21st Century Skills in ELT
Part 5: Ideas for Integrating 21st Century Skills: Twitter

In this final post of the series, Shaun Crowley offers a fifth idea for integrating 21st Century Skills into your lessons.

In my last post, I suggested the use of Wordpress as a tool for students to create their own online portfolio – a project that promotes digital literacy, learner independence, and creativity.

If that seemed a little too ambitious for your students, here is a simpler suggestion for integrating 21st Century Skills into a blended class/homework activity: get your students using Twitter.

Twitter has many educational uses, but here’s one that helps you promote autonomous learning as well as improve language acquisition: Use it as a channel for reporting new English words. These could be words that students have noticed while listening to music or watching a movie, or words that they remember from class that they find particularly useful. Here’s how you could set this up:

- Task your students with registering with Twitter. (If you already have a Twitter account, you may want to register a new one specifically for this purpose.)
- Have the class share each other’s Twitter addresses – yours as well – so that everyone can follow each other.
- Tell students to tweet definitions that will benefit the rest of the class. These could be definitions to English words, phrasal verbs, idioms or expressions. Start the ball rolling by tweeting the first one. Eg: *Chuffed to bits* = British English slang meaning “very happy”.
- Encourage students to read each other’s definitions and retweet those that they find particularly useful or interesting.
- Every so often, check how many tweets your students have, and draw up a leaderboard in class to encourage ongoing engagement in the task.

**A final word**

Whatever we call it and however we define it, the core competencies known as “21st Century Skills” have an increasingly important role in education, and ELT is certainly not an exception.

In these posts I have suggested four ways to combine language learning with 21st Century skills – but I’m sure you can think of many more.

What’s interesting here is that technology has a key role to play, and as a result, many of the ways in which we can engage students in these skills can easily be dealt with through independent study.

Outside class, students have more freedom to apply the English they learn using technology – which inevitably involves experimenting with digital tools and working things out for themselves. (Indeed, being able to learn independently of a teacher is perhaps the most crucial 21st century skill of all.)

Do you integrate 21st Century skills into your class? If you do, please share your own ideas in the comments below.

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