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THE ROLE OF *IT* TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROCESS

OF FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The goal of the paper is to show the role of digital information means in learning second/foreign languages. The changes in the approach to foreign language teaching on one hand and the development of information technologies on the other hand influenced the formation of teaching process greatly. Teaching of foreign/second language is no exception. The use of digital applications is a part of everyday life for modern learners. Hence, integration of such tools will help make learning process much more comfortable.

The article is of practical purpose. It describes the ways to use digital resources to develop specific language competences. Besides information from existing scientific sources, the research includes author's personal experience gained from the teaching process. Each digital learning resource has a small review explaining when and how it can be used.

Keywords: second/foreign language teaching; digital/electronic means; teaching platforms.

1. Introduction

My practical work as well as theoretic research in last few years is connected with teaching second/foreign language on one hand and inclusion of digital education and multimedia means in the teaching process on the other hand. My own pedagogical practice showed me clearly the benefits which the integration of digital means in foreign/second language teaching has. This article is less about theoretical research and more about practical suggestions about digital means which can be used to solve pedagogical problems in language education process.

1.2. Methods used

Descriptive method to show computer/digital platforms used in foreign language teaching in relation to structural, functional and interactive methods are used in this article. The approach is pragmatic: I use combination of several different researchers and approaches to form my own opinion.

1.3. Digital means and second/foreign language teaching

In the last decade computer and associated digital means play growing role in the educational process. "Digital Revolution" changed teaching landscape like any other aspect of life. While not so long ago Face To Face teaching was considered to be the only option (where at first blackboard and later overhead projector served as a medium for one-way information transmission, which was ideal for an environment where teacher had a dominant, leading role), the development of the abilities of informational and communications technologies created rival methods: Blanded and Digital Educations.

The formation of new educational environment naturally demands the creation of new methods, with the integration of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) for solving pedagogical and educational tasks. This means the educational methods which use computer as a mediator between teacher and student. Teaching and learning happens with IT-technologies. Multimedia Tools and Internet makes service and resources easily accessible, makes it easier to share experience and cooperate (Sierra, http://www.hltmag.co. uk/jun09/sart06.htm).

Second/Foreign language learning is a long and difficult process, which requires high motivation, desire, will, energy, time etc. from the student. It should be one of the main tasks for the authors of curriculum and courses as well as for the teachers to include and implement the instruments corresponding to teaching goals in the course. This will make teaching-learning process more colorful, richer, easier, and, most importantly, make it closer to the natural, comfortable environment of the student. If we take into account, that absolute majority of modern learners are from the generation after the "Digital Revolution", for whom the use of digital

means is a part of everyday life, the importance of including IT-means in courses becomes absolutely clear, since it will make their environment much more comfortable.

Second/foreign language teaching was dominated by translation-grammatical method throughout the centuries (in countries with conservative education systems, it is still the leading method). Because of this, no digital technologies were or could be used. Later, the creation of audio-lingual method was a real revolution in language teaching, which was the inception of the use of digital means in language teaching process (though only on one-way level, where the student just listened). Later, with the development of cognitive and socio-cognitive language teaching methods as well as inclusion of IT-technologies in language teaching process made it possible to use digital means as a tool for two-way and, in some cases, multi-way (between teacher and student, between student and class, between student and learning resources etc.) interaction.

Our approach to the use of digital means is following: their use in the reaching process is not a goal on its own. Technical support is important for the success of a course, but it's still just a medium, "it's a supporting tool and the main focus should be on the content and the methodology of its delivery" (Gochitashvili; Lominadze; Manjgaladze, 2010, 127-132)

In his article, „Online Tools for Language Teaching", Jeong-Bae Son offers us a questionnaire based on the famous 5W1H principle (who, when, where, what, why and how). We think that the use of this questionnaire will help course authors and teachers who plan to implement digital tools.

(1) Who uses it? – Learners? Teachers? Other users?

(2) When do we use it? – Class time? Self-study time? Meeting time? Free time?

(3) Where do we use it? – In the classroom? In self-access rooms? At home? Outdoor areas?

