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ADVANTAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF USING ICT
IN TEACHING PRACTICAL ENGLISH

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Автор аналізує основні можливості та переваги використання інформа-ційно-комунікативних технологій у навчанні англійської мови. Подаються фрагмент заняття для ілюстрації способу використання інформаційно-комунікативних технологій та рекомендації щодо роботи з комп'ютером.
Ключові слова: інформаційно-комунікативні технології, навчання англійської мови, творчість.

Автор анализирует основные возможности и преимущества использования информационно-коммуникационных технологий в обучении английскому языку. Предлагаются фрагмент занятия для иллюстрации способа исполь-зования информационно-коммуникационных технологий и рекомендации по работе с компьютером.
Ключевые слова: информационно-коммуникационные технологии, обучение английскому языку, творчество.

The article analyzes the basic opportunities and advantages of using ICT in teaching Practical English. The fragment of a class is given to illustrate the way of using ICT in class and the tips for using computer-based activities are given.
Key words: ICT, teaching English, creativity.

The magazine article I read 15 years ago ran: "If you took a doctor from the 19th century and put her in a modern operating theatre, she would have no idea what to do, but if you put a teacher from the 19th century into a modern classroom she would be able to carry on teaching without pause." Both ideas seemed so true, but modern technologies changed our lives so much, that today the teacher from the 19th century would be in the same situation as the doctor.

Modern language teachers require modern technologies, tools and new ways of engaging students in a wide range of communicative tasks. Today a textbook only is not able to satisfy the needs of a language teacher. The opportunities that digital media provide today's language teachers with are enormous. Never before has it been so simple to bring the world into the classroom and have students use authentic materials and participate in real communicative contexts.

Computers are mainly used for word processing, information searching and e-mail, in spite of all the other possibilities of practising English offered by computers and the Internet. They are, for instance:

1) using ready-made language exercises on the Internet;

2) using media sites and other websites from organizations and authorities, in order to work with current events or thematic projects;

3) communicating with students in other countries via e-mail and chat, or participating in subject-based discussion forums;

4) exploiting the many reference tools on the Internet, such as on-line dictionaries, encyclopedias;

5) creating and publishing student work, in the form of, for instance, digital storytelling, blogs and wikis, making avatars [7].

Searching for information on the Internet, chatting and game playing are obvious parts of the lives of many young people in the 21st century. The Office of National Statistics Internet Access Survey (UK), 2009 gives the following stats:

1) 63 per cent of teens feel 'addicted' to the Internet;

2) Internet usage is highest among the 16 to 24 year old age group in the UK;

3) 86 per cent of teens use the Internet on a daily or almost daily basis;

4) 23 per cent of users access the Internet through mobile phones.

The questionnaire held with the students of the 2nd year of studies of philology faculty shows that modern students spend about 42 hours in the Internet weekly, which is 6 hours daily on average. Teachers should use it to the advantage of their students.

M. Warschauer [2, p. 27] points out four main reasons of using the Internet in teaching languages being encouraging students to learn a language through on-line communication, creating opportunities for "real" written communication, raising students' motivation and learning computer skills for their future successful career. J. Harmer [1, p. 146] focuses his investigation on another extremely important reason of using the Internet in teaching English – the Internet is a source of authentic information.

So, we can point out the pedagogical gains in the use of ICT in teaching English, such as:

1. The possibility to connect the teaching of English to reality, for instance, using authentic texts, reading or listening to current news and creating opportunities for "real" communication [2].

2. The possibility to offer more variation in one's teaching compared to only or mainly using a textbook.

3. The possibility to offer a form of teaching more adapted to individual students' interests, learning styles and abilities.

4. The possibility to motivate students by having them publish their work for a potentially bigger audience than the teacher only [1].

5. The possibility to develop students' creativity.

Standards, standardized testing and approved curriculum is important, but is not enough. We need to develop what students will truly need to be successful in the future. Creativity is the edge they need and we need to do our best to develop it [4].

Following Dean Rieck, the author of the piece "Do You Have These 11 Traits of Highly Creative People?", let us have a look at these 11 traits of highly creative people that should be encouraged and developed in our students.

1. Have *the courage* to try new things and risk failure. Every big breakthrough starts as a harebrained idea. This doesn't mean you should constantly go off the deep end, just that you should balance your routine portfolio of solutions with an investment in the new and untried. Over time, the risk is usually worth the reward.

When students are suggested to work with the site for the first time, for instance, to do the first step, register on the site to be able to leave comments to articles and videos, they are confused and, surprisingly, turn to teacher's help. Only several students from the group of 15 can do it without a problem.

