

DIGITAL TOOLS FOR LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ЦИФРОВЫЕ ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ ДЛЯ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКОВ

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Аннотация. В статье рассмотрена возможность практического использования цифровых технологий в обучении иностранным языкам и также в учебных заведениях. Было отмечено, что основной задачей языкового образования сегодня является повышение качества образования. Цифровые технологии способствуют индивидуализации и интенсификации обучения на уроках иностранного языка цифровые технологии помогают решать целый ряд дидактических задач. Компьютерные программы для внедрения учебного материала, моделирование ситуаций общения, игровых задач, контроля и оценки также дают возможность заинтересовать студентов своим разнообразием, так как существует ряд программ для упрощенного общения с носителями иностранного языка и увлекательные способы его изучения.

Ключевые слова: цифровые технологии, информационно-коммуникационные технологии, преподавание иностранного языка, языковое образование, программное обеспечение для изучения языка.

Abstract. The article considers the practical use of digital technology in foreign language teaching and also in educational institutions. It was noted that the main task of language education today is to improve the quality of education. Digital technologies contribute to the individualization and intensification of learning in foreign language classes digital technologies help to solve a number of didactic tasks. Computer programmes for the introduction of learning material, simulation of communication situations, game tasks, control and evaluation also provide an opportunity to interest students in their diversity, as there are a number of programmes for simplified communication with native speakers and fascinating ways of learning a foreign language.

Key words: digital tools, Information and communication technologies, foreign language teaching, language education, language learning software.

The importance of using modern technology to modernise education may seem clear to many. However, this feature is often associated with intensive social development in the field of communication and information, which is the main tool for access to knowledge in the modern world. The importance of using digital tools in language learning should also be emphasised.

Nevertheless, the benefits associated with the use of digital tools should be better known in the field of education, as the use of these technologies in language learning is of particular importance. But many people, being fond of digital tools, forget about other, equally effective ways of learning. Practice has shown that computer-based language learning programmes have many advantages over traditional teaching methods, as they contribute to individualisation and intensification of learning, increase cognitive activity, motivation and broaden horizons, creating conditions for independent work. ICT allows students to establish their own learning rhythm, which is a key indicator of motivation. However, this activity requires careful planning on the part of the teacher in order to be able to involve all students in the educational process and to avoid unproductive work.

Nowadays there is a growing interest on the part of some teachers to learn modern technologies, which provides an opportunity to update their teaching methods. To better understand how useful these tools can be for language teaching it is necessary to understand that they only serve to help with didactic tasks, conducting didactic activities aimed at stimulating language acquisition through the production of multimodal texts: texts produced using different semiotic codes (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 1996) [1].

Nevertheless, attitudes towards the use of technology and its inclusion in the educational process in schools have been both positive and negative. The benefits of computer science, communication and technology (ICT) programmes are to develop self-confidence, improve communication, creativity and imagination, and note that ICT helps learners to master all four learning skills if they can obtain the information and knowledge they need. Also, technology stimulates learning and maximizes students ability to actively learn, technology-based learning assumes that both students and schools are provided with computers and Internet access, which is obviously not always the case. Thus, even if technology is available and not very expensive, there are still schools, especially in rural areas, that don't have adequate equipment and Internet access. Moreover, technical problems and teachers' lack of experience and, often, confidence in using technology also hinder this way of teaching. This leads to negative attitudes among teachers towards the use of technology and their belief that when technology-based learning is introduced, the classroom cannot be easily controlled. From the above it can be concluded that teachers with negative attitudes towards technology are unlikely to be able to transfer their skills to students and encourage them to use it. Thus, to effectively integrate technology-based learning into the educational process, appropriate equipment must be provided and teachers, schools and students must have sufficient knowledge to use it.

The use of technology therefore requires a certain level of autonomy on the part of the individual. A person has to be autonomous and take responsibility for what and how he/she uses technology outside the formal educational setting. It was found that students who are independent and share positive Moreover, students become more active and self-sufficient when they use technology for learning. also found that the use of technology predicts independent learning and that the use of technology indirectly influences academic performance through independent learning.

