USING TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING
A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract:

Educational technology is a wide field. It can be considered either as a design science or as a collection of different research interests related to fundamental issues of learning, teaching and social organization. This paper aims at highlighting the importance that technology has in teaching nowadays as technology itself means the application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks. It further focuses on the idea that educational technology is based on theoretical knowledge that comes from different disciplines: communication, education, psychology, sociology, philosophy, artificial intelligence and computer science therefore it helps in improving education. It is also a complex, integrated process involving people, procedures, ideas, devices, and organization, for analyzing problems involved in all aspects of human learning. Technology should facilitate learning processes and increase performance of the educational system as it regards to effectiveness or efficiency.

Keywords: teaching, technology, education, facilities, learning, advantages

1. Introduction

Educational Technology relies on a broad definition of the word "technology". Technology can refer to material objects such as machines or hardware, but it can also include broader themes such as systems, methods of organization, and techniques. Some modern tools are overhead projectors, laptop computers, and calculators. Newer tools such as smartphones and games are becoming more and more important because

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of their learning potential. Educational Technology may be extended to include the techniques of the educator.

1.1 Main technologies used in teaching

Learning technologies play a major role in full-time distance teaching. Even though learning still relies on papers, videos are increasingly being used as e-tutoring through forums, instant messaging, video-conferencing etc. Sometimes it only aims at increased efficiency or effectiveness of current practice, but frequently it aims at pedagogical change. Learning technologies are considered as design sciences which are fundamental issues of learning, teaching and social organization and therefore make use of modern social science and life sciences methodology.[ii]

Educational technologists would not therefore consider the computer as just another piece of equipment. If educational technology is concerned with thinking carefully about teaching and learning, then a computer has a contribution in making computer-based learning environments which give us a new perspective on the nature of teaching and learning. Technology is becoming essential in university classrooms. The use of technology allows professors to diversify their lectures, display more information, and enhance student learning. By using different technologies in the classroom, this can help professors save time and energy and allow for more attention to be paid to the course content. There are many different learning materials available to professors in order to help them with their teaching.

1.2. The use of technology in teaching nowadays

Today we are facing a wide range of pedagogical strategies and available technologies. Classification schemes taking into account both dimensions can become very complex. We will present both simple and more complex attempts but also take into account that pedagogical designs and technologies can be combined in certain ways. Each time a new technology appears soon after it is used as a new solution to education by both researchers and practitioners. Therefore, one also could also say that fundamentally speaking, educational technology research and practice is technology itself.

2.1. Advantages of technology in teaching include:

2.1.1. Enriches students' knowledge

We know that successful technology-rich schools generate impressive results for students, including improved achievement; higher test scores; improved student

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[ii] Candlin, C. N., & Murphy, D. (Eds.). (1987). Language learning tasks.

attitude, enthusiasm, and engagement; richer classroom content. Of the hundreds of studies that show positive benefits from the use of technology, two are worth noting for their comprehensiveness. The use of technology resulted in educational gains for all students regardless of age, race, parental income, or other characteristics. By using technology, students explore and represent information dynamically and in many forms; become socially aware and more confident; communicate effectively about complex processes; become independent learners and self-starters; know their areas of expertise and share that expertise spontaneously.[iii]

Educational technology has a significant positive impact on achievement in all subject areas, across all levels of school, and in regular classrooms as well as those for special-needs students. It has positive effects on student attitudes. The degree of effectiveness is influenced by how students are grouped, and the levels of student access to technology. Technology makes instruction more student-centered, encourages cooperative learning, and stimulated increased teacher/student interaction. Positive changes in the learning environment evolve over time and do not occur quickly.

2.1.2 Improves teachers' performances

Educational technology helps us understand, bring to consciousness, and express one's own inner world of thoughts and emotions. Multimedia gives teachers the tools to turn the classroom into centers of student-directed interests. Technology offers tools for thinking more deeply, pursuing curiosity, and exploring and expanding intelligence as students build "mental models" with which they can visualize connections between ideas on any topic.

