



## Teaching the Internet Generation

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### Abstract

The advance of technology has opened the door to new ways of learning. Thai teenagers can watch a video of American teenagers on the popular website You Tube and connect with others around the globe. They use cell phones, blogs, live internet chat and communicate through personal websites such as Hi-5 or Facebook. Teaching from traditional textbooks does not keep this generation engaged or motivate them to learn. New teaching approaches are needed. This paper explores how simply modernizing everyday lessons, activities and student projects increases student motivation, engagement and performance.

Creating a vocabulary and listening activity based on the popular rock group Linkin Park had surprisingly good results. Students listened to a song by the group and filled in vocabulary blanks that were left in the lyrics. The meaning of each word was discussed as a follow up. The interesting thing about this activity was that the students, not the teachers, wanted to expand the lesson. They started asking about the meaning of certain phrases and the overall message of the song. Engaging the students' interest allowed the lesson to grow and expand naturally from its original intention. Learning became fun and interesting.

A simple twist on a normal vocabulary lesson created a dynamic, positive and fun classroom environment with all students focused and ready to learn. This environment can be created every time by preparing material that relates to this new generation of students. The world has changed and it is time for the education system to follow suit.

**Keywords:** Internet, Creative, Technology, Modern

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## การสอนยุคอินเทอร์เน็ต

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### บทคัดย่อ

ความก้าวหน้าทางด้านเทคโนโลยี ได้เปิดประตูสู่การเรียนรู้แบบใหม่ๆ วิทยาลัยไทยอาจตุรวิดิทัศน์ เกี่ยวกับวันรุ่นอเมริกัน จากยูทูปเว็บไซต์ที่เป็นที่นิยม และการติดต่อสื่อสารกับบุคคลอื่นทั่วโลก การใช้โทรศัพท์มือถือ, เว็บไซต์เฉพาะเรื่อง การคุยกันทางอินเทอร์เน็ต, และการติดต่อสื่อสารกันโดยทางเว็บไซต์ส่วนตัว เช่น ไฮ-ไฟว์ หรือ เฟสบุ๊ก การสอนจากตำราแบบดั้งเดิม ไม่ได้ทำให้บุคคลในวันนี้ มีส่วนร่วมหรือสนใจในการเรียนรู้ จำเป็นต้องมีการสอนแบบใหม่ งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งสำรวจว่า บทเรียนประจำวันที่ทันสมัย, กิจกรรมต่างๆ, และโครงการของนักเรียนจะช่วยเพิ่มแรงจูงใจ, การมีส่วนร่วม, และการเรียนของนักเรียนได้อย่างไร

การพัฒนากิจกรรมคำศัพท์และการฟัง โดยอาศัยกลุ่มเพลง rock ที่เป็นที่นิยมชื่อ Linkin Park ได้ผลคืออย่างน่าประหลาดใจ นักเรียนฟังเพลงโดยทุกกลุ่ม และการเติมคำศัพท์ในช่องว่างในคำประพันธ์ การอภิปรายความหมายของคำศัพท์ในแต่ละคำในรูปแบบของการติดตามผล สิ่งที่น่าสนใจเกี่ยวกับกิจกรรมนี้ก็คือ นักเรียน ไม่ใช่ครูผู้สอนที่ต้องการขยายบทเรียน พวกเขาเริ่มถามความหมายของวลีต่างๆ และข้อความในภาพรวมของเพลง การมีส่วนร่วมในความสนใจของนักเรียน ช่วยให้บทเรียนเติบโตและแผ่ขยายตามธรรมชาติ จากความตั้งใจดั้งเดิม การเรียนรู้มีความสนุกและน่าสนใจ

การเปลี่ยนแปลงง่ายๆ คือบทเรียนคำศัพท์ธรรมดา ช่วยพัฒนาสิ่งแวดล้อมในชั้นเรียนทางบวก และสนุกที่มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงไม่อยู่นิ่ง กับนักเรียนทั้งหมด ทำให้นักเรียนสนใจและพร้อมที่จะเรียน สิ่งแวดล้อมนี้อาจจะพัฒนาได้ตลอดเวลา โดยการเตรียมเนื้อหาที่สัมพันธ์กับนักเรียนซึ่งเป็นคนรุ่นใหม่ โลกได้เปลี่ยนแปลงไป และถึงเวลาที่ระบบการศึกษาจะเป็นไปตามความเหมาะสม

