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BENEFITS OF USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AT THE ENGLISH LESSON

ЭФФЕКТИВНОЕ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ИНФОРМАЦИОННЫХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ НА УРОКЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

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ABSTRACT

ICT; ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING;
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Research has shown that the use of Information Technologies at the English lesson can improve and enhance students' language acquisition and substantially motivate them to continue their learning and stimulate their creativity and passion. However, the challenges and barriers that many English teachers and professors encounter while attempting to incorporate ICT in their teaching have triggered debates and growing concerns about the real utility of ICT use in the language classroom. Research findings show that the use of information technology in the language classroom boosts autonomous learning, maximizes targeted outcomes, motivates learners and helps them

АННОТАЦИЯ

ИНФОРМАЦИОННО-КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИИ, САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЕ, ПРИМЕНЕНИЕ И ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ

Использование информационных технологий на уроке английского языка способствует формированию речевых навыков и в значительной степени повышает мотивацию студентов к дальнейшему изучению языка и к творческому подходу в этом процессе. Однако проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются многие преподаватели в ходе использования ИКТ в преподавании иностранного языка, вызывают дискуссию о фактической пользе информационных технологий на занятиях. Результаты данного исследования показывают, что применение информационных технологий способствует самостоятельному изучению, повышает успеваемость,

improve their performance in the learning process. However, using ICT without careful planning and well-defined objectives will more likely be a waste of time and effort.

мотивирует студентов и помогает им улучшить свои результаты. Тем не менее, использование информационных технологий без тщательного планирования и целеполагания может оказаться и безрезультатным, и затратным по времени процессом.

Research has shown that the use of instructional technology and ICT in particular in the English language classroom can improve and optimize students' language acquisition and substantially motivate them to continue their learning and stimulate their creativity and passion. Technology in language learning can boost variety and increase the diversity of learning environments and opportunities and enhance the quality of the learning experience by making class content more varied and accessible to almost each individual learner; thus ensuring more participation and engagement among learners.

Curricular integration of ICT offers access to a set of electronic facilities such as interactive video, the Internet, email and the World Wide Web. These ICT tools can help learners acquire linguistic skills, establish contact and interaction with other language users and broaden their minds about different cultural practices, values and contemporary lifestyles in countries where English is used as a mother tongue or as a second language. ICT-aided teaching is believed to create more liveliness and interaction in the English language classroom.

The challenges and barriers that many English teachers and professors encounter while attempting to integrate Information and Communication Technologies in their teaching have triggered substantial debates and growing concerns about the real utility of ICT use in the language classroom. So, do perceived benefits of ICT use in the language classroom provide palpable evidence for the improvement and optimization of English language teaching and learning or are they just ornaments that are beautiful rather than useful? Does the use of ICT at the English lesson bring about positive changes into the classroom and provide an optimal environment for more varied and productive learning?

Motivating students in the language classroom is not always an easy function to fulfil because it involves a multiplicity of psycho-sociological and linguistic factors. Most foreign language professionals acknowledge the importance and utility of motivation to optimize language learning and maximize targeted outcomes. So to what extent can information technology increase motivation and involve students more in their learning? Many researchers argue that information technology can

influence students' motivation to learn and can increase their interest and attention and ensure more involvement and engagement in the classroom.

Students are more likely to display positive attitudes when computers are used in the classroom. They are more motivated and interested to communicate with native speakers from other countries. Most students believe ICT motivates them in gaining more interest in the learning process. By increasing the amount of authentic material in the classroom (blogs, podcasts, and digital videos) and providing students with appropriate skills to approach authentic material, teachers promote meaningful interaction, raise students' interest and motivation; and ensure more participation and engagement in the classroom.

Given these claims, there seems to be little dispute about the potential benefits of ICT use on motivation and engagement in the language classroom. However, the introduction of ICT materials as class content requires the use of advanced cognitive processes which may, and against the expected outcomes, de-motivate low achievers and those whose learning style is far more adapted to a teacher-dominated classroom.

