



A. Konobeyev, PhD, "Computers for Education"

Using ICT for Teaching English and Professional Development

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Professional forums for teachers

Regular communications with other members of the professional community is probably as important for teachers' professional development as training courses. While at professional development institutes teachers get theoretical information on latest developments in ELT methodology and on federal and regional regulations in education, professional communication with teachers from other schools, cities and regions can help find solutions to practical teaching problems, share experience with the less experienced colleagues, start joint projects, discuss ELT materials, publish teachers' own materials etc.

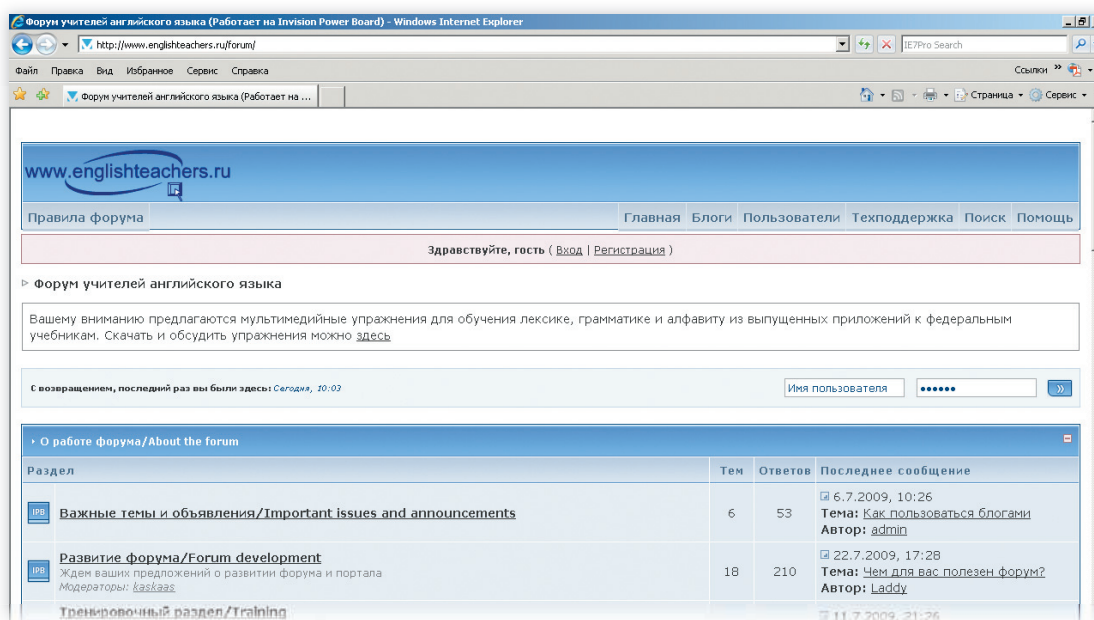
One of the most efficient ways to organize such communication is through internet forums. A forum can be a short one, like the Pedagogical Council (Pedsovet) that is organized annually in late August, or an ongoing, 24/7 forum.

A short forum is easier to manage and its participants can agree beforehand on issues to discuss by submitting questions online. An ongoing forum is less manageable but it is convenient in providing consultancy, resources and information to teachers whenever they need it. For example, at www.englishteachers.ru there are more than 5000 participants.

The forum has sections dedicated to discussing popular textbooks. Quite frequently the questions of the participants are answered by the authors of those textbooks. Many teachers share their lesson plans and supplementary materials that they developed to use with the textbooks. Materials, developed by teachers for extracurricular work, contests, Olympiads and other tasks are published in the "Materials developed by teachers" section and other relevant sections of the forum.

The "ELT articles section" contains numerous articles on ELT methodology. The Seminars section contains information on forthcoming All-Russian and regional seminars, as well as links to online registration pages. Assistance and other services are provided by the website's administration to those wishing to register for these seminars.