(4) What do we do with it? – Reading? Writing? Listening? Speaking? Course management? Communication? Collaboration? Social networking? Resource sharing? Website creation? Web exercise creation? Web search? Entertainment?

(5) Why do we use it? – To manage courses? To communicate with others? To

collaborate with others? To experience virtual worlds? To share resources? To create Websites? To create Web exercises? To collect information and resources? To have fun? To make learning and teaching easier?

(6) How do we use it? How does it work? – By contextualizing? By creating learning spaces? By contacting others? By working with others? By exploring online communities? By sharing information and resources? By publishing Websites and Web exercises? By reflecting on learning and teaching? By developing language learning activities? By integrating certain online activities into the curriculum? (Jeong-Bae Son, 2011)

We think that each of the questions above can have more than one answer from the ones offered by the author. Besides, we think that it's possible to expand the list. In particular, the list doesn't show the great potential of digital means in assessment process in the process of giving motivation and feedback and acquisition of cultural competences.

And, besides that, we think that it is important to ask a question with following

possible answers, to be able to see what prevents the integration of digital resources in teaching process and solve these problems:

(7) Why don't we use it? – Lack of the access on digital resources? Lack of information about digital resources? Expected complication of work? Incompatibility with accustomed educational culture?

1.4. Relation between traditional courses and coursed enriched with digital/IT technologies

Courses with integrated IT-tools do not diverge or oppose the traditional educational environment and process. On the opposite, its basis lies in pedagogical-methodological repertoire, teaching resources and assessment methods that exist in traditional educational practice, while trying to correct its flaws. For example, there are several "advantages" in language teaching programs based on technologies/computer/multimedia. First of all, there is the possibility to include text, audio, visual materials, graphical and moving elements like animation and video, all in same course. Thus, the knowledge is

transferred with different means, besides traditional oral and textual ones.

It is a known fact that in educational process human resources (course author, tutor, instructor, and manager on one side and student on the other side) are equally important as teaching materials, methodologies, technologies. The union of these components gives the optimal result: achieving the goals set by students/learners themselves, while taking into account their interests.

Each learning course has its own teaching specification, which should be represented in its format by the authors and in teaching methods and forms by the course teachers. We'll try to formulate the ways, techniques and methods for the use of necessary digital means to create a learning course which will support effective conduction of teaching process. From this standpoint, foreign language learning course should be based on accepted standards of general educational process planning and organizing. It should be then expanded with competences that are important for teaching foreign languages specifically (e.g. sociocultural competences,

multiculturalism). Digital tools have a great potential in this direction.

Naturally, integrating digital/IT technologies in a course requires for instructive designers and course authors to decide, which type of tools should be used with which type of teaching materials and in what quantity. Depending on specific tasks, a language course should include as many different internet-medias as possible: graphical design and 3D models; audio production (texts, song lyrics); video production (effective to understand target culture and non-verbal communication skills) etc.

Digital means used for supporting course content

1.5 Short review of language competences

1.5.1. Reading

Reading is one of the most basic language skills and it serves as a basis for developing further language skills. Digital tools can help students develop their reading abilities.

While choosing a text for the development of reading skill, maximal diversity is necessary. Generally, such text should cover all speaking styles. If course

authors/pedagogues write the text on one of the teaching platforms (MOODLE, Exelearning etc.), they should segment these texts logically and visually themselves.

Language teachers and theorists know the problems that the lack of teaching materials, its monotony and, most importantly, its non-authenticity and artificial nature can create. Modern digital/distant educational technologies allow us to offer the students unlimited supply of information (we mean authentic texts of different genres and styles, dictionaries, any information connected to learning material, as well as texts created specifically for educational purposes); give learners recommendations about material. The ability of learners to choose from many possibilities which serve same educational goal is also considered very effective (unfortunately, this possibility is practically nonexistent in traditional learning environment).

Foreign language course creators should try to avoid one of the most common methodological mistakes: while it is justified and necessary to use texts and audio/video records created specifically for educational purposes at the beginning of the course, it's

recommended to supply more natural, authentic texts when the language skills of the student grows. These texts present specific of the language they learn and prepare the student to take part in real communicational activities. The records could be made from TV-programs, everyday life, radio programs, plays, while the texts can be chosen by taking genre and style differences into account.

