INTERNET APPLICATIONS
IN THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Phenomenon of globalization goes hand in hand with modern information and communication technologies (ICT) which have changed the way we communicate. Internet has become a "golden bridge" to the "global village". Active use of foreign languages, as a key competence of the contemporary modern society, has brought implementation of Internet into the field of education.

Modern education requires modern approach. Internet is an effective means for rapid communication and plays an important role in the process of foreign language education. On the other hand there is still not enough attention paid to the use of Internet and web-based applications in the process of foreign language learning. Pasch and Norsworthy [2001:8] admit that "teachers and media specialists should be aware, however, of the tremendous potential in the language classroom of other Internet applications, such as E-mail, interactive chat, videoconferencing, and so on". Integrating computer technology in foreign language education makes the process of learning more authentic, effective and interesting. Bush and Terry [1997:74] add that "technology represents possibilities to break from tradition in many aspects. With these powerful tools, we can create new contexts, new approaches, and new ways of thinking about the craft of teaching languages". The main goal of foreign language learning stays in effective communication in the target language which is defined in School Curriculum and Assessment Authority [1993:3] as "the ability to choose appropriate examples of lexis and structures and to transfer meaning from and into the target language" to accomplish communication goals. In other words ´to know what to say and how to say it to be understood´.

New computer technologies brought a rapid change in communication in the last decades. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become widespread and influenced all spheres of education. CMC can be either synchronous or asynchronous. Glendinning and McEwan [2006] describe synchronous CMC as a process of communication which requires the participants being on line at the same time (e.g. instant messaging, chatting, audio or video conferencing) while in asynchronous CMC the participants involved in communication are not present at the same time (e.g. e-mail messages, discussion boards, blogging, text messaging). As suggested by Dudeney and Hockley [2007:7] "in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet and communications technology", Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was substituted by Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in the 1990s. The use of Internet and its applications by language teachers are slowly becoming an inevitable part of FLT.

On the other hand in Internet-based lesson the emphasis is put on the students´ authentic use of foreign language in authentic settings. Teacher is a facilitator who

supports students´ ideas, learning styles, strategies and monitors their language interaction. Students are not passive recipients of information anymore, they become active in controlling their own way of learning relying on their own skills and competences. There are many positives in using Internet and web-based applications in foreign language learning. According to Next Generation Forum [Next Generation Forum 1999] they influence relationships between students and teachers; develop students´ learning strategies; students get in touch with ideas and concepts that used to be beyond their reach as well as show them new ways to social interaction. Cognitive and moral development, self-esteem, willingness to take risks are only partial benefits which students gain. Participation in authentic situations teaches students to use their general knowledge, improve their linguistic skills (listening comprehension, reading for specific purpose, writing proficiency, accuracy in grammar and vocabulary) as well as communication and technical skills. In this context, it is interesting to note that communication skills do not only include the way students communicate but they also involve skills concerning co-operation (peer co-operation), tolerance or adequate reaction on problems. Siraj-Blatchford and Whitebread [2003:69] see problem-solving skills as "a complex intellectual process involving the co-ordination of a range of demanding and interrelated skills […] which include understanding and representing the problem; gathering and organizing relevant information; constructing and managing a plan of action, or a strategy; using various problem-solving tools; reasoning, hypothesis testing and decision making". Understanding of other participant in Internet communication requires accepting his/her way of thinking and creating an appropriate ´communication code´. Dudeney and Hockley [2007:8] point out that "Internet offers excellent opportunities for collaboration and communication between learners who are geographically dispersed". Taking into consideration the aspect of personal development students learn to accept cultural diversity and to establish self-identity. Sefton-Green [1999:2] points out that "the increasing accessibility of these technologies has created significant new opportunities for young people to become cultural producers, rather than mere consumers".

In spite of all the advantages Computer Mediated Communication brings, it would of course be misguided to believe that learning foreign language can substitute common teacher-student communication in the classroom. According to Kern [1995:470] "computer-mediated discussion is not a panacea for language acquisition, nor is it a substitute for normal classroom discussion. What it does offer is a powerful means of restructuring classroom dynamics and a novel context for social use of the language".

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Summary

The author of the paper brings a new perspective on the use of Internet applications as a part of foreign language learning which main goal is to prepare students for effective communication. Moreover, the author admits that teachers do not dedicate enough time to the use of Internet and web-based applications such as e-mail messages, chatting, forums etc. in the process of foreign language learning in spite of the fact that they offer communication with authentic people in authentic settings. In addition, students learn to use their communication and linguistic skills in real cultural context as well as they become ´cultural producers´. The author understands cultural diversity as a natural and integrated part of authentic communication reflected in the process of modern education.