

TABLETS AS AN EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING TOOL

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Digital technologies are great tools for helping students learn and it is believed that using technologies is the future of education system. Any tool that can increase students' access to the language will contribute greatly to their progress. Some such effective educational tools that are quickly becoming powerful and popular are tablet devices. The present paper focuses on the reasons, benefits and some effective uses of tablet devices in the foreign language classroom, viewed from both students' and teachers' perspectives.

Key words: digital technologies, tablet devices, FLT, administrative work, teaching/learning process, autonomous work.

Introduction

We live in a world which is continually evolving and rapidly transforming and it has become generally accepted that methods of teaching should change to satisfy the needs of the progressing world. Nowadays it is impossible to get along without modern technologies. Interactive technologies have an importance for everyone concerned in language teaching and learning. They can change the way that learning takes place making it more engaging and memorable. Among such effective educational tools that are quickly becoming powerful and popular, especially with young learners, are the tablet devices. It is firmly believed that they can go a long way in improving education efficiency and standards.

Why do We Need to Use Tablets in Language Teaching?

There are a number of reasons why tablets should be used in language teaching. First of all, tablets are popular among students. Learners have genuine interest in technology and are especially attracted to tablets. The students today are members of the generation known as "digital natives" (Prensky 2001). They've grown up with technology. Far more than older generations (known as "digital immigrants"), they understand how computers can be used for finding information and school administrators have to take advantage of this predilection to help boost students' ability to master new subjects. They can find a lot of interesting information and educational games there. Students spend hours on technologies, so why not use this opportunity and engage them through their favorite medium and combine both learning and pleasure. Secondly, tablets bring education to life by providing endless access to valuable information which previously was only available in printed format. They hit the sweet spot between a computer and a piece of paper, which is the biggest reason it has become a staple in the classroom. They help tear down classroom walls and allow students to broaden their learning opportunities. Another reason why tablets should be used in language teaching is that it allows integrating the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. It also engages the key components for learning, which are active engagement, participation in groups, interaction, feedback and connection to real world.

Besides, tablets are portable devices, thus they can be put in a bag or just held in hand. Students can take one with them everywhere and use it whenever needed. Another challenge is to use tablets to increase the effectiveness of the process of teaching and learning, thus facilitating both the teachers' and students' work.

Tablets as a Tool

Tablets can be a useful tool for both a teacher and a student from 2 perspectives: organizational and teaching/learning.

With the help of tablets teachers can do some **administrative work** in class, such as:

- *marking the absentees*. With the help of tablets this task is much easier as a teacher can just see the photos of the students on the screen of the device. If the students do not switch on their devices and do not participate, they will be considered absent.

- *keeping record of the learners' performance*. This will also be transparent for authorities of educational institutions, who will have access to this register.

- *getting in touch with parents of younger learners*. They may notify parents what their children do in class and how they succeed in learning.

In terms of **teaching** with the help of tablets teachers can: plan their lessons; search for web-based teaching materials; make use of web-based ready-made tests; develop language tests with the help of on-line programs; share materials with their students and other teachers; etc.

In terms of lesson **organization** students can: organize their lessons with the help of tablets without putting notes on different sheets of paper; make use of iHomework program. It has calendar feature and students can see all their assignments and quizzes, on the right side of the screen they can find their readings, reminders as well as assignments; share documents with peers and with their teacher.

With regard to **learning** students can develop all of the four language skills by reading texts, listening to recordings, communicating with peers both in writing and orally.

What Features of Tablets Can be Used in Class?

Some of the useful features of tablet devices that can effectively be used in class are the following: *Search feature* – sometimes the teacher needs to explain something from quite different books and in order not to waste time on finding, opening and showing the picture or a grammar rule in a book, students can just type a certain word and find the needed information or paragraph. *IOS operation system* (for Apple) – iCloud keeps the tabs open in Safari up to date on your iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, and Mac. So it is possible to go from one device to the next and pick up browsing wherever you left off. Safari also saves web pages – not just links – in a user's Reading List, so it helps get caught up on any device, even when the device is not connected to the Internet. The "*Kindle*" *feature* is a very easy and affordable way to have books on the go. For example, one can not only read something on the screen of iPad but also there is a so called "*search feature*" where a certain word can be typed and then there are results where the necessary paragraph can be chosen. "*Popular highlights*" *feature* enables one to see what other people (students) found concerning the same subject. At the same time one can make notes on the text if s/he needs to remember something. When one needs to highlight something with some color, s/he should only slide his/her finger, it is called "highlight pen". *Camera feature* allows taking snaps and videos in class. One can make a video of a lesson instead

of making notes, photocopy educational materials, etc. If a student has forgotten his/her textbook, s/he can take a photograph of the relevant page. The *calendar feature* is also a productive tool that allows setting deadlines for assignments and reminds to rehearse materials.

What are the Benefits that Tablets Can Bring to Class?