Special sections, monitored and largely authored by experienced teachers and academics contain worksheets, lesson plans and articles on current issues in ELT methodology. Thus, the webforum at www.englishteachers.ru is a place that brings together resources, teaching materials, annotated links to useful websites, academic articles, news on forthcoming events and, most importantly, a space where teachers can consult each other, share practical solutions to everyday



problems, find effective ways of teaching and preparing students for school-leaving and international tests and exams, and even take part in professional contests for teachers. Participation in such an ongoing forum keeps teachers updated on local, regional and federal ELT events, helps them to find new, more effective ways of teaching and to build a professional community in a very broad meaning of the word.

A survey at www.englishteachers.ru shows that 15% of its users use the forum to find support (moral or practical), 23% — to find additional and supplementary materials, 32% — to find new ideas for the classroom, 15% — to share their own experience and ideas. (It was possible to give several answers for the survey.)

Presentations and materials developed by teachers

ICT is not confined to using internet resources either online or offline. More and more teachers are now designing and developing their own materials to suit a particular textbook, a particular class, lesson or event. Most often such materials take the form of PowerPoint presentations, which can be used as visual aids or for checking the students' progress.

Using a presentation as a visual aid is probably one of the easiest ways of introducing ICT into the classroom. The pictures can be found on the internet and, if their copyright holder allows such use, be inserted into PowerPoint slides. However, using pictures found on the internet to make up a presentation for classroom use does not necessarily mean that the lesson is supported by ICT. Moreover, some teachers scan entire pages from textbooks to show them through a data projector rather than referring students to the texts, pictures and exercises in the textbook. Such a use of computers hardly improves learning. In fact, it can even seriously decrease its effectiveness due to the fact that every page in a high-quality textbook is compiled according to specific laws of psychology and rules of methodology, and the font size meets certain sanitary norms and regulations. Thus, projecting a page on the screen can have an overall damaging effect on the lesson.

Every use of technology, including computers, in the classroom is effective only as long as it adds some new functionality to the lesson. Just showing yet another picture, found on the internet, to add to the pictures of the same place that a textbook already contains would hardly help to achieve any of the lesson's goals and objectives faster. On the other hand, showing pictures that *add* to the information contained in the textbook, or enable students to see the information from a different angle, or to reconstruct a text based on a sequence of

pictures, would mean putting ICT to a more effective use. Let us consider this example:

1. Teacher: "We are going to read a story. The paragraphs in it are jumbled up. You are to reconstruct the story by putting the paragraphs in the correct order. The pictures on the screen will help you. First, look at the pictures.
2. Who can tell me what the story is about according to the pictures? What did you see in the first picture? What did you see in the next picture? Etc.
3. Now put the paragraphs in the text in the correct order.
4. Now I am going to show you some more pictures illustrating the story, and also you will hear some sounds from the story. You are to tell which episode of the story each picture and sound illustrates.
5. Finally, on the screen you see a set of pictures that illustrate another story. In groups of 5 discuss the pictures and write down the plot outline of the story. The words written below the pictures will help you.
6. At home write down the story that you've made up in your small groups. Remember to use the words that were written below the pictures.

The task of using a presentation for checking the students' progress can have the form of a text where certain words or elements of sentence structure have been removed. First students look at the text and try to fill in the gaps. Then, they exchange their papers and do peer correction, while at every click of the mouse a removed word appears in the text. To make the task less difficult and more entertaining, the gaps can be first filled with pictures which show what the missing words mean, and on second series of clicks, with the words themselves.

These are some of the easiest ways of using ICT materials developed by teachers. Creation of such presentations does not require more skills than a confident PC user already has. However, some researchers report, that creating such presentations usually takes much longer than preparing for the same lesson without using ICT.

Although convenient, using such materials is not as empowering as using the already-made learning software. Of course, using such software has its own advantages and issues, which we are going to look into in the next section of the article.

Learning software in ELT classroom

The seemingly easiest way to introduce ICT into the language classroom is to use specially-created learning software. The advantages of such software are obvious — the content and the tasks are already there, the teacher

does not need to design any tasks of his/her own, the software can be used both in class and by individual students, and it is readily available in the market. But the situation is not really as brilliant as it seems to be, and sometimes the disadvantages of such software may outweigh any potential advantages that it may have. Let's look deeper into this issue.

