This issue’s tip comes from Leslie Davison, recipient of the 2018 ACTFL Award for Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction Using Technology with IALLT K–12. She is a Google Certified Innovator, was Colorado Teacher of the Year in 2015, and is an elementary and high school Dual Immersion and International Baccalaureate Spanish teacher in Breckenridge, Colorado.

What new technology tool do you recommend—and how do you use it in your classroom?

Accessibility to technology is no longer a barrier at our school. All students come to class with a school-assigned Chromebook and most also have a smartphone. This means that the use of technology in and of itself is not as engaging as it once was. To address this, I try to use it primarily to do things that are unique or otherwise impossible.

Here are four of the ways in which I have used technology this year to serve a global audience, have fun, connect with parents, and explore worlds outside of the classroom.

1. Kiva

Kiva (kiva.org) is an online microlending organization that makes loans in increments of $25 to small businesses in developing communities around the world.

Kiva provides an awesome opportunity for students to authentically participate in a global community while using their language skills.

There are a number of ways to add Kiva to a world language curriculum. This year, my students read a variety of loan application letters from Spanish-speaking countries. Honduras, El Salvador, and Bolivia have been popular with my students, and Kiva makes loans in communities in Africa, Asia, and Central/South America. Although the main Kiva site is in English, the original application letters are written in the target language at a level that is usually quite comprehensible. Students learn language and content about geography, farming, agriculture, retail, and construction.

Students chose a person or a family that they would like to support and made a simple Google Slides presentation about why we should lend to them. These presentations were shared orally in front of the class. The students took notes and engaged in follow-up questions: “How much do they need? What is their business? Where are they from? How many kids do they have?”

Following the presentations, students voted on who to fund. Clara did an effective job convincing us to vote for Ernesto, this year’s winner. From Honduras, Ernesto requested money to buy seeds and fertilizer for his small farm so that he could send his children to a better school.

I have an account with Kiva, so we were able to watch Clara take the steps to actually fund a portion of Ernesto’s loan.

PRO-TIP: Depending on the level, I have pre-taught subjunctive phrases that students can integrate into their presentations, such as: “It’s important that you give … “, “I want you to support … “, or “I hope you choose … “

EXTENSION: Students learn that they can volunteer for Kiva to translate loan applications for families. Additionally, they can buy Kiva gift cards for birthdays or special events.

2. Gimkit

Although it’s along the same lines as Quizlet Live, Quizizz, and Kahoot, Gimkit (gimkit.com) takes it up a notch. Created by...
a high school student, the goal of the game is to make lots of money. Gimkit provides features both teachers and students love.

Questions can be multiple choice or short typed answers called “text input.” Text input questions allow for higher level thinking and encourage students to add proper punctuation and accent marks. One of the best features of Gimkit for a world language class is the fact that the questions repeat, giving students multiple opportunities to see both the question and the answer.

Another feature I like is that after I start the game for the class, it moves on automatically without me having to advance it. I’m then free to move around the room supporting my students or preparing the next activity. Students love the team mode and you can alter both the group size and the length of the game. I normally have it play twice and allow each game to run for about 7 minutes.

The craziest thing about this game is how excited the kids get over some of the special features that my students discovered while playing the game. Once the teams start making money, they can freeze out other teams, increase the amount of money that they receive for each correct answer, and even give another team a gift. It gets very exciting!

Gimkit is free for three different games, called “kits.” If you want more games, you’ll need to pay for the pro version. I highly recommend giving Gimkit it a try even if you don’t plan to pay for the pro version.

**PRO-TIP:** Gimkit allows you to import questions already created in Quizlet. The game show genre of music can become repetitive, so I turn the sound off and play songs in Spanish from my computer.

**EXTENSION:** I like to share with my gamer students that Gimkit was created by a high school student and that the company is looking for employees who speak multiple languages.

---

**Text Messages**

Although many tech solutions exist today to connect our students with their parents, I have found that using a tool that parents and students already use regularly is most effective. Last month my students sent videos of themselves summarizing a novel to their parents. They provided no explanation, simply sending an audio message or a video of themselves speaking in Spanish about the plot of the book. Minutes after sending the text, phones throughout the classroom began to buzz with replies.

