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MODERN TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

STRESZCZENIE

WYKORZYSTANIE NOWYCH TECHNOLOGII W NAUCE JĘZYKA OBCEGO

Wraz z rewolucją technologiczną, stosowanie technologii informatycznej jest wszechobecne i stanowi integralną część naszego życia. W dzisiejszych czasach uczniowie języków obcych mają dostęp do szerokiej gamy narzędzi i zasobów internetowych oraz korzystają w coraz szerszym zakresie z technologii cyfrowych (nauka języka wspomagana komputerowo – CALL). Nowoczesne urządzenia IT i aplikacje mobilne znacznie ułatwiły naukę języków obcych dzięki opcjom wyszukiwania informacji w źródłach internetowych i słownikach elektronicznych, sprawdzania pisowni, śledzenia wiadomości, itp.

Cyfryzacja w edukacji ułatwia dostęp do materiałów i innych zasobów, jednocześnie nauczyciele podejmują coraz częściej nowe wyzwania, takie jak identyfikacja i wybór zasobów cyfrowych odpowiednich do ich własnych kontekstów dydaktycznych, a także projektowanie i wdrażanie działań z zastosowaniem techniczno-pedagogicznym w nowoczesnych klasach podczas nauki języków obcych. Nie ma potrzeby dodawać, że zarówno nauczyciele, jak i uczniowie muszą zapoznać się z nową technologią, żeby w pełni korzystać z aplikacji i nowoczesnych rozwiązań.

Technologie mobilne (MALL – nauka języka wspomagana technologiami mobilnymi) na zasadzie powszechnej/ogólnej dostępności «anytime, anywhere» (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008) są obecnie szybko rozwijającym się obszarem zainteresowania badaczy, a branża technologiczna dostarcza elektroniczne rozwiązania do nauki języków obcych w coraz większym zakresie. Chociaż «autonomia ucznia» (Benson, 2007) jest promowana przez MALL, a uczniowie mają w większości pozytywny stosunek do korzystania z urządzeń mobilnych, mogą one napotkać na pewne trudności, szczególnie podczas dokonywania wyboru odpowiedniego narzędzia lub programu. W artykule zostaną przedstawione trzy platformy zaprojektowane

do nauki języków. Platformy do nauki języka islandzkiego, polskiego i estońskiego jako języka obcego dostępne na stronie https://icelandiconline.com/, www.popolskupopolsce.edu.pl/, https://www.keeleklikk.ee/ zostaną omówione w kontekście CALL i MALL.

Słowa kluczowe: nowe technologie do nauki języków obcych, zasoby cyfrowe, platformy
                internetowe, CALL, MALL

SUMMARY

With the revolution of technology in the last century, technology is now available everywhere and is incorporated in many aspects of our life. Nowadays learners of foreign languages have access to a wide range of versatile tools and online resources and benefit from the proliferated use of digital technologies (computer assisted language learning – CALL). Modern IT devices and various applications have considerably facilitated language teaching and learning for different purposes, e.g. finding information, interaction, spell check, etc.

Digitalization in education facilitates access to materials and other resources, but at the same time teachers face new challenges, such as identification of digital resources appropriate to their own teaching contexts, as well as designing and implementing activities appropriate to the techno-pedagogical affordances of the modern foreign language classroom. Needless to say that both teachers and students have to acquaint themselves with the new technology.

Mobile technologies (mobile assisted language learning – MALL) due to its "anytime, anywhere" principle (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008) is currently a rapidly developing area of interest for researchers and the amount of (freely) available technology for language learning is abundant and still growing. Although "learner autonomy" (Benson, 2007) is promoted by MALL and learners have mostly a positive attitude towards using mobile devices, they may face certain difficulties, especially when making the choice of the suitable tool(s). The paper will consider three platforms that were designed for language learning. Platforms for learning Icelandic, Polish and Estonian as a foreign language accessible at https://icelandiconline.com/, www.popolskupopolsce.edu.pl/, https://www.keeleklikk.ee/ will be discussed in the context of CALL and MALL.