Types of software and their features

First of all, there are different types of learning software. Among others, one can find *skills-building* software, which is aimed at building students' vocabulary, or grammar, or listening, or reading skills. Usually such software includes only one type of skills, although more and more often one can find different skills sections on a single disc, e.g. such as grammar and pronunciation building programme. Such programmes are good for individual practice if they suit the student by the language and conceptual level. However, very often, as it would sometimes happen with a grammar-and-vocabulary course, the vocabulary is either too low-level or too high-level for the grammar exercises and thus creates problems rather than helps students to get rid of them. Besides, as these programmes are too focused on particular skills, they are not easy to apply in a classroom where students are expected to be equally making progress in all types of language skills.

Another example of learning software is *exam preparation* or *testing* software. Usually it takes the form of a set of electronic tests, which provide immediate feedback to the user and explain the peculiarities of a particular type of task or an entire exam. Numerous TOEFL Preparation CDs belong to this type of software. These programmes are useful mainly for those who wish to prepare for a particular exam and are not very suitable for pupils studying English for General Purposes.

Probably the most frequent type of learning software are ready *study courses*. Such programmes are, basically, courses of English which are supposed to be ready for studying. They are usually arranged around certain topics (like Travelling, Eating Out, Checking In a Hotel, Buying Tickets and so on), contain exercises for learning vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and simulating speaking activities and are designed according to specific language levels. Some courses include a variety of features, such as images, games, glossaries, voice record and playback option and short videos. Other courses include mainly dialogues together with their audio version, vocabulary, grammar and writing games and exercises, mock role plays when a programme pronounces certain phrases and the student has to insert suitable phrases in the gap, sometimes using a feature that allows students to record their own speech and compare it to the bits recorded by native

speakers. Again, very much like with skills training software, such courses are best for use by individual students, who can select and adjust their pace of work as they go along. Using these courses in the classroom frequently leads to problems, as often the content of these courses does not fit the federal standard and the federal programme, the topical vocabulary is different from what the students have in their textbooks, the order of learning grammar issues also differs from what there is in a textbook or from what is required by the federal standard and programmes. In short, such digital courses clash with the textbooks in vocabulary, grammar, level of difficulty and pace of study, and the teacher has to spend a lot of time and effort to select the contents which would suit the class and make studies more effective rather than leading to failures.

A more suitable for a general audience type of software is multimedia supplement, specially designed to go with a particular textbook. On the surface level the advantages of such multimedia supplements are obvious: they fit the lexis and grammar of the textbook, they suit the students' language level, they do not confront the conceptual level of the textbook, and the exercises on CDs support and expand the exercises in the textbook by providing more practice on varying levels.

On the other hand, though, there still is a number of aspects to consider while analyzing the supplement to decide how to use it most effectively.

What makes multimedia supplement effective?

Multimedia supplement is most effective when it:

- follows the topics of the textbook, thus helping students to expand their understanding of the material that they are studying;
- fits the vocabulary, grammar and language level of the book, providing extra practice in the subject matter;
- contains multi-level exercises so that both the more and the less-successful students would benefit from using the supplement;
- provides various features that can not be included into the textbook: videos, animated cartoons, sounds, interactive games, puzzles, tests, other exercises for interactive practice;
- provides instant feedback to students so that they know whether they have been successful in doing an exercise or a test. Some multimedia supplement rely on the teacher to give feedback to the students, which, instead of increasing learner autonomy, makes the students even more dependent on the teacher, which is hardly effective from the point of view of applying ICT to teaching EFL;
- contains additional resources, such as additional exercises, information, access to online resources

(which is relevant only unless the textbook itself has a support website);

- can be easily built into the learning process both on technology (that is, be used with a single computer and a data projector plus a smartboard if required, used in a computer classroom or by the students individually as part of their homework) and on methodology level (contains clear and concise instructions for the students on what to do and how to do the exercises);
- helps the teachers to save time and better organize study process (that is, contains a detailed teacher's guide which explains the overall uses and objectives

of the supplement and contains instructions and recommendations for every single exercise, together with information on how they can be best fit into the lesson), contains a class management system;

- is easy to use due to an intuitively understandable interface and does not require installation of any additional software or access to the internet to do the exercises.

