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USING TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *Motivating students in learning a foreign language can be challenging, but educators can help to foster student motivation by employing a series of strategies, such as creating a positive and supportive learning environment and building a positive relationship with the students, using a variety of teaching methods, providing regular feedback and recognition for their efforts, using authentic materials, using technology, setting achievable goals, and providing opportunities for student choice and autonomy by encouraging learning outside the classroom. Employing technology in education is becoming a global trend and the majority of students use it in education in general but also in the process of language acquisition. Most scholars view the use of technology as being supportive for the learning environment and as a crucial element in providing a high-quality education, especially for the new generations of students who were born in this digital era and cannot function without technology. Technology offers students quick access to relevant information, not to mention that it expands their universe of learning. It also allows students to get in contact with a wealth of authentic resources, which can inspire language learners. The paper begins with highlighting the importance of motivation in language acquisition, then it presents the main reasons why we should connect motivation with technology, and finally it reviews some benefits of using technology to enhance language learning.*

Keywords: foreign language learning, students' motivation, technology, benefits

1. Introduction

As traditional methods of teaching and learning in higher education seem to no longer inspire students, numerous empirical research have confirmed the beneficial impact of technology use on language learners' motivation. Scholars argue that innovative teaching strategies such as those using technologies can increase students' engagement and improve their learning [1]. In the same spirit the Council of Europe suggested an action-oriented approach in the educational process, in which learning about the use of technology should be done "by doing" and via experience. Technology is primarily utilized to promote student engagement in the learning tasks and activities as well as knowledge transfer beyond the classroom to other social contexts [2]. Therefore, the present paper brings its contribution to underlining the importance of technology in motivating students and presents some effective strategies that foreign language teachers can use in teaching English.

2. The importance of motivation

The concept of motivation is abstract and challenging to define; however, we will generally refer to motivation as being a certain behavior expressed in the willingness and desire to work hard to learn

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a foreign language, in other words motivation is the driving force behind a successful long-term teaching–learning process, hence its importance in education. It is the key to all successfully accomplished tasks and students' engagement in class, and last but not least motivation is the key that nurtures students' passion of the target language and guarantees students' academic success.

As mentioned above, motivation is a significant factor in the process of learning that determines students' active participation in class, the quality of work they produce and their performance in a course in general. Knowing the importance of motivation and its practical implications are paramount in the teaching learning process. Educators can help increase student motivation using a number of strategies such as creating a positive and supportive learning environment and building a positive relationship with the students and encouraging them to learn outside the classroom, in order to make them autonomous learners. Likewise, using a variety of teaching methods, providing regular feedback and recognition for their efforts, utilizing technology can also boost students' motivation [3].

Learning and mastering a foreign language requires a lot of time and a sustained effort from the students. Consequently, they have to remain motivated for years, which is definitely one of the biggest challenges in the process of language acquisition.

3. Technology and motivation

In the contemporary information era, when widespread connections are viable, students regarded as digital natives, are extremely competent at multitasking and comfortable with any sort of technology. Due to this tight relationship with technology that they use both for academic and personal activities in order to communicate and retrieve information, students changed their perception on teaching and learning, they do not conceive the teaching-learning process in the absence of technology that they see as an imperative of their existence. Nowadays technology includes computers, mobile phones, tablets, interactive applications and games, virtual lectures, videos, and smart boards, among other cutting-edge teaching aids.

Technology has advanced quickly, and this has had a tremendous impact on English language instruction that has undergone significant changes both in teaching as well as in learning a foreign language. One of the most important changes is the fact that it allowed language learners to practice their language skills in a natural setting. Many scholars agree that technology has a good influence on the process of learning English, even though the use of computers and the internet in language learning has been much debated. Wernet, Oligens, and Delicatch (2018 apud Rahmani, M. and Salehi, H. 2023) claim that technological integration in the classroom appears to be crucial for higher and professional education [4].

Since motivation generally appears to be a significant indicator of success in language acquisition, using technology in language learning has a great deal of motivational advantages among which we mention an increased individuality and autonomy, more options for communication, identity development, intercultural content, alternative methods of evaluation and the creation of motivating tasks [5].

Additionally, employing technology enables content for instruction to be modified to fit the learners' requirements and needs. Furthermore, it can offer immediate feedback and even allow the combination of materials (audio, video, text, photos, etc.). Through the use of technology, students have the chance to direct their own learning and have unrestricted access to knowledge that is outside of the authority of the educator.

