

INCORPORATION of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Lojko M.O.

Grodno Yanka Kupala State University

It is widely acknowledged that the developments of Information Technology (IT) have influenced considerably on foreign language teaching. At present methodologists, teachers and those engaged in educational process actively explore the ways of implementing technology in the foreign language classroom. For example, in one interview Bill Gates suggests that even great teachers can get better with smart feedback and lays out a program from his foundation to bring it to every classroom [1].

Historical outline of IT implementation into education

Foreign language teaching has changed with the introduction of the micro-computers into education in the 1980s. So far, students would access information only in libraries or printed encyclopaedias, but the invention of CD-ROMs changed the access to the knowledge. The micro-computers made teachers, students and language practitioners independent of huge computers existing at universities. This time the micro-computers were recognized as an educational tool.

This development brought about the necessity to provide teachers with the knowledge how to apply the new technology in the classroom. For that purpose the Microelectronics Education Programme was implemented in the USA. The programme encouraged the use of the technology as an aid to teaching and learning and intended to gather information, create teaching and learning materials, disseminate training opportunities and develop software. Teachers were also supported by assistance of teacher professional networks which suggested how effectively implement the computer into the classroom [2, p. 6].

Another advance of technology for educational purposes was the introduction of disk drivers which replaced cassette tapes used previously for the storage of

programs and resulted in important shifts in software. Then, the development of a graphical user interface (GUI) brought a more user friendly, for teachers and pupils alike, with Apple MacIntosh and Acorn Archimedes machines among the first to innovate with GUI [3]. The increasing user-friendliness of the interface shifted educational computing out of the 'specialist' domain into the mainstream of schools. Gradually educational institutions began to adopt commercial applications for teaching and learning. Various programmes used until now only in business and industry such as word processing programmes, databases (Word, Access, Excel) were taken into the classroom routine.

Apart from the development in technology, the need for promoting knowledge about the use of computer software in classroom curriculum grew. Books published in that period of time, tried to define the practical use of computer in the classroom and offered new approaches to learning and teaching.

The new era for technology in education came into existing with the implementation of the Internet into education in the mid to late 1990s. The first form of the Internet was ARPAnet which consisted of one computer linked to another in order to share information and was used in the USA since the 1960s by defence department. Over time, "more computers were added to the network, and people began to send simple messages over the network to distant colleagues"[4, p.2]. With the Internet teachers had access to a suite of computers; a whole class could interact with the technology at the same time. The Internet allowed both the students and the teachers to gain insight to resources and information, available via email, via voice, and through various blogs and forums. It improved communication between teachers and learners, both in the classroom and at home.

The widespread of computers and influential development of the Internet in the mid 1990s resulted in growing interest in computer-assisted learning and teaching. Many practitioners published their works concerning the educational technology. They issued practical guides and handbooks for teachers comprising examples of the practical applications of IT in the language curriculum. In addition, there was the time when new magazines for teachers accessed online, on the Internet,

emerged, e.g. *Language Learning and Technology*, *Teaching English with Technology*, *IALLT Journal for Language Learning Technologies* etc.

It was also the time of large-scale introduction of interactive whiteboards (IWBs), which were large interactive displays connecting computers and projectors. In using IWBs the focus was shifted back to the teacher and their interaction with the whole class. A great advantage of the IWBs is that they made it possible to use a wide range of different software and display them to users. The most commonly used software programmes for use with the IWB include maps, pictures, diagrams, office software programmes (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), programmes which enable watching videos and DVDs. More to the point, nowadays publishers of course books prepare special educational software that accompanies their books and makes the teaching and learning easier, more interesting and memorable for users (e.g. Business English Courses *Market Leader* by I. Dubicka, M. O’Keeffe, Pearson Longman; *ProFile* by J. Naunton, Oxford University Press).

Mobile learning and hand-held devices are emerging as the next phases in technology development. As technology develops to provide higher quality computing on ever smaller devices, mobility is going to become a key feature of teaching and learning. The mobile technology offers anytime, anywhere learning and enhances opportunities for creativity, personalisation and support for out of University learning.

FORMS OF IT APPLICATION

E-learning is a term which refers to the use of electronic media and ITs such as the Internet, intranet, extranet, satellite broadcasting, audio/video, interactive TV and CD-ROMs in education in order to deliver knowledge, to interact, to evaluate, and to facilitate learning. E-learning can be combined with traditional teaching in the form of blended courses.

E-learning gives many advantages both for learners and for teachers and the institutions providing the courses. One of the advantages of e-learning is the learning cost. The learners do not have to pay travel costs and they save travel time as well. What is more, the course fees can be lower because of number of learners attending

to an e-learning course at the same time. Besides, the form of learning is cheaper for the teaching institutions as from the budget of the institution disappear items such as coaching fees, rent training centre, transportation, accommodation, meals and other.

