INTEGRATING DIGITAL COMPETENCIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT HIGHER SCHOOL

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Abstract: *Technology has become a crucial part of learning throughout the world. Teachers are nurturing learners of the 21st century who grow up with technology, computers, gadgets, and internet connection. Technology has been an expanse of their lives, especially their academic objectives. Technology is more valuable for EFL learners as it gives opportunities for learners to connect a wide range of information. Technology is interconnected with learner autonomy, where students can learn independently in their normal pace. It also helps learners collaborate with foreign learners and enhance language learning through several digital media by applying the Internet to access a wide range of reliable sources, materials, and tasks. To consider the relationship between student learning and the efficient combination of technology, this study provides an overview of the demands and tools for learning English in modern society. It will explore contemporary reforms in higher school to adjust to a new generation of the digital era.*

1. Introduction

In the period of information and globalization, learning English provides various opportunities to find and use numerous beneficial information. Prensky (2001) states, " Digital natives are used to receiving information fast. They like to parallel processes and multi-task. The natives prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards". Ever since Prenskiy (2001) introduced the term "digital natives", which refers to a new generation that has grown up with technologies, it has appeared in numerous studies (Bennett, Maton, & Mervin, 2008; Jones, Ramanau, Cross & Healing, 2010; Yot-Domìnguez & Marcelo, 2017) through the use of such term as " digital generation", "new generation", "net generation", etc. Specifically, a " digital native" is defined as a member of a generation where digital technologies and the Internet are a part of everyday life (Thomas, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, Prensky (2001) insisted that teachers should recognize that today's learners have different and distinct characteristics and adapt their teaching approach to their learning strategies because the learners

nowadays may acquire information differently and perform many functions in different ways. Especially, teachers must understand the way that learners react by using learning strategies to digital technologies in their learning (Teo, 2013).

The use of digital devices in language learning can enhance learners' learning motivation and attitudes. This is because the digital device enables differentiation according to the learners' language proficiencies or characteristics and provides immediate feedback and active interactions. Additionally, it enables learner-centered education that allows the learners to plan, manage, and evaluate the process of their learning independently. In the past, many studies in the field of CALL[1] and MALL[2] [3]have reported on the affective nature of digital language learning environments for learner-centered language learning (Jung, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2017; Kim & Rha, 2014; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Ogata & Yano, 2005). Allen et al. (2016), Courts and Tucker (2012), Lewis et al. (2013), Simkins (2002), Zucker and Light (2009) argued that incorporating technology will boost academic success and also improve the quality of prevailing offerings by institutions. Similarly, Raman and Thannimalai (2019) pointed out that advanced technology especially evident in the period of Industrial Revolution 4.0 has greatly influenced every aspect of our life comprising education setting and leaderships globally. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence and Internet has transformed school leaderships, teaching methodologies and also remodeled classrooms. Besides, technology also facilitates us with a blended learning atmosphere that enhances teaching expertise and develops social and cognitive skills (Gaddis, 2020).

Thus, it is significant to enhance digital integration to develop learners learning abilities in their personal disciplines. It is crucial for the teachers and students to improve their digital intellect because these skills are required to sustain the needs of this new era and succeed in the 21st century. Wekerle et al. (2020) suggested that the digitalized higher education systems are considered a very powerful way of promoting student's learning. Therefore, the perception of a student regarding using technology enriches their learning that requires monitoring of technology integration in the learning atmosphere. Yurtseven Avci et al. (2020) mentioned that technology integration comprises activities such as constructing instructional strategies that hearten learners to generate their own knowledge. Additionally, teachers must examine the work of students so that he or she may act as a catalyst for their mentors

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[1] Computer-assisted language learning

[2] mobile- assisted language learning

because integrating technology and sharing students' work within the environment of professional learning would raise both qualities of teaching and the learning power of students. This study seeks to explore the ways Internet-based technology, more especially digital competencies, may promote English language learning by high school pupils.

2. Literature Review

It is believed that digital competencies can prove to be very useful in learning the English language if appropriately selected. By adding various technologies to their classes, teachers can benefit from better explaining the topic to pupils and revising without too much effort which will help them to shorten the amount of time for organizing the lesson and lengthen the analysis of the topic. Digital integration aims to enhance learning and different scholars have also discussed the tools adopted by educators to facilitate learning processes (Garrison, 2016; Laurillard et al., 2013). Innovative learning facilitates by developing the course material that provides chances for undergraduates to participate in the content of the course distinctly, actively, and independently (Laurillard et al., 2013; Simkins, 2002). Moreover, digitalized teaching has mutated traditional learning into automated and self-paced studying (Crall et al., 2010; Butler-Pascoe, 2011; Gagnon et al., 2015).

