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E-LEARNING FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

While distance education is growing more and more popular by the year in a variety of fields, e-learning for foreign languages is still "foreign" in many and different ways, especially when it comes to research, data, and teaching methodology. Online foreign language courses differ radically from other subjects in which students interact and communicate in their own language in order to learn new material. In Romania, more and more students are enrolled in distance education programs in the last 5 years. We want to investigate this aspect in order to answer the following questions: What is the nature of learning a foreign language? What is the role of the teacher in the new virtual classroom? What language learning strategies should educators use? How essential is self-efficacy? To successfully adapt continuously moving requirements of the educational market, the "online site" is the new trend on the Romanian market. This trend represents the newness that we can enjoy if we want to be in tune with the times. Online platforms have progressed significantly in recent years. They continue to provide increasingly more useful applications and tools for language learning.

Keywords: E-learning; foreign language; learning strategies; teachers' role; virtual classroom.

1. Introduction

Teachers who use online technologies should continue to provide opportunities for learning and to promote and develop language. But it is also recognized that further research is needed; given the rapid pace of innovation in software and Internet access are needed to understand more about the role and impact of using technology in learning foreign languages. The new trend represented by online courses for foreign languages represents an opportunity for people who travel a lot and want to learn a language at their own pace. The advantages of this platform threaten the traditional courses where time tends to become the first enemy. Each of us feels the constraints of time and prioritization, and the alternative of an online course seems to be the ideal solution for those who want to learn a foreign language. Knowing a

foreign language is imperative today and courses in this area are among the most popular. Increasingly more people are determined to turn to competition the traditional courses or online courses as a result of daily brisk pace. Thus, online courses can be attended by anyone who wants fast and paced learning.

2. The Purpose of this Article

The advantages of an e-learning course are numerous, from the flexibility and freedom to access to all the resources of a traditional course that helps participants to learn wherever they are, leaving them freedom to choose time and time allocated to the study. With just an internet connection you can transform your hotel room or dorm, in a classroom.

The learner's empowerment and self-discipline are among the advantages of the e-learning system. The friendly, interactive and easy to use platform offers different activities to develop all the necessary skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, ensuring the success of these modern learning methods. Online courses help people eager to advance in their careers by developing language skills, specific for their professional activity. (Anghel, T. 2008)

To successfully adapt continuously the educational market's requirements, the "online site" is the new trend on the Romanian market. This trend represents newness that we can enjoy if we want to be in tune with the times. Choosing an e-learning course is an exciting challenge in a world where we want to be the best.

With a focus on language, communication and culture in the national standards for learning foreign languages, teachers are in a continuous search for better ways of accessing authentic materials and provide experiences that will better develop the skills of learners of foreign languages. The technology is probably the best way to create an environment conducive to learning. ICT can support teachers in making learning languages faster, easier, more attractive and interesting.

ICT tools are part of our culture, of our everyday life (home or office). Though united in a planetary network, there is a concern about the risk of social isolation of those who spend long hours in front of the computer. Yet, the internet should be regarded as any other means of communication like other modern means of communication.

When it comes to new information technologies, we refer to Internet and any other communication offline and online at various eLearning programs created or various possibilities that the computer offers and which we can use as a means of rendering of information (messenger, Skype, MS Office, tables, video and audio etc.)

Using the Internet in education, along with other auxiliary tools, enables real-time access to information exchanges and international and provides learning opportunities - teaching. In this framework participates various categories of people (students, teachers), each having a well defined role. Educational applications of the Internet could be classified into several types of teaching - learning activities.

Communication by email and chat brings together those who favor teaching applications, interpersonal exchanges between young people and leads them to know and observe similarities and differences in cultural, political, linguistic areas. During the virtual classrooms, students will be able to check their communication skills in a foreign language. Teachers will teach using official correspondence

techniques specific to the foreign language studied, which would improve written expression, using correct and relevant information, structuring ideas.

The teacher will define clearly a topic that will attract the interest of students and expose more types of documents (PDF, press articles, essays, etc.). Students should be tasked with gathering documents, analyze and interpret the collected documents, request the opinion of specialist teachers in that area, and write a dissertation (synopsis, summary, comment, etc.) in the foreign language.

Research, validation and the resources used to achieve the foreign language bibliography on a specific subject within the rules of citation of electronic documents is necessary. Publication of documents in foreign languages on the Internet involves not only a good knowledge of computer programs specific to such activities but also a good knowledge of a foreign language. It may consider drafting personal pages the student introduces, describing their achievements in intellectual and professional areas of interest projects. The teacher's role is to teach the students techniques for structuring, drafting and presentation of personal language. Students will be able to improve their knowledge of written expression in a foreign language by writing an article. Self-training is also important and it links to sites specializing in textbooks or virtual tests in order to check the language's knowledge. (Niemiec, C. & Ryan, R. M. 2009)

3. The Advantages of Using New Training Technologies

These refer to the quality, authentic materials. Students have the opportunity to organize their learning process, facilitating a type of contextual learning.

Multimedia represents foreign language programs, images, videos, graphics, animations, audio, etc. are integrated which normally occur in isolation in the case of other means of learning. The combination of audio-visual texts facilitates the rapid transition from one type of exercise to another without having to change the method of learning. By coloring, animation, special effects, multimedia programs are innovative, attractive and motivating. The visuals, sound, film fragments, animated characters represent attractive multimedia programs and web pages.

The technology is increasingly used in learning foreign languages as a supplement to training, or as a way of learning (Warchauer, M. & Healey, D. 1998). Although access to technology may be difficult in accessing adult education programs and practitioners, these can be overcome. This change in the education system following objectives: increasing the efficiency of learning and developing communication skills and individual study. Achieving these objectives depends on the readiness of the teacher in computer use, the style of the teacher, the number of students, interest, their knowledge and skills, the atmosphere in the class and type of programs used how much time the software is integrated into lesson synchronization sequences explanations used, methods of assessment, prepared worksheets. Using computer randomly during the lesson may lead to boredom, monotony, inefficiency learning through non-participation of students in the lesson, learning objectives and cause failure repulsed by this modern teaching-learning and evaluation. The overuse of computer may result in loss of practical skills, calculation and investigation reality, the deterioration of human relationships.

In the same time, the excessive individualization of learning leads to denying the student-teacher dialogue and isolating the act of learning in its psychosocial context. The respective subject is segmented

and students' activity is diminished, being guided step by step. However the use of the computer has many advantages:

1. Stimulates innovative learning ability, adaptable to the rapid social change conditions

2. Strengthens the scientific investigation skills

3. It realizes that concepts learned during this period will find their usefulness later

4. Increases its efficiency by assessing the properties of coherent knowledge

5. Strengthens the students' motivation in learning

6. Stimulates logical thinking and imagination

7. Introduces a cognitive style

8. Installs overtaking climate, competitiveness

9. Mobilizes psychomotor skills in computer use

10. The development of visual culture

11. Introduce practical skills training

12. Ensures a permanent feedback

13. Rapid data processing facilities

14. Uses appropriate strategies to find the respective answer

15. Thinking skills

16. Determines a positive attitude of students towards the learning discipline.

The computer is also extremely useful as it simulates processes that no other teacher can teach. Thus, by means of offering students a model and illustrations of abstract concepts, processes and phenomena illustrations of unobservable or hard observable various reasons. Allow performing experiments impossible basically done due to lack of teaching material, to inadequate equipment or threat of school laboratories were exposed students and teacher. Students can carry out the virtual experiment, can repeat it a sufficient number of times so they can track how the studied phenomena take place and can extract their own conclusions.

The computer is also used for capacity building communication, collection, selection, synthesis and presentation of information, for typing essays (Warchauer, M. & Healey, D. 1998). Thus, students develop the ability to appreciate critical accuracy and correctness of the information obtained from various sources. The computer allows creating value and stimulating problem situations motivational for students, or status level testing tool knowledge and skills acquired by students. Modern technology and education focused on the students' needs, desires and possibilities, requiring differentiated group level. Some of the benefits of this innovative system are:

1. Interactivity: e-learning system is an interactive student-teacher.

2. The variety of the learning methods: e-learning system enables the learner to explore these learning methods that fit best.

3. Learning by practicing: If in learning English in a group class, some students dominate the activities and others refuse answering, the online learning is the saving solution for the latter: they are forced to work, so to learn.

4. Learning from mistakes: One of the most appealing features of this system is that students can make as many mistakes and they will not feel ashamed in front of the computer. On the contrary, they can fix the wrong parts and even learn from mistakes.

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5. Adaptation to their own learning rhythm: If students are very talented and eager to learn a foreign language, in partnership with the computer, they can set their own learning pace and will go through several levels in a shorter time.

6. Review: No time to attend an English course, E-learning application fits the best. Students can even repeat the revising and whenever they want without having reservations about the attitude of other colleagues or teacher who must keep a certain rhythm imposed.

7. Socializing: Learning e-learning system gives students the opportunity to socialize through a Blended learning system.

8. Media resources: A constant concern of schools is to provide classes with audio and video resources. Curriculum and textbook content does not allow their use to each lesson. Using e-learning application, students will use all resources that provide the lessons' dynamism and variety. Thus, we introduce new knowledge, stimulate memory and ensure students' performance.

9. Lifelong learning: Combining traditional elements with modern technology has become a way of life. Extension of this trend in the educational field is vital, it has became one of the instruments that provide continuous training.

10. The role of the teacher: Fortunately, the role of the human being teacher will never be taken by the robot teacher. The first steps to study a foreign language will lead to success, passion for the study will be developed only under the guidance of a teacher. All those who study online systematically request the opinion of a teacher. (Osler, A. & Starkey, H. 2005)

11. Accessibility: Access to language training is an advantage not only of those who live in big cities. Poor health and inability to travel are no longer an impediment. A computer and a headset will help students join a virtual classroom. Only the trainer is as real as possible (Warchauer, M. & Healey, D. 1998).

The students can browse the material. They have to know just to think logically and to locate the information they need. Presentation of modules with varying degrees of difficulty allows the students to know exactly what level is located, to acknowledge their limits and possibilities. This develops self awareness and desire to succeed. (Niemiec, C., Ryan, R. M. 2009). Students can make web pages presenting the school, city, country, culture, customs and traditions of native people, teaching materials developed by them and their teachers, information (topics and scales of correction for various exams and school competitions, scientific and cultural arts, books and school magazines, training courses and training for students and teachers, graphical way to Olympics and exams, official documents, discussion forum, students' notes and information about their school work, ads and statistics from students on various topics, messages, optional courses, faculties and colleges).

4. Conclusions

The latest research shows that the use of the computer and the Internet enables a better understanding of matter in a shorter time. It reduces the time required for processing experimental data for learning activities involving senior cognitive processes: during the assessment, the human subjectivity is deleted, the student being protected by the teacher's whims. They assess themselves alone and this

reduces students' stress and emotions. There is the possibility of simultaneous evaluation of many students with different levels of training, as the evaluation tests are also carried out on different difficulty levels. We can achieve summaries leading to withholding essential information faster (Ostender, S. & Schroeder, L. 2002). Even the educational games can be achieved in order deepen knowledge and practical skills development or enrichment their projects, portfolios, html pages. (Vin, W. & Vrakking, B. 2011).

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