Soft skills are the most important for the development of students' self-organisation skills nowadays:

1) EasyBib - this resource can be used when writing research works both in foreign languages and in Russian. It allows you to automatically generate bibliographic lists for research works using such citation styles as MLA, APA and Chicago / Turban.

2) Milk is a free resource to help you create an online timetable with deadlines for certain tasks, create schedules. It can be used from various platforms such as Gmail, Twitter, iPad, iPhone, Android.

3) Survey monkey is an online resource used by both students and teachers to create all kinds of tests, questionnaires, quizzes, etc. It is useful both for performing various tasks using task-based and content-language integrated learning technology and for getting feedback from students or the teacher. A resource called Classmarker is a similar one.

4) Bubbl.us is the next online resource for creating mind maps online. Such "mind maps" help to organise the necessary information for the quickest learning, memorisation and repetition. In the classroom, they are taken with them at the beginning of the lesson by both students and teachers to reiterate and create an interesting introduction to a new topic.

5) Create-a-Graph - this resource allows the creation of various graphical forms of presenting information such as graphs, tables, charts, etc. [2]

However, technology integration alone isn't enough in this type of language learning, there are technical and pedagogical implications. The former include learners' skills in using technology independently, their efforts and devices, and the latter include educational design. In other words, there is a need for teachers who are able to organise and maintain a flow of lessons of this type and who have the 'pedagogical knowledge' to be included in such learning.

Of course, the use of ICT tools must be adapted to the specific social context. In some social settings, overuse of ICTs may lead learners to enter a virtual world which they abuse privately. On the other hand, there are disadvantaged social environments where, without school-based training in new technologies, students won't be adequately prepared to properly use digital tools. They allow a daily exchange of information between students from different countries in a peer-to-peer education. ICTs are seen as a universal learning tool for language acquisition and a variety of interdisciplinary content. The use of laptops involves the use of special software not only for writing and listening to real materials in foreign languages, such as YouTube videos or films in original languages, but also for creating new content. Various tools are also used to facilitate learning and manipulation of content. Mindmapping software (Mindmup, Mindomo, Coggle, etc.), online quizzes and questionnaires (Kahoot, Edmodo tests) as well as virtual classroom platforms involve students and teachers in exploring, learning, developing, sharing and creating new content related to different topics, topics related to a whole range of educational programmes (science, history, history, etc.).

Innovative technologies for online learning that are relevant today are of several types:

- Interactive technologies;
- Game-based technologies;
- Mobile learning or M-learning.

To begin with, interactive technology is an approach to learning consisting of almost instantaneous feedback from students interacting with the teacher, which helps the teacher to quickly analyse students' actions or to communicate with native speakers of a foreign language. An example of this interactive approach to learning is the ZOOM app, which is very popular with educational institutions in all countries. ZOOM is considered one of the leading video platforms. In addition to videos, teachers can organise different forms of foreign language teaching on the so-called platform. For example, the teacher can show a screen with a presentation, a virtual textbook or even a series of engaging videos. Furthermore, it is possible to organise some discussions and debates, which are useful not only for improving oral skills but also for better understanding of the material. Students can share their opinions using video and sound, zoom in on the chat or use a pencil that is shown on the screen being broadcast.

Besides ZOOM, there are other sites and programmes such as Kahoot, Skype and others that are really useful for teachers. They enable you to get feedback from your students as quickly as possible and organise the most convenient work with all students. Why is it important for teachers to get fast feedback from students? This is an important task during distance learning, because compared to offline learning it is quite difficult to track whether students have understood all the information or not. By getting quick feedback from learners, teachers can see whether their teaching method is working or not [3].

Nowadays, one of the main issues in foreign language teaching is the organisation of teaching children of different ages using playful technology. There are several factors for this. Firstly, to keep pupils and students interested in the lesson being taught and to reinforce their activity throughout the lesson. Secondly, an important task is to motivate the children and try to

create a link between real life and the lesson. Also, in order to develop the students' speech skills, this can be successfully carried out through play activities.

Two types of play techniques are most common: didactic and role-playing games.

