

A university tutor speaks about using technology

Interviewer: I'm talking today to Dr Liz Hauge about how she uses technology in her teaching. Thank you for talking to us today, Dr Hauge. Is it Dr Hauge, or should I call you Liz?

Liz: Um...Liz, I always tell my students, and indeed all of us, all the staff here...the students never have to call us by our titles. We're very informal; we're always called by our first names, so - Liz.

Interviewer: Okay, what courses do you teach?

Liz: Well, I'm an English language specialist. I'm an applied linguist, so I teach English. Most of my English teaching is probably English for Academic Purposes, and then within that category, the English that I teach is discipline-specific so I teach English to law students, to applied linguists, like myself, to education students, to geography students and so on, but I teach general English as well to Stage 5 English language students.

Interviewer: Perhaps we could focus on your Stage 5 general English course.

Liz: Yes.

Interviewer: Do students who are doing that course have to use a virtual learning environment on that course?

Liz: Yes we use a VLE called Blackboard, and we use it quite a lot. It's very important for the students: I put a lot of course documents on there; lots of information; I set up lots of links to useful websites; I put work on there for them to do so it's very important for them, yes.

Interviewer: So useful websites, things like grammar books, online grammar dictionaries that kind of thing?

Liz: Yes, yes, we have grammar exercises on there, dictionaries, as well as all the expected English language websites. I put on there links to the national newspapers, the BBC and of course BBC iplayer today so that they can watch programmes that they may have missed. And ITV, ITV catch-up. All kinds of external links; links to the media; links to cultural institutions, lots of university links as well - I mean, they can find for themselves the Library on the web, but I like to make it fairly easy for them, I suppose, and I put links to the Library and to the Medical Centre and to the Students' Union - lots of places within the University.

Interviewer: Okay. And you mentioned course documents that you make available through the VLE. Can you say what kind of course documents that might be?

Liz: Oh, all kinds of course documents. Information about what they should expect their assessments to be like; their actual assessments; their assignment titles and

information; and sometimes I put on there streamed video data if they need to analyse a stretch of conversation, for example, which is an exercise that we do for one of the modules that I teach, and that is available on Blackboard because if they should go home over the holidays, they can access that material from their home countries.

Interviewer: Are there any other kinds of online resources that you might use during your course?

Liz: I use lots of online resources, but I try to make them all available through Blackboard, as I say. For example, we use the eLanguages learning materials quite a lot with various courses. And these are activities that explain and test grammar; they explain the structure of essays, and one that I use with most of my students is a very good exercise on concordancing, and we actually go through that in class. We visit the concordancing websites, and it shows the students how they can use the websites themselves to improve their knowledge of how English is used.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you about what you do in the classroom. Does any of your class teaching involve technology at all?

Liz: Yes, in the classrooms we have quite a lot of Smart technology. Some rooms have a Smart board through which you can access the Internet, Blackboard; you can play DVDs, play videos and so on. Other rooms have computer workbenches, which serve similar purposes. You can actually write on Smart boards. Yes so we use that quite a bit, and the students use it as well because they have to give oral presentations as part of their assessment, and so they prepare their PowerPoint presentations, and they use the Smart technology in class for that.

Interviewer: That sounds very high-tech.

Liz: Well yes, but they know how to do it. We do use low-tech aids as well; for example, if the students are having a class discussion, I might give them overhead projector acetates and pens so that they can summarise their discussion and then they can put it up very quickly after the discussion for everyone to see. They can present their discussion to the rest of the class, so that's quite low level but very effective in a teaching situation.

Interviewer: So you use technology a tremendous amount in your teaching by the sounds of it?

Liz: Yes, yes, I suppose we do. I mean, we take it for granted. You know, when I first started teaching, very little of this was available, most of it was unavailable, but it's very useful. I'm glad we've got it.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much, Liz, for talking to us today about how we use technology in the classroom.

Liz: Pleasure.