English Language Training Course

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Research Work Theme: Modern Technology in Learning and Teaching Foreign Languages

Modern Technology in Learning and Teaching Foreign Languages

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Summary

In this input, we will begin by looking at all the benefit which we can get from using technology in language learning. We will briefly consider ways of using technology and will pass through some facts of experience. We will also think about the advantages and disadvantages of technology in learning. Learners themselves can teach us a lot about technology although teachers are sometimes afraid to accept. We will then go on to look at factors we need to bear in mind when selecting or designing a technology based lesson. And we will finally consider how technology effects the learners' skills.

Source of information

1. *The benefits of new technology in language learning*

Current word processors allow us to create and re-create our texts until they are fully comprehensible to others. Gary Motteram, editor of "Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching", explains how the arrival of digital technologies in the classroom has helped learning.Technology is very much part of language learning throughout the world at all different levels. We are as likely to find it in the primary sector as much as in adult education.

I no longer need to make the case for computers to be provided in education, because computers are there in abundance in all their modern forms.We may see traditional computers in labs, teachers and students walking around with laptops or tablet PCs, and many people will have a mobile phone in their pocket that is capable of doing rather more than the mainframe computers that started computer-assisted language learning in the 1960s.

a) *Accessibility*

The digital revolution has drastically improved accessibility in language learning. With platforms like Duolingo and Memrise, anyone with internet access, irrespective of location, can learn a new language. These platforms, many of which are free or cost-effective, offer flexible learning opportunities, breaking the chains of traditional classroom timings. They also cater to special needs, with features like screen readers or subtitles, ensuring inclusivity. Moreover, unlike static textbooks, online resources can be updated, reflecting contemporary usage and culture. This democratization ensures that learning a language is no longer a luxury but a universally accessible opportunity.

b) *Interactivity*

The introduction of technology in language learning has supercharged the interactivity quotient, significantly enhancing user engagement. Platforms now offer dynamic exercises such as drag-and-drop, real-time quizzes, and immersive simulations. Tools like Duolingo leverage gamification, turning lessons into challenges, which not only test

knowledge but also keep learners motivated. Voice recognition software assists in pronunciation, providing immediate feedback. Additionally, augmented reality scenarios place learners in virtually real situations, promoting contextual understanding. All these interactive elements transform learning from a passive intake of information to an active and engaging experience, amplifying retention and understanding. Trying to find ways for people to do meaningful spoken language practice in a class can be very challenging, particularly if, as a teacher, you lack confidence in your own spoken language skills. Linking your class to other classes around the world, using tools such as video conferencing, can give a reason for a learner to ask a question and then try to understand the response.

c) *Multimedia Learning*

Multimedia learning leverages a blend of text, audio, video, and interactive elements to provide a rich and diverse language learning experience. Platforms like Babbel and Rosetta Stone integrate visuals and sounds, allowing learners to associate words with images or contexts, enhancing memory retention. Podcasts offer auditory learners an avenue to understand speech patterns and nuances. Simultaneously, videos introduce learners to cultural gestures, facial expressions, and real-life contexts, bridging the gap between textbook learning and practical usage. Interactive exercises further embed learning through action. This multi-faceted approach caters to various learning styles, ensuring comprehensive and effective language acquisition.

It might also provide support for the teacher, too. The technology mediates the process, getting language out there and giving feedback that shows whether someone has or hasn't understood what you have said.

There was also a bigger project work all based on students' initiative to show their respect to the April's heroes and Genocide victims.

By means of technology you can also organize interesting, active and inspiring debates. As mentioned above "Teachers and learners can go online to read or listen to material about different areas" and start a strong and circumstantial discussion.
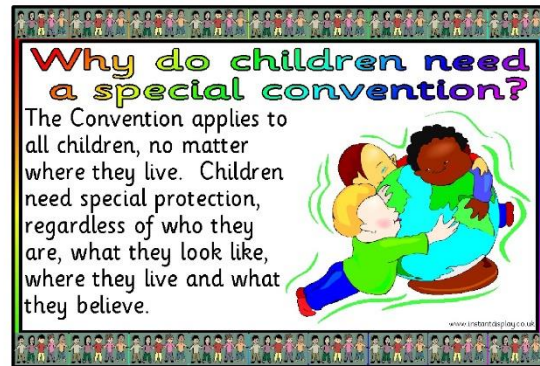
2. The role of technology in language learning

It is rare to find a language class that does not use some form of technology. In recent years, technology has been used to both assist and enhance language learning. Teachers have incorporated various forms of technology to support their teaching, engage students in the learning process, provide authentic examples of the target culture, and connect their classrooms to classrooms in other countries where the target language is spoken.