Didactic games help to develop children's internal linguistic skills such as grammar, phonology and lexicology. The key point of such a game is to have a concrete target result at the end of the lesson. Vocabulary plays an important role in learning a foreign language. Although students are aware of the importance of vocabulary development, most of them have a passive attitude towards learning. Often teachers' explanations are boring and uninteresting for students. Games will help to get students interested in learning and make learning fun and enjoyable. One popular didactic game that helps increase vocabulary is "Charades". The essence of the game is that the teacher prepares a list of words on cardboard cards and chooses a pupil who has to explain the words without using forbidden words. During the game the pupils also develop the ability to look at things from a different angle in order to explain the necessary word in all possible ways.

Role play or creative play is one of the effective methods to improve and increase fluency, as children have to speak according to the given situation, which leads to the use of different communication techniques. As for "shy pupils", it is a great chance to make them talk because they can be different people and go beyond boundaries during role play.

Teaching a foreign language in the 21st century is a challenge. Because forty-five minutes per lesson is not enough to practise all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing). However, mobile learning (M-learning) is proposed as a solution to this problem. Mobile learning today is a new and evolving trend in education, characterised by the creation of a new learning environment. It is better than distance or blended learning (e-learning and traditional learning), as it is defined by the following features:

- provides effective self-study;
- individualises learning;
- boosts motivation;
- there is no time limit (students can study at any convenient time);
- boosts motivation;
- you can select your favourite interface.

M-learning is successfully used in all disciplines, especially in foreign language teaching. These days there is a huge variety of apps on the mobile market for learning a foreign language, including English. All these apps can be divided into 3 groups:

- mobile applications aimed primarily at improving a particular speech skill;
- mobile applications designed to develop language skills, such as vocabulary or grammar;
- versatile mobile applications designed for the comprehensive development of foreign language communication competence and the attainment of the required level of language proficiency.

In general, apps can be used to develop a particular skill or to improve all four foreign language skills. For example, to make progress in listening skills, it is better to use ESL Conversation (Listening), 6 Minute British English, BBC Learning English and others. These apps can be used to develop and learn grammar, vocabulary, lexicology, slang, idioms and give you the opportunity to hear speech and understand it.

In today's world, it's not just mobile games that are popular. One of the main distractions for any teenager is computer games. A computer game is a type of learning game activity which simulates real-life situations by means of computer technology and is one of the most attractive for students. An important feature of the game is that it allows students to feel free, independent and autonomous. At the initial stage of learning, computer games such as Dora's Big Birthday Adventure or Dora's Lost and Found Adventure, based on the English language cartoon series Dora Explorer familiar to many children, can be used. These games expand vocabulary, improve listening and reading skills through authentic materials, and contain word-formation rules. There are also a

series of games containing two or more products on the same topic. They are designed to allow you to learn English at different stages. For example, the English from A to Z collection of computer games consists of three parts:

- "Part 1: Mission Spy",
- "Part 2. Mission Detective
- "Part 3. Mission: Space Tourist".

The first part aims at learning historical facts about England and the English language. The main objective of the second part is to enrich vocabulary on various topics. In the third part, the player is offered to perform a large number of substitution exercises, aimed at training the composition of sentences according to the established direct order of words. Thus, the computer game provides not only motivation for learning a foreign language, effective memorization of lexical and grammatical units through imagery and visualization of the language material, the possibility to study the language independently at any available time, but also the presence of a competitive component in learning through the possibility to play with other participants over the network.

The use of information technology in teaching, in particular in foreign language teaching, optimises the learning process, which has a positive impact on the results of the educational process. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this positive effect can only be achieved with careful planning of goals, outcomes and ongoing activities, all of which should be based on the educational needs and requirements of the learners. Modern technologies such as interactive technology, gaming technology, M-learning exist these days. Interactive technology provides interaction with students, analysis of their actions and the outcome of their work, selection of other options for presenting complex learning material, i.e. it serves for quick feedback. Game-based technology contributes to the development of various qualities, such as independence, initiative and teamwork skills. M-learning ensures effective independent work, increases students' motivation and cognitive activity, interest in the subject, and helps to individualise learning.

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