This activity takes no preparation and absolutely anything you are doing in class (a cultural drawing, a class song, a sample writing, etc.) can be shared seamlessly with parents.

**PRO-TIP:** I have my students take a screenshot of their screen showing both their message to their parents and the response they received. They then load the image into Google Classroom so I’m able to see all the responses. Be sure to use this sparingly to maintain its impact.

**EXTENSION:** Sending these inspiring responses from parents to a school principal or a member of the school board is an effective marketing technique for your World Languages Program.

---

**My Maps**

My Maps ([google.com/mymaps](http://google.com/mymaps)) is a tool that allows users to create their own Google Maps.

My upper level students read *El País* or *CNN Español* regularly. We then discuss the news of the day and students put a placemark of the location of the event on their personal Google Map. The placemakers can be edited to be different colors, icons (a house, tornado, bike, church, etc.) or be customized.

My Maps enjoys the same collaborative properties as any Google doc. The default status is “private” but this can be changed to “view only” or be made easily editable by whoever the author wishes. In some classes I use a single map and various students add to it every day.

In addition to placemarks, a line can also be drawn to mark the path of a hurricane, a historic cultural route such as El Camino de Santiago, or the path immigrants may be traveling at any given time.

**PRO-TIP:** Google’s My Maps are very easily embedded in student or class blogs and websites.

**EXTENSION:** I also use My Maps to track of our global connections, trace where my students are from, and mark cultural products or practices that pop up during the year.
Tofugu tofugu.com

The Tofugu website is dense with Japanese language and culture teaching and learning resources. The monthly New Japanese Learning Resources are gold mines. For instance, the May 2019 edition features four valuable resources: JLPT Stories, which provides 3- to 4-minute stories read by native Japanese speakers at normal speed and labeled with their JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) level; Onomatopedia, a new online onomatopoeia encyclopedia; the Japanese grammar study app Bunpo for Android that allows you to choose a JLPT level or basic kana lesson (or hiragana/katakana for beginners) when you launch the app; and Kanjikai, a new kanji-only dictionary that makes the kanji search experience fun. Searching in English gets no results.

Forvo forvo.com

Forvo is a huge pronunciation guide, with words in more than 300 languages. Its tagline is “All the words in the world. Pronounced.” The new Forvo Kids is a collection of children’s language learning apps (English, Spanish, German, French, and Basque) aimed at 3- to 6-year-olds. The Language of the Day is a fun feature, as is Trending on Forvo.

LISTEN UP! Language-Related Podcasts

Brazilian PodClass
podcasts.com/learn-portuguese-brazilianpodclass

Boasting nearly 600 podcasts, Brazilian PodClass describes itself as a machete that helps you hack your way through the jungle of learning—or teaching—Portuguese. There are podcasts appropriate for all levels and you will find episodes on popular expressions, pronunciation, conversation, culture, and current events. Online transcripts are available at no charge for each podcast, and learning guides are available at the premium membership level. Available on iTunes.

Españolistas espanolistas.com

A good podcast option for intermediate Spanish speakers, Españolistas is hosted by a Colombian Spanish teacher and her American fiancé. The pair discusses topics ranging from online dating to Venezuela’s economic crisis, in a way designed to increase vocabulary and improve listening comprehension. The hosts keep their conversations fun and lively.

LaunchPad
iftic.ill.hawaii.edu/launchpad

LaunchPad is a fast-paced, Shark Tank-style competition that features innovative technology products intended to fill real needs in world language education. The competition will take place at the 2019 ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo in Washington, DC, where a panel of experienced professionals and the audience—that’s you!—will judge the merits of the products and choose a winner.

The 2019 finalists are five start-up companies that have built creative and intuitive technology tools that support language learning and have the potential to introduce innovations in language education.

Help choose the 2019 LaunchPad winner at noon on Saturday, November 23, in the Exhibit Hall of the Walter E. Washington Convention Center.

Feel free to take a peek before the games begin!