While technology can play an important role in supporting and enhancing language learning, the effectiveness of any technological tool depends on the knowledge and expertise of the qualified language teacher who manages and facilitates the language learning environment. In some cases, however, school and university administrators have permitted technology to drive the language curriculum and have even used it to replace certified language teachers. Language technology companies have made unsubstantiated claims about their products' abilities to help students learn languages, thus confusing administrators into thinking that these technologies can be an effective cost-cutting measure. There is currently no definitive research to indicate that students will acquire a second language effectively through technology without interaction with and guidance from a qualified language teacher.

3. Position statement: Is technology a silver bullet for language teaching and learning?

The use of technology should never be the goal in and of itself, but rather one of the tools for helping language learners to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish authentic tasks. Further, all language learning opportunities whether provided through technology or in a traditional classroom setting, should be standards-based and help develop students' proficiency in the target language through interactive, meaningful, and cognitively engaging learning experiences, facilitated by a qualified language teacher.

Is technology a silver bullet for language teaching and learning?

Sponsored feature: Technology such as Twitter and videos does support language learning, but teachers will only see the benefits if it goes hand-in-hand with a change of pedagogy.

Pedagogy is the key: technology can support students learning languages but teachers need to alter their approach to see the real benefits.

Technological innovations have changed language learning radically from the old-fashioned image of pupils learning lists of verbs out of textbooks. Although language teaching has a long history of using tech, dating back to the 1960s, recent developments such as social networking and easy-to-use video cameras have removed many of the limitations. Whereas using tech may have once meant a weekly trip to a computer lab, it can now involve anything, from Facebook and Twitter to podcasts and videos in the classroom. The question is: should teachers try to evolve their teaching to fit with the latest gadgets, or should they stick to their old ways?

Those who use tech say the advantages are obvious. Russell Stannard, a linguistics lecturer at Warwick and founder of a teacher training website, says that languages and digital technology are a natural fit. "Language development is around four skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – and all of those are facilitated by technology. There's a very strong link between the affordances of technology and the type of things we're trying to do as teachers."

Using tech means that students can now turn to Twitter to use the language, without having to pack the class off on a school trip. Goria says: "Use of technology has moved towards the internet and social networks, rather than concentrating on pieces of purposely-designed technology that you would have in language labs. They increase exposure to the target language and allow you to join groups that share interests in the language."

Another major development in language tech has been the use of video, according to Stannard. "The potential of video is incredible," he says. "It could be instructions, presenting learning materials or students producing videos themselves. They could pretend they're telling the news in the foreign language, they could act out a job interview situation, or put videos online for students in Europe about their local town. We could even prepare for oral exams by working in groups, filming it and then watching it back."

Mark Warschauer, professor of education and informatics at the University of California, agrees: "Technology can provide audio-video materials that can be paused, repeated, played

more slowly or quickly. Technology can also record and analyze a learners' own speech, and can provide various types of scaffolding for students learning to read."

For language teacher Ellie Paull, technology has become part and parcel of her lessons. "The students I teach all have iPads," she says. "I don't necessarily use them every lesson, but they add another string to my bow as a way of presenting new information and checking their understanding."

"They are great for adding variety to lessons, which is good when you're catering for a range of learning styles. They also allow for a greater level of independence in the classroom as the children have the resources to look things up for themselves."

Anecdotally, the using technology seems like a perfect way to enhance language learning. But what solid evidence is there that it actually makes a difference?

"There's lots of evidence that giving students extra chances to communicate in the language are very motivating," says Warschauer. "Use of Twitter, email, discussion forums, Skype, and other tools can provide authentic communication opportunities that are too often lacking in language class."