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching the current generation of students is a very different experience compared to generations past. The difference has been created by the advance of technology over the past decade. This advance has produced two major trends in students: It has shortened attention spans and expanded their ways of thinking. The majority of children and teenagers today are far more knowledgeable about the internet and technology than their elders. Students can watch videos on You Tube of their peers in countries all over the world. From this they learn about other cultures, ideas and ways of thinking. This has created a new generation that thinks much differently than their parents. This thinking has permeated everything from education to social values. In terms of education, it has produced a new breed of student that craves variety and relevance. Students today expect teachers to be modern and current in terms of their teaching methodology. A teacher seen as "old generation" tends to lose student interest and respect quickly. How can we approach teaching this new breed of students? How can we teach them while at the same time appealing to their interests?

As a foreign teacher in Thailand I have struggled in determining an effective way to engage internet generation students. As a volunteer at a high school in Udon Thani province, following old textbooks, ideas and materials created negative energy in my classrooms. Students were unmotivated and often unwilling to learn and study. After this initial setback I decided to experiment. Due to my volunteer position I had the freedom to use many different ideas for all grade levels. I noticed that students enjoyed being active and having variety in every lesson. If I stuck to one activity for one hour student interest faded. From this observation, I learned that the first step to creating a dynamic and positive classroom is to use a variety of approaches and provide many different opportunities for active learning.

The second observation was that students enjoyed using technology and learning about relevant material they could identify with. Teaching material can be made relevant by keeping up to date on current events and culture. Incorporating technology can be very challenging at times, especially when IT material in the classroom is limited or outdated. It often falls on the teacher to think of new and creative ways to intertwine technology into lessons.



This paper examines how using a variety of approaches and creating opportunities for active learning creates a dynamic and positive learning environment. It also explores how technology and relevant material can be mixed in to help appeal to this new generation of students.

Maintaining Attention through Variety. Teenagers today have limited attention spans and get bored quickly. This can wreak havoc for a teacher who is trying to create a good classroom environment. Many teachers stick to their old methods and as a result lose their students' attention. The way to engage this new generation is through activity and variety. Changing presentation formats during lessons helps keep students engaged and focused. My students taught me that 2-3 changes within each lesson worked best. When I did more, they became confused. When I did less, they lost interest. Changing the activity or adding a new twist every 20-25 minutes was the best fit for my class. When I did this, students always wanted to know what was going to happen next.

One successful lesson using variety was on body parts. The first 15 minutes was spent on a fun warm up activity. The class was split into teams and one student from each team had to come to the board and

draw a human head. One by one each team member had to run to the board and fill in the rest of the body. The next step was for students to label as many body parts as possible, again going one by one. After 10 minutes each team had to sit down. The team with the most correct body parts won the game. With this fun warm up the transition to the main part of the lesson was smooth.

Using a health website from the internet, a human body was displayed on the monitor for students to see. When you clicked on a certain body part it showed the name and a voice pronounced the word. After listening students were asked to repeat the word as a group. The follow up to this was a retention activity using the original teams from the warm-up. Using a laser pointer, different parts of the body were highlighted. The team that recognized the part quickest and said it correctly was awarded a point. Bonus points were given if they could spell it correctly.

When you have variety it becomes easy to incorporate the 4 key elements of teaching into lessons; speaking, listening, reading and writing. The body parts lesson incorporated all these elements by using games and different visuals. The changes kept the students interested and engaged



throughout the lesson. It also gave them multiple opportunities to learn and use the vocabulary in different ways.

Growing Lessons Naturally. One hour lessons are great, but teachers should also be prepared to teach longer units that expand student knowledge. This process begins with a basic foundation and grows naturally from that base. The manner and pace of development will vary from classroom to classroom. It is an interactive process where students demonstrate their readiness to proceed to the next step and teachers adjust their lessons based on student needs. The goal is to create solid momentum and flow to the unit. There is a simple format that can be used as a guideline for creating this foundation and natural expansion. For the purpose of clarity the topic of animals will be used as an example.

The introduction of a new topic or unit will set the tone for the coming weeks. Keeping this in mind, it is vital to make sure you engage student interest and explain things simply and clearly. Nothing is worse than talking for 20 minutes and having a classroom of confused students. The best way to start something is to create a fun game or activity that introduces the topic vocabulary. The game is fun for the students and helps teachers assess what

students already know and need to learn. For animals, a simple jeopardy game was used. (See Appendix A) This game created the basic vocabulary foundation for the next lesson. The categories for questions used the vocabulary students would need to describe animals. Students were learning the words they needed by simply playing the game. It was a lot of fun and kept the students actively engaged.