Under texts we understand texts in broad sense: from instruction language to learning texts. Maximally diverse texts should be chosen. Within the bound of the course, texts of formal as well as conversational styles should be represented.

To achieve the above mentioned, quite difficult goals, teachers have a diverse choice of digital resources. Below we present the main means, which can be accessed and integrated by everyone. Some of them are convenient in developing reading skills, while others can be multifunctional and we'll discuss them in other paragraphs as well.

1.5.2. Writing

Writing is a visual form of communication. This complex process

requires from the author the knowledge of and the ability to use several components of language. Writing is a part of our everyday life and we use it to achieve several communicational goals (shopping list, messages, essays and papers, poetic texts, song lyrics, prosaic texts, emails, texts and messages in social networks, letters and greeting cards, journals and blogs).

It is one of the fundamental language skills. In modern world, several mediums are used for writing: letters, computer, cell-phones, which require the knowledge of different writing styles. The content, i.e. the idea that author wants to transmit to the audience, often decides which "genre", which style of expression the author will choose: lecture record, account, poem, novella… It is very important in writing process to choose appropriate lexical repertoire and language register, so that the message can be sent and received correctly. It is also very important to know and correctly use pragmatic aspects of the language (implicit messages the text should transmit to the readers; communication rules of given society; how to address the recipient etc.).

The role of orthography and punctuation in the creation of written text is very important. Solving of all these texts can mean that the person can communicate in second/foreign language completely. Digital means have a real potential to help learners complete these tasks.

1.5.3. Listening

Despite listening being the most important part in verbal communication, it had a very minor role in second/foreign language courses and curricula for a long time. Listening is connected with many difficulties: besides academic language (which is the one usually taught in educational environment), the listener has to understand everyday language, which often differs from the formal one. The understanding is hampered by contractions and "changed" words and phrases and, most importantly, by different tempo and quality of the speech (too fast, too loud background voice while listening etc.).

1.5.4. Speaking

First of all, we must differentiate between speaking training and oral communication. The former happens

usually with the guidance of a teacher and is oriented on the correction of mistakes, whole communicative activities focus on learning to use language freely. Training in speaking helps complete pedagogical task, while verbal communication solves real, everyday ones. The former focuses on giving one correct answer to one question in one try, while there can be a wide choice of answers in latter case. Speaking skill means that the student develops communicative competence, which will help him handle real communicative tasks. The widespread practice of reading dialogues aloud or exercises where the students speak loudly phrases like "I like this film", "You like this film", "He likes this film" serve their purpose in the beginning stage of language teaching, but cannot cover real communicative tasks. Below we shall review the possibilities to use digital resources to develop this language skill.

1.5.5. Vocabulary

In his work, *Language Teaching*, David Wilkins wrote: „Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed"(Wilkins, 1972, 28). In order to perform its primary function, namely, to establish communication, it is necessary to have appropriate lexical stock and a skill to use it correctly. However, it is clear that learning a lexical unit does not mean only knowing how to translate it from one language into another, since vocabulary consists of much deeper layers than it seems.

Teaching vocabulary does not mean teaching just often used or normative vocabulary from the context offered by textbooks (seeing that most words have more than one meaning), neither is just mechanically learning them by heart an answer. Digital medias naturally create environment, where the learner meets same word naturally several times, sees it's synonyms, manipulates with lexical units in receptive and reproductive activities, combines writing, listening and reading (in blogs, comments etc.). Also, in communication with digital channels, all this happens absolutely naturally, taking the interests of learners into account. With the use of digital instruments it is possible to improve vocabulary during the learning course as well as individually, from the side of self-learner.

1.5.6. Grammar

Teaching grammar in second/foreign language learning process goes beyond traditional framework, which considers grammar as traditionally set approach, teaching how words and their components connect to each other and create sentences; the rules, according to which words connect to each other and create one of the branches of linguistics, which studies syntax and morphology (semantics). Teaching grammar in the context of foreign language teaching means that the student should be able to solve communicative tasks, choose language register correctly, use corresponding style in oral task, choose and realize language repertoire according to goals (convince, emphasize, deny) etc. Naturally, it is impossible to solve these takes by solely using resources from textbooks. We repeat once more that the use of digital communication means in a course of self-learning process has a big potential.