Increased exposure and interaction may be positive features to learning, but assessing the effectiveness of specific, individual tools or apps is more difficult. "How do you measure the impact of technology in teaching? says Stannard. "It's such a difficult thing to do because you can never control the other variables."

In fact, one study in 2001 claimed: "A healthy dose of skepticism about the pedagogical effectiveness of many current technological tools appears to be well justified if one considers the perhaps overly enthusiastic reaction to previous technological breakthroughs."

Used wrongly, computers could even damage learning. "Technology can be a distraction," says Warschauer. "I remember observing a beginners' French class a number of years ago, the teacher bragged about how engaged the learners were in creating multimedia in French. However, the students were spending most of their time and energy talking with each other in English about

how to make PowerPoints, when, as beginning learners, they really needed to be spending time hearing as much French as possible."

Stannard says the trick is to put the pedagogy first, not the technology. "You've got to know why you're using it. Teachers do need to learn to use new technology, but the driving force should always be the pedagogy behind it.

"If the technology is quite difficult to use and it takes up a chunk of the lesson to set up the activity, you've seriously got to question whether that's valid. There are ways around it though – you could explain the technology in the target language, for instance – but it can be a problem."

Dr Goria, who runs a master's programme for language teachers about digital technology says there is a "constant balancing act between theoretical discourse and the practical application of it." She says: "Using technology for the sake of it doesn't add anything to either the teaching or the learning. It is really only an improvement if it goes hand-in-hand with a change in the pedagogy."

Sometimes teachers need to maneuver between books if it's necessary. Modern text-books provide far better and more opportunities for listening and speaking skills improvement.

For every grade we should have the appropriate additional materials to better this or that skill. From my own experience I can claim that ,for instance, English file intermediate level for the 9th grade is a perfect helper.
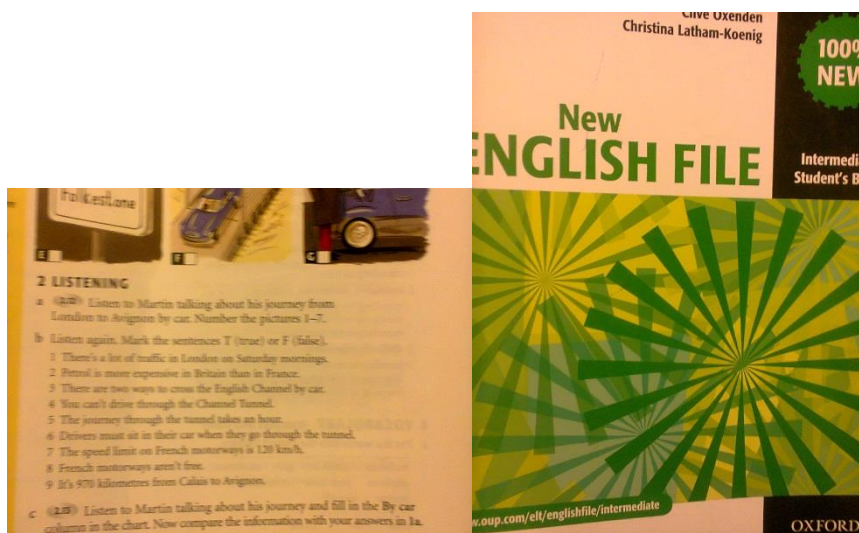
4. Teaching languages with technology: tools that help students become fluent

From Padlets to Popplets, languages consultant Joe Dale shares the tools modern foreign languages teachers are turning to in their classroom.

Technology lends itself very well to personalized and independent learning, allowing students to work at their own pace, says Joe Dale.

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 (MFL) classroom.

There is great value in incorporating new technologies not as a bolt on or reward, but as an integral part of the process. This allows learners to foster the four c's: communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. ICT lets learners easily draw on authentic resources that promote inter-cultural understanding and interact with virtual peers in real non-fabricated contexts.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 immediate feedback. Gaining points for their efforts and being able to compare their scores with their classmates is motivating the students to their learning.

