

APPLICATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: The digital era is a creator of learning modern English language from the youngest population to the three cycles of the higher education system. Internet connections and technological innovations transformed into modern tools such as computers, tablets, smartphones, smartwatches upgraded with modern platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard, etc., are not only a necessity but also an obligation of every individual and institution for advanced and modern learning of English Language. The introduction of professional platforms in the teaching of English at particular universities is a need to keep up the step with the progressive European countries. At the universities in the Republic Northern Macedonia there is a trend for the use of modern technology in learning English, including several system platforms such as Moodle, Google Classroom etc. Results of our study have shown that most of the teachers or 50% (10 teachers) reported that they did not use open-source platforms at their faculties while a larger group of teachers or 40% (8 teachers) reported using the Open Access Moodle platform, while 10% (2 teachers) said they used the Google Classroom for the requirements of English language teaching. The application of filmed stories and video clips is a very common technology used in learning English at universities from teachers and students. Our study resulted that the respondents were divided into two groups, those that regularly use movies, video clips and other types of film materials in English language teaching 55% (11 teachers), while in the second group were classified teachers that occasionally use such resources with 45% (9 teachers),

Keywords: digital technologies, English language, teaching, Moodle, video clips, movies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Some of the tools that can be used in the EFL classroom are: digital storytelling, comics, eBooks, videos, images, online speaking avatars and interactive whiteboards that can be accessed via the internet. The advancement of technology is now evident with studies showing about 90% of students having access to a mobile device or computer whether at home, school or work (Diniz and Levay, 2016). It is therefore not surprising that teaching methods have also evolved towards embracing technology. The new teaching era has been marked with examples of modern teaching such as blended learning, on-line open-source platforms, as well as virtual teaching classrooms that are being endorsed by major education experts. These new teaching methods integrate technology in English language teaching to facilitate teachers, to improve the engagement of the student and for everyone involved produce a comprehensive, structured environment for learning. It is therefore evident that educational institutions require transitioning to a more technologically oriented classroom.

The application of new technologies in the teaching of English at the state universities in the Republic of Northern Macedonia was an occasion to do some research and to synthesize certain results that will give an approximate picture of the level to which university teachers practice the application of new technologies in learning English and what level has been reached with the blended-learning model of learning English. In this paper, it was important to obtain data on the use of professional systems and platforms, which enable interactivity and capability of the teaching staff to practice this type of teaching. Frequent use of computers, resulted in combined use of video clips, movie stories and recently digital tools for simultaneous translation into foreign languages. The results of the research conducted at the state universities in the Republic of Northern Macedonia, showed a positive trend for the use of new technologies in learning English, especially among the teaching staff, mostly from middle age, which clearly indicates that modern technology is more acceptable for teachers and for students both at foreign and more often at domestic universities.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The starting point for completing this paper was the connections with the access to the electronic databases, the use of the latest experiences from the application of new technologies in learning English and part of our extensive research on the readiness of the teaching staff of the Universities in the Republic Northern Macedonia to apply new technologies in learning English. Our research enclosed teachers from 7 state universities in the Republic North Macedonia: University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"-Skopje, University "St. Kliment Ohridski"-Bitola, University "Goce Delchev"-Stip, University "St. Apostle Paul"-Ohrid, State University-Tetovo, South East European

University-Tetovo and Mother Teresa University -Skopje, as well as two private universities, such as First Private University FON Skopje and University American College Skopje.

3. THE USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Up to date findings in regards to the application of new technologies in the study of the English language confirm that they offer a much greater number of benefits, especially for those who study the English language, in our case, students from universities, but also for teachers who succeed in teaching the curriculum into a more transparent way to students, avoiding traditional subjectivism.

The application of new technologies greatly increases the creativity of teachers in the application of new methods in the study of the English language, and thus, largely, takes the teacher's responsibility. The application of new technologies not only raises the level and quality of English language learning that is functionally related to the modernity offered by new tools and modern software in the presentation of the material, but the new technologies cause a sense of additional activity and mobilisation of each student, listening to the subject material that is presented in the classroom. These take on the role of an additional motivator and stimulator for not only students as listeners, but also for teachers who see the challenge in adopting modern tools, which include computers, tablets, smartphones, smartwatches (Recanoski et al., 2021), interactive boards, e-learning platforms (Moodle, Blackboard, and Google Classroom), etc (Figure 1).

Figure. 1. Illustration of modern tools used in English language teaching



With the application of these modern tools, teachers have the opportunity to apply and implement learning methodologies that have proved to be very successful in studying English (Masruddin, 2014). Methodologically, this further means that teachers provide a different level of training among the listeners, with full efficiency in the presentation of the material and the exercises.

In that manner, students' motivation undoubtedly grows through the use of multimedia technologies such as smartphones, tablets and laptops as opposed to the learning approach with classical textbooks and practical exercises. There is no doubt that the application of modern technologies in the study of English transforms students from passive actors in the educational process into active participants who gain in-depth knowledge of the subject foreign language. The use of modern technologies in learning English can be realized through detailed applications whose use does not require an active internet connection. Here we would like to stress that sharing, debating, creating and forming opinions with the help of new digital technologies, definitely transforms English classrooms into more perceptive and creative educational environments (Thouësny and Bradley, 2011). Conceived in this way, English lessons are no longer boring and presented with a teacher who just explains something on the board, but on the contrary become an educational time that involves more student senses, and students are engaged in much more than a few aspects. Virtual boards, for example, definitely enhance the English language learning process by engaging students interactively, with online exercises and interactive multimedia content being a significant motivating factor that results in better educational outcomes.

This is in the context of Ahmadi's findings (Ahmadi, 2018), who stressed that computer technology can be considered as an integral part of a learning activity.

