MEDIA EDUCATION AND INTERNET TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Today millions worldwide are Internet subscribers. It is easy to have the Internet connection everywhere: in different educational and social settings, coffee shops, public transport, shops, classrooms etc. This article attempts to investigate the usage of the Internet and Internet technologies in the process of teaching English as a foreign language, as at present to go with the times it is impossible for a teacher to neglect the interests and requirements of his students. We admit several problems with the traditional system of education: you need to pay thousands of dollars per term to attend a prestigious school or University. But today you not always need to leave you home for studying - online learning has to be the greatest revolution in contemporary education. It is obvious that lifelong learning via the tools we describe in the article must now be a part of everyone's career plans. In modern job market, taking online courses help workers remain competitive and they don't need to take time off from their jobs to do this. Here we describe media education and its different aspects: network society, IT platforms and Virtual Learning Environment as alternative, easy, interesting and convenient methods of teaching.

Key words: media education, Internet technologies, social networks, educational apps, Virtual Learning Environment, English as a foreign language teaching.

Media process in the lives of modern people is greatly connected with new information and communication technologies. Today this global infrastructure is being developed while shifting information without limits in space and time. That brings to sudden increasing of knowledge importance.

It is impossible to imagine present education without using media communication tools and modern information technologies. Thus, we can define education as a method of personal formation in informational society and pay detailed attention to media education investigation. We may analyze media education as a separate branch of science while its subject is the person's interaction with mass media [7, p. 117].

In general, it is the question of e-learning in ESL teaching which is understood as the use of electronic media information and IT in education. It can be used in or out of classroom, self-paced or with the teacher or instructor guidance. It is often used as a mean of distance learning. It is urging to underline that it was in 1960s when in Illinois University, the USA, they decided to use computers in teaching students [1, p. 2]. Many years have passed since, but we still turn to the method to be widely and successfully implemented in all spheres of our lives, including education. That shows the problem is still vital and important to be investigated.

To prove the above mentioned information, we have included a number of web sites to transform teaching and learning experiences through technology with modern 21st-centiry skills at ESL classes. We would like to start with nearpod.com site which has recently been listed as #1 in a list of 'The 90 Hottest EdTech tools of 2018 According to Education Experts'.

Why is it so popular? What does it lead for educators? – To register as a 'Teacher' account one may use the appropriate grade and subject he teaches (he may also choose the students of higher education or even PhD). The site is full of ready free lessons to be downloaded and uploaded. If to register as a 'Student' account it gives the opportunity for students of the whole class to cooperate and interact. It is usually the site which helps to regroup the students according to the pictures that appear on their screen. We consider it to be very useful at the English grammar lessons, as the students are provided quizzes. To find the correct variant they need to cooperate. This increases the team work skills.

One more international web site to be successfully used at ESL classes is quizlet.com which aims at helping students understand and comprehend the material taken of the text book. Monthly it is used by 30 million students and teachers all over the world as an iOS and Android app. It was designed 10 years ago by Andrew Suttarland as a tool for studying French. It became so popular in a couple of months because of its easy access and comprehension.

The two above mentioned apps are only the top of the educational value iceberg given by the Internet and its technologies in the process of teaching English as a foreign language. There are numbers of different tools, apps and programs to help a teacher to make his lessons more creative and adoptive to the students' interests and requirements. The obvious advantage of using them is easy access, as a student can work with an app even using his mobile or tab Internet connection.

Another aspect that the article touches upon is one more phenomenon within media education – network society. Some scientists consider its rise in communication society, thus, today networks, especially social ones, are playing a substantial role in our lives: networks easily connect people or groups of people according to their interest; they can acquire and create new communicational structures independently, which are difficult for traditional institutions; they can participate in the organization of social communities.

The problem of media education and IT learning has been substantially learnt by many scholars: American researchers A. Diozed, A. Mol, K. Northenstreg investigated the creation and development of social networks in the world. The Ukrainians also pay attention to this problem. T. L. Arkhipova, N.V. Osipova, and M.S. Lvov assert that the social networks as the main tool of educational process organization. V. Bykov underlines the psychological and pedagogical peculiarities of social servers in education, the connection of media education with the studying process.

