

ENHANCING LEARNING AND TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES THROUGH DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

Innovation is a defining characteristic of a knowledge society and a digital economy. It is therefore key to high quality educational delivery. For many in education this has come to mean the use of new technologies such as YouTube, Twitter and Pinterest, or the redesign of the spaces in which learning takes place. In recent years reference to 'digital technology in the classroom' can be taken to mean digital processing systems that encourage active learning, knowledge construction, inquiry, and exploration on the part of the learners, and which allow for remote communication as well as data sharing to take place between teachers and learners in different physical classroom locations. This is an expanded notion of technologies that recognises their development from mere information delivery systems and also clarifies their role in classrooms in contrast to their wider use across schools and learning centres.

The digital education revolution much has been achieved, and much has changed in the way students and teachers use digital technologies. Language learning is already undergoing a digital revolution. The overarching challenge now is to maintain momentum and ensure that digital technologies are used more systematically to improve the quality of education provision and learning outcomes for all students. The high uptake of new digital technologies is creating changes in what students learn, as a result of the change in how they learn. They afford new opportunities and provide different learning experiences resulting in high quality learning outcomes.

Digital technology is the term used to describe those digital applications, services and resources which are used to find, analyse, create, communicate, and use information in a digital context. Digital learning is learning that is facilitated by the direct or indirect use of technology or digital tools. The implementation of digital learning in a classroom is crucial to developing digital literacies as well as digitally literate people. The digital resources will include video, audio and web conferencing, webinars and video on demand, portals and immersive environments, content and learning management systems and resource exchanges, email, skype, social media, bulletin boards, forums and blogs. Engagement activities include simulated immersion experiences, games and collaborative projects with international peers.

Digital learning technologies can enable students to grasp concepts more quickly, to connect theory and application more adeptly, and to engage in learning more readily, while also improving instructional techniques, leveraging instructor

time, and facilitating the widespread sharing of knowledge. Digital technologies will enable this in new and better ways and create possibilities beyond the limits of our current imagination.

Digital learning technologies help students:

1. Learn more efficiently and more fully. Digital assessments offer students rapid feedback on their understanding, allowing both students and instructors (who can access this information) to concentrate their efforts on where further understanding is most needed. Rapid assessment, simulations, visualizations, games, annotation technology, and videos with multiple instructors provide a richer learning environment toward a fuller understanding of concepts. Annotation technologies, discussion boards, and online support provide additional forums for discussion, debate, conjecture, and edification.

2. Learn with mastery. The ability to pace learning to one's preference, to review material, and to be assessed on a section before moving to another leads to mastery learning.

3. Learn the best way. Active engagement, hands-on experiences, discussions and flipped classrooms allow students to experience learning that applies best practices and directly employs current theories of learning.

4. Learn anytime, anywhere. Asynchronous classrooms allow students to "go to school" where and when they are most ready to learn. This helps graduate students access advanced information needed for their thesis research when they need it.

Digital learning provides quick feedback to instructors on where students are struggling, allowing teachers to provide additional instruction and answers to common questions, either online or in person. Automation eases or eliminates routine grading, freeing course teams to spend more face-to-face time with students. Instructors can disseminate new ideas more quickly, touching more people and impacting more lives. Digital platforms allow instructors to meld worldwide participants into campus teaching, creating global conversations - resulting in richer teaching experiences. Digital learning empowers instructors to build courses using the best content previously developed by other instructors and colleagues, whether within the same department, or even at other institutions. This "digital abstraction" for modular learning content is the real meaning behind the "digital" of digital learning.

The potential benefits of digital technologies are that they can foster dialogic and emancipatory practice. Dialogic practice is that in which students are active, engaged and empowered participants in a conversation from which learning emerges. Emancipatory practice is that in which an individual student's ideas go beyond the learning prescribed by the teacher/syllabus as they draw on knowledge gained outside formal education to construct understanding. Different technologies can improve learning by augmenting and connecting learning activities. Digital technology can often also be exciting for learners and offers a potentially more engaging alternative. At the same time it is important to be aware that some learners may be less confident in learning with digital technologies and steps need to be taken to ensure equality of access.

Many language classes lack quality materials and peer-to-peer communication and the language being learned is limited and lacks authenticity. This makes it difficult for learners to sustain interest in the communication, especially where immediate feedback is not available. Schools can use digital resources in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning. Electronic grade books, digital portfolios,

learning game and student performance, are a few ways that technology can be utilized to power learning.

Professional support for teachers will be provided through online professional learning, networking and global communities of practice to enable participants to share ideas and strategies and link to language experts and professional associations. Teachers can also connect with native language speakers and supervisors, both in Ukraine and other countries. In the digital age, teachers need to be flexible and adaptable to whatever gets tossed their way. New technologies are being developed every day that change not only how students learn, but how teachers teach.

To develop the 21st century skills every student needs, they must access new digital learning models that not only enhance their learning experience, but also guide them along the path to becoming effective digital citizens. Ukraine needs to generate a culture within schools and the community in which innovation is understood as an important component of continuous teaching and learning improvement. Ukrainians will recognise schools as belonging and contributing to the digital economy.

Literature

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(3 30.03.2018 .)

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