Developing communicative competence requires maximizing learners’ exposure to comprehensible input in the target language as well as providing them with abundant opportunities to generate language output in meaningful contexts. Both of these tasks demand ample contact with the target language. It can be challenging to provide this during the limited number of classroom hours that most educators have with students.

Incorporating technology into the mix of tools you use is one way to create opportunities for learners to use the language outside of the classroom. I have found Classkick to be quite helpful for this purpose.

Classkick

While many of the functions of Classkick overlap with those of other tools (e.g., text responses, image uploads, drawing, and voice recording), this tool allows students and teachers to use all of these important functions on a single platform rather than having to draw upon several different services. This makes it easy to keep all materials and tasks in one place and makes it unnecessary for students to learn how to use multiple tools.

The user interface is also extremely simple and intuitive. My students have encountered no problems finding functions and using them. Three of the functions that I find to be particularly easy to use and useful are:

1. Text boxes, links, images, and voice recordings are treated as movable “objects.” This means that you have full control over where each appears on the page. Images can also overlay one another, which allows for mixed media (e.g., text or a voice recording floating over an image) that may inspire creative tasks.

2. Tasks are presented as a slide-style canvas, and the slides may be ordered in any sequence. This accommodates step-by-step learning, story-style learning that unfolds over multiple pages, as well as quest “journeys” that go through multiple tasks.

3. In-progress assistance from both the teacher and peers is possible. Students may “raise their hand” by simply clicking on the icon to ask for help and receive feedback while working rather than having to wait until the assignment is turned in. There is also a “peer helper” option that can be activated so that assistance can be provided by classmates.

The flexible design of Classkick allows you to be creative when designing learning tasks. Here are a few features that I use often in my classes:

- **Prompt-Response**
  
  When assigning students tasks on Classkick, the prompt may be a text, an image, a voice recording from the teacher, a hand drawing, a link to a video or a website, or any combination of thereof. Tasks may be completed in the same manner, using any combination of these input formats. For instance, in a listening comprehension task, students may listen to an audio clip describing a room and, in response, draw the room using the drawing tools and add text labels to the furniture (see Figure 1).

- **Dialogical Speaking**
  
  While the Classkick learning environment is primarily asynchronous making it less than optimal for spontaneous interpersonal conversations (I recommend Zoom for recorded synchronous conversations between learners), simulated dialogical practice is still pos-
sible using pre-recorded and sequenced input provided by the teacher (see Figure 2). Because Classkick offers flexibility in the placement of objects, you can pre-record answers and ask students to come up with questions that lead to those answers. This helps address a problem that is common in the language classroom: Learners often reply to questions, but less frequently have the opportunity to initiate inquiries.

- **Note-taking**
  One way that I expand student contact with the target language is through flipped learning: Having learners view instructional videos at home and apply the content learned in class. I use Classkick to provide a video link, and students type their notes using my guiding questions. They can also ask questions of their own, to which I can provide individualized feedback. While there are more effective tools for this specific task—Classkick unfortunately does not show the video on the page itself, but rather as a link to the external site—I still use it because it allows me to keep all learning records in one place, making it easy for students to find them for later review. If it is important for you to have the video displayed on the page together with the guiding questions, I recommend using Google Docs or Lingt.

- **Pronunciation Practice**
  I teach Chinese, a tonal language, so it is important that my students practice producing the correct tones for each character, but pronunciation is important in any language. I have students record themselves reading the lesson text aloud. I then use the drawing tool and flexible object placement to provide feedback. I circle salient pronunciation errors and accompany these with text explanations and/or recorded audio demonstrations (see Figure 3). It is worth noting that for both learners and teachers, voice recording is an extremely easy one-click function on this platform that does not require any uploading effort. Being able to provide feedback in both audio and visual forms with relatively little effort is a tremendous benefit and makes it easy to accommodate learning styles and maximize intake.

