

Creating technology-enhanced communicative activities for the language classroom

presented by Anna Bennett

reviewed by Neslihan Demirdirek

In this session, Anna Bennett explored practical activities that enhance learner engagement and make online interactions more meaningful. She believes that we have unprecedented opportunities for integrating technology into the teaching-learning process whether fully online, hybrid or in a physical classroom. She also provided opportunities to evaluate how participants are currently implementing technology in their own contexts.

The presenter started her session by giving a self-reflection poll on mentimeter for the participants to reflect on their feelings due to the sudden transition to online education during the pandemic and how they dealt with the challenges. According to the poll given during the session, the top three barriers seemed to be students without access to technology, assessing learners and motivating and engaging learners.

Anna Bennett believes that the 'digital genie' is out of the bottle now. All our experience has had an impact on how we teach today whether online, hybrid or the brick and mortar classroom. She shared the SAMR model developed by Dr. Ruben R. Puentedura. SAMR stands for the following:

Redefinition: Technology allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable.

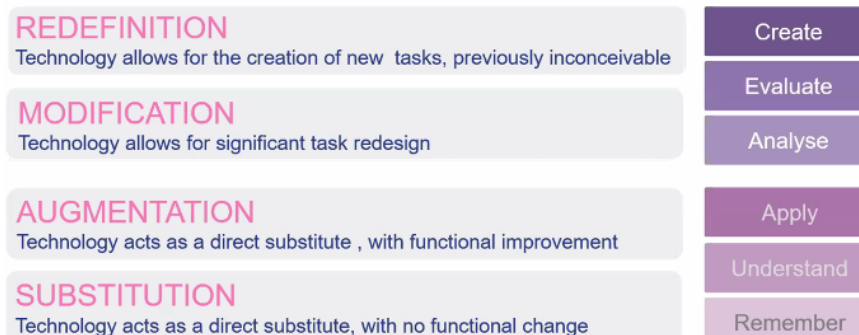
Modification: Technology allows for significant task redesign.

Augmentation: Technology acts a direct substitute, with functional improvement.

Substitution: Technology acts a direct substitute, with no functional change.

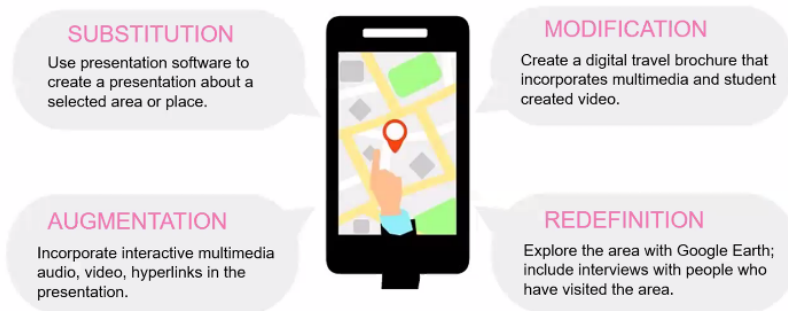
She explained each level of technology integration by giving some explanation and examples. Just like Bloom's taxonomy, the model shows the basic skills (Substitution) at the bottom, and the higher skills (Redefinition) at the top. In **Substitution**, there is no change to the learning process or the learning outcomes. Students can get comfortable with new technology before we start transforming their learning. For example, giving an online quiz instead of a pen and paper quiz. In **Augmentation**, technology adds something to the learning process. It allows for the introduction of more independent and student-centric learning. For instance, asking students to prepare an online presentation on Prezi instead of using PowerPoint. In the third one, **Modification**, technology is used to design interactive and dynamic tasks. Students can collaborate in groups, allowing for collaboration and knowledge sharing. An example of this can be preparing a podcast and recording it in groups. The last level of technology integration, **Redefinition**, means using technology to make entirely new learning opportunities possible. This includes connecting learning with the real world while building technological soft skills such as digital collaboration. A good example can be projects students carry out with students in another classroom or school. Anna Bennett highlighted that redefinition is not the same as 'high tech'. She thinks that a learning experience is redefined when it integrates technology seamlessly and meaningfully to open new doors for student learning – regardless of how sophisticated that technology might be.

Later, in her presentation, she showed how Bloom's taxonomy and the SAMR model are related. While the first and the second levels of technology integration seem to be related to remembering, understanding and applying, the third and the fourth levels are related to analyzing, evaluating and creating.

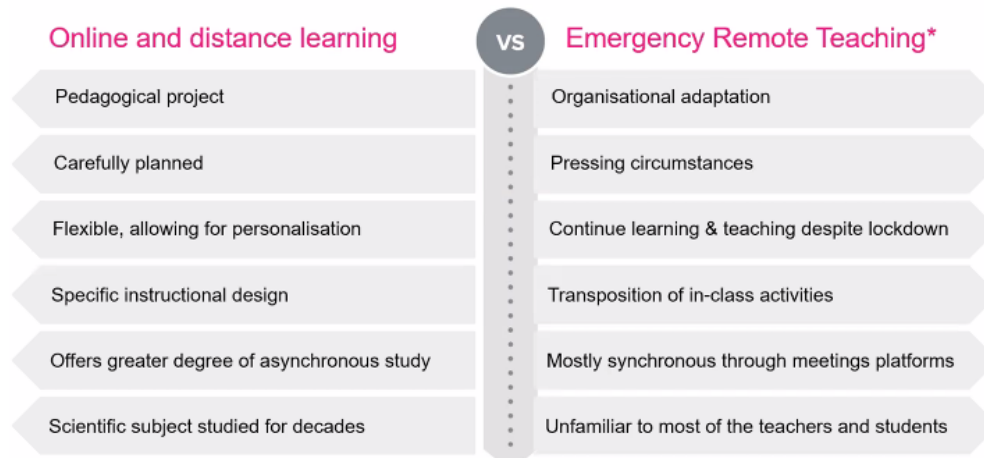


She gave the following practical example to clarify these levels of technology integration.

GESE Grade 3: Places in the local area (CEFR A2.1) or GESE Grade 6: Travel (CEFR B1.2)



Towards the end of the presentation, she questioned whether there is a skills gap between online and distance learning and emergency remote teaching. She listed the differences as follows:



She also introduced Trinity College's Teach English Online course and Certificate in Online Teaching (CertOT) that are developed to help teachers improve the knowledge and skills they need to make their online teaching as productive as their face-to-face teaching.

The presenter finished her presentation by sharing the following quote by George Couros.

"Technology will never replace great teachers, but in the hands of great teachers, it is transformational."