The following checklist can help teachers to analyse learning software and easily decide if they want to use it in their classroom:

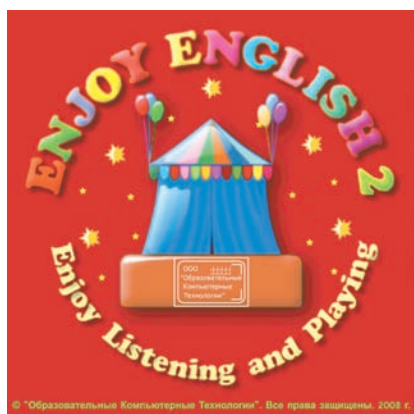
Analysing for	Focus on	Questions to consider	How to find out
Target audience	Age and level of students	1. What level of English is this software for? 2. What age of students is it meant for? 3. Are the instructions and tasks formulated clearly enough for your students to easily understand them?	Check the annotation on the cover. Run a demo of the software to see if it suits your students.
Educational objectives	Type of software and its objectives	1. What type of software is it? Is it a skills trainer? Is it meant for exam practice? Is it an independent course? Is it a multimedia supplement to a textbook? 2. What is it supposed to prepare students for?	Check the annotation on the cover. Check the index (the contents) page of the main menu of the programme. Run a random lesson to see what its objectives are.
Usability	Equipment needed and technical difficulty / ease of the software	1. Does it need any extra software to be installed? 2. What equipment is needed? Can it be used only with a smartboard? Will it work if you have only a standalone computer and a data projector? Do you need a computer classroom to use it? Can it be used by individual students at home? 3. Does it require internet connection or special registration / activation key? 4. Can it run in a network, or does it have to be installed individually on each and every computer? 5. Do you need to obtain a license for using it on several computers? 6. Does the manufacturer provide technical support? 7. Is the interface (the layout of the screens and the elements on the screens like buttons etc) clear and understandable?	Check the technical requirements information on the cover. Check the booklet / inlay to see if it contains an activation key or any information on licensing. Check the cover, the booklet / inlay for technical support contact information / website.
Content and features	Content of the programme and what it can do	1. What features of the programme make it different from a textbook? 2. What type of resources does it contain? Does it contain videos, sounds, interactive images? 3. What type of exercises does it contain? Does it contain multi-level exercises? Does it contain interactive texts, quizzes, tests?	Check the booklet / inlay for information. Run a random lesson to see what it includes.

Analysing for	Focus on	Questions to consider	How to find out
		- What skills does it focus on? Does it contain reading, listening, writing and speaking exercises? - Does it contain information and tasks for project work / case studies etc? - Does it increase learner autonomy through exercises for independent work, exploration and instant feedback?	
Management of the study process	Information for teachers and students	- Does the software include teacher's guide in the booklet / inlay or on the disc? - Is the teacher's guide written in clear, concise language? - Is there enough information in the guide on what stages of the lesson to use the software at? - Does the guide include pictures or video instructions that explain how to use the software? - Does the guide contain recommendations on how to use every single exercise? - Is the software fully compatible with your textbook and easy to build into your lessons? - Does the software include a Class Management System?	Check the booklet / inlay for information. Run a random lesson to see what it includes.

This checklist will help you to analyse learning software and foresee most of the potential problems that you can face as a teacher. However, the importance of each of these issues is more visible when applied to a concrete example. Let's do a case study of some learning software.

Learning software — a case study

The software we are going to study is called "Enjoy Listening and Playing 2".

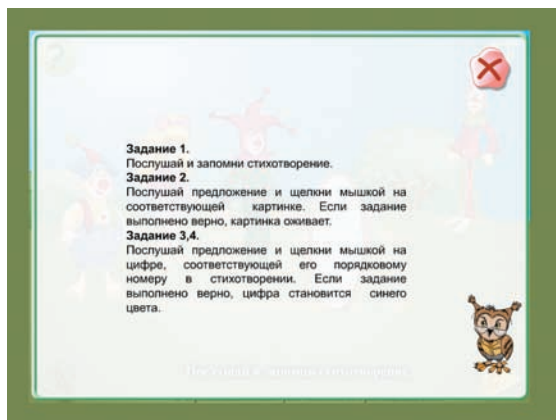


We are going to quickly go over all the questions in the checklist, answer them and then decide whether this software is suitable for your classroom.

