following into consideration:

- provision of infrastructure (e.g. easy access to the Internet) for learners to seek, share and use information and resources for learning as well as to interact with teachers, other learners and people around the world;
- readiness of English teachers to incorporate information technology in their classroom and to engage in professional capacity building to familiarise themselves with the use of e-resources and e-learning tools for pedagogical purposes; and
- availability and prevalence of e-resources and e-learning tools.

At the senior secondary level, e-learning can be further leveraged to create opportunities for the application of language knowledge and skills. However, it is worth noting that using e-resources and e-learning tools throughout the English lessons just for the sake of it can be counterproductive. Only when information technology ties in with pedagogy can effective learning and teaching take place. With its proper use, teachers can achieve the following:

Catering for Different Learning Styles

With the advancement in technology, learners should be exposed not only to printed texts, but those integrated with elements such as images, sounds and videos in digital format. Teachers can make good use of such texts as input to cater for the different styles of learners and enhance their interest in learning English. For

example, while video clips and movies can better capture the attention of visual learners, audio books can be particularly engaging for auditory learners. Similarly, teachers can vary the modes of output expected of learners, who can choose to demonstrate their learning through electronic means, ranging from producing digital photographs with captions to creating a digital story or a video clip with voice-over. Allowing learners to use their favourite means for accomplishing a task not only enlivens and enriches their learning experiences, but also gives them a sense of empowerment and enhances their engagement as well as motivation.

Fostering Interaction and Collaboration

The prevalence of social media, learning management systems, online forums and weblogs allows learners to conveniently share knowledge and exchange ideas with peers. These platforms, which allow teachers to provide topics or stimuli for critical or imaginative responses, serve to facilitate purposeful interaction and collaboration. For instance, teachers can publish a discussion topic of a social issue on a learning management system where learners can post their views on the topic or respond to the comments of their peers. Such interaction is conducive to the building of a learning community among learners.

Various software applications (apps) play a part in fostering collaboration. In preparation for a group presentation, learners can contribute ideas to a virtual platform with the use of an app in such a way that they can develop their ideas more fully and work out the logical flow collaboratively. They can also be assigned a writing task supported by computer software which enables learners to create and edit the same piece of work simultaneously. Essentially, digital technologies open up ample opportunities for genuine collaboration, which is instrumental in the development of skills for communication and negotiation.

Enhancing Information Literacy

Teachers can optimise the use of information technology to develop learners' information literacy. The use of information technology indeed enables learners to gain easy access to various kinds of learning resources. However, in view of the continuous extension of the frontiers of knowledge and information in the cyberspace, learners should be guided to think critically about and properly use the information from various sources. Capitalising on the vast amounts of information available on the Internet, teachers can design appropriate learning activities to

develop learners' ability to search for, integrate, interpret and evaluate information, to make appropriate judgement on the reliability of the sources of information as well as to construct new knowledge. In order for learners to learn how to handle information in an appropriate manner, teachers are also advised to instil in learners the importance of ethical use of online information.

Promoting Independent Language Learning

Information technology greatly facilitates language learning beyond the confines of the classroom. The Internet, for instance, is a powerful tool that can be exploited for accessing language resources for self-learning. Teachers can set up a virtual classroom where they can upload various supplementary learning materials for students' self-access. Teachers can also introduce to learners a wide range of language arts (e.g. music videos, animation) and non-language arts materials (e.g. documentaries, online newspaper database) available online to enhance cultural and social awareness, develop creativity, nurture a broad spectrum of interests and construct knowledge. Through engaging in extensive reading and viewing outside school hours, learners build English knowledge progressively according to their own pace, interests and needs. Teachers are also encouraged to guide learners to develop learning to learn capabilities through the use of web-based resources such as dictionaries, thesauruses and concordancers for looking up meanings of words or expressions and finding out how these are used in different contexts.