language

technology integration

Second language teachers are focused on four main skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The tools referenced in some of the other starter guides (i.e., English Language Arts) offer great reading and writing practice. But below, tools specifically targeting speaking and listening skills are outlined.

voxopop

Tool: Voxopop
Equipment: Computer with mic, Internet connection
urls: http://www.voxopop.com

With Voxopop, students can create an electronic avatar of themselves and then make it speak. They can record opinions, questions, and thoughts and post them. Then, other students can record their own responses to these posts. In the end, Voxopop gives students the chance to create electronic conversations with one another. But because students are recording their own parts, they can practice and re-record their speech as much as necessary before they post. This takes the pressure off of conversation-making in a non-native language, but still allows students to get tons of useful speaking and listening practice.

sketchcast

Tool: Sketchcast
Equipment: Computer with mic, Internet connection
url: http://www.sketchcast.com

Sketchcast allows students and teachers to draw on a virtual whiteboard and record their audio narration. The tool is completely web-based, so it doesn't require users to download anything onto their computers. Students can simply log in, begin sketching (using a computer mouse) and record their verbal thinking as they solve a problem, explain a concept, or simply draw a picture. Rather than standing in front of the class and writing on the board, students can use Sketchcast to make a class presentation. With less pressure, they can re-record as much as they need in order to perfect their speaking skills.

comic and cartoon creation

Tools: Pixton; Make Beliefs Comix; Go! Animate
Equipment: Computer, Internet connection
url: http://www.pixton.com; http://www.makebeliefscomix.com; http://goanimate.com

As students learn to use a new language, conversation is an important skill. By creating simple comic strips, students can imagine possible dialogue scenarios and write them out. They can then practice the scenarios – their own or those created by other students – verbally. Students can use two free comic creation tools – Pixton, which offers more features, and Make Beliefs Comix, which has a simpler interface. To take things a little further, students can use Go!Animate to create animated cartoons with talk bubbles. If they have computer mics, they can even record the cartoon dialogue themselves.