Target audience:

- What level of English is this software for? — *Beginner to elementary.*
- What age of students is it meant for? *Grade 2 of Russian schools — 7—8 years old.*
- Are the instructions and tasks formulated clearly enough for your students to easily understand them? — *The tasks are in Russian, written in simple language, formulated in the same words throughout the entire disc which makes them easy to understand for students. The instructions are written in white letters at the bottom of each screen. Besides, there is a button marked "?", which makes more detailed instructions appear on the screen. Students should easily understand them.*





Educational objectives:

1. What type of software is it? Is it a skills trainer? Is it meant for exam practice? It is an independent course? Is it a multimedia supplement to a textbook? — *The software is a multimedia supplement to the "Enjoy English" Grade 2 textbook, as it says on the cover.*
2. What is it supposed to prepare students for? — *The main objectives of this software is to practise students' listening and reading skills, with the main focus on interactive listening. Another objective is to help students memorise and practise vocabulary and some aspects of grammar.*

Usability:

1. Does it need any extra software to be installed? — *No, no extra software is needed, the programme will run "as is" on any computer, no installation is required.*
2. What equipment is needed? Can it be used only with a smartboard? Will it work if you have only a standalone computer and a data projector? Do you need a computer classroom to use it? Can it be used by individual students at home? — *This programme can be used both with a standalone computer and a data projector, with a computer, data projector and a smartboard, in a computer class or individually by students on their PCs at home. Thus the programme is pretty universal in usability.*
3. Does it require internet connection or special registration/activation key? — *No, no internet connection or special activation key is necessary in this version.*
4. Can it run in a network, or does it have to be installed individually on each and every computer? — *One disc can be run in a class network without having to be installed on every single computer.*
5. Do you need to obtain a license for using it on several computers? — *Unless you use one disc for the class network, you need to have a separate disc for each computer.*

6. Does the manufacturer provide technical support? — *Two websites are listed on the cover as providing internet-support.*
7. Is the interface (the layout of the screens and the elements on the screens like buttons etc) clear and understandable? — *The interface is intuitively understandable. There are instructions on how to use the buttons on the inlay and in the teacher's guide.*

Content and features:

1. What features of the programme make it different from a textbook? — *Although the programme is built on the audio from the textbook, it consists of fully interactive exercises, animated cartoons and contains additional exercises for extra practice to add to those you can find in the textbook.*
2. What type of resources does it contain? Does it contain videos, sounds, interactive images? — *The programme contains animated cartoons, sounds, interactive images, interactive listening tests and exercises.*
3. What type of exercises does it contain? Does it contain multi-level exercises? Does it contain interactive texts, quizzes, tests? — *The programme contains interactive listening exercises and tests.*



4. What skills does it focus on? Does it contain reading, listening, writing and speaking exercises? — *The programme focuses mainly on listening exercises, but also contains a large number of reading and some writing exercises. With most of the exercises students need to repeat new words and phrases, thus practising their pronunciation and speaking skills.*
5. Does it contain information and tasks for project work/case studies etc? — *Although the programme contains extra exercises, there are no project tasks as enough of such tasks are used in the textbook.*
6. Does it increase learner autonomy through exercises for independent work, exploration and instant feedback? — *The exercises provide instant feedback and can be*

done independently by learners. The programme will repeat words, phrases and dialogues as many times as needed until the learners get them right. Every time a learner does an exercise correctly, he / she gets a visual bonus (a short animated cartoon) which motivates learners to do the exercises.

