

Re-Purposed Technology Lesson Plan

John McClellan

TE 831

Summary Box

Lesson title: Learning Basic English Using Duolingo on Your Smartphone

Prepared by: John McClellan

Subject area: ESL Teaching

Technology used: Smart Phone & Duolingo App

Length of lesson: 10 Minutes per Day

Suggested grade level: Primary Level

Lesson Objectives: *The student will be able to:*

- *Download and perform daily functions using the application to better understand basic English language communication.*
- *Commit to using the application on a daily basis as a means of attaining better English language comprehension in an addictive and entertaining way.*

Student NETS Standards Alignment:

- **3. a. plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.**
- **7. a. use digital tools to connect with learners from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, engaging with them in ways that broaden mutual understanding and learning.**

Materials:

- Smart Phone
- Duolingo App

Lesson Procedure: This Lesson fits the model of a tutorial on how to use an application using the student's mobile phone device. It can additionally be performed on tablets, laptops, desktops, and so on. For the purposes of this lesson we will discuss procedures performed on a smartphone, with the educator having access to a laptop and projector for large groups, or simply their own personal device for on-on-one or small group sittings.

Before: Depending on the size of the classroom and number of students the teacher should arrange the classroom accordingly. If in a large setting and using a projector, be sure to have everything set up before the students enter the room, as video setup can sometimes take a bit of time. The teacher should have already downloaded the application and begun using it at least briefly so they are familiar with its basic functions.

Recap:

- Arrange Classroom
- Prepare Relevant Tech Devices
- Familiarize Yourself with the Application

During: The teacher should first display the name, logo and use of the app. Try to avoid demoing too much at first, as this could cause students to skip ahead while others are trying to orient themselves. Have the students locate the app in the app store using their relevant devices. When all students have opened the app and are ready to begin it is appropriate for the teacher to begin demoing the first couple of steps in the app. At this point the teacher should remove themselves from position at the front of the room and begin monitoring the students progress. Encourage them and help them if they get stuck at any point in the process.

Recap:

- Display the App
- Direct Students to Download and Open the App
- Briefly Demo the App
- Monitor Student Progress Using the App

After: This application has a reward feature that encourages daily use. At the end of completing the first exercise (more depending on time and student engagement) the teacher should instruct the students to open the app daily to earn more achievements. As the app creator is still adding and creating content for the platform, teachers are encouraged to update their practices reflecting any updates.

Recap:

- Encourage Daily Use
- Scan for Updates Often

Additional Resources:

<https://www.duolingo.com/learn>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T8dsmJOVNs>

<https://schools.duolingo.com/>

Reflection: I work in South East Asia and over the past 10 years or so I've noticed the increased sophistication of personal handheld devices in the classroom. Where once it would have been unheard of for a student to be carrying a new iPhone, now I see them much more frequently. All students

have some access to a smart phone. There are inexpensive Chinese android devices readily available, so I'll always notice students in class with their noses buried in their devices. The main problem I've noticed is I never see them using the devices for anything helpful or educational. They are exclusively on social media, chat applications, or button-mashing video games. Never will I observe a student reading something of interest, searching for a location on a map, or even using a simple Google search to answer a query. I've observed coworkers grow frustrated with these distractions (I can't blame them) and pass around shoeboxes to collect these devilish devices. Once this task is completed, they can get back to the very important business of having the children copy sentences out of textbooks so they can copy the one-word answers from the smart kid in class. I've decided to take a different approach. I wanted to use an application that feels like a game, but can help with a useful skill, in this case learning English. For these purposes Duolingo fits nicely. TIK (Teacher Integrated Knowledge) Theory corresponds with this lesson for the 1:1 device dynamic. I'm not able to fashion a new iPad for every student I teach, but Duolingo works very well on almost any small smart device. I also looked to the broad theory behind TPACK. This lesson is great because it doesn't require a great deal of prior tech or content knowledge. It relies mostly on the effective pedagogical delivery of the teacher. The 'P' in TPACK is my favorite part.

During this specific launch of my idea I was visiting my wife's village in a rural area. It's 2020 currently, and we're in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. The schools have yet to formally open, but I'm fortunate to have access to several of our cousins. With a little bit of encouragement, I was able to get a broad coalition of ages on our new patio. Duolingo is free and can run on just about anything, so in pretty much no time I had them using it. I'm also currently using the app to learn Welsh, so I was pleased to see they were taking to it about as well as I was.

When identifying constraints, I like to look for solutions as well. For this experiment I only used the app in the individual learner capacity. There is a teacher option that can help if you are dealing with a large number of students and want to track their progress or keep them on track, I've included a link above. The major constraint, however, is the amount of time you probably shouldn't devote to the app in the classroom. I don't think the game-based design of Duolingo makes for a tool that should be used for 40+ minutes for example. I love the app, but even I would find that amount of time spent in one sitting to be fatiguing. Hence my reason for limiting the length of lesson to only 10 minutes daily.

Other ways these technologies can be re-purposed are varied and expansive. The concept of 1:1 technology pairing has been around for some time now, but the real-world applications keep changing because the tech is evolving faster than any of us can really follow. What I will say is this: Any smart device a student brings into the classroom should probably be seen as

an educational asset, rather than a liability moving forward. And I do think educators' opinions are evolving on this issue, particularly with the added stress from recent events.

Speaking to Duolingo narrowly, going beyond the practical 10-minute application of the application in class, I would like to encourage my students to use the app a few times at home during weekends and holidays... It is just a game after all.

For my own professional development this re-purposed lesson plan gets at the heart of what I'm trying to achieve by completing my MAED. I want to deliver quality education to a wide range of students that will not only help them learn in my classroom but can also be transportable when they leave my classroom for the day, or for the last time ever. I'm quite the traditionalist really. I like analog technology a lot. I'm more comfortable with a book in my hand than reading from a screen. What I've realized throughout my teaching career is that it really isn't about my likes and preferences, it's what's going to be most relevant and useful to my students moving forward.

I've been told it's sometimes good to get out of one's comfort zone. I have in the past been one of those teachers who loath to see phones on in my classroom. I'm trying to move past that bias and see how they might become more pedagogically useful. Personally, I've been a slow adopter of the app downloading craze. I'm also amazed what I discover when I start learning or using new apps. I'll always remember when I shifted from searching for news articles (I still do of course) to also having the BBC app right on my phone. Complete with breaking news alerts. I thought, "Wow! Useful!" Moving forward I'd like to take the kind of inspiration I encountered over these past few days and use it to encounter other new technologies and work out ways to incorporate them into my lessons. Onward!