Currently available technologies, the most important of which are computers, communications systems such as Internet connections, and interactive videodisk and CD-ROM systems, provide a learning environment in which problem solving and intellectual inquiry can be developed. The technology also allows students to work at their own place and encourages them to take initiative and learn independently. The world is constantly changing and ways in which we function at home, work and school are also changing. The speed at which technology has developed plays a major role in these changes. From e-mail to on-line classes, computers are definitely influential in our lives, and can enhance the learning process in schools in various ways.

2.1.3. Serves as additional assistance

An advantage of having computer-assisted instruction in the classroom is that the computer can serve as a tutor. Teachers can only aid students in the learning process so

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[iii]Barson, J. & Debski, R. (1996). *Technology in the service of foreign language learning.*

far. Computers can assist teachers and act as a tutor for the students who are falling behind. Teachers do not have the time to repeat lessons over and over again. It is believed that it is important to give all students in the classroom the opportunity to adequately learn the lessons, and with computers acting as tutors they can.

One of the biggest problems in the world today is illiteracy. Each year thousands of students graduate from high school reading at the elementary school level, or not reading at all. Every student should have the opportunity to receive additional assistance when they need it. [iv]Teachers are doing the best they can with literacy issues in the classroom, and computers can reach the students that the teachers cannot.

2.1.4. Entertaining ways of teaching

For sure, learning technologies are interesting and motivating. You can use different kind of texts, graphics, videos and pictures. Having online lessons, students can use authentic language using blogs, wikis to work with students promoting independent learning storing materials for future use students learn IT skills together with the language having fun and variation. Education serves as a window through which our imagination and curiosity can take flight into the unknown and enhance our creativity, and the use of computer technology in education plays an enormous role in helping students to achieve their full development potential. Given the role that education plays in preparing students to go into the world, it seems clear that there should be a connection between the world and the classroom.

2.2. Disadvantages of technology in teaching include:

What then are the potential disadvantages of using new technologies for language teaching? I will highlight three aspects: investment of money, investment of time, and uncertainty of results.

2.2.1 Investment of money

Uses of new technologies in the long run tend to result in higher productivity, at least in the economic sphere. Productivity in education is certainly harder to measure, but it is not unreasonable to assume that over time new technologies will help create more effective education. In any case, whatever results may be achieved over the long term, there are definite startup expenses related to implementing new technologies in education. For university language learning programs, such expenses usually include hardware, software, staffing, and training for at least one networked computer classrooms where students can drop in and use assigned software and one or more

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[iv] Bennett, F. (1999). *Computers as tutors: Solving the crisis in education. (p. 3).*

networked computer classrooms where teachers can bring whole classes on an occasional or regular basis.

2.2.2. Investment of Time

Just as technologies may save money over the long term, they also may save time. But, potential long-term benefits to an institution are little consolation to an individual teacher who is spending enormous amounts of time learning constantly-changing software programs and trying to figure out the best way to use them in the classroom. Increased demands on time are due in part to the difficulty of using new online multimedia technologies in their still-early stages comparable, perhaps, to the early days of tuning a radio or starting a car when those machines were first invented.

However, time demands are caused not only from learning how to master the technology, but also from the changing dynamics of the online classroom. As indicated earlier, new technologies create excellent opportunities for long-distance exchanges, such exchanges can be extremely complicated in terms of coordinating goals, schedules and plans, especially when involving teachers from different countries or educational systems. Also, another benefit of electronic communication that provides opportunities for student-initiated communication can also create a time obstacle, as a teacher's e-mail box becomes flooded with messages from previous students.

2.2.3 Uncertainty of Results

As indicated earlier, there is no single predictable outcome for using computers; any more than there is for using books or libraries. Thus, teachers and institutions are expected to invest large amounts of time and money without any guarantee of achieving particular results. By simply bringing new machines into an institution does little to bring about the kinds of social transformation needed to make effective use of those machines. Whether in workplaces or in schools, the natural tendency is to use new technologies in ways consistent with previous methods of organization and practice. This can often result in inefficient or even demotivating uses of computers, in which workers or students see their interpersonal connections and personal power reduced rather than increased.