1.5.7. Culture

It is a well-known fact that learning a language means learning a culture. Cultural heritage of the language learner plays a big role in this process, since his own cultural norms and views, clichés and stereotypes must meet completely new cultural space. Sometimes this beliefs, expectations and cultural values match, while other times they are absolutely different. The culture not only tells who speaks with whom about what and how the communication should go, it also helps decide how the message should be decoded, determine the significance of the message and the conditions and situations in which different messages can or cannot be sent and interpret them. Culture is the basis of communication (Samovar; Porter; Jain; 1981, 5).

Specialist separate culture into 2 types, which his important in language teaching process:

1. This is culture, meaning anything connected with human life, beliefs and expectations, norms of behavior

2. "Big" culture, meaning the music, literature and art of the country (Abisamra)

Second/foreign language teachers and curriculum authors must realize that the knowledge of everyday life elements and languages is necessary to comprehend the "Big" culture, because literature and art in

general is based and contains universal, international knowledge and values on one hand and ethnical, local values and experiences on the other one.

Traditionally, second/foreign language curricula contain elements of "Big culture", but the other kind (especially in Georgian educational space, unfortunately) is almost completely neglected. So the authors of courses and curricula must take this into account and give students information about both types of culture balanced and help them realize the values of target culture by choosing learning activities and resources correctly, helping them develop tolerance, appreciation and recognition towards foreign cultures even if it is radically different from their own.

Reflection of cultural component in teaching course (culture as a "fifth aspect (skill)" of language) is considered inseparable from other language skills, but its development requires different activities. Digital and technological means give a great possibility to develop these skills, especially if the language taught is not a widespread one.

1.5.8. Pragmatic aspects of a language

Teaching pragmatic aspects of a second/foreign language in second/foreign language teaching course has a very special significance, although many educational environments do not teach them at all. It is absolutely possible for someone to know both vocabulary and grammar, but have problems when speaking, being unable to choose appropriate phrases. For example, a simple word like *"vai"* can, depending on intonation and different pragmatic environments, express fright, surprise or happiness in Georgian language.

This ability shows how well the knowledge acquired during the course is being realized. In practice, pragmatic competence is an ability to analyze, formulate and transmit the content so that it is exact and appropriate for the social and cultural environment in which the communication takes place. Since, generally, this skill is acquired and not thought, this is a process requiring diverse communication, which is impossible in traditional teaching environment. While it is easier to complete these tasks in widespread languages and donor cultures,

the chance to do it in small languages is minimal. This is exactly the case where digital and information technologies are irreplaceable: they offer anyone who is interested to participate in different communication situations and exercises.

1.6. Learning platforms, digital resources and their integration in second/foreign language learning courses

In the next part of the article we describe which digital IT tools can be used for which purpose in second/foreign language process.

1.6.1. Learning Platforms: Blackboard (http://www.blackboard.com/); Drupal (http://drupal.org/) Sakai (http://sakaiproject.org/) Joomla (http://www.joomla.org/) and Moodle (http://moodle.org/) are free open resources, from which Moodle is most popular due to its easy and comfortable interface. On it, it is possible to place teaching material and perform every operation which helps in learning the material (visualization, testing, creating links, making audio records, integrating video links or records). It helps learners develop language skills by creating diverse exercise and testing systems. It's integrated for solving management and pedagogical tasks.

One can use these platforms in second/foreign language courses to give and assess exercises. It is possible to conduct the course completely on a platform or use several of its components, in case when existing material does not cover needs, is not enough or is to monotonous.

1.6.2. Communication Channels are: Gmail (http://mail.google.com/), Skype (http://www.skype.com), TokBox (http://www.tokbox.com/), Windows Live Messenger (http://explore.live.com/windows-live-messenger), Yahoo! Messenger (http://messenger.yahoo.com/), Jabberwacky (http://www.jabberwacky.com/), Verbot (http://www.verbots.com/), MyBB (http://www.mybboard.net/), phpBB http://www.phpbb.com/, Tangler(http://www.tangler.com/) and Voxopop (http://voxopop.com/).

