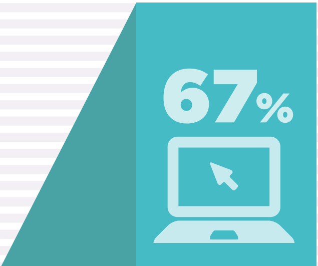
LANGUAGE LEARNING GOES DIGITAL

How schools are using a suite of 21st century tools to improve second language instruction.

GOODBYE LANGUAGE LABS

Language learning has received an upgrade from headphones and



67%

tape decks!

67% students in a one-to-one program report using their **LAPTOPS** to teach foreign language.[1]

41% of high schoolers use **TABLETS** in foreign language schoolwork.[2]

60% of college-aged foreign language students use **SMARTPHONES** to help them in their studies.[3]

51% of foreign language teachers use **CURRICULUM-BASED SOFTWARE** “sometimes or often.”[4]

At least 3 Ivy League universities now use **VIDEOCONFERENCING** to teach less common languages.

BENEFITS OF PLUGGING IN

VOCABULARY:
Kids learn more words when they hear them from many different sources. [5]

GRAMMAR:
Seeing correct usage in context can help concepts click. [6]

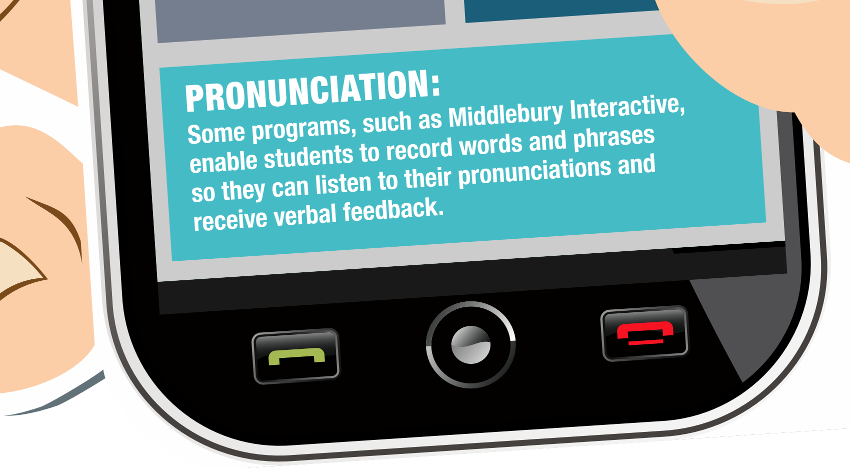
ACCESS:
Technology makes it easier to connect with native speakers and authentic learning experiences. [7]

CREATIVITY:
Technology helps students become content producers. [7]

MOTIVATION:
Kids get excited by technology and want to use it! [7]

OWNERSHIP:
Software and apps can help students feel in charge of their learning as they work at their own pace. [7]

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE:
Technology can expose students to different aspects of culture. [6]



PRONUNCIATION:

Some programs, such as Middlebury Interactive, enable students to record words and phrases so they can listen to their pronunciations and receive verbal feedback.

WHAT EDUCATORS HAVE TO SAY

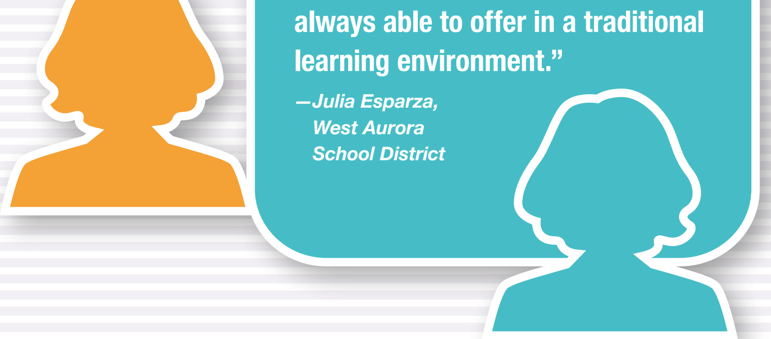
“We’ve grown from 40 to 400 kids in the program—the [Middlebury Interactive] courses introduce more languages with new, engaging, fun and interactive ways to learn.”