Extensions were added during the game to test student retention and focus. After students answered questions correctly, they were asked to draw a picture, spell the word or show the action. For example, when students answered the question "Is a cat big or small?" they were also asked to draw a picture of a cat on the board and spell the word "cat" correctly. This tested understanding, allowed students to learn about one item using a variety of methods and helped them remember what they learned.

After the jeopardy game students had basic vocabulary to talk about animals. The next step became expanding their knowledge and seeing how far they could be pushed. The second lesson incorporated the vocabulary and dialogue to be used for the upcoming activity. The first step was getting students to generate a list of animals



in groups or teams. It began with the teacher telling a funny story about their favorite animal. When the class began shouting out animals they knew, this created the opportunity to get the lesson started. The students who spoke were asked to come and draw their animal on the board and write its name. If they were having trouble with the names other students could help. Drawing the pictures was fun and the students had a blast doing it.

From this base created by the students, the expansion of the vocabulary could now begin. Using the animals on the board, small sentences were created to describe each animal. Students enjoyed learning this new vocabulary because there was lots of variety. First, they were asked to demonstrate the meaning of words and act on commands. For example, when the teacher said "Show me swimming", students would act out swimming. Later words were combined and students would demonstrate a fish swimming or a monkey eating a banana. Even when learning vocabulary, students want to be active and learn through many different methods. A teacher can cater to this need by adding little twists and changes, which helps with student retention and keeps lessons dynamic. In this scenario, teacher and students worked together to

build the material from the grassroots up. The next step was to create an activity that would incorporate what was learned from the previous classes. This activity allowed students to use the vocabulary they had built from the previous two lessons. It also incorporated a variety of skills and every person in the class was involved.

The goal was to combine everything together and get students creating their own body of work. In groups, students had to choose an animal. They were then asked to conduct research and create an information board. The research focused on the vocabulary from the past two lessons with some added twists and challenges. For example, students had to figure out if their animal was big or small or if it could swim or fly. A twist was giving students a map of the world and having them color the part of the world their animals came from. Photos were found using search engines on the internet such as Google.

Once the board was completed it was time to present. Every member in the group had to say at least 1 sentence about their animal. As a follow-up, the teacher asked questions to test student understanding. For example, the teacher would say "Sorry I forgot. What color is an elephant? Can you tell me?"



From a simple Jeopardy game to introduce basic animal vocabulary, students progressed to creating their own presentation about an animal of their choice. Given such opportunities students learn to use the vocabulary taught in a meaningful way that they will not forget. In essence, students are growing the seeds planted by their teacher. Using Technology. Students love using technology because it's such a big part of their everyday life. There are many different ways to use technology in the classroom. The following activities are a small example of some creative ways to mix teaching material and technology together. All of these activities can be used as starting points to begin a new unit, topic or area of focus.

Camera Phone Craziess. This activity was created when trying to figure out how to modify a traditional scavenger hunt. This is where you ask students to find a list of items. The majority of high school students have cell phones with built in cameras. This means the materials are already prepared for the lesson. The only thing that has to be created is a list. The class is divided into teams based on the size and skill level of the particular class. Low level classes should have a few large teams while higher level classes should have

many small teams. Each team is given a list of items. Working as a team they have to take a photo of every item using their camera phone. The first team to complete the task and hand it in to the teacher is the winner.

This activity is very versatile because there are so many topics that can be selected. For example, students can be asked to take pictures of their friends showing different emotions or things such as a red motorcycle. Sports, colors, classroom items, clothing and household items are just a few of many other potential topics. When used as a starting point, it allows students to ease into the new topic comfortably. After the activity the more formal aspects of the unit can be started such as sentence formation and structure. This is also a very creative way to test students at the end of a unit instead of having them write a formal test at their desks.

Surfing the Net. The computer lab can also be used to create very interesting lessons. An internet scavenger hunt is a great way to engage students. In this activity, students have to answer questions by searching for the answers using the internet. Current events, sports, weather, entertainment and classifieds are all examples of potential topics.