Key words: technology for language learning, digital resources, internet platforms, CALL and
           MALL

1. Introduction

The emergence of different educational tools and software has motivated the teachers to integrate educational technology into their lessons. Technology has fundamentally changed the way we learn, making it more engaging, but also challenging. It was shown by a number of studies that ET has great impact on student learning, by bringing the language and culture to the students' 'doorstep'

and enabling the students' immersion into the foreign language setting almost cost and relatively time free.

In order to acquire linguistic competence one might want to travel to the country where the target language is spoken, to increase contact with the culture and the language of interest. Theoretically, this method may seem ideal, however practically, it is not accessible for most students, due to the time constrains, economical and other reasons.

On the other hand, ET can play a major role in enhancing learners' contact with the target language and according to Bialo[1], ET has been considered as a crucial factor in improving the quality of education and the level of student educational learning performance. ET has demonstrated a significant positive effect on student achievement and the teaching and learning processes as a whole.

There is a widespread belief that formal FL (foreign language) teaching is often unsuccessful because learners receive impoverished or insufficient input in the target language[2]. ET can enhance teaching and learning practices, and create an "ideal" learning environment[3]. Therefore teachers and students are encouraged to use ET, since it can have a great impact on improving student learning and assist L2 development. In addition, it can empower teachers and learners, "transforming teaching and learning processes from being highly teacher dominated to student centered"[4]. Activities implemented via new technologies are meant to engage and foster the student's own sense of agency. Consequently, the student is not perceived as a passive consumer of knowledge, but rather an active and responsible learner, engaged in collaboration and information sharing in a resource-rich environment within and beyond the classroom.

Students use technology outside the classroom in their everyday life, therefore incorporating it into the classroom activities is extremely beneficial for the learners, since they understand it, pay attention to it and like to use this type of medium. ET motivates the students to become more involved, active and interested in learning. In addition, ET promotes the collaborative communication and interpersonal skills of students, which consequently, changes their attitude to learning. Accomplishing real life tasks, such as planning a trip to a foreign

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1   E.R. Bialo, J. Sivin-Kachala, *The Effectiveness of Technology in Schools: A Summary of Recent Research*, SLMQ 1996, 25.
2   *Bilingual education*, J. Cummins, D. Corson (red.), Dordrecht 1998.
3   D. Marshall, *Learning with Technology: Evidence that technology can and does support learning*, San Diego 2002.
4   S. Higgins, *Partez-Vous Mathematics? In Enhancing primary mathematics teaching and learning, Thompson,* I, Buckingham 2003.

country, ordering a meal in a restaurant or sharing their opinions with a friend after a virtual tour in a gallery is only possible, if they make use of what they've learnt in the classroom. The awareness of a real application of their skills empowers students and helps them to stay motivated and take responsibility for their own learning.

To be a responsible learner, student needs to be involved in the process of learning as well as to enjoy it. Having fun is often associated with game playing. Most of us have enjoyed playing games as children and some of us probably still do as adults. Therefore the idea of game playing whilst learning a language is very likely to keep students motivated.

The popularity of games like Kahoot could be observed in classrooms worldwide. It might be more popular among school age learners, however its application goes beyond the K-12 level. During foreign language classes at university, this game is also used by some teachers in order to introduce a new element to the classroom and keep the students motivated.

The use of new technology in language profession is not only computer functional competence (i.e. knowing how to use the tools), but also critical competence (being aware of what tools are good for) and finally developing rhetorical competence (understanding how these tools could help transform the learning environment, how their effective use could be applied to learning foreign languages).

ET creates opportunities for learners to develop their "cognitive, critical thinking, information reasoning and communication skills"[5]. Careful planning and adequate topic choice can help learners to "explore education beyond classrooms by providing access to a wide range of resources and information,

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5   A. Chigona, W. Chigona, *An investigation of factors affecting the use of ICT for teaching in Western Cape Town*, The 18th European Conference on Information System-ECIS 2010 proceeding, 2010.

promoting scientific inquiry and discovery, and allowing students to communi-
cate with experts"[6]. The students see the real application of their knowledge,
which they can also integrate into everyday life tasks using their creativity,
which in turn supports them in building self-confidence.