- **Creative Mixed-Media Tasks**
  This is my favorite function of Classkick because it taps my students’ creativity and helps them really own their language use. Flexible object placement makes it easy for students to create funny memes combining images and text (see Figure 4), or record a conversation over a scene (see Figure 5). Learners may also supply images for descriptive and narrative tasks, as in Figure 6, in which the learner wrote about her favorite outfit and added a picture of herself wearing it.

Two thoughtful features in Classkick even help make grading and commenting faster and easier. You can create a collection of “stickers” with frequently used comments that you can then just click to insert, eliminating the need to type the same comments over and over again. And you can use the up/down arrows on the keyboard to switch between students, and the left/right arrows to switch between the assignments of an individual student. These sound like such simple functionalities, but they have actually saved me a lot of time.

The basic edition of Classkick is free, while upgrading to a paid tier enables additional functions such as auto-grading of multiple choice questions and more design options. Setting up a class roster is possible in both the free and the paid versions, and allows you to keep assignments private to your own students. Once you assign a project to the class roster, a link appears that may be easily copied and shared with students. Classkick works best on Google Chrome.
What’s That App? Download

Memrise
memrise.com
Memrise offers the functionality of Quizlet in an optimized portable app. It includes “courses”—similar to the “sets” in Quizlet—composed of hundreds of thoughtfully selected words and phrases in the target language. This is a great way to get in some extra vocabulary work. Languages include French, Spanish, Japanese, German, Chinese (Simplified), Korean, and Italian, and it distinguishes between Spanish spoken in Spain and that spoken in Mexico.

StudyBlue
studyblue.com
Used by more than 16 million students, StudyBlue is a student-centric, crowdsourced learning app. Teachers can create flashcards by uploading vocabulary, phrases, and grammatical concepts to the app. Students then create and use their in-app flashcards based on what was uploaded as study tools for assignments and tests. It’s even possible to copy and edit flashcards created by others from the StudyBlue library where there is school-specific and class-specific content (think AP Spanish), and progress can be tracked online. StudyBlue even claims to be able to appraise student pronunciation of each word in the app.

HelloTalk
hellotalk.com
This free app connects students with native speakers. It is possible to search for language exchange partners by native language, city, distance from you, and more. The interface also allows you to connect with all native speakers of a language at once to share an update or ask a question about language or culture. Chat with individual members or join group chats for a collaborative learning experience.

Websites to Watch

LanguageNut
languageNut.com
LanguageNut digital language resources for elementary and high schools promote the development of deeper language comprehension, as well as exam skills and productive skills. Teachers are able to set spontaneous speech activities, as well as other low-stakes language practice across all skills. LanguageNut High School includes 8,000 exam-style questions and 2,500 words and phrases in different tenses, as well as a wide range of interactive games. These automatically marked games save time and reward students with points, medals, and unlockable achievements. Comprehensive reporting and individually assignable activities make it easy to track student progress.

Teach with Lindsay Does Languages
lindsaydoeslanguages.com
A UK-based website for those who teach languages online, but with lots to inspire independent language learners and teachers alike. Some of the components are: Teach Languages Online, a weekly podcast; an Online Language Teacher Planner, a digital and print-ready planner that helps organize online language teaching; 100 Creative Ideas for Online Language Teachers, an e-book with activities to use during lessons, as well as videos, templates, and examples. There is also a Languages Online Facebook Group.

Listen Up! Language-Related Podcasts

Learn Out Loud (learnoutloud.com)
Learn Out Loud doesn’t produce a language podcast of its own but is an online warehouse of podcasts made by others. Browse the directory to see what’s available for the language that you teach. The “Other Languages” category is a treasure chest for those who teach less commonly taught languages. You may have to do a little exploring to find what you’re looking for, but it will be worth the effort. Learn Out Loud is a repository for all sorts of valuable odds and ends.

LingQ (lingq.com)
The LingQ web-based language-learning system offers podcast series in Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish. The podcasts are casual, natural conversations between native speakers of the language. There’s a community aspect to the interface that rewards you for helping your peers, and the podcasts are also available on mobile. Access to the podcasts is free, but a LingQ account enables features like interactive transcripts and downloads.