It's easy to lose focus with this activity and make things too broad. It's important to keep a narrow vision when planning the lesson. For example, if you want to focus on sports you should tailor your lesson accordingly. Have students search sports websites for scores, statistics and opinions from journalists. The overall goal of your lesson will change according to the level of your students. If you have a low level class you can start by building on basic vocabulary used to describe sports. Students can be asked to find specific pictures or describe what they see in a sports photo from the internet. Intermediate students can be asked to find certain information like sports scores or the weather in a given location. Higher levels can be asked for their opinion about a certain article commenting about a game or athlete's actions such as taking steroids.

If you want to extend this from one lesson you can assign a project. One simple project idea is to have students find a particular article. They have to describe who, what, when, where, why, how and present it to the rest of the class. A fun statistics project is to have students choose their favorite athlete. They have to create a biography of them with full statistics using Power Point or Microsoft Excel. As you

can see, there are all sorts of options for expansion once you have the basic format.

Messenger Madness. MSN Messenger is a program used by almost all students today. This can be used to a teacher's advantage. Instead of using a written quiz to gauge student levels at the beginning of a term, evaluations can be conducted using this program. Students can be divided into groups of two or three. They are then asked to have a five minute conversation in English by messaging each other. After the activity each group prints their conversation and gives it to the teacher. The teacher can use these conversations to check the students' level and correct grammar. The rest of the term and future lessons are now easier to plan because the conversations will be a great indicator of weak areas that need to be addressed and improved. It will also get students very excited about what to expect next time.

One great thing about MSN messenger is that it has the emoticons function. Emoticons are animated faces that can be used with normal typed dialogue while talking with other people. A simple test on emotions can be conducted by saying different emotions and having the student message the appropriate emoticon. This can be combined with the camera phone





activity mentioned previously when teaching a unit on emotions.

MSN also lists the exact time messages are sent and there are many options regarding font color, size and background color. A fun listening activity can be created by having students follow a set of directions from the teacher. For example, the teacher can ask students to change their font color, size or send a message at exactly 10:37 am.

**Singing and Learning.** Teenagers love music and this can be used to create some great lessons. There are many variations to be considered based on the level of the class. Using music is a great way for a teacher to connect with their students. Showing an effort to cater to their needs will make students want to go that extra mile for their teacher.

A simple vocabulary lesson begins by the teacher eliciting from students what kind of music they like. From this the teacher can select a few songs. The lyrics of the song are given to each student with some blanks. Students listen to the song and fill in the missing vocabulary. After reviewing the vocabulary the lesson can be expanded by exploring the meaning of the song. Students can be asked to give a presentation about what they think the

song means and if they enjoyed it.

If you want to make the activity more student based a project can be created. The guidelines are up to the discretion of the teachers, but here is an example to build on. Each student has to select their favorite song. Their task is to summarize the meaning of the song. Once they have done this they present their findings to the rest of the class. There are many different and creative ways for students to present their work. Students can use Power Point, a slideshow with photos or act out the story to explain the meaning of the song.

## **CONCLUSION**

All of these activities can be altered and adapted to use all the different areas of learning. Speaking, reading, writing and listening can be incorporated all together or isolated individually depending on the teacher's specific goal. For example, the song lesson can be specialized as a listening exercise by using the basic fill in the blanks vocabulary format. It can be modified into the presentation format which makes students use all four areas. The same can be done for the camera phone activity by giving the list orally instead of through a written list. Students have to listen, communicate with each other, write the items down, read for



understanding and then go and take the photos.

All of these lessons can be very high energy and students become excited at times. It is very important to remain focused on the goal of the lesson and keep control of students. This is achieved by explaining the format and process of the activity clearly from the beginning.

These activities along with the idea of building naturally from a strong base allow teachers to shape and mould their classroom. Traditional methods can be modified and adapted to create new and interesting lessons. Simple twists can add 10 minutes to simple games or activities. It falls on the teacher to think of the best way to do this. This is only a set of guidelines for teachers to apply when teaching their

students. It is a skeleton and the meat, flesh and blood has to be infused by the teacher's own thoughts, ideas and creativity.

The world is currently in a state of exponential growth and development. This growth has forever changed our world and how future generations will learn and develop. As teachers we must be knowledgeable about this and adapt to our ever changing surroundings. The overall goal will always remain constant; to make students better. The methods however, must be adapted and adjusted to the current situation. The current trend is calling for more technology, creativity and variety. As teachers, it is our responsibility to recognize this and use it to empower our students to move forward with confidence into this new world

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