We should keep in mind that the teachers' approach to teaching also
needs to be modified from the role of knowledge transmitters and experts in
a particular subject to mentors and facilitators of critical thinking. Previous studies
demonstrated that effective technology, such as smart boards and PowerPoint
are very enjoyable, help to better utilize the lecture time, limit disruption by
students, provide outstanding methods for presenting the lecture materials, and
enhance the concentration and engagement of the students. But learning with
technology incorporates more than just making learning activities digital, it is
also about creating contexts for authentic learning that use new technologies in
integrated and meaningful ways to enhance the production of knowledge as well
as the communication and dissemination of ideas. This approach is in line with
Open Learning's educational philosophy which borrows from constructivist
teaching methods (e.g. Piaget, Vygotsky) and provides students with increased
engagement, so they can reflect meaningfully, construct and discuss their own
solutions and concepts with one another, and then creatively apply this new
knowledge in meaningful and collaborative ways.

2. Technology and Foreign Language Education

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), as the name suggests,
is the application of technologies in language teaching and learning. In other
words it is the use of technologies that improve and facilitate educational
learning. These technologies could be used interchangeably with Computer
Assisted Language Learning (CALL) or Mobile Assisted Language Learning
(MALL). It has taken up the goal of modern approaches to language teaching,
including communicative language teaching, task-based learning, process
approaches to writing and training in language learning strategies in enhancing
student autonomy and control over the language learning process[7]. Modern
technology aims at making language teaching and learning more flexible and
students' learning more autonomous. To reach this goal, technologies such as
computers, cell phones, iPads, etc. together with various programs are used

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6   B. Means, *Introduction: Using technology to advance educational goals,* [w:] *Technology and educa-
tion reform: The reality behind the promise,* B. Means (red.), San Francisco 1994.
7   M. Warschauer et al., *Computer Learning Networks And Student Empowerment,* System 1996,
vol. 24, No. 1.

to break the constraints of time, space and conditions in learning. With new technologies including mobile computers, Pocket PCs, Apple iPhones, Android phones, and tablets, instructors and students can communicate in multimodal ways, through voice and image as well as text. The successful implementation of these technological resources, embraces the mobility and connectivity of mobile devices and is directly related to the way teachers perceive their use and functionality and the way they incorporate them into their practice. Advances in mobile technologies have enabled educators to use mobile devices for educational purposes, which is becoming a common expectation of learners today.

Learning with mobile technologies is currently a rapidly developing area of interest for researchers, teachers, materials writers and app developers in the educational field, not least within language education. Yet to what extent is this growing interest realized and shared by language learners themselves? How far are they motivated to exploit the affordances offered by mobile technologies for language learning, and how far can mobile technologies help to engage and sustain individual motivation for language learning?

Some academics like Rutherford and Krashen[8] have long suggested that acquisition of language is enhanced when learnt in comprehensible, manageable pieces and constitutes 'comprehensible input'.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) not only provides second language (L2) learners with ubiquitous learning support, immediate feedback, and independent and targeted reading practice, but new technology also helps them achieve advances in social interactivity, context awareness, connectivity, individuality, and immediacy. Moreover, as Kukulska-Hulme and Shield noted, MALL inspires new ways of learning, as it emphasizes continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use. It also provides a ubiquitous learning that can closely fit learners' learning habits[9]. Godwin-Jones suggests that mobile devices integrate real-life interests and academic roles[10] on the part of learners. This characteristic of MALL would eventually promote "learner autonomy"[11], meaning that learners can take more responsibility for their own learning.

8   S.D. Krashen, *We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis,* „The Modern Language Journal" 1989, 73(4).
9   A. Kukulska-Hulme, L. Shield, *An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction.* „ReCALL" 2009, 20(3).
10 R. Godwin-Jones, *Autonomous language learning,* „Language Learning & Technology" 2011, 15(3).
11 P. Benson, *State-of-the-art article: Autonomy in language teaching and learning,* „Language Teaching" 2007, 40(1).

3. The Internet as a Teaching and Learning Tool

Technology is not just a single homogeneous tool, but various technologically based tools that enhance L2 leaning in different ways. For example the internet may seem an ideal solution and a perfect tool for the students and teachers, when they are looking for authentic L2 materials (realia). The students can virtually 'travel' to the target language country and cross the boarders with just a click of the mouse.