Management of the study process:

1. Does the software include teacher's guide in the booklet / inlay or on the disc? — *The software contains a detailed teacher's guide on the disc. The guide is in pdf format and can be viewed either on the screen or printed out for reference.*



2. Is the teacher's guide written in clear, concise language? — *The guide is written in clear, concise language and is easy to understand.*
3. Is there enough information in the guide on what stages of the lesson to use the software at? — *The guide contains a description of the overall goals and objectives and use of the software as well as recommendations on what stages of the lessons the exercises can be best used. (see p. 13 „Назначение программы“)*
4. Does the guide include pictures or video instructions that explain how to use the software? — *The guide contains pictures and screenshots that make it very easy to understand. (see p. 13 „Назначение кнопок и условных обозначений“)*
5. Does the guide contain recommendations on how to use every single exercise? — *The guide contains detailed recommendations for each and every exercise. (see p. 13 „Поурочные рекомендации“)*
6. Is the software fully compatible with your textbook and easy to build into your lessons? — *The software is fully compatible with „Enjoy English“ Grade 2 textbook, the information in the Teacher's Book and in the Teacher's guide on the disc is enough to allow it to be easily built into the lessons or to be used by students for homework.*

7. Does the software include a Class Management System? — *No, this version of the software does not have a Class Management System. But it looks like it does not need one either.*

So the answer to the question of whether I would be willing to use this software with the “Enjoy English” Grade 2 book in my class is a definite YES.

Summing it up

As we see, there are many different ways of using ICT for ELT, from finding information on the internet to digital communication to using virtual learning environments to developing multimedia and using ready-made learning programmes. However, the main point to consider before using ICT is what it will do to make the lessons more effective. Will it save your time? Will it expand the borders of the textbook? Will it motivate your students? Will it give you more opportunities to enjoy learning and teaching?

The answer to all these questions is “Yes, with care”. We hope that the information provided in this article will help you to better identify for yourself what types of ICT and how you could best use in your classroom and make your lessons more effective and enjoyable both for your students and for you.

Below you will find a list of some useful resources that will help you to learn more about ICT and find more information to use in your classroom.

Resources:

www.englishteachers.ru — a webportal for teachers, containing a forum, free lesson plans, presentations and other resources for teachers. As well as providing information, it also provides services informing of forthcoming seminars, conferences, contests and other events for teachers and providing assistance for registering for them online.

<http://school-collection.edu.ru> — a collection of digital educational resources for many school subjects including EFL.

<http://www.eslpod.com/website/>, <http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Listening/Podcasts/>, <http://www.podcastsinenglish.com/index.htm>, www.teachingenglish.com — podcasts for EFL students.

<http://www.teflclips.com/>, <http://www.teachertube.com/>, <http://www.teachers.tv/> — video resources for teachers, including EFL teachers.

www.wikipedia.org, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/>, <http://www.britannica.com/>, <http://encarta.msn.com/> — online encyclopedias.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/>, <http://www.yourdictionary.com/>, www.multitran.ru, www.lingvo.com — online dictionaries.

ОБУЧАЮЩАЯ КОМПЬЮТЕРНАЯ ПРОГРАММА

Мультимедиа приложение "Enjoy Listening and Playing"
к учебнику "Enjoy English" для 2 класса

МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ РЕКОМЕНДАЦИИ

1. НАЗНАЧЕНИЕ ПРОГРАММЫ

Программа "Enjoy Listening and Playing" для 2 класса создана как мультимедиа приложение к учебнику "Enjoy English" для 2 класса, но вместе с тем она обладает универсальностью и гибкостью и может быть использована в качестве приложения к любому учебнику для первого года обучения.

Программа рассчитана на коллективную и индивидуальную работу учителя в классе с применением мультимедиа проектора, интерактивной доски или персональных компьютеров, а также может быть использована для самостоятельной работы учеников в домашних условиях.

Программа основывается на принципе погружения учащихся в языковую среду. В ней уделяется большое внимание обучению произносительной стороне речи, именно, когда дети слушают и повторяют слова и речевые образцы за профессиональными английскими актерами.

Программа предлагает визуальную опору для выполнения заданий на аудирование и освоение новых лексических единиц, развивает навыки чтения и говорения на уровне разговорных клише, закладывает основы восприятия английской речи, привлекает интерес к изучению английского языка с помощью разнообразных методических приемов.