New online technologies match well with newer approaches to language teaching, in which students are viewed not as empty vessels to be filled but rather as active agents collaborating in their own learning process. Yet even in situations where instructors already agree with such a perspective, teaching in an online environment can challenge teachers' practices. The online world presents important new challenges, and learning how to integrate new online technologies into the classroom will likely be as long and complicated a process as doing the same has been in the business world,

but made even more difficult in education by lack of dependable funding for equipment and support.

Having said all of this, we still believe that integrating new technologies should be an important goal of language programs, but a goal of which the cost and complexity should not be underestimated.[v] The most effective technology-enhanced language programs take many years to develop and are based on much trial and error, administrative support for teacher experimentation and collaboration, and sustained, careful attention to the forms of social organization and pedagogy which accompany the use of new machines.

3.1 Adaptation of Technology by the Teachers

Advances in information technology have revolutionized how people communicate and learn in nearly every aspect of modern life except for education. Teachers must adapt the technology which will empower them and help their students learn. It is believed that there are five strategies for successful teacher adoption of education technology and that these principles will help fulfill the potential mentioned a century ago.

Schools must use technology that empowers teachers. Teachers rightly reject education technologies that divert their attention from instruction. The best education technologies enable teachers to do more with fewer resources. Communication platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or Tumblr enable dynamic communication with students. Teacher-empowering technologies include mobile apps that grade written student work and provide lesson plan databases. School systems need to aggressively track what works for their teachers and put all other unworkable technologies aside.

Teachers should treat the adoption of technology as part of lesson planning. Systematic adoption of technology at the classroom levels limits the damage of shifting policy maker priorities. Teachers should not fear open-source technologies. Many mistakenly believe that education technologies are expensive and complicated to use. Open-source technologies are stable, secure, and compatible with other platforms. Organizations both small and large use open source devices every day.[vi]

Teachers working together have tremendous potential to reform education. Every day teachers face choices about how to implement the curriculum and instruct students. Those moments are opportunities for teachers to engage in education reform that has a real impact on students. Teachers should use education technologies that are inexpensive, easy to use, and improve student learning. It's important for our educators

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[v] Brown, J. D. (1998). Computers in language testing.

[vi] Warschauer (Ed.), Telecollaboration in foreign language learning (pp. 49-68).

to understand and adapt new technologies so that students can benefit from read/write instruction instead of a stale, read-only education.

3.2. Stay informed

Use Really Simple Syndication to keep up with technology news and events. To use RSS you'll need an RSS reader like Google Reader. An RSS feed is basically a dynamic link that updates your RSS reader when new content is posted to a website. You can also subscribe to technology newsletters, and talk to students about websites and web services they use on their own. A majority of teachers do not know what.

3.3. Work with IT professionals who understand education

I have been part of IT workshops and I know it is important to supply technology at schools to stimulate the learning process. IT staff must be willing to bend on certain security measures and trust students with equipment so that they can be creative and not suffocated. We let students take laptops home to work on approved projects, which ultimately motivate their classmates to do the same. There should also be dedicated instructional adviser who helps teachers integrate technology into their lesson plans. This often helps ease the teachers' modification of complex lessons.

3.4. Become a user

Make a Facebook account so you can understand the benefits of social-networking sites. Add some information about yourself. Locate former school students. Be part of different groups. This will let you see sites like Facebook from different perspectives. To collaborate and share course materials, you can create a new site for your class. Students benefit more from teachers who collaborate and less from teachers who force lectures. Also, it's much easier to teach about something that you've actually used in depth.

3.5. Don't be afraid of change

Some teachers think that upgrading from Office 2003 to 2007 is using the latest technology. However, a Word document is still words and formatting meant for someone to read. Instead of being satisfied with word processing in a new version of software, why not let students create a school "newspaper". The news could be updated in seconds, it could be interactive (comments, updates, etc.), and it could include user-submitted media. Google Earth could be used to give an elementary student global perspective by flying in from a world view down to the roof of his home.