Adding Internet access to mobile devices has extended users' ability to communicate from simply telephoning to emailing, creating and sharing multimedia messages, accessing social media like Facebook, and so forth. When applied to learning activities, these mobile communication services increase students' extrinsic motivation to participate in learning. Computer mediated communication seems to help the L2 students engage more frequently and with greater enthusiasm and confidence in the communicative process, because the students use internet primarily as a tool for communication (instant messaging and text messaging). They prefer to communicate in a relatively anonymous and protected environment, therefore introducing chats into the classroom would maintain and even increase their motivation in FL learning.

The implementation of web tools together with the growth of independent learning, given the fact that educators provide a wide assortment of materials for learners to study outside the classroom, encourages the learne′s autonomy. The students can study at their own pace and listen to the texts as many times as they want, since they no longer need to rely on the teacher's assistance, and they receive prompt feedback.

The implementation of web sources has been considered as a framework that facilitates the educator to design and construct student-centered learning by using the web for planning and application. The web provides teacher and learners with support tasks and attractive materials to develop and conduct classes. We might then say that autonomy can be enhanced by the use of net sources, which encourage independence; besides which, motivation is enhanced since users usually deal with more appealing and interesting materials provided by the internet.
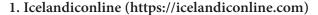
Mark Warschauer claims that the Internet is a virtual library that has a huge amount of valuable information for teaching and learning[12]. Searching through the web exposes students and educators to a substantial variety of tasks available in a combination of formats, such as text, graphics, audio, videos and websites.

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12   M. Warschauer, *Millennialism and media: Language, literacy and technology in the 21st century,* „AILA Review 14: Applied linguistics in the 21st century" 2001.

4. Internet platforms for language Learning

The online courses that are introduced in this part of the article serve as an example of language learning platforms that have being developed for less spoken languages. Collection of the internet platforms of 36 languages was compiled as part of the research supported by the EnetCollect project (European Network for Combining Language Learning with Crowdsourcing Techniques *URL http://enetcollect.eurac.edu*) ongoing COST Action, a research network that boosts collaboration among scientists across Europe (and beyond).

Three of the platforms that were designed for learning less spoken languages, namely Icelandic, Polish and Estonian accessible at https://icelandiconline.com/, www.popolskupopolsce.edu.pl/, and https://www.keeleklikk.ee/ are considered in this paper.

1. Icelandiconline (https://icelandiconline.com)

The University of Iceland actively participates in research and development in the area of Computer Assisted Language Learning. Development of Icelandic Online began in 2000 and the first course was launched in 2004.

Key concerns in the development were that these online courses should be pedagogically driven and the course design would include scaffolding of effective form-focused ways to teach morphologically complex languages online.

The University of Iceland now offers six online Icelandic courses, www.icelandiconline.is, based on sound second language acquisition research and innovative instructional practice combined with the relevant technology. The goal is to provide an interesting, entertaining and effective online language learning environment for computers, and in 2016, for tablets and smart phones. The Icelandic Online courses are: Learner centered, guided and sequenced with

interactive and visual exercises, self-instructed and available in six proficiency levels. They are integrated in terms of instruction of vocabulary, form and function, organized around various oral and written texts followed by comprehension and accuracy and fluency exercises. They are aided by auxiliary resources such as glossaries, declension tablets and dictionaries.

Icelandic Online allows anyone with Internet access the possibility of participating for free in a global community of learners of Icelandic. The University of Iceland offers a course in survival Icelandic along with five courses for university students.

Icelandic Online offers six different courses in Icelandic:

Bjargir:

A survival course for absolute beginners. The content of this course is aimed at learners who live and work in Iceland.

Icelandic Online 1:

This is a beginning level course for students of Icelandic. CEFR level A1. Level 1 offers two themes: Náttúra (Nature) and Menning (Culture).

Icelandic Online 2:

This is a lower intermediate level course for students of Icelandic who have already gone through Icelandic Online 1 or have basic skills in Icelandic. CEFR level A1/A2.