В основе концепции программы лежит личностно-ориентированный подход, направленный на необходимость формирования у младших школьников позитивного отношения к процессу обучения и развития мотивации к дальнейшему овладению английским языком. В связи с тем, что внимание детей до 10 лет отличается малой устойчивостью, предлагается сочетать задания с использованием информационных технологий с традиционными видами деятельности, так как работу с мультимедийным компонентом ребенок воспринимает как игру. Мы рекомендуем как учителям, так и родителям помнить о том, что по санитарным нормам и правилам (СанПиН 2.2.2.542-96) дети 2 – 5 классов могут работать за компьютерами не более 15 минут.

Использование информационных технологий помогает разнообразить виды деятельности и удерживать внимание ученика на изучаемой теме необходимое количество времени.

Кнопка  остается активной во время выполнения задания, чтобы можно было послушать аудиозапись несколько раз, все формулировки заданий даны на русском языке.

Методические рекомендации разработаны для применения мультимедиа проектора в классе, где каждый ученик работает в паре или в группе. Методические рекомендации разработаны для применения мультимедиа проектора в классе, где каждый ученик работает в паре или в группе.

4. ПОУРОЧНЫЕ РЕКОМЕНДАЦИИ

UNIT 1

L1 Ex1

Основная задача

Научить здороваться и называть имена.

Ход выполнения

Посмотрите ролик, нажмите  и попросите детей повторить фразы знакомства за персонажами.

Нажмите  и перейдите к выполнению Задания 2. Вызовите к доске одного или нескольких учеников и попросите назвать персонажа, который называет свое имя.

Дополнительные возможности

Для закрепления разговорных клише попросите детей выбрать понравившихся персонажей и разыграть сцену знакомства.

L1 Ex2

Основная задача

Научить знакомиться.

Ход выполнения

Посмотрите ролик и убедитесь, что все учащиеся поняли диалог. Нажмите  и попросите детей повторить реплики диалога для того, чтобы проверить правильность их запоминания и уделить внимание произношению отдельных звуков и слов.

Нажмите  и перейдите к выполнению Задания 2. Попросите мальчика нажать изображение Тришки, а девочку - изображение Алисы и повторить их реплики.

Дополнительные возможности

Вернитесь к Заданию 1, распределите роли и отключите звук. Попросите учеников разыграть диалог.

L1 Ex4

Основная задача

Ввести и закрепить лексику по теме "Профессии".

Ход выполнения

На ознакомительном этапе попросите учеников послушать названия профессий и сопоставить их с ожившими картинками. Нажмите  и попросите детей хором и индивидуально повторить слова за диктором.

Нажмите  и перейдите к выполнению Задания 2. На этом этапе происходит контроль усвоения новой лексики. Вызовите к доске одного или нескольких учеников и попросите нажать картинку с изображением человека названной профессии.

Дополнительные возможности

Для проверки произношения и закрепления лексики: 1) Послушайте и посмотрите еще раз Задание 1. Перед Заданием 2 введите структуру Гл + название профессии (структура Гл + имя ученика уже знакома). Попросите одного ученика быть ведущим, а семеро учеников (по количеству вводимых слов) пусть выберут себе профессию и запомнят ее. Когда диктор произнесет название профессии, например pilot, ученик, выбравший ее, говорит: "I am a pilot.", а ведущий нажимает соответствующую картинку на экране или на доске. 2) Задайте это упражнение на дом и на следующем уроке попросите учащихся назвать все семь профессий.

3. НАЗНАЧЕНИЕ КНОПОК И УСЛОВНЫХ ОБОЗНАЧЕНИЙ

Кнопки	Назначение
	включение аудиозаписи
	проверка выполнения задания
	переход к следующему заданию
	возврат к предыдущему заданию или началу упражнения
	инструкция по выполнению упражнения
	выход из программы
Условные обозначения	Назначение
	работа с интерактивной доской или мультимедиа проектором
	работа за персональными компьютерами в классе
	индивидуальная работа дома

может быть осуществлен через контекстное меню строки ВЫХОД).