2. Use *intuition* as well as logic to make decisions and produce ideas. When Matt Drudge designed his Web site, he listened to his gut instead of the Internet gurus. He kept it simple, small, fast, and some would say ugly and primitive. But it works for him, making The Drudge Report one of the most recognizable and popular sites in the world.

3. Like *to play*, since humor and fun are the ultimate creative act, which is to say you just have to lighten up. We all have goals, and quotas, and deadlines, but it's not life and death. When you enjoy yourself, your brain relaxes and is able to produce more and better ideas. One of those ideas may be just what you're looking for.

4. Are *expressive* and willing to share what they feel and think, to be themselves. Blogging is the ideal arena for injecting your personality into your work. People are emotional creatures and respond better to people who appear real, honest, and open. Not only is it more interesting, it can also be more persuasive.

5. Can *find order* in confusion and discover hidden meaning in information. Research and critical thinking are key tools for the creative person. Information is to the brain what food is to the stomach. So-called "writer's block" or creative burnout almost always results from a lack of fresh information and having nothing meaningful to say.

6. Are *motivated by a task* rather than by external rewards. You must like the challenge of writing, explaining, teaching, and persuading. Sure, you can make money

along the way, but if you're in it just for the money, you're not going to be a fountain of new ideas.

Paraphrasing these to speak about students' "obsession" for getting points, we should say, that doing creative, challenging tasks makes them think of how they speak, how they progress from class to class rather than think of points they get for the task. For the final speaking task before the examination I gave my students 2 days to combine their ideas of what their ideal school would be like, the task was to use as much vocabulary from topics of the 2nd term as possible and prepare a 3 minutes presentation. They even didn't ask how many slides in their Power Point they are to have, they prepared 20 and more slides themselves with their own comments and they all, including the students with low points, were fountains of ideas, brilliant ones!

7. Have a need to *find solutions* to challenging problems. Even the most creative writers won't have a solution for everything. If they claim to, they've stopped thinking. Highly creative people are those whose eyes light up at a question they can't answer. That's the opportunity to learn something new and produce remarkably creative content.

Students today make very poor spellers. They rarely write dictations and they hardly read anything not concerning their studies. Teaching the topic "Travelling", I found an interactive task that helped me practise spelling, teach new vocabulary and encourage speaking. The listening text was called "Super-fast UK route given the green light". The task was to listen to the text, put the text down, answer the comprehension questions and find the mentioned route on the map of UK. By the way, students have difficulties with remembering correct pronunciation of proper names, such as Manchester, Birmingham, etc. As they all have their devices with the Internet, there is no problem for a teacher to work online. They checked the text, corrected their mistakes in spelling, word use etc. and developed their listening skills. We organized a discussion based on the problems raised in the text, they were to search the net to find more information about HS2 and find out the present state of the problem. They went online www.bbc.com/news/uk/-21221828 to read an article and watch a video of the Prime Minister talking about the route. They expressed their ideas on the same problems in our villages or small towns and their solutions were amazing! The final task was to speak (write) about Ukrainian projects of the same kind.

8. Will *challenge assumptions* and ask hard questions to discover what is real. Writing, blogging, or business rules aren't really rules, only rules of thumb. If you want to wield true creative power, you will always take what others advise with a grain of salt. (That includes all of us gurus who love to don our pointy wizard hats and pontificate on the secrets of success.) If you don't know something from personal knowledge or experience, you don't know it at all.

9. Can *make connections* between old ideas to produce new insights. Combine the little doodles you make on a white board with online video and you get Common Craft, a new approach to explaining things to people in a way they can easily understand. Sometimes the best solutions are simply two old ideas jammed together.

10. Will *push the envelope* in order to expand the boundaries of what is possible. There was a time when no one thought you could make money on the Internet. Now it's a huge, multi-national business platform. Instead of dividing the world into the possible and impossible, it's better to merely divide it into the tried and the untried. What have you not tried yet?

11. Are willing to *test* new ideas and compete with others based on results. Isn't that what they mean by the "market of ideas"? Isn't that what business competition is about? If you're afraid of being wrong or losing, your creativity will suffer.

We are sending our students out into a globally competitive world. Core knowledge, literacy, the ability to think and learn should be combined with creative traits to prepare students for the future they will face.

Here is a fragment of a class showing teaching with ICT in combination with the traditional methods. We tried to provide the students with a challenging authentic listening text from an educational website [7]. The text is available at intermediate and upper-intermediate level, so the teacher can pick up the level suitable for the group.

