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**LUSYA TER-SARGSYAN**

*Lecturer of the Chair of Languages at ASUE*

## **TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO EFL TEACHING**

*The present paper discusses new methods of teaching English which are available due to the development of information technologies. Undoubtedly, nowadays the Internet offers teachers a wide range of opportunities to have interesting and effective lessons. In these terms, various web pages, blogs, wikipedia and activities are considered to be productive both for developing students' speaking skills and for broadening their horizon.*

**Key words:** *foreign language teaching, Internet technologies, developing speaking skills, technologies in foreign language teaching*

JEL: Y8, Y90

With the advent of information technologies, teaching methods have gradually slid into a new paradigm. A paradigm where new teaching methods do not 'support the old pedagogy of telling/ lecturing, except in the most minimal of ways, such as with pictures or videos'<sup>1</sup>. As a result of this technologically ubiquitous environment and their interaction with it, today's students, or as Prensky labels them today's *Digital Natives*, '*think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors....We can say with certainty that their *thinking patterns* have changed. Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet'<sup>2</sup>. The affluence of materials and communication easily accessible over the Internet is increasingly challenging teachers to reconsider and reevaluate their approaches and teaching methods.

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<sup>1</sup> Prensky M., The Role of Technology in Teaching and the Classroom // Educational Technology. 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Prensky M., Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. 2001.

My experience as a foreign language teacher shows that when integrated into the curriculum, technology increases the learners' intrinsic motivation and helps the teachers improve both their performance in the classroom and the quality of language education. At the same time, the use of learning technologies in the classroom helps teachers equip their students with the so-called 21st century skills, abilities that students need to develop to succeed in the information age.

At present, the web proves to be useful in language teaching in different ways: accessing authentic reading materials, designing language exercises, consulting a bank of different types of texts/genres, conducting research projects, joining communication projects, checking references, to name a few. The Internet is abundant with EFL materials on the news, foreign culture, popular culture (films, music, showbiz), environment, crime, food, health, travel, etc.

Learning technologies offer a range of advantages such as interactivity, multimedia, for they provide a combination of media such as texts, graphics, sound, and video, which students can work through at their own pace. The authenticity of the content on the Internet is also worth mentioning, as it offers a wide range of materials designed for teaching and written by native speakers. Finally, learning technologies offer the joy of real communication within the framework of communication in forum, social media networks, blogs, etc.

However, as everything in our reality, learning technologies are not devoid of disadvantages. They may not only involve technical issues, but also problems related to insufficient IT literacy required both for software and the Internet, various abilities and degrees of comfort with technology both for learners and teachers, as well as inaccuracies both in the language and content featured on the Internet. There is also the omnipresent danger of having your learners distracted when asking them to go online and complete a task or join a discussion, as all those aspects that make the web an attractive tool for teaching can also detract students from their commitments to learning.

Teaching examples involving web resources are innumerate. Some of them can include the following activities. For instance, visiting the website Cubeez<sup>3</sup> and using a projector the teacher can guide the whole class through an interactive story. Once inside the story he/she elicits the vocabulary from the pictures on the left and students can choose what happens in the story. The class can practice reading the story aloud, add sound effects, change the ending, etc. Or in the computer room students listen to a weather report and match the weather symbols to the country flags. Either as a whole class activity or individually, students can watch a video as a part of a lesson on countries. The teacher can ask students which countries they know and extend activity by giving them word cards with names of geographical features as a follow-up activity.

The web offers a wide array of resources and learning tools to have English language learners practice their productive skills. At the same time, even a plain chat room can come handy and serve as an effective warm-up activity, as in the example illustrated below.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cubeez.com/>

Students are set the time to meet in a chat room. Once they have all joined the chat, the teacher gives them the beginning of several sentences and gives them two minutes to complete the sentences. The sentences can relate to any topic but the language in them should relate to the target language of the lesson. For instance, the sentences provided below help the learners practice the use and form of Present Perfect.

- *I have always wanted to ...*
- *I have never been...*
- *One thing I've always wondered is ...*

The same activity can be done in a group with the teacher asking the learners to compete in pairs and decide which pair is the fastest and which pair provides the most accurate answers.

Recording messages helps learners integrate productive skills with receptive ones. The teacher first creates a character and provides the learners with some personal information on the character. Then the teacher asks the learners to imagine that they are the character in question and write a message for his/her answering machine. For example:

*Hello, this is Mary Ayvazyan, sales manager for Viva Cell. I am out right now, but please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.*

As soon as the message is ready, the teacher can ask the learners to record the message they have produced either on their smartphones or tablets. Afterwards the teacher can tell the students that they have 'an issue' with this character and their company and assign one different issue to each learner. For example:

- *A pre-paid delivery of phone cards has not arrived.*
- *The invoice for a service is for the wrong amount.*
- *One of the staff was rude when he/she came to your office to purchase a phone card.*

The teacher then asks the students to listen to the recorded message of their peers and leave a message in response describing the problem they are experiencing. The students record their own voice messages, outlining their specific issue and stating a possible solution.

