

TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES WITH TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract: Technology lends itself very well to personalized and independent learning where students can work at their own pace, complete interactive exercises rigorously in class or at home and receive feedback. Gaining points for their efforts and being able to compare their scores with their classmates is motivating for them too.

Keywords: technology, traditional methods, multimedia, electronic dictionaries, electronic annotations, smart learning systems, grammar checking programs, automatic speech recognition, phonetic programs, virtual games, chats, social networks, online forums or message boards.



Over the past years, many foreign language teachers have been worried about the search for new teaching methods. Methodists in many strange countries are engaged in the analysis of existing methods and technologies and their adaptation to modern realities and requirements and at the same time are looking for radically new

approaches. There is debate about how the process of teaching a foreign language in a modern school should look like. Some teachers advocate the preservation of traditional methods, while others want to completely change the whole system. There is a third category of teachers, offering to combine new and old forms. But no one doubts that change is inevitable. This is due to a number of factors: requirements for the ultimate goals of language learning, the psychology of a modern student, and, of course, with technological changes in the world around us.

The current time is a period of intensive development of technologies, primarily computer ones. Young people live their lives through technology: they are the web generation, and they are hungry for more. Our challenge is to channel the natural enthusiasm our pupils have for ICT by using it in their everyday lives and embed it purposefully into the modern foreign languages classroom.

This leads to the fact that modern students better perceive and assimilate new information through contact with computer information sources. The use of computer technology in the process of learning a foreign language makes it possible to make this process easier for students and create a familiar environment for them. It also allows to diversify the work and make it more interesting for students. Thanks to multimedia resources, the process of learning a foreign language can be moved beyond the classroom and made continuous. In some cases, the desire and need to learn a language comes as a result of using these resources (communicating online with native speakers, watching programs and films in a foreign language, using various sites that require knowledge of a foreign language).

Thus, modern schools, colleges and universities are required to revise the approaches that have so far been used for teaching foreign languages and to search for innovative methods taking into account the development of science and technology. It is expected that they will use multimedia and Internet technologies along with new teaching models in order to avoid the previously used model based on the explanations of the teacher. In addition, students are encouraged to learn a foreign language using a computer, which will be 40-50% of the total academic workload. These dramatic

changes resonate with the idea of the dominant role of a student to whom computer technology provides access to advanced teaching methods. However, it must be understood that multimedia technologies have certain disadvantages, as well as that the use of multimedia requires additional skills from the teacher. Otherwise, there will be a mismatch between the efforts put in and the poor results.

Teaching a foreign language using computer technology includes:

- Authentic language material, such as video clips, flash animations, web quests, podcasts, news, etc.

- An online environment in which students can communicate with native speakers of a foreign language via e-mail, text computer editors, social networks, voice or video conferences;

- Language learning tools (online applications and programs) aimed at studying phonetics, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and sentence analysis. Tools include text-to-speech exercises, speech recognition, interactive and controlled tasks;

- An online environment that enables communication between the teacher and students, students with each other;

- Game forms of training.

There is a wide range of special tools and training tools that offer the use of computer technology for teaching foreign languages.

For example, electronic dictionaries; electronic annotations (links to the word or sentence level, contextual translations or explanatory information); smart learning systems; grammar checking programs; automatic speech recognition (ASR) and phonetic programs; virtual games; chats (synchronous computer communication: text or audio); social networks; Online forums or message boards.

How can computer technology improve the process of learning a foreign language? The processes and results of using computer technologies depend on how they are used in training. Two types of foreign computer learning can be distinguished. The first type assumes that computer technology complements traditional forms of teaching and learning (including assessment), making them faster, easier and more

efficient. The second type offers innovative ways of teaching and learning, which should improve students’ competencies to a greater extent than traditional methods can do.

Kongrith and Maddux (2009) suggested that the use of innovative teaching methods has the following characteristics:

- Requires a high degree of interaction between the computer and the student;
- Makes the student, not the creator of the program, responsible for what happens on the screen;
- Aims to fulfill more creative tasks.

In conclusion, computer technology can be great benefit in the development of language competencies, provided that they are correctly and reasonably used. Their importance for independent work of students is becoming increasingly important. They help to overcome the language barrier and psychological complexes of students. Computer technology develops students’ interest and motivation in learning a foreign language. Internet resources form the skills of intercultural communication and knowledge of another culture. All these advantages prove the need to integrate computer technology into the modern educational environment.

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