E-Mail

As we already mentioned, digital communication is a very important part on

modern communication. E-mail is especially important, when we want to send personal feedback. "At the same time, course teacher should use the chance to improve reading and vocabulary of the student. It is the responsibility of a teacher to use correct language messages and text to send their students. At the beginning level of learning this could be short information, which can gradually grow more complex. E-mail is an asynchonic digital communication, which "is sometimes called mother of all internet applications" (Warschauer, 1995, 7-26).

E-mail, like other products of digital and informational technologies, can become a medium for creating and sending a message in target language to classmates or to the whole world (Oxford, 1990, 79).

Besides grammar, reading, writing and lexical units e-mail is also a great way to teach the students language etiquette (register): greeting, introduction, farewells with representatives of different age, social and cultural groups, which is a basis of everyday communication. Besides, sending an e-mail is a part of everyday life and will help students practically.

What is teacher's job?

1. E-mail can be used from the very beginning of the teaching process. Be careful in choosing massage and language repertoire. For the beginner's dates, numbers, proper names and some international words (like presentation or training) are suitable.

2. Feedback is must. Any question, response etc. needs adequate feedback (sometimes using student's native language or the language you, teacher and student share (blended with target) can be helpful.

3. Think about corrections. May be immediate corrections discourage students. But leaving them without reaction does not work well. Anyway, correct mistakes and errors personally. Publicly you can just prize the students.

4. Use (but not overuse) symbols. Integrate them in the text (narrative). They are international and can serve as hints for students. It is truly motivating.

For the completion of language tasks all above mentioned tools can be used, but Skype covers all the needs such tools can cover. It is the function of a teacher to plan "chat sessions", which are part of the course, as detailed as possible and manage the process so that it does not go beyond learning needs. This means: planning how

to change undesirable communication; where is intervention advisable; how to encourage student talks; whether the sessions should be individual or group, whether it will have audio and video (to teach gestures, expressions and intonation) etc.

The work of a teacher is much more effective when he/she

- Explains his/her role to students; appoints time (possibly arranging it with students); defines talking topics

- Defines the roles and responsibilities of students during the chatting process;

- Since the chat is part of teaching process, it should be assessed by the teacher like any other teaching activity; Teacher should ask the students to make a summary of the chat, count word if it was written; analyze the mistakes.

- Besides communication, during the summary the teacher asks the students to write a report (where did communication take place; with whom; how many people took part; what was the discussion topic; what conclusion did he/she reach; what is his attitude etc.) (Gochitashvili, 2012, 366)

Communication channels can be used to have contact with native speakers, to take part in individual or group classes. Besides chat sessions conducted by a teacher, natural, unplanned chat processes play also a great role in language learning process.

We think such forms of communication in non-native language (letter, chat, comments and posts, about which we shall speak below) can be more comfortable than face to face speaking, since the language used in computer communication is much richer in vocabulary, more correct grammatically than face to face communication. The reason for this is the fact that the student has time to type and organize the text, to correct mistakes, use dictionaries, which is impossible in oral communication, sometimes leading to the learner being paralyzed, fearing expected errors and inaccuracies.

1.6.3. Social Networks

In education generally, second/foreign language teaching including, social networks like Facebook and Twitter are one of the most important innovations of recent years. Despite their main goal not being foreign language teaching, they can be a great support for language learners.

The opinions of teachers differ about inclusion of social networks in language teaching process – how beneficial it can be or what are the downsides of integrating these networks in teaching process. The main function of such sites is social: society uses these websites to expand the relations with their friends and acquaintances.

In these situations language learning and relationships happen naturally and simultaneously. It is a known fact that the best method to learn a foreign language is to communicate with the speaker of the language and read natural texts in it. And these sites offer language learners to communicate in same language, get information about topics he/she is interesting in.