—Allyson Hudnall, Provo School District

“It has been really nice to challenge students with Middlebury Interactive’s advanced high school language curricula, which is at a quicker pace. It is one of the ways we are able to ensure they learn something new every day.”

—LuAnne Kelsey,
West Aurora
School District

“The Middlebury Interactive program has been a wonderful way to challenge kids, give them a choice, and provide them with the skills for the future—something we’re not



always able to offer in a traditional learning environment.”

—Julia Esparza,
West Aurora
School District

3 MYTHS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

MYTH

The goal of interactive language software is to replace teachers with technology.

MYTH

Students can’t learn the rhythms of a language or the feel of a culture from a computer.

MYTH

Language learning software is all about skill-and-drill vocabulary exercises.

REALITY

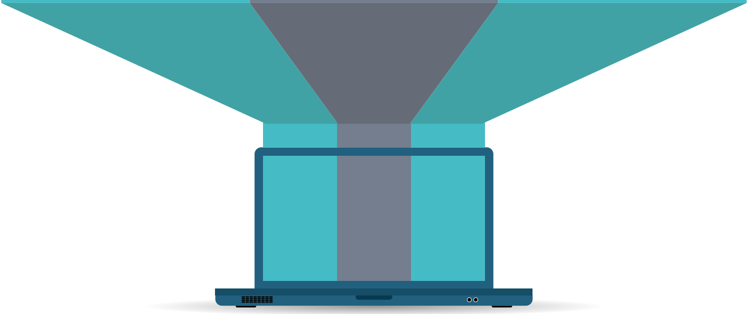
Much of the growth in digital language learning is coming in a blended learning environment, where online curriculum supplements classroom learning.

REALITY

While it’s true that face-to-face conversation is hard to beat, technology can often be the fastest way to bring a Beijing dragon festival or Barcelona dance performance to life.

REALITY

A good software program shouldn’t just be a (very expensive) replacement for flashcards! Look for technology that incorporates authentic texts, conversations and learning experiences.



8 WAYS
TO MEET YOUR
LANGUAGE LEARNING GOALS

1

IF YOU WANT TO...
develop conversation skills

TRY... finding penpals on sites such as ePals or InterPals. Studies show that students pick up language faster when used in an authentic way, such as emailing.

2

IF YOU WANT TO...
build writing vocabulary

TRY... having students create Wordle word clouds (wordle.net) that show the vocabulary used in an assignment, then challenging them to expand their word clouds in the second draft.

IF YOU WANT TO...

expose students to a language like Farsi or Thai

TRY… recruiting international students or tutors to work with your students via videoconference in exchange for some English practice, too!

3

4

IF YOU WANT TO…
challenge advanced learners and support struggling ones

TRY… a program like Middlebury Interactive that enables students to work at their individual pace and provides progress and monitoring at all levels.

5

IF YOU WANT TO…
foster problem solving in the new language

TRY… asking students to design an app that would be helpful in visiting a new country.

6

IF YOU WANT TO…
practice authentic writing

TRY… inviting students to respond to tweets that are written in the language you are studying.

IF YOU WANT TO…
strengthen

pronunciation

TRY… record short how-to videos and post them to a class blog for a group critique.

7

8

IF YOU WANT TO… understand another culture

TRY… incorporating authentic materials like videos and local fables and stories into lessons.

> *The technology*
> *you use impresses*
> *no one.*
> *The experience*
> *you create with*
> *it is everything.*

—Sean Gerety

SOURCES

[2] Pearson Mobile Device Survey, 2013

[3] University of Colorado, Boulder, 2012

[1] University of Southern Maine, 2011

[4] NCES, 2010

[5] Baltova, 1999

[6] Nutta, 1998

[7] Ketsman, 2012

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