



Integrating Digital Tools in ELT

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Abstract: Numerous educational platforms and instructional software have been developed along with the advancement of ICT. The most successful and appealing language learning experiences for students are those that combine technology with English instruction. Using technology in language learning has become the ideal instrument for achieving competence and fluency. This article discusses the advantages of integrating digital tools in teaching English as a foreign language at the university level.

Keywords: ICT, digital tools, learning platforms, English teaching, higher education, students

1. Introduction

Information technologies and digital teaching aids for foreign languages are becoming more important and extensively utilized in higher education globally, including in Uzbekistan, according to recent studies [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9]. Digital technologies are thought to be the very tools that teachers and students need to develop their learning capacities, change the way classes are organized, and support any educational and methodological resources found in or outside of the classroom in order to implement successful foreign language learning while accounting for particular courses, the diversity of the student body, and institutional requirements [10].

Existing national and international education strategies propose measures to more effectively use the potential of information and communication technologies in education and to support all participants in the educational process in developing digital skills to improve learning in a digital society.

2. Method

Using ICT to teach and learn foreign languages has revolutionised the field by increasing access to information for all students, whether they reside in urban or rural areas. Students gain from the use of ICT in ELT because it makes learning easier and helps students develop their conceptual and perceptual abilities. ICT provides energy, but it also gives students autonomy, enabling them to further their own growth [11]. The use of ICT in foreign language instruction fosters collaboration, which is something we value highly when teaching foreign languages in the classroom. A learner has the option of interacting with a native speaker via chat, forums, email, or by visiting a significant cultural connection.

A learner can practise the crucial abilities of speaking and writing without obstacles by visiting a significant cultural connection or by interacting with a native speaker via chat, forums, email, etc. A learner feels better, solidifies prior learning, refreshes memories, and has a sense of being in a real-world conversation when they are able to

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establish a spiritual connection with the material. It is true that using ICT in teaching and studying foreign languages, along with the Internet itself, may help students overcome challenges they may face along the way. More and more, foreign language instructors are becoming into multimedia. He or she employs various technologies associated with certain media, such as pictures from books, writing, and words [12,13].

Up until now, the majority of research on the digitalization of foreign language instruction has concentrated on describing the nature of various teaching aids, their typology, and methods of implementation. This literature primarily shows the benefits of using digital tools and information and communication media, with very few occasional drawbacks [14]. For example, access to ICT in education does not guarantee its effective use, and it may even have unfavorable effects if is not used appropriately in teaching [15].

ICT has significantly changed the educational landscape, and as we can see, innovations in the teaching and learning process have improved. Teachers and students of English as a foreign language (EFL) employ a variety of technology tools to make learning effective. When using ICT in the classroom, educators must know how to use smart devices and technology efficiently. Using so-called Ed-tech tools is the latest trend in English teaching and learning that are used in today's contemporary classrooms in the following [16]:

- (1) **Google Forms** with constantly updated information about attendance and progress, that is, a kind of “electronic diary” created, filled out, distributed to students by the teacher (the university’s LMS system is capable of tracking intermediate and final grades, but it does not have an attendance tracking function and the accumulation of course grades in real time); MS OneDrive as a cloud storage for all kinds of educational and non-educational materials; MS OneNote Class Notebooks as a repository for course materials and homework [17]; MS Teams for conducting online classes, discussions and consultations and for exchanging messages with students in a single software platform;
- (2) **Classroom learning tools:** These are software tools that teachers use to present, study, practice, and review curriculum-based course materials (e.g., offline or online PowerPoint presentations, interactive Mentimeter presentations, offline audio and video textbook supplements, online audio and video resources such as TED Talks, BBC Learning English, National Geographic Learning [8], educational platforms LearningApps, Quizlet, Kahoot!, Padlet); all classrooms should be equipped teachers’ work stations, projectors and sound speakers; students have access to high-speed Wi-Fi on laptops, smartphones, and tablets;
- (3) **Out-of-class learning tools:** (1) for mandatory, graded homework (interactive workbooks, programs for practicing listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary); (2) for additional, non-graded, elective practice of the English language (for example, television series, various audio and video podcasts in a foreign language with their subsequent abstracting and annotation in the classroom in additional time).

3. Results and Discussion

In fact, using computer tools allows ELT teachers to teach all types of communicative activities: speaking, listening, reading and writing. In addition, using digital technologies, the teacher can constantly improve his knowledge and skills, as well as monitor the development of communication skills among students. The scholars Zimina and Lyulyaeva [18] define a number of tasks that the use of ICT in the process of teaching a foreign language is designed to solve: 1) increase the motivation of learning; 2) contribute to the activation of the cognitive sphere of students; 3) improve methods of

conducting lessons; 4) timely monitor the results of training and education; 5) plan and systematize your work; 6) use as a means of self-education; 7) prepare a lesson (event) efficiently and quickly.

The use of ICT by students themselves during extracurricular time is becoming extremely important. Dedja [19] highlights a number of the following important aspects: 1) web chats provide an opportunity for even the most shy people to practice communicating in a foreign language; 2) Internet resources abound in accessible original materials; 3) social networks offer communication with real native speakers from different cultural environments; 4) all kinds of portable devices, previously used as means of entertainment and communication, are now becoming a powerful tool for learning [20].

4. Conclusion

Since both teachers and students should be familiar with technology and use it for educational purposes, they should also take care not to abuse it. They should remember to mix materials from books and the Internet, listen to files from the CD room as well as the Internet, write essays, communicate in real time, and exchange messages with native speakers. Teachers of foreign languages should advise their students to utilise their own laptops, iPods, MP3 players, and smartphones to aid in their language acquisition. Teachers of foreign languages must update their pedagogy and keep an eye on their students' engagement.

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