Social networks also play a big role in self-learning. Facebook and Twitter help users to integrate working in a foreign language without the process being directly focused on language learning. Instead, the language is being learned by cooperation and relation with the speakers of the language. Social networks offer a unique possibility to learn with natural relationships instead of artificially created language environment.

The advantage of virtual language environment of social networks is its flexibility. Language learner can create an environment which is comfortable and interesting for him/her. He/she chooses the material of "learning" and partners for relationship him/herself, taking own interests and language abilities into account. Since, generally, internet-relationships are characterized by free choice: the learner chooses who to have relations with, which group to join, what questions to ask, which language tools to use, what to read, which blog to add. He/she also chooses the necessary volume of the desired information in foreign language; the authors of verbal messages are many different people with different language repertoires and competences. Naturally, all these activities create a natural environment for language acquisition and provide comfortable, convenient terms to study.

The teachers can use social networks to complete their pedagogical tasks. First of all, they need to cleverly "manage" the relationship process in the social networks to achieve this: on one side, transmit the knowledge which cannot be transmitted in

class environment (because of lack of time; lack of representation in learning program; specifics of material; offering the material in academic environment not being appropriate etc.).

A teacher can create "natural" language learning environment for his/her students – put different types of information and activities on his/her "wall". Language learners, meanwhile, can ask him/her questions any time (like any person they can expect an answer from), while the teacher can answer these questions at the time that is convenient for him/her. Online relations are not limited by time or geography. Students have the ability to formulate an answer, analyze and correct his/her opinion, use dictionary to avoid grammatical errors, observe the language of others etc.

Social networks, along with blogs and wikis, are also important resources in second language self-learning process. Available and widespread social networks are: Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/), MySpace (http://www.myspace.com/), LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com/), Twitter (http://twitter.com/) and Livemocha

1.6.4. Blogs and Wikis

Blogs are types of websites which present information chronologically. It usually supports comments. Basically, these are "private entries for wide use", in which the blogger tells his/her opinion about different issues, makes comment and offers news about specific subjects. The text is usually accompanied with photos and graphics (which is a good support in learning process). Many blogs are topical, dedicated to specific issues: there are facts and information as well as personal opinions of the author, which, naturally, requires different stylistic and vocabulary choices. This is a big plus in language learning process.

The blogs, or digital journals, are being used more and more often for the cooperative learning processes. Some of these sites are accessible to everyone. For example, the global leading company in web-technologies, Google, has a blog generator called Blogger.com. One only needs to have a Google account to be able to create a blog here. Blogs are being used in teaching process to collect the opinions of students, to make them analyze what they

learned or debate about a topic they are learning. All these activities are important to master a second/foreign language.

One of the interesting uses of blogs in teaching is so called "personal journal". In the teaching process the students are given roles of some literary characters and are tasked with writing a blog from this characters point of view. Such blogs help students understand and the material deeply as well as develop other skills (http://jullietta-blog.blogspot.com). If we take the vital importance of literature in learning process into account, the potential of these types of activities become very clear. Same blogs can be used for different function (e.g. writing the blog about topics from target culture, chosen by the teacher (taking historic, geographical differences into account) ; narrative in first person and conveying narration of others in third person; transmitting information in academic and conversational styles and so on. In the process on blog creation, grows not only the perspective of the learner, but also his/her language competence.

Another instrument used in praxis is a teaching wiki, i.e. a cooperative website with the structure of Wikipedia. Any student of the class or group can edit the wiki. Examples for the use of wiki are: group writing, cooperative development of a website, gathering information about some learning topics, creating a digital guide, uploading portfolios of students, uploading timetables, planning and management of teaching projects. It is possible to download special programs for wiki creation, but it is much easier to use wiki-service websites. Most popular of these is wikispaces.com, which even has a design for educational needs. There are also blog platforms created specifically for educational purposes, like edublog.org, which integrates blogs and class management systems.

http://greetingsfromtheworld.wikispaces.com (was recognized as best educational wiki several times, it unites posters from different sides of worlds about their environment, culture or country. At the moment there are about 300 interactive posters from schools of all continents.).