Technology-based English language education improves collaborative language learning and enables students to communicate effectively [6]. Technology facilitates the learning process and provides

teachers with appropriate instructional resources, bringing language learning opportunities to the student's environment. It also helps students become autonomous learners and provides unquestionable benefits. Furthermore, students are fond of technology, and when they have the option to study via technology, their motivation rises, which improves information retention. Thus, these are the main reasons to connect technology with motivation.

4. Benefits of integrating technology in language learning

Academics state that integrating technology in teaching foreign languages can increase the efficacy of both educators' instruction and students' learning [7]. In this section we will focus on the advantages of integrating technology teaching and learning a foreign language. Using technology in language learning not only motivates students but also enables them to develop lifelong skills helpful both in and outside the classroom.

According to Reinders et al (2022) [8], one of the benefits of integrating technology is the fact that it offers wide exposure and increased opportunities to learn the English language. Students are introduced to language through digital learning in a range of fun and interesting activities. They may interact through language learning applications, websites, music, games, movies, and many more authentic materials to learn English. Digital tools such as e-learning platforms are particularly useful for students to conduct live pair or group discussions and other activities online, independent of the time or place, especially with peers from another country. As scientific advisers for the joint projects of our students with their colleagues from another academy, a project that was conducted mostly via Moodle e-learning platform, we could definitely argue that this kind of peer collaboration makes studying more pleasurable and increases students' motivation to learn and work.

Another advantage that is equally important for students is getting access to authentic, real-life materials to provide them accurate information that mirrors the situations they could encounter in real life and that could interest them. The ability to provide rapid, easy access to a varied digital content (such as that made by publishers or individual bloggers) is a great feature of digital sources that encourages them to study.

A wide range of interactive media and activities are included in several digital learning environments, including websites and e-books, allowing students the space they need to thoroughly investigate each setting according to their individual interests and prior knowledge as a guide, in other words it enables them to personalize their learning.

Moreover, flexibility is another benefit of technology as educators demonstrate their students that learning can happen anywhere, even in the digital environments they use on a regular basis. Learning is flexible and it offers them the opportunity to study when and how they want.

Receiving accurate and timely feedback for their assignments or simply having access to it help them grow and it can also be highly motivating. Due to this feature students have a better understanding of their progress which helps them in pursuing their goals. Likewise, teachers could also follow their students' progress and identify and address issues.

As students explore digital environments, they develop their decision-making skill, which enables them to control what, when and how they learn, acquiring the abilities that will support their further learning, i.e. the desired autonomy.

To sum up, the aforementioned components offer a student-cantered learning that help students experience a deep sense of control which boosts their motivation of completing the tasks and becoming lifelong language learners.

On the other hand, we should bring to attention that besides the countless benefits, technology also presents several disadvantages. Using technology in class is not as simple as it may seem, it requires

sound decisions regarding selection of technical tools, adaptation and application in the foreign language class; afterwards we should consider the way we use it and how we use it to enhance students' motivation. Firstly, technology alone would not provide the desired educational effect in the absence of an educator who should employ educational technology skilfully and with a specific classroom objective. The ongoing online activities that students engage in, frequently divert their attention, which might lead to unfinished assignments. This shows that technology users need to take caution while using the equipment to avoid getting unexpected effects [9].

At the same time, technology and the novelty of using it can be a powerful motivating tool; however, it tends to diminish as students become familiar with it. As a result, the educator needs to constantly find ways to motivate their students, and if students are actively involved in the process of learning it also motivates professors.

Addressing this issue is essential in keeping students motivated and engaged, with the ultimate purpose of fostering their creative thinking and empowering them with the attitude necessary to overcome issues and obstacles with original and unique solutions.

5. Conclusions

In today's technologically advanced world, using technology in learning a foreign language may significantly improve student performance, especially by successfully boosting their motivation. Taking into account our experience in class, integrating technology might be beneficial to increase motivation, which is seen to be a crucial component in language learners' success. However, there is a need for advanced research regarding the selection and adaptation, and last but not least the effective use of technologies and their potential limitations in the foreign language class. It is obvious that technology by itself is unlikely to maintain students motivated for an extended period of time, but when used alongside a skilled professor, engaging activities, and well-designed materials, it may be quite effective in keeping them motivated.

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