Icelandic Online 3:

This is a intermediate level course for students of Icelandic who have already gone through Icelandic Online 1 and 2 or equivalent studies. CEFR level A2/B1.
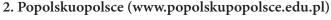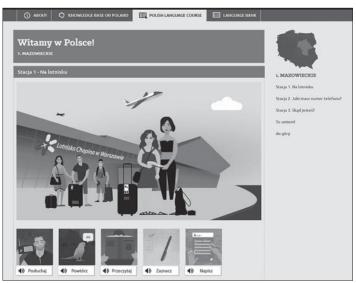
Icelandic Online 4:

This is a high intermediate level course for students of Icelandic who have already gone through Icelandic Online 1, 2 and 3 or equivalent studies. CEFR level B1/B2.

Icelandic Online 5:

This is an advanced level course for students of Icelandic who have already gone through Icelandic Online 1, 2, 3 and 4 or equivalent studies. The primary focus of this course is on reading of Icelandic literary texts. CEFR level C1.

Extra – Icelandic Online 1 and 2 Plus: 8-week distance learning courses with the aid of a tutor. This is an expanded and tutored version of Icelandic Online 1 and 2 for a fee with special focus on oral and written comprehension, grammar and written production. Students receive individual feedback from a tutor on written exercises and instructions regarding grammar and vocabulary. The Plus courses are non-simultaneous, self-access online courses. They are based on the open and free courses Icelandic Online 1 and 2.

2. Popolskuopolsce (www.popolskupopolsce.edu.pl)

The main aim of the project is the creation of an e-learning platform containing a course of Polish as a foreign language for beginners (the level A1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR) The language course has been planned as a virtual journey around Poland – from arrival in Warsaw, through a stroll around Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia, sailing on the Mazurian Lakes, a hike in the Bieszczady Mountains, a meeting with the inhabitants of the region of Kaszubia, a weekend in Wrocław, right up to a stay in Cracow and a host of trips to other interesting places in Poland. Each subsequent region we get to know in the company of the heroes of the language course – a Polish-Italian family living permanently in New York. Thanks to the location of language functions in various regions of Poland the user is absorbing language knowledge at the same time as becoming acquainted with figures and important places important for Polish history and traditions – from the most well-known to untypical. Language material embedded within a cultural context ensures that the course is more interesting as well as allowing one to introduce language material that aids authentic communication in Polish in day-to-day communicative situations. The course conception as a ramble around the regions of Poland allows one to present the assets of each; taking into consideration their cultural, tourist and most recent achievements and successes. Consequently, the platform offers a complete course in Polish at level A1. The course lends itself to the independent study of Polish as a foreign language or may be used as part of an institutionalized programme of instruction. This is

the first proposition of its kind which ensures that the development of language competencies together with socio-cultural ones and a knowledge of Poland itself is developed in an interesting, informative and interactive way. And in this way it promotes Poland and the Polish language abroad. The educational materials developed during the course of the project may constitute support in the teaching of Polish culture and history to Polish young people as well as those of Polish provenance living abroad.

3. Keeleklikk (https://www.keeleklikk.ee)

Keeleklikk is a modern online Estonian course for beginners which is suitable for individual study and also for classroom use. Keeleklikk targets adult learners who want to learn to communicate in everyday situations. The course consists of 16 comprehensive language learning units which include a total of 200 animations, over 100 videos explaining grammar, and roughly 1200 exercises. Keeleklikk also features a real Estonian teacher with whom students can exchange letters via e-mail. All 16 chapters are available with instruction in Russian and English. The project has been financed by the European Social Fund and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Science, and it is free of charge for anyone who wishes to use it. The Keeleklikk online Estonian course has received an award from the Ministry of Education and Science, and also the European Commission's Award for Contributions to the Development of Foreign Language Teaching.

5. Conclusions

The role of Educational Technology in language teaching has changed significantly over the last decade. Previously, its use in language teaching and learning was only limited to text and simple exercises like gap filling and multiple-choice drills. The recent developments in technology and pedagogy allow us to integrate computer technology into language teaching and learning to a greater extent. Multimedia resources and internet access facilitate student immersion into rich environments for language practice and promote learner autonomy. Students can easily explore language use in authentic context, which activates their motivation for communication, increases their interest and improves their electronic literacy skills. New Media allows for publishing in Social networks for a global audience, gives access to various texts and multimedia information as well as facilitating communication in the target language. Computers are gradually becoming an integrated part in the language learning process, constituting an important element of language learning and teaching.

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