We appreciate Manuel Castells' works who considers network concept as a space for inter-personal connections which keeps interaction socially; provides help, information, identity, and the feelings of being a part of a definite social group. Another researcher, A. Leschenko, finds social network to be a space for accumulating, storing and spreading information of different source and content that defines its lack of control [8, p. 45].

The Canadian scientists strongly believe that media education builds the positive, creative and pleasurable dimensions of popular culture. It incorporates production of media texts and provides critical thinking among students. In the digital age, the principles of media education are the same as they have always been, but the existence of cyberspace is adding new and challenging questions. The role of a teacher has been greatly changed, as there has appeared an accepted new critical pedagogy. We may emphasize the important challenges on evaluating the right information for one's needs and synthesize what one believes as being useful knowledge [4].

Despite the great variety of approaches to this term, it is possible to cite the following characteristics:

- social networks and network technologies cover all spheres of our lives;
- social networks represent a personally communication-based system;
- social network is a particular medium for participants' interaction;
- every system produced by a network is virtual and can exist independently;
- it has a branchy structure;
- social network aims at sociability – a feeling of ease and confidence within social interactions of a personality [6, p. 55].

Another aspect of media education is Virtual Learning Environment (abbreviated as VLE) which is easily used in the student environment, as a number of schools and higher educational institutions have this learning platform. We may consider VLE as '… an online system that allows teachers to share educational materials with their students via the web' (Moodle, WebCT and Blackboard) [5].

There are a lot of advantages of VLE usage:
- it offers the possibility to use different forums, discussions, polls, feedbacks in the platform;
- students can easily hand in their works without finding a teacher physically;
- teachers can fill the virtual space with different necessary materials (ppt presentations, documents, worksheets etc.) to be used at the course;
- it makes the connection with the pathways to all other online learning spaces;
- YouTube, BBC, newspapers can all be embedded in VLE;
- students and a teacher can share videos and podcasts;
- it offers the possibility to evaluate students skills on a definite studying unit or course, in general;
- it can be accessed very easily by 'Digital Natives';
- the virtual learning can usually take place at a time that is convenient for the student.

Virtual Learning Environment platform has disadvantages when used in teaching English as a foreign language. As Sarah Johnson says, unfortunately, while studying distantly many people are programmed to multi-task when they're on the computer. This could lead to skimming articles or starting videos that turns into background noise as they try to complete another project at the same time which reduces the productivity of their work [2]. It is also embarrassing for some when they cannot ask a teacher for clarification in real time. Others might require lessons that are more hands-on, visual, or auditory than what a teacher may offer on his platform. Finally, VLE does not provide human-to-human contact, which may limit teacher's opportunities for team-building and role-playing activities, brainstorming, or discussion.

We consider it is impossible to rely only on VLE platform learning while teaching English. We have to supplement it with in-person classroom-style training on as-needed basis.

To conclude, we have identified a few demerits of integrating IT platforms and apps into a teaching school environment. Still, we cannot deny the many advantages of the virtual learning. The virtual classes aim at stimulating informative interest to the language; making a class creative; contributing to students' team work. The bottom line here is that any institution that wants to offer online classes should be ready to invest in a good virtual classroom and learning management system.

The question of using IT platforms and computer environment is rather disputed. As Tom Snyder foresees a time when there will be totally virtual colleges and universities, and students will not only take classes at their own institution, but enroll in courses at the great institutions around the

world [3]. It will easily give the opportunity to communicate with outstanding scholars; it will offer the possibility not only to study political science with Bill Clinton or science with a Nobel Prize winner, but will give the opportunity to communicate with native speakers worldwide. Finally, any educator who wants to be in pace with the world educational changes has to use the new Internet tools (IT platforms, media tools, social networks etc.) to involve students in studying English, as these platforms and apps are the future of all the educational establishments.

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