For any MFL teacher learning vocabulary is essential and Quizlet is an effective way of memorizing and embedding words, phrases and making sound spelling links. Students and teachers can search for existing lists and easily create their own. Socrative is another free cross-platform tool which allows for classroom voting, instant feedback and formative assessment. You can send students multiple choice, true or false or short answer questions as well self-

assessing pre-made quizzes. Furthermore, using avatars instead of real pupils' faces may encourage increased participation especially from reluctant learners.

Video is another powerful vehicle in and out of the languages classroom. Making videos draws upon multiple intelligences, promotes creativity and fosters collaboration. The process gives students ownership of their work which increases engagement. Pupils can produce short films in the target language, create animations using apps such as Yakit Kids, Puppet Pals and Explain Everything screencasts, as well as peer assess each other's work. These videos can be easily uploaded and stored in the cloud, used to form part of an e-portfolio over time and are accessible at all times. Other tools used for generating e-portfolios and submitting homework are Edmodo or Showbie. The advantage of these tools is that students don't require an email address just a class code.

Using video to flip the classroom is another possibility where learners access the lesson content they would normally learn in class, at home which frees up more class time for practicing and accessing higher-order thinking skills. The MFL department at Wildern School in Hampshire is currently experimenting with flipping and recording their findings on a dedicated blog. Flipping doesn't have to involve creating lots of new material. It can be as simple as sharing existing PowerPoints or screencasts.

5. *Internet-based technologies*

Internet-based technologies can be an extremely **useful resource** for teachers and learners of **foreign languages**.

Various **innovations** (including Google-assisted language learning and concordancers) have **revolutionized** the approaches to **teaching foreign languages**.

New technologies and applications allow **students** to become increasingly **autonomous in learning** foreign languages, as well as gaining more intercultural literacy.

The proliferation of Internet-based software over the past decade undoubtedly has transformed the way foreign languages are taught. And yet, while educators increasingly exploit these pedagogical tools, the real story seems to be the way students use them to acquire foreign language competency. The literature seems to suggest that students increasingly rely on mobile-assisted language learning independently of, or asynchronously to, more structured learning, but other factors have also received the attention of researchers. This brief literature survey highlights some of these issues.

6. Motivation

How to motivate learners is one of the main challenges faced by foreign language teachers. Using the case of teaching modern Greek online to students in China, Xiaoyin Huang, Costa Dedegikas, and Jan Walls demonstrated that multimedia technology combined with appropriate instructional design can create a good learning environment that not only leads to effective language learning but also is highly motivational. In the same way, Brent Kelsen has shown YouTube to be highly influential in helping language students improve their listening and speaking skills.

7. Reading and Writing

Many researchers have noted the role technology plays in developing reading and writing skills. Early in the millennium, Adina Levine, Orna Ferenz, and Thea Reves identified that in order to develop critical literacy skills for foreign language learners, computer-based technologies were more useful than the conventional method of reading.

Several years later Subhadra Ramachandran supported this finding, propounding that judicious use of technology in the classroom helped students in their literacy development. From the point of view of students' writing skill, he also determined that using this kind of technology in the classroom helped students write better and improved their collaborative writing skills.

Likewise, Read Gilgen described that personal digital assistant and laptop devices were considerably more effective than traditional modalities, creating a mobile language-learning environment for students. Recent scholarship concurs with these findings, although it tends to

recommend using a combination of web-based and traditional writing instruction rather than a single approach.

8. Conclusion

Based on my review of the literature, I believe this is the right time to adopt technology for language teaching and learning for those faculty and students who have not already done so.

Language teachers should update their skills with training on the use of technology, including computers, multimedia, and smart boards in the language-learning classroom.

Instructors should also urge their students to use technology for language learning; the Internet especially can be fruitful for autonomous learning.

Watching YouTube videos, using instant messengers, writing e-mails, texting, and using Skype can help students improve all four language skills.

On the whole, while student satisfaction surveys confirm the continued success of Internet-based resources in the teaching of foreign languages, a growing body of literature suggests these technologies are encouraging students to become increasingly autonomous in their learning of foreign languages, as well as more interculturally competent. This trend supports the larger concept of lifelong learning, especially with respect to learning foreign languages in or out of the language classroom.

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