The use of a computer by teachers in the classroom has also brought about a change in the role of the teacher, taking them from the role of a lecturer to a facilitator of learning. Recent foreign language teaching approaches and methods have been part of a broad reform that supports and extends students' participation and ensures more involvement in their learning.

Information technology and computers in particular have been used to implement a large set of innovative teaching practices in the language classroom. Standards-based approach, competency-based approach, project-based learning and task-based learning have largely benefited from web technology and helped students develop a set of learning strategies and styles that promote autonomous learning and offer platforms for more individualized learning.

Advocates and supporters of ICT in language teaching argue that unlike traditional instruction, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) fosters learners' autonomy and helps them develop individual learning strategies. This advantage pre-supposes an exchange of roles in the language classroom. A teacher is no longer expected to be the only provider of knowledge in the classroom and students are required to play a new role. They need to take ownership of their learning and contribute to its construction and organization.

In many parts of the world, teachers of English assign project work to students as a way to enhance and boost classroom learning. Most students use the Internet as a research and resource tool. This enables them to take charge of their learning through participating in real world projects. Multimedia applications and

programmes allow students to do a reading assignment in the target language, use a dictionary, study grammar and pronunciation related to the reading material, take a comprehension test on the reading content, and receive immediate feedback, all within the same programme. This will be enough to maximise targeted outcomes and offer more opportunities and facilities for autonomous learning.

Web-based teaching and web quest in particular is believed to promote autonomous learning and help students develop efficient learning skills and strategies. Bernie Dodge (1995) defines "web quest" as an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all the information used by learners is drawn from the web. The outcome of such a task is usually a presentation or a report which requires students to invest great individual efforts and use pre-acquired skills and knowledge. This boosts achievement and reinforces autonomous learning as well.

Information and communication technology has promoted and enhanced interaction and authentic communication among English language users and learners. Other methods and approaches would simply not offer the ease and speed of communication that ICT can now allow. It is true that there is no substitute for face-to-face communication, but learners do not have the time or the money to travel and learn from students in other parts of the world. A simple Internet video or audio link can allow language users to exchange information and ideas, discuss issues and engage in authentic conversations and exchanges.

Web technology and Internet video links in particular allow exposure to non-verbal communication as well. Facial expressions, gestures and posture, which are culturally overloaded, enable learners to make appropriate interpretations of different speech acts and help them develop a sense of communication commonality. This allows them to avoid blenders that may impair communication. Moreover, computer-enabled communication provides teaching environments that support learning conditions and back up meaning-oriented communication. Learners maintain a balance between fluency and accuracy and develop their intercultural communication skills to engage in successful authentic conversations and exchanges with native speakers. This makes of text-based chat a powerful and efficient mediating and learning tool.

However, computer-enabled communication does not allow users to take advantage of social aspects of oral interaction such as body language and prosodic features. Learners resort to express their feelings and emotions using emoticons and smiley faces. These electronic illustrations may help users express themselves and exchange messages but they are of no value when it comes to language learning development and improvement of performance on written class assessment. They may even cause inappropriate and careless usages of the language.

Most studies reveal and demonstrate through research that the appropriate implementation of information technology in the language classroom promotes learning, enhances interaction and communication, boosts autonomous learning, maximizes targeted outcomes, motivates learners and helps them improve their performance at the English lesson.

However, using ICT without careful planning and well-defined objectives will more likely be a waste of time and effort. ICT uses in English language teaching and multisensory delivery in particular have their limitations as well. The cultural component of teaching material can be challenging and confusing. Moreover, an appropriate use of ICT in English language teaching and multisensory delivery in particular requires adequate training and pedagogical planning. Blake (2008) insists that "Teachers inexperienced in using technology often harbour the belief that merely transforming an activity into a web or CALL format will guarantee its success for students. Again, any activity without adequate pedagogical planning-technologically enhanced or not- will produce unsatisfactory results with students, even if it's attractive from a multimedia point of view". Poor pedagogical planning is likely to undermine the use of ICT at the English lesson.