The advantages to integrating technology in EFL learning and teaching are mainly threefold:

(1) high exposure to English unparalleled opportunities to practice EFL and engage with authentic real-world contexts of language use, thus doing things with language rather than just learning about language;

(2) boosting students' motivation to improve their communicative competence in English is a very effective way of indulging language learners in the target language and culture, as individual learning style and pace could be catered for;

(3) increased learner autonomy and control, providing a more student-centered pedagogy with learners at the center of the learning process and more actively engaged in their learning than in traditional direct instruction methods (Jewell, 2006). For example, both asynchronous (email, discussion boards, mailing lists, and blogs) and synchronous (instant messaging, videoconferencing, chat rooms, and Multi-User Domains) computer-mediated communications enable students to hone their English skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking at the same time, and get actively involved in one-to-one, one-to-many or many-to-many communication environments, free from the constraints of time and space. All these tools can be used in formal instruction, guided by an EFL teacher, or, independently, by self-tutoring. (Motteram,

2013). By using various websites learners can access a wider range of information and make e-friends whom they communicate with them in the English language or find numerous videos or e-lessons to comprehend the meaning of words, and texts in English and play controlled, online, educational games to strengthen their knowledge. For example, www.youglish.com is a website where learners can find the meaning of a word and its usage in different contexts, as well as, they are able to change the videos according to their wishes, and also they can add that word to their online word list in order to find whenever they need. This website helps the learner to feel the real usage of words and different videos make them remember that word and use it in their own sentences. When learners apply these types of digital devices, they can not only improve their vocabulary range but also language production, when they listen to the consumption of new words, their brain automatically repeats and they start using these words in their speech.

English learning through digital games and motivation

The digital games industry has gone through major transformations over the past few decades, in part as the result of technological innovations. Malliet & de Meyer (2005) trace the video game medium back to its prehistory (starting 1958) and note that "almost all [game] genres known today already existed in a prototypical form in the early 1980s", ranging from relatively language-intensive and contemplative adventure games to more fast-paced action-oriented games. However, the rise of online PC games[4] beginning in the mid-1990s and the more recent development of massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) have expanded the possibilities for players to interact in and with foreign languages, sometimes involving multiple languages synchronously (e.g., Thorne, 2008). In the game design literature, many approaches have been undertaken to determine the essence of a game, a synthesis of which is provided by Salen and Zimmerman (2004: 80): a game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome. In the CALL literature, the term game has been used as an umbrella rubric to refer to a wide and heterogeneous range of environments and user (or player) activity types.

According to Hubbard (1991), the game appears to be one of those intuitive concepts in language teaching that remains undefined even in books particularly devoted to it (op. cit.: 221; emphasis in original). Early CALL definitions stressed

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[4] PC game - personal computer game

that games are self-referential systems that make no attempt to mimic the actual world (Crookall & Oxford, 1990; Hubbard, 1991; Phillips, 1987). As a result, a game can be distinguished from authentic communicative activities, which are related to the actual world, and formal language practice, which is related to the classroom world (Crookall & Oxford, 1990: 18). (Hubbard, 1991: 221). In addition to motivating learning, good digital games represent good learning because they can make learners feel like active agents rather than passive recipients, allowing them to learn different styles, new skills, strategies, and consolidating ideas and concepts best when they see how they fit into a context; all elements that can be very motivating (Gee, 2005; Wang et al, 2008; Yu-lin, 2015).

According to Prensky (2001; 2007), motivation is a combination of fun and participation plus learning and entertainment. Similarly, Gee (2005) states that what motivates gamers is basically the principle that they can create and live a new identity in a new virtual environment. Squire (2006) complements this view and declares that what motivates gamers to play even after a long day of work and study is the fact that they are agents in a new world, living a new life and a new identity virtually, inside the game. Hence, digital games enhance motivation to learn languages in a new virtual era with new online identities.

Conclusion

This article tried to outline the importance and assistance of digital competencies in learning the English language in high school and provide theoretical views of various scientists. In this area, teachers should consider the needs of the digital generation. While learning English through various games, it is significant to be motivated and interested. In fact, pupils' interests, academic objectives, and learner autonomy should be taken into account while applying digital competencies.

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