The activity develops further when the learners are again put in the shoes of the character they have been introduced to and write an email to the person who complained outlining what will be done. As we can see, the activity integrates all four skills and apparently works well in English business lessons, as it includes not only leaving a message in a work context, but also writing a business-related email. One could combine it with the more general task, and then work on register and formality by comparing what is more appropriate, in terms of vocabulary, structures, and tone, for the respective message. Overall, this task will help students in their future when dealing with some companies or a particular person.

Even a simple Microsoft Word document can turn out to be useful in terms of editing texts. Teachers can ask their learners to complete a text that has had all the verbs removed using a word processor such as Word. This can be done either with a projector as a whole-class activity or with students at computers in a computer lab.

PowerPoint offers unlimited number of activities. The ability to display texts, images and other audio-visual elements makes it a powerful tool in the classroom. One of PowerPoint's famous features involves creating a photo dialogue by adding speech bubbles and choosing appropriate sayings for the people in the pictures representing everyday situations, or adding images and animating them, for example, making them appear or zoom across the page. As part of an English language course for students majoring in Economics, I have recently designed a PPT lesson on advertisement slogans. Some slogans of famous companies and their names were given randomly and the students matched them using their background knowledge (for example Mercedes – The best or nothing, McDonalds – I'm loving it, Nike- just do it! etc). Then watching an appropriate video material the students checked if they had matched the slogans correctly. As a follow-up activity, again with the help of PPT, the learners were shown some adjectives (*reliable, user-friendly, luxurious, innovative, extraordinary*) and brainstormed which brands they associated each adjective with and why.

Blogs are online journals or diaries. They consist of a series of 'posts', which appear on a web page in reverse chronological order for the most recent post to appear at the top of the page). Blogs can be on any topic. Blogs used in education are called 'edublogs'. First, one needs to sign up for a blog on the homepage. Once they have created their blog, they need to decide whether they want to use it as a class, learner, or teacher blog. A class blog is a single blog set up by the teacher which all the learners contribute to. A learner blog is set up and contributed to by an individual learner, in other words, each learner has their own separate learner blog.

There is a number of sound reasons for using weblogs with students. Aaron Campbell (2003) identifies three types of blogs for the use with language classes<sup>4</sup>:

*The Tutor Blog* is run by the teacher of a class. The content of this type of blog can be limited to syllabus, course information, homework, assignments, etc. Or the teacher may choose to write about his or her life, sharing reflections about the local culture, target culture and language to stimulate online and in-class discussion. In this type of blog, students are normally restricted to being able to write comments on the teacher's posts.

*The Class Blog* is a shared space, with teacher and students being able to write in the main area. It is best used as a collaborative discussion space, an extra-curricular extension of the classroom. Students can be encouraged to reflect in more depth, in writing, on themes touched upon in class. With this kind of blogs, they are given a greater sense of freedom and involvement than with the tutor blog. Class blogs guide students to online resources appropriate to their level, develop a sense of community in class and encourage shy students to participate, thus, helping to build a closer relationship between students in large classes.

*The Learner Blog* requires more time and effort from the teacher to both set up and moderate, but it is probably the most rewarding one. It involves giving each student an individual blog. The benefit of it is that the blog becomes

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<sup>4</sup> Campbell A., Weblogs for use with ESL classes, 2003.

the student's own personal online space. Students can be encouraged to write frequently about what interests them, and can post comments on other students' blogs. Learner blogs can be used for peer error correction.

Over the last two decades, English teachers have witnessed the video develop from a passive media that learners merely watch to one that can be used in the classroom to engage learners in a variety of ways. Video based lessons are primarily used to develop listening skills. First of all, students are exposed to authentic English in a natural context by watching real situations. Various topics covered by the video can be exploited further in a follow-up debate involving recycling of new vocabulary, and a piece of writing for homework. The stated length of the video enables teachers to plan their lesson more accurately in terms of time management. The length of a video clip matters much, as a longer one may detract the learners' attention away from the task.

There are also *video or movie maker sites* that offer options to create animated movies with text and/or audio, and to share them with other people online. They follow a template system: one chooses the background, then the characters and their clothing; one decides what the characters say, etc. Some movie sites work with captions (one reads what the movie characters say via little voice bubbles) while others have text-to-voice software which allows the animated characters to speak.

As we can see, the web is truly an enormous collection of information: texts, images, audio and video recordings, many of which can be exploited in language teaching. The problem is that this information is somewhat chaotically organized. Michael Bush compares the web to one great big, wonderful library, where all the books are piled in the middle of the floor<sup>5</sup>. That is why it is important to choose web resources as carefully as any other teaching resources and plan appropriate activities around them. There are many tools available for teachers to find what they want. Google is currently the most popular search engine on the Web and there are many other search engines in a variety of different languages. It is necessary that teachers follow the copyright regulations. Many people think that just because they use the materials and resources retrieved from the web for education purposes, they should be free from copyright. This is not the case. Materials on the Web are subject to the same kind of copyright conditions as other non-web based material, such as CDs, books, newspapers, works of art etc. Copyright is a very serious issue and though it sounds tempting to use the materials of virtual reality in the classroom to make your lessons entertaining and more effective, we should be aware of the risks we take every time we use internet materials. At the same time, as sharing materials has become common practice since the advent of Web 2.0, there are now many sites where materials are offered free of charge or at a very low cost.

The Internet, by its very nature, contains materials and resources aimed at very different audiences. As such, it is essential to ensure that learners can access appropriate materials without coming across offensive content and exposing themselves to unnecessary risk. It is also the teacher's job and

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<sup>5</sup> **Bush M.**, Internet Mania. World Wide Web technology: what's hot and what's not! 1996.

responsibility to make sure that the students enjoy cyber well-being and do not get engaged in cyberbullying, the use of Information Communications Technology, particularly mobile phones and/or the Internet for abusive purposes. Cyberbullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe or personal. The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scope of cyberbullying can be great, the audience can be very large and reached rapidly. Bullying is never acceptable and, therefore, all educational institutions should be adequately equipped to deal with it through their existing anti-bullying policies and procedures. To raise their learners' safety awareness, teachers should encourage them to install safe antivirus software, to have a good and safe password, to have different emails as well as different passwords for different purposes, to use legal sites, not to answer spam letters and not to open any unknown attachments. These measures will help university communities to protect all their members and secure a safe and healthy environment for learning.

To conclude, all the activities and tools presented in this paper are underpinned by the idea that communication and interaction are crucial to effective language teaching. There might be a wide range of tools and sites for language education, but the focus should be placed on those that encourage learners to engage and interact not only with the language but also with one another.

Hence, the effective use of learning technologies and tools in the classroom entails effective planning, delivery and monitoring which are to be provided only by the teacher.

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**ԼՈՒԻՅԱ ՏԵՐ-ՍԱՐԳՍՅԱՆ***ՀՊՏՀ լեզուների ամբիոնի դասախոս*

**Անգլերենի՝ որպես օտար լեզվի դասավանդման տեխնոլոգիական մոտեցումներ.**– Սույն հոդվածն անդրադառնում է անգլերենի դասավանդման նոր մեթոդներին, որոնք հասանելի են դարձել շնորհիվ տեղեկատվական տեխնոլոգիաների զարգացման՝ միաժամանակ առաջարկելով գրեթե անսահմանափակ հնարավորություններ: Անշուշտ, այսօր համացանցը տրամադրում է ընդգրկուն միջոցներ օտար լեզվի հետաքրքիր, բայց միևնույն ժամանակ արդյունավետ դասավանդման համար: Այս համատեքստում դիտարկվում են մի շարք կայքեր, այդ թվում՝ վիքիպեդիաներ և բլոգներ, որոնք ուղղված են խոսքային գործունեության որոշակի հմտությունների զարգացմանը, ինչպես նաև առաջարկվում են վարժություններ, որոնց նպատակն է ոչ միայն օտար լեզվի իմացության, այլև ուսանողների ընդհանուր գիտելիքների ընդլայնումը:

**Հիմնաբառեր.** *օտար լեզվի դասավանդում, համացանցային տեխնոլոգիաներ, խոսքային գործունեության հմտությունների զարգացում, անգլերենի դասավանդման նոր միջոցներ:*  
JEL: Y8, Y90

**ЛЮСЯ ТЕР-САРГСЯН***Преподаватель кафедры Языков АГЭУ*

**Технологические подходы преподавания английского как иностранного языка.**– В данной статье анализируются новые методы обучения английскому языку, которые стали доступны благодаря развитию информационных технологий, обладающих почти неограниченными возможностями. Несомненно, сегодня интернет предлагает обширные возможности для интересного и в то же время продуктивного преподавания иностранного языка. В контексте новых методов и средств обучения английскому языку рассматриваются разные веб-страницы, в том числе википедия и блоги, направленные на развитие определенных навыков речевой деятельности, а также предлагаются ряд упражнений, нацеленных на улучшение не только знания иностранного языка, но и на расширение кругозора студентов в целом.

**Ключевые слова:** *обучение иностранному языку, интернет технологии, развитие навыков речевой деятельности, технологические средства преподавания английского языка.*  
JEL: Y8, Y90