If educators can step out of the education bubble to incorporate real-world technology into their lessons, students will greatly benefit. Instead of avoiding new technologies either because of misinformation or fear of change, educators should

embrace change to prepare students for life after organized education how can teachers use technology in the classroom. As technology advances, it can be difficult to keep up and adapt to the advancements in both our personal and professional lives. Teachers have an especially important role to play in technological advancements, as incorporating technology in the classroom can be both a learning tool for students and a teaching tool for the instructor. For this reason, incorporating technology in the classroom is a great way to increase a child's interest in learning.

4. Teaching equipment

4.1. Overhead projectors

Overhead projectors are used as a visual aid to display information for students. It allows for material or diagrams to be displayed to large classes enabling more time for teaching or class discussions. It is important that when you are making transparencies to write large and legibly, and to only include main points or ideas. The overhead projector is easy to use and can be easily incorporated into the classroom.

4.2. Video or data projectors

Video or data projectors generally serve the same purpose as the overhead projector. However, by using these methods it is easier to display information from more complicated sources. This enables professors to create presentations or videos using software programs and display them to their students. Video or data projectors are more complicated to use and professors must be familiar with the equipment before the class starts. It is also important to know all necessary programs and passwords before you begin.

4.3.Blackboard

The blackboard is often considered a traditional teaching tool. The blackboard can be used by professors throughout the lecture to explain ideas or define main points. It is important to make sure your writing is clear and visible and that all students can see what you are writing.[vii] It is recommended that only main points or ideas be written rather than long drawn out pieces of information. The blackboard can be a useful tool to help students visualize key aspects of the lesson but may make things difficult if you

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[vii] Breen, M. P. (1987). Learner contributions to task design.

4.4. Videos

Videos are a good way of reinforcing the course material being taught. You as a professor may have to request specific materials if they are not provided for you in the classroom. It is important if you are using a clip or a video to have it ready to go and at the proper location. Tape counters may differ from those you have at home and you shouldn't rely on them to find something quickly in the classroom.

4.5. Internet

The internet is another way to reinforce the course content or to display specific publications available on the World Wide Web. When using computers in the classroom it is important to try them out and see what programs and passwords you will need. It is also important that you have specific web site addresses written down so that you do not have to waste time searching for them.[viii] One good feature of using the internet is that you may display information from other sources or even create your own web pages.

5. Conclusions

Computer technology is not a panacea for language teaching, using it demands substantial commitments of time and money and brings no guaranteed results. Appropriate use of new technologies allows for a more thorough integration of language, content, and culture than ever before and provides students with unprecedented opportunities for autonomous learning. Computer technologies not only help teachers and students to transcend linguistic, geographical, and time barriers but also to build bridges between bilingual, ESL, and foreign language programs. The use of new technologies allows students to engage in the types of online communication and research which will be paramount for success in their academic and professional pursuits.

In conclusion, the advantages discussed concerning computer technology in the classroom outweigh the disadvantages. Computer technology is a positive supplement to bridge the gap between education and the technological world in which we live. Computer-assisted technologies in schools offer students greater access to information, an eager motivation to learn, a jump-start on marketable job skills and an enhanced quality of class work.

In addition to the examples given in this chapter, there are many other uses of computer technologies in second language teaching, learning, and research. These

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[viii] Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society.*

include tracking the learning process of individual students, preparing and training language teachers, and testing language learners. Unfortunately, it is not possible to cover all of these topics in depth within one chapter.

In conclusion, the key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in "humanware". Our human capacity as teachers to plan, design, and implement is effective for educational activity. Language learning is an act of creativity, imagination, exploration, expression, construction, and profound social and cultural collaboration. If we use computers to fully humanize and enhance this act, rather than to try to automate it, we can help bring out the best that human and machine has to offer.

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