The teacher's task is:
a) to prepare the class carefully;
b) to know the stages and exact timing;
c) to prepare activities for each stage;
d) to be able to guide students while working with the Internet;
e) to have extra activities prepared in case something goes wrong;
f) to ask for students' e-mail addresses in advance.

2nd year Practical English
Second term
Module 2, topic "Great Britain" (Module 3 "Travelling")
Text "Super-fast UK rail route given the green light"
Pre-text questions: 1. Have you ever heard or read about HS2? 2. Do you know what it is?

Super-fast UK rail route given the green light.

Is it a sensible decision or a waste of money?

Last week the UK Government unveiled plans for a new, super-fast rail route – known as HS2 – that will link the north and the south of England.

The trains will travel between London, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. They will travel at a top speed of 400 km / hour, and will cut journey times in half. Building work will begin in 2017 – but the trains won't be ready until 2032.

Supporters of the project are over the moon. They believe the UK rail network – which was mostly built by the Victorians more than 100 years ago – is in desperate need of an upgrade. Super-fast trains are common in many countries around the world – including France and Japan – and many people think the new route is essential for British businesses.

But critics of the plan say it costs far too much money, and will destroy the countryside. Some people will be forced to sell their homes and relocate. Others will have to endure the noise of passing trains. And some areas of natural beauty will have a train line running straight through them.

"It is difficult to preserve the countryside and also built a new, super-fast rail route," says English Coach. "I can see the arguments for and against HS2. Overall, it seems to prioritize the needs of people in cities – at the expense of those who live in the countryside."

Do you often travel by train? Where do you go?

Does your country have super-fast trains? Are they popular? Are they expensive?

Do you think the new super-fast UK rail route is a good idea? Why / why not?

Go online www.bbc.com/news/uk-21221828, have a look at the pictures and the map. Do they suggest you what the text is going to be about? The teacher can give listening at the class or send the audio to students' e-mails and give it as a home assignment. Then the students are given the home task to listen to the text carefully, write it and mark stresses and tunes. The teacher can plan to give the task to read the article from a BBC site giving details of the problem for home assignment and / or watch a video either at home or in class. Next time the students go online www.maryglasgowplus.students and check the text. The teacher gives the task to learn it by heart practising it with the speaker. The final task is to prepare to take part in a discussion "Are you "for" or "against" such projects as HS2?", "Do we have similar projects in Ukraine? Are you "for" or "against" such projects?"

Also, the work on the text, the article and the video can be successfully summarized in a "for" and "against" essay. The students work with great interest and the results are visible very soon when we hear them speak better, when we read their essays and their ideas impress us and generally the quality of the class improves sufficiently.

We would like to suggest some tips for using computer activities:
- the teacher asks students to find out as much information as possible about a personality or a problem in a limited span of time;
- if they have trouble finding a suitable website, the teacher should guide them;

- the teacher asks students to write a fact file of a personality, for example, a famous football player, giving the address with an example (this is a good way of practicing students' reading skills, especially skimming and scanning);

- after completing the task, students exchange fact files via e-mail. Reading e-mails can be assigned as homework;

- the teacher sends them an e-mail with a questionnaire about a personality and students have to fill it in. The teacher's involvement in the activity gives students confidence and makes them feel closer to the teacher.

So, let us point out the advantages of using ICT in the English language classroom:

1. ICT bring variety to our classroom. Students get used to learning a foreign language in a new and pleasant way, not just by interacting with the teacher and reading from a textbook.

2. The application of ICT gives more opportunities for communication between learners: they can exchange information in real time, they can participate in discussions, work on different projects, exchange e-mails, search for information. So, students have a better insight into the culture of the country and people whose language they study.

3. The Internet offers a wide variety of reference materials like on-line dictionaries, encyclopedias for developing students' individual work.

4. Computer programs can be created or adapted by teachers to suit their students' needs and level of language knowledge.

We have pointed out the opportunities and the advantages of using ICT in the classroom. No doubt, they cannot replace traditional methods. Textbooks and any other printed materials are necessary in the teaching process. But traditional classes can be alternated and improved by using computer or the Internet. Also, the students will know ways of using their computers for purposes different from just chatting in their native language as well as downloading materials without reading them for their educational purposes. They will also spend, let us hope, 2 of their 6 daily hours in the Internet doing tasks we give them, those, necessary to perform well in class.

We think that the research of using ICT in teaching English will be continued and result in software for different levels which will be designed according to the program and satisfy the needs of teachers as well as those of students [3, p. 909–912].

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