

Online World Introduction

SAMPLE

Young Learners and Technology

Research shows that appropriate use of computer technology in education is beneficial for students (Clements and Sarama; Waxman, Connell, and Gray; Byrom and Bingham). Broadly speaking, students can learn from computers and with computers. Students learn from computers when the computer assumes the role of a tutor, with the goal of imparting and increasing basic knowledge and skills. Students learn with computers when the computer serves in the role of a facilitating tool, with the goal of developing critical thinking skills, research skills, and the creative imagination (Ringstaff and Kelley).

Computer activities should be age-appropriate and foster instruction in ways that increase learning, motivation, personal productivity, and creativity. Children are naturally curious and willing to interact with computers, and they enjoy their ability to control the type, pace, and repetition of an activity. In some cases, children have even managed to learn how to use a computer with no instruction at all, through their own curiosity, fearlessness, and persistence (Mitra).

Computers in the English Language Classroom

The decision to use computers in the language classroom, including the English language classroom, requires the establishment of both technological goals and language-learning goals. For young children, goals such as the following facilitate a path to focused learning.

Technology Objectives	Language Objectives
To become familiar with the parts of a computer (CPU, screen, keyboard, mouse, cursor, printer, and so on).	To use English to interact in the classroom and to communicate in social situations.
To become familiar with approved software programs for the classroom.	To use English to describe self, family, community, and country.
To become familiar with operations (select, drag, save, delete, and so on).	To use learning strategies to increase communicative competence.
To become familiar with finding, filing, tracking, and organizing information.	To develop the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
To share information and collaborate with others.	To pronounce English words, phrases, and sentences intelligibly.
To develop learner autonomy.	To use appropriate register.

References

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The Online World

The Online World (www.ourdiscoveryisland.com) is an immersive world which accompanies the *Our Discovery Island* series. It is a ground-breaking digital product, combining the methodologies of classroom-based ELT and games-based learning. It is a safe learning environment, suitable for young learners which, via an Internet connection, can be used:

- on individual computers at school or at home;
- in groups at school, in the classroom.

It provides immediate feedback on performance, and contains features that appeal to young learners, such as colorful attractive visuals, clear audio providing pronunciation

models, animation, and game-like activities, all of which play a part in student motivation. It is carefully calibrated to appeal to children at primary level. The target vocabulary and grammar reinforce the syllabus of the course. Since tasks are intuitive and clear, and students receive immediate audio and visual feedback on their progress, the program builds learner confidence and independence.

The Online World was authored by a team of ELT specialists and multimedia games developers. It offers rich and engaging digital “islands,” which build on the language and aims contained within the books. The main emphasis is on expanding vocabulary while students learn by playing language games and achieving tasks. New language is introduced gradually and contextualized, so that students feel confident and motivated to complete each level. The key concepts which have guided the design are:

- *Immersion.* The Online World takes students out of their classroom or home environment and immerses them in a coherent and believable context. Engaging content and beautiful design hold the students’ interest and motivate them to continue with the adventure. Research conducted with the Online World indicates that even very young children are able to maintain concentration and enthusiasm for long periods of time.
- *Stealth learning.* The Online World is enjoyable and learning takes place almost without students being aware of it. Rather than mirroring the type of tasks in the Student Book, children learn via interactions with characters in the adventure. They are presented with real-world-like tasks, giving them a sense of responsibility and active involvement, which is extremely motivating. Learning takes place through listening and reading comprehension of speech bubbles, and through exposure to the target lexical sets via dialogues, the Picture Dictionary and supplementary language games.
- *Mastery.* Striking the right balance of challenge and achievability is a key component in any game. The Online World has been carefully designed to introduce the key skills needed to complete the task at the start of each level, and then by slowly building the complexity of the language students encounter. It is important that students find the tasks within the adventure sufficiently challenging. Children with prior exposure to digital games expect to fail at complex tasks several times before achieving them. This makes the tasks more, not less, satisfying, once achieved. It also encourages exploration and educational risk-taking. The model of “try, fail, repeat, succeed” is also important because it gives repeated exposure to the target language, ensuring that students comprehend the language before they move on.
- *Control.* Students love immersive worlds because they feel free within them. They can move their avatar around at their own speed and in their own chosen direction. They are also free to experiment and to fail without censure or observation. This gives them confidence and motivation. The Online World has been designed to allow children

sufficient freedom to enjoy the adventure and games, but at the same time to carefully channel them towards the learning outcomes and to expose them gradually to the target language. A carefully controlled gating system means they must achieve certain tasks before progressing into new parts of the adventure. A starred report card system motivates them to complete all the tasks within a scene, but gives them some freedom to determine when and how they do this.

- *Reward.* The Online World includes many of the most popular features of existing games, such as collectible items, customization, avatar design and “hidden” rewards such as new characters who appear once certain tasks are complete as well as audio and visual feedback to a task.

Teacher Support

We recognize that many teachers are likely to be unfamiliar with digital components, so we have developed a series of help guides, both online and as a download to be printed, to help teachers gain confidence in using the Online World in the classroom, in assisting students with queries about the tasks, or in setting parts of the Online World for home study.

In conjunction with these resources, there are walkthroughs of each level, to answer queries about specific sections of the adventure. They can also act as an introduction, or provide quick support for teachers who cannot spare the time to go through the Online World themselves.

All teachers will receive an individual Access code to the Online World and, unlike the student version, it will contain a map, allowing them to skip back and forward between scenes.

For ease of classroom management, there is a Progress Review System (PRS) where teachers can register their classes and monitor their progress.

Family Island

Family Island is a fun place where students can visit a fair, a toy factory and an adventure park, among other locations. Their main goal is to find nine children in a giant game of hide and seek. As they move around Family Island, they will bump into and be able to interact with characters they recognize from the books, such as Rita and her friend, Oscar.