E-learning enables access to knowledge and learning at any time and in any location where the learners have access to a computer and Internet connection. Moreover, e-learning gives the learners an opportunity to learn at their own pace and according to their own learning style and to control their own rate of working. In addition, learners can always re-examine the topic sections they find difficult. Thus, e-learning makes it possible to meet different learning styles and to facilitate learning through a variety of activities. With e-learning, learners can be given choices enabling activities and format to be customised for them. The use of graphics, video and audio with different input and output devices means that more of our senses can be stimulated. The more senses are used, the more learning is likely to take place, every student can be encompassed.

Additionally, e-learning is a good means to help students with building self-knowledge and self-confidence. It may encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning, to minimize fear and shyness, which could occur in a traditional classroom. E-learning may also facilitate communication between students. Relationships are developed by using audio-visual messaging like Skype, discussion forums, chat rooms, blogs, email, or other synchronous or asynchronous communication means.

Blended learning is based on traditional direct instruction with e-learning. In other words, it combines a face-to-face component with appropriate use of technology such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, and computers as a means of communication (chat, email, or blogs). These system solutions are used especially in situations where the methods and capabilities of the e-learning are not able to meet educational goals which can happen when manual skills are needed to form. The combination of traditional teaching with e-learning enables the elimination of the disadvantages of each of these techniques and allows keeping their greatest

advantages. One of the advantages of blended learning evaluating from e-learning is the possibility to distinguish and individualise the pace, the difficulty and scope of the teaching material. Blended learning allows adjusting teaching and learning methods according to the preferences, needs and skills of the learners. Besides, due to the technological capabilities blended learning makes it possible to enrich and diversify the materials on the course with multimedia, which greatly influences on the attractiveness of learning.

There are also some advantages resulting from the use of traditional forms of teaching and learning. Thus, interpersonal relationship may be developed between course participants. Activities in the classroom open up opportunities to exchange experiences and to discuss different subjects. Besides, the direct contact with the teacher has a great influence as students can obtain answers to different, bothering issues immediately.

Two terms hybrid learning and blended learning are often used interchangeably. What links these two concepts is the use of a variety of IT tools in the classroom. They differ only in the percentage ratio of the usage and the type of the technology they use. In the case of hybrid teaching the most important part of the course takes place in the classroom, but digital media are used in traditional classroom and outside the classroom as well as additional exercises. The hybrid method combines a variety of content, such as tasks that require interaction and cooperation, online exercises, links to websites and different types of applications for mobile devices. Accordingly teachers have to choose IT tools adequately to their teaching aims and to combine the online elements together with the tasks performed in the traditional classroom such as role plays, discussions and conversations in a sensible way. In the hybrid learning students could manage their own learning, they may control their own pace, rhythm and learning style. They may easier analyse and assess their learning progress.

The concept m-learning (mobile learning) refers to learning with portable digital devices, which are easy to use in a variety of different settings. The mobile

technology enables students and teachers to learn everywhere and every time as the mobile devices are compact and very light and have a regular access to knowledge and information. It helps the students to personalize their own learning as it gives them the opportunity to determine their own pace, depth and place of learning and makes possible regular and instant support of a teacher.

Due to their portability students may learn, take notes, take photos, watch videos and enter all types of data directly into the device, they may search for information which they need anytime and anywhere. They have access to diagrams, articles, essays, dictionaries as well. All of that influence on motivation and attainment of the students.

There is a number of mobile devices that can be used in and outside a classroom to make learning more efficient, e.g. mobile and smart phones, e-book readers, handheld game consoles, personal audio players (MP3 players), notebooks and tablet computers. There are many different modes of m-learning. It may proceed in a form of: communication through SMS (Short Message Service) which means sending and receiving text messages between two or more mobile phones; communication using text messages and graphics together (MMS-Multi-Media Messaging Service);

WAP, LTE, GPS, Bluetooth or other technologies which enables the access to the Internet and sharing information from one mobile device to another;

Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) devices like Palm OS or Pocket PC MAC OS, tablets which may be used like mini PC [5].

Summing up it should be underlined, that nowadays Universities hold conferences, offer courses and workshops (online as well) on many aspects of Web-based language teaching (www.carla.umn.edu/institutes/2015). In return those provide an excellent opportunity for foreign language teachers, for instance, to learn a wide variety of technology tools and techniques, to examine best practices for incorporating technology into the curriculum, or design activities using computers and mobile devices to promote student interaction.

References

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