Here we offer you some of the most widespread blogs and wikis you can integrate in your teaching practice:

Blogger http://www.blogger.com/; Edmodo http://www.edmodo.com/; Edublogs http://edublogs.org/; Live

Journal http://www.livejournal.com/; WordPress.com http://wordpress.com/; PBworks http://pbworks.com/; Wiki-spaces http://www.wikispaces.com/;

1.6.5. Presentation

A presentation is an important teaching activity, playing a big role in foreign language learning. It has a complex nature, being interactive and requiring actualization and demonstration of writing and verbal skills from the author and mobilization of audial and reading skills from the audience (when presentation is visualized, with PowerPoint, for example). Also, questions and answers sessions which follow the presentation significantly improve the speaking and listening skills and offers the participant a natural communication environment. Most important in second/foreign language learning process is, of course, the development of language skills, but the development of the perspective of the student plays also a big role. It is the duty of a teacher to help students choose presentation topics (relevance with learning material, a task corresponding to the student's language competences etc.) and then rate it.

PowerPoint is the most widely used digital mean for presentations, but the importance of online-presentation tools grows every day, because it allows students to listen to presentations (asynchronously, if they want) made by the representatives of the target language. If we take into account the fact that not everyone can listen to such presentations face to face, online-presentations allow them to correct this flaw. Besides that, a teacher must try to include the whole class in the presentation process. She/he should give them following tasks: rate and write which part of the presentation was most interesting, discuss what you agree or disagree about.

280 Slides offers a lot of multimedia (http://280slides.com/) while Animoto (http://animoto.com/,) has video slide-shows. Empresser (http://www.empressr.com/), SlideRocket (http://www.sliderocket.com/) and Zoho Show (http://show.zoho.com/) offer us very efficient, innovative and easy ways to prepare presentatiosn about topics connected to second/foreign language learning.

1.6.6. Resource Sharing

In every teaching process teaching resources play a main role. To create and also share teaching resources has traditionally been one of the greatest challenges, requiring both intellectual and financial resources. Digital/online sources are important tools for sharing the resources, the use of which offers teachers many different possibilities. They are also a great way for self-learners of second/foreign languages. It is possible to share the resources using these tools:

To share documents, there are Google Docs (http://docs.google.com/) and TitanPad (http://titanpad.com//);

Zoho Writer (http://writer.zoho.com/) and VoiceThread (http://voicethread.com/) are used for group communication.

One can use Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/) and Picasa (http://picasa.google.com/) to share pictures, while Xtranormal (http://www.xtranormal.com/) serves the same role for movies;

Creation and sharing of podcasts is possible on PodOmatic (http://www.podomatic.com/), which houses millions of podcasts created all around the world;

Glogster (http://www.glogster.com/) is considered to be one of the leading digital teaching resources in USA and other leading countries. It allows the creation of interactive posters, so called Glogs (Graphic Blogs);

Slideshare (http://www.slideshare.net/), which was among the top 10 educational tools in 2010, allows storage of presentations in PowerPoint, PDF, Keynote or OpenDocument formats. It also allows storage of videos and organization of Webinars;

Jing (http://www.techsmith.com/jing/) is being used to create and share visual materials;

YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/) is the most famous website for uploading and sharing videos, but the same function is shared by SchoolTube (http://www.schooltube.com/), which was acclaimed by educational organizations and TeaherTube (http://www.teachertube.com/), which was created based on YouTube specifically for educational purposes. It combines video and audio resources, documents, Photos, groups and blogs. Another interesting website of this function is WatchKnow (http://www.watchknow.org/).

1.6.7. Creation of exercises

The use of diverse exercises is very important for developing all for major language skills, for solving grammatical problems and for the teaching-learning process of socio-cultural and pragmatic use of language. To develop language skills it is most important to offer diverse and man exercises. The student should be able to go through the exercises based on the well-known educational principle – from simple ones to the difficult ones. The exercises should have answer key and/or assessment system/scheme.

This can be made using following online resources:

ContentGenerator (http://www.contentgenerator.net/); SMILE (http://clear.msu. edu/teaching/online/mimea/smile/);

Video-quizzes can be prepared on the websites ESL Video, