

Media in Teaching Foreign Languages: The Role of Technology in Second Language Teaching and Learning

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Summary:

Internet, with its constant development, worldwide access and all mans' great interest in media and internet resources created favorable conditions to implement internet-based devices into the educational system. This paper considers chiefly one subject matter, i.e. web-based second language teaching. First aim is to present advantages and drawbacks of implementing technology into the classroom, its influence on students and obstacles teachers may encounter during internet-centered lessons. The second and latter issue is to describe in what kind of technology can be used in foreign language classroom environment and in what form teacher can implement it. The overall target of this article is to draw attention to the subject of technology and media in the educational field, which have possibilities to create learning new languages more attractive and diverse for learners.

Abstrakt:

Internet, z jego ciągłym rozwojem, ogólnosiwiatowym dostępem oraz dużym zainteresowaniem wszystkich ludzi mediami i zasobami internetowymi, stworzyły sprzyjające warunki do wprowadzenia urządzeń internetowych do systemu edukacji. W artykule omówiono głównie jeden przedmiot, tj. nauczanie drugiego języka przez Internet. Pierwszym celem jest przedstawienie zalet i wad wdrażania technologii w klasie, jej wpływu na uczniów i przeszkód, jakie mogą napotkać nauczyciele podczas lekcji skoncentrowanych na Internecie. Drugą i ostatnią kwestią jest opisanie, w jakiej technologii może być wykorzystywana nauka języków obcych oraz w jakiej formie nauczyciel może ją wdrożyć. Ogólnym celem tego artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na temat technologii i mediów w dziedzinie edukacji, które dają możliwość uczynienia nauki nowych języków bardziej atrakcyjną i zróżnicowaną dla uczniów.

Nowadays, the world of the Internet and technology is continuously transforming, which forces teaching, also of English, to develop within these

changes. However, along with this transformation there are obstacles and possibilities that web-based teaching create. The result of this revolution for teaching is to find and introduce new ways of teaching. The teacher's role is to meet student's learning interests with the actual lesson program and to increase the productivity of teaching. The usage of media during the class is one of the solutions to cope with this problem.

Advantages

In present days, media and technology are everywhere, in every aspect of our life, which also provide novel approaches to second language teaching. The use of technology allows teachers to use it in the best way and implement it in teaching and assessment planning. Comparing the traditional model of teaching and multimedia teaching, the "new one" has lots of benefits. According to Beata Matussek (Matussek 2018: 100-101) some advantages are:

- The individualisation of teaching, which means that “[...]all students go through the same experience, but they move on at their own pace.” (Cullata, 2016). Individualisation requires from teacher regularly keeping under control tabs on how students are performing. Technology can help the teacher in this task of collecting student mastery data;
- Polysensory nature of classes gives opportunity to develop and actuate senses, like sight, hearing and touch employing multimedia educational programs;
- Stimulation of functions responsible for reading and writing, such as visual and aural perception, memory, reflex improvement, auditory and visual analysis and synthesis;
- An attractive course of classes that improve the quality of the lesson and student's attention. This motivates students to participate in classes actively and to perform tasks. Moreover, an exciting form of lesson encourages the student to look for new information and makes it easier to remember;
- Success and satisfaction with their achievements, thanks to tracking their progress and their evaluation. Often educational programs produce attractive sounds and messages that motivate the student and propel him/her to continue learning;

- Increased concentration is the result of interesting tasks and exercises, as well as attractive ways to work with multimedia that stimulate student's curiosity and attention.

It can be distinguished by three more important features, listed by Santiago Villa, who characterise multimedia and technology as a mean of learning and teaching. First one is twenty-four-hour availability, that enables a student to learn at any time s/he needs, "but also when there is only a desire to improve knowledge and skills."(Villa 2006: 123-124). Secondly, the author stressed that we only need a browser and sometimes some plug-ins to be able to access the Internet and take advantage of the information it contains. The Villa's last quality of technology is "non-linearity", which enables the learner to search for information for his/her purposes and desires, liable to his/her knowledge. This makes learning objects different from one person to another.

Disadvantages

It is widely known the fact that everything has, both, pros and cons; the same case is with the usage of media in Second Language Teaching. Previously, there were described advantages, that is why it is high time to consider also drawbacks of media in SLT.

According to Zainab Alsuhaibani (Alsuhaibani 2019: 726) there are five reasons why media can cause some difficulties, both for students and teachers, in teaching and learning the second language. These are:

1. Lack of technological facilities

Theoretically, each language class should be equipped with the tools a teacher needs to work, including a computer, Internet connection and interactive board; however, sometimes the reality is quite different. What is more, the types of software for EFL teachers are not widely available and cheap, as well as the problem with the internet connection. Summing up, the problems with software and hardware holds back teachers' potential to exploit computer during their lesson.

2. Lack of knowledge and training

Some teachers have a problem with delivering their knowledge using technology because they are not qualified enough to be confident of their high-tech skills. Some of the SLT teachers do not have the necessary knowledge to use

technology during the lesson. The most common familiarity about Computer-Assisted Language Learning comes from their own experience, not from course. Deficiency of training opportunities and knowledge about the proper use of computers and the Internet in language teaching create a significant obstacle to teachers' technology integration.

3. Curricular limitations

Next teachers' problem with implementing technology into the classroom is the complexity to adapt and to find such a high-tech tool, which is compliant with the curriculum. Strict curricula cause problems with modifying or adjusting technology into the lesson. Furthermore, it is challenging for teachers to apply computers into the lesson schedule since teachers must fulfil lesson plans predefined by curricula. Curricula create a barrier for teachers to use computers in a language classroom, as well as proficiency exams and inflexible course books.

4. Lack of time

One of the biggest reasons why teachers do not use computers in the classroom is the restricted time. This teachers' limited time affects his/her time both during the lesson and before it. Firstly, to employ technology, the teacher must sacrifice time for learning and training himself to be sure of his/hers computer skills. Secondly, combining technological activities in the classroom is time-consuming to prepare, to find on-line materials, which also has to meet students' proficiency level.

5. Financial barriers

It is not a secret that technology costs a lot, especially software, hardware and maintenance. Teachers cannot afford to buy new interactive board or projector, that is why it is hard to equip language classrooms with technology tools.

Unquestionably, usage of technology in teaching improve and diversify the process of teaching the second language. However, implementing innovative technologies is a hard task in the language classes, because this is something more than turning on a computer. Moreover, teachers sometimes fear of using technology in the classroom, because they feel unqualified. That is why they must be trained in how to apply high-tech tool respecting a learner-centered approach. Additionally,

teachers need to be directed to exploit technology as a tool, which encourages learners to view themselves as those responsible for their learning evaluation.

The most critical aspects of using technology in the learning process are to foster learners' motivation and learning interest SLL. Multimedia technology should be used as a mean of maintaining students' communicative competence. Such employment of technology can develop learners' thinking.

We will now consider ways of implementing the technology into the teaching L2 process. The technology has grown substantially over the past few decades, also affecting the ways how teachers teach the foreign language. Since the emergence of Web 2.0 and Internet at schools, the process of teaching the second language provided the opportunity for the teachers to introduce children to an authentic environment. This enables teachers to extend students' point of view on language and foreign culture by accessing to the real world and introducing genuine material and native speakers. This work will present several means of implementing devices that can stimulate teaching L2.

Blog

According to Cambridge Dictionary, a blog is “a regular record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you put on the internet for other people to read”(Cambridge Dictionary, online resources). This definition describes the blog as some kind of diary, that appears in reverse chronological order. Moreover, it can be written by one person or a group of writers, who are focused on one topic, which can vary from travel to food or fashion. However, different explanation states that blog is “a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, online resources). It means that one can not only put text on a blog post but also add special effects, like photos, videos and links.

Aaron Campbell provided three types of blog applications in the foreign language classroom (Krajka 2007: 105). These are:

1. The Tutor Blog is administered by a classroom teacher, who can create a blog related only to organisational matters, like homework, additional materials, course information etc.; however, tutor has also opportunity to write about his/her own experience or life, some cultural aspects of selected

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country/region, or another topic of choice. Since, it is the teacher, who runs the blog, the students are obliged to write comments to the tutor's posts. This type of blog serves several purposes:

- to provide students with everyday reading training, using learner-oriented texts;
- to foster the use of websites in English;
- to promote communication between students and teacher by writing comments on the teacher's entry;
- to give information about class or syllabus;
- to create a collection of links helping students to evaluate their knowledge.

2. The Learner Blog is a type of blog run by one student, which is more challenging, both for a teacher and a student, since the teacher has to set up, instruct and control each student's blog, and the student has to determine the blog-topic and write frequent posts. It is often required by other students to write comments on each schoolmate. The Learner Blog's functions are:

- appropriate for writing, but also reading courses;
- students are motivated to use the search engine in English to place proper links in their posts;
- the source of writing practice.

3. The Class Blog is a blog run by a teacher and students understood as a tool for extra-curricular, collaborative discussion place, where students can elaborate their thoughts and opinions related to classes. This blog has enumerated functions:

- serves as a noticeboard, where every student and a teacher can share messages, links or pictures;
- is a place for students to post reflection or questions about assigned homework;
- is an instrument which provides an opportunity to initiate language learning based on projects
- is a computer-generated place, which provides to teacher ability to conduct international classroom language exchange (Stanley, n.d.)

Blogs are used worldwide by foreign language teachers for several reasons. Firstly, low blog maintenance costs work in its favour because one does not need any technical knowledge to use and write a blog post. Secondly, the blog promotes language interactions and students have a chance to interact with one another.

There are some educational aspects for why to use blogs as an educational tool for teaching and learning the second language. The most obvious is that it can develop student`s writing skills, both informal and formal, by constant practice and classmates` comments. The creativity of the student may also be evolved, since s/he can supplement post by adding various forms of media, like video, photo or link. The comment section enables the student to create new ideas during the conversation within a learning group or on public Web. Moreover, Gabriela Gorąca-Sawczyk (Gorąca-Sawczyk 2013: 89) proposed several educational functions of the blog:

1. Organising the learning environment,
2. Developing communicative, language and intercultural competence,
3. Fostering autonomous learning,
4. Motivating FL learning
5. Promoting language awareness,
6. Ordering language knowledge.

A blog is a tool, which can be used in different ways, including writing, listening and reading. Moreover, it creates a possibility to exchange thoughts, views and opinions on different topics. The great advantage of the blog is that one can use it anytime and anywhere unless s/he has the Internet communications. One more desirable feature of a blog is its interactivity, which makes a student a comaker. Due to that, one feels responsible for what s/he is creating, which lead to feeling more involved in learning language and becoming motivated.

Smartphone

Next trending tool used by teachers worldwide to expand students` skills in L2 is a smartphone. It became an essential device for people in most parts of the world because it provides a social connection between people and connects with the world in general. It is said that mobile devices serve as distraction and obstacle

during the lesson, but it is not the case since it has several optimistic outcomes, which are:

1. integrating into instruction multimodal language learning tasks involving the use of images, audio and video
2. enabling collaborative classroom activities using mobile devices for group writing, listening or speaking
3. enriching classroom activities with authentic language resources through apps and online sites
4. leveraging individual preferences on mobile devices to personalise learning and develop learner autonomy
5. enhancing students' digital literacy and other 21st-century skills needed for the workplace
6. encouraging out-of-school and lifelong language learning (Godwin-Jones 2018)

These features indicate that it is almost impossible to implement them in the classroom without using mobile phones. What is more, smartphones have already build-in functions, which are useful in communication and multimedia use. Some of these applications serve to take notes or photos, edit purposes, to play video or audio, to record and surf on the Internet, to write a message or email. Moreover, the reason why smartphones are more popular is the fact that there are many free applications, which are helpful in teaching, like Skype, used for video-conferencing, Messenger/What'sup, used for messaging and multimodal texting, Penzu, for personal journaling, YouTube for video-streaming and Quizlet, for mobile and web-based study application. They allow students to improve their competence in all language skills, both receptive and productive ones. Their intention is not to learn a foreign language in a traditional way, but to be able to use the language in various environments, as well as to try to put the language into practice.

With that being said, a smartphone is an excellent tool for language learning, because it has many profits for the learner "in vocabulary acquisition, spelling and pronunciation, grammar, listening and reading skills" (Bllaca 2016: 308). Student has to learn a large number of words to communicate, and then s/he must practice

listening to gain proper knowledge of pronunciation, after that exercise reading and grammar (Bllaca 2016: 308). Every aspect of language effects on one other, so that the student can develop several language skills at the same time.

Moreover, students` smartphones can be used by a teacher, while playing games on the interactive whiteboard during classes. These devices enables all of them to participate in the game at the same time, and to contend with each other. Moreover, the smartphone is an inherent part of learners` lives, therefore they regard lesson with smartphone more interesting, engaging and practical in some way.

The Internet

The most useful educational media-oriented tool is the Internet, that is “the large system of connected computers around the world that allows people to share information and communicate with each other”(Cambridge Dictionary, online resources). It provides a wide range of implementation into the classroom and outside. Moreover, nowadays, the Internet is commonly used by educators in places where computers are widely available. M.D. Finnemann (Martins et al. 1 2004: 355) has done a brief division of the available resources, which are: teacher-centered resources and student-centered resources. The first one is assisting teachers in planning their lessons and give them the opportunity to develop themselves. In that way, the Internet can be understood as a resource bank or as a tool for searching for teaching materials. More important is the student-centered resources which allow them to take advantage of a variety of possibilities of the Internet, like "practice grammar and vocabulary skills with interactive language programs"(Martins et al. 2 2004: 355-356) and “participate in on-line videoconferences with native speakers and in projects with students from the target language country.” (Martins et al. 3 2004: 356).

The number of implementation of the Internet into teaching and learning a foreign language seems infinite. Therefore, researchers found a significant number of benefits, which lead from using the Internet in the classroom:

- increased motivation and interaction,
- greater knowledge of the foreign country`s culture,
- partial student`s responsibility for his/her learning process,

- dissemination learner to more cross-curricular grind.

(Martins et al. 4 2004: 356)

Constant improvement of the Internet gave a chance for teachers and learners to learn foreign languages in new ways, because it enables them to surround the foreign language without leaving their own country, so “it offers authentic learning resources available.” (Shin, Son 1 2007: 3-4) According to Crystal, the 85% of electronically stored information worldwide is in English, which is one of the most acquired languages. This is why “English language teachers to look at the social, economic, cultural and linguistic consequences of the global spread of the English language influenced by the development of the Internet” (Shin, Son 2 2007: 3). When the Internet being so massive part of the current world, foreign language teachers should gain knowledge and improve skills to be able to teach online.

Each of these ways of implementing technological tools into the second language teaching is useful unless the educator has the knowledge of employing them into the teaching process in the right time, amount and way. Blog, smartphone and internet are only the means, which are need to be wisely operated by the teacher, but as well by the student. It is since the every single one of these tools may be used in an improper manner..

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