Tablets will save educational institutions, teachers and parents *money and time* with the ability to use free online materials. Teachers in their turn don't need to spend much time on searching curriculum resources. They can *facilitate teacher's work*. Teachers have to juggle variety of tasks including planning lessons. They can help themselves with quick online tests so the students can instantly see their performance. Another benefit of the use of tablets is that they can *motivate students* by providing incentives like games to keep them progressing. They also make it possible to *provide immediate feedback*: children would submit their work and a few days later teachers would give it back and would go over it. Delay means that they have often forgotten what they have written or why they chose to write it like that. With tablets they can receive immediate feedback from interactive tools and quizzes which means they can find out straight away if they have got something wrong. Tablets also *provide access to web-based educational resources* (e.g. online dictionaries, ebooks, with the help of which students can read whatever they want without going to the library and wasting time. eBooks allow students to find a phrase or a definition of any word in a book. But we don't see this sort of technology as a threat to the 'real book'. People will always read printed books, this just allows people greater flexibility which has definitely changed the way of teaching. Tablets *contribute to career preparation*, since using new technologies allows students to learn new skills sets which will help them in the marketplace as there are many jobs that need basic computer skills. They *provide flexibility* by giving equal opportunities to students: they have a chance to work with the same materials, but at their own pace and improve their scores. They can also easily rearrange the seats in the classroom if needed. Tablets help to *remove obstacles in class*: if there are students with trouble of hearing, using a classroom amplifier system can allow teachers to amplify their voices and speak at a comfortable level. Students with poor eyesight have a chance to magnify the font size of the text on the tablet screen. Tablets can help students overcome barriers quickly by removing frustration and negative feelings or emotions. And finally tablets go a long way in *promoting autonomous learning*, which in its turn helps *shift traditional learning model to the flipped one*. In this case learners learn more by themselves than with a teacher. They don't rely heavily on the teacher. The teacher transforms his/her role from a director to coordinator. Flipped learning allows time for more classroom discussions, exploration, hands-on activities and cooperative learning. As opposed to the traditional learning model: Presentation (in class) – Practice (at home) – Evaluation (in class), the flipped learning model suggests: Presentation (at home) – Practice (in class) – Evaluation (at home or in class). It allows transforming the traditional teacher-led classroom to a teacher-guided one. (<ctl.utexas.edu/teaching/flipping-a-class>)

Concerns and Solutions about the Use of Tablets in Class

There is an anxiety that introduction of tools like tablets in teaching will affect students' handwriting, as students are used to tapping on the screen in order to write something.

However, this problem can be fixed with the help of a special program available in most tablets and a special pen (much like an ordinary one): students can write on the screen of tablets and develop their handwriting. Of course, worksheets are also used in class as today's students still appreciate contact with paper. They all have textbooks and exercise books. So, they can also write on ordinary paper. Tablets can be used as an extra tool, they do not replace printed materials. The teachers are not ready to let go of the traditional style of teaching. We have welcomed tablets in so much as they help communication and widen the resources available. Students still value their exercise books and rely on them. Another concern about the use of tablets is that you can never know when the device will go wrong, as we can never foresee it. So in many educational institutions there exist special labs that are used to fix them as soon as possible. And in order not to lose the information in tablets it should be kept on hard disc or in the internet. The cost of tablets is also an issue. Nowadays not every family can afford to purchase one.

Sometimes pupils being interested in technology and knowing all the possible use of it can make them distract attention from the lesson and begin playing interactive games, let alone cheating. To avoid it teachers should stay in control of their classroom and see exactly what students are doing on the devices. Lack of technological knowledge of teachers is another issue. Actually students nowadays know more about technology than teachers do. So teachers can make the best use of it and ask students for help in technical issues. Teachers need proper training to use these tablets as technical educational tools. So, special teacher training classes should be organized for teachers to develop their technological knowledge for further effective teaching.)

Conclusion

Using technologies is the future of education system. In order to create a better educational system, we must revisit the purpose of education. Educational institutions need to prepare students for a life in which twenty-first century skills of digital literacy and inventive thinking are more important than memorization of dates and names. They are to consider how teaching tools can equip individuals with the necessary knowledge to better themselves, to create a more egalitarian society, and thus to prepare the citizens of tomorrow for the inevitable challenges they are likely to encounter with. "Teachers will not be replaced by technology but teachers who don't use technology will be replaced by those who do." (Sherl Wessbrown Beach)

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Պլանշետը որպես լեզվի ուսուցման արդյունավետ միջոց

Ներկայումս թվային տեխնոլոգիաները նշանակալի դեր ունեն դասավանդման գործընթացքում, հետևաբար դրանք կրթական համակարգի անբաժանելի մասը պետք է կազմեն: Հողվածն անդրադառնում է նման տեխնոլոգիաներից մեկին՝ պլանշետին, որը հետզհետե ավելի ու ավելի լայն կիրառություն է գտնում ինչպես մեր առօրյա կյանքում, այնպես էլ դասավանդման մեջ՝ բարձրացնելով ուսուցման արդյունավետությունը: Հողվածում քննության են ենթարկվում օտար լեզվի դասավանդման ժամանակ պլանշետի արդյունավետ օգտագործման որոշ միջոցներ, որոնք դիտարկվում են ինչպես ուսանողների, այնպես էլ դասավանդողների տեսանկյունից:

Планшет - как эффективное средство обучения

В настоящее время цифровые технологии играют важную роль в процессе обучения, поэтому они должны стать неотъемлемой частью системы образования. Статья посвящена одной из таких технологий, которая все более широко применяется как в нашей повседневной жизни, так и в обучении, повышая эффективность последнего. В статье рассматриваются некоторые эффективные методы использования планшетных устройств в преподавании иностранных языков, как с точки зрения студентов, так и преподавателей.