However, here I would like to emphasize that although modern technologies are present everywhere around us, their use, especially in education, and thus in teaching English at the university level, remains of limited application (Mofareh, 2019). Recent studies have even found that poor student achievement may be due to inadequate use of technology in education, as opposed to widespread traditional methods of knowledge transfer. (Al-Tamimi, 2014; Habeeb, 2020).

4. LATEST INNOVATIONS AND TRENDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

New technology edged up over the years but not everything remained the same. This may be result of the growing concerns over security and the wearing out of some innovations. Those that have stood the test of time possess a solid teaching practice.

Blended learning- here trend is reflected by course material and resources of teachers as they combine technology with the more comprehended traditional mode of teaching (the Modern Language Centre in London King's College combines online lessons with face-to-face-teaching). Blended learning is a more preferred classroom interaction model due to fact that it accommodates the learning style of each student to reach the highest level of absorbance.

Mobile learning. - it is evident that mobile apps provide more access to online resources. For example, Oxford University Press uses Essential English to give students and teachers free resources that consist of flashcards, lesson plans, phrasebooks, etc (Ghada, 2014).

Gamification were learning occurs through the use of gaming apps and software (Wibbu's Learn Languages with Ruby Rei). Interactive games help language skills to be used to collaborate, negotiate, and create friendships.

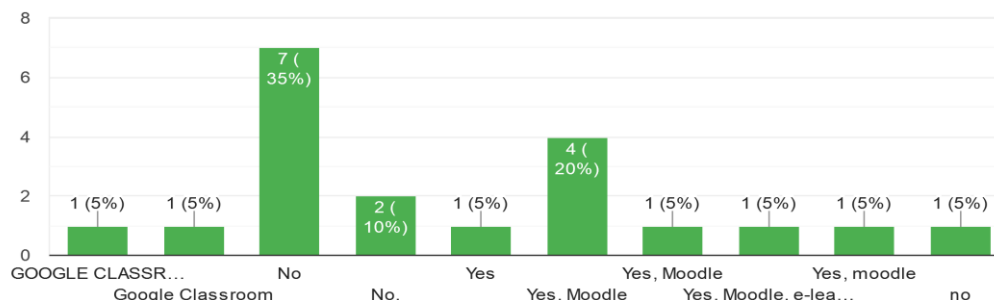
Embodied learning is not strictly based on remembering, it also entails the use of the body and mind, exploring, discussing and collaborating. For instance, Doodle Town course by Macmillan Education involves hands-on activities, visual and audio to inspire and stimulate the learner thus getting them to be inquisitive, to create and draw.

Learning and teaching management platforms - such as Edmodo provide learners with online access to handouts, submit homework, and continue with classroom discussions. Currently, online platforms are being additionally used to communicate with stakeholders and parents, assist in the management of materials and lesson plans, and provide a better curriculum overview for the teachers and the administrative staff. (Nomass, 2013).

5. PROFESSIONAL PLATFORMS USED IN UNIVERSIY LANGUAGE TEACHING PROCESS

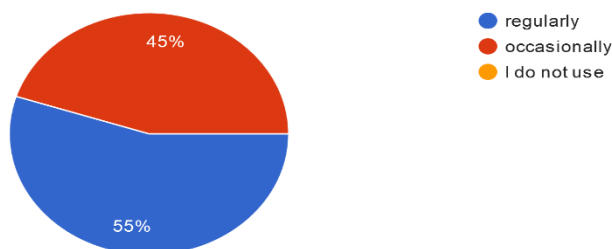
The survey conducted required clarification from the respondents whether an open-source platform such as Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom, etc. was being used in teaching at the university level. From the results obtained in the histogram (Figure 2), it can be seen that most of the respondents or 50% (10 teachers) reported that they did not use open-source platforms at their faculties. A larger group of respondents or 40% (8 teachers) reported using the Open Access Moodle platform, while 10% (2 teachers) said they used the Google Classroom for the requirements of English language teaching.

Starting from the fact that at our universities on average about 40% use Moodle's open-source platform for English language learning, we want to draw the attention to its significance and the source of its construction. Namely, Moodle is a free educational tool for e-learning, whose name comes from the acronym Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, created by Martin Dougiamas (Nishina, 2009). According to the latest findings, the MOODLE platform today has about 100 million registered users from around 234 countries and is available in over 100 languages (Knežević, 2017). The diversity offered by the MOODLE platform in studying English allows for branching into the various spheres of everyday life, including English in the industry, in business, etc. (Stanford, 2019), as well as the social nature of learning, integration of the curriculum, alternative directions of knowledge, etc.



Use of filmed material in English language teaching

Here, the attention should be drawn to this type of tools that definitely fall into the group of modern technologies, and they have become more and more attractive in the recent years because they increase interest in students for more perceptual lectures. Although the making of videos and film stories is one of the most difficult activities in the preparation of lectures (Sokolik, 2001), they mostly satisfy the students' needs.



them prepared before the beginning of the semester as proposed by Shrosbree (2008), so that they can be used in a timely manner and be available to students during the semester. Such prepared materials can be reused in different ways, for example for creating a kit of phonetic exercises based on the video media.

6. CONCLUSION

The application of new technologies in ELT in today's conditions is inescapable to maintain the trend of systematic learning of modern English at all levels of education. The Computers, Internet, modern platforms, smartphones and watches are tools that pave the essential way of using modern tools for learning English language fully and quickly. The application of modern technologies at the universities in the Republic North Macedonia shows a positive trend, which is directly reflected in the percentage of those technologies and their application of the teaching staff. The most commonly used platform is Moodle with 40%, while Google Classroom is used with 10% (but with great progress in the past period). Filmed stories and videos are used regularly by teachers in learning English with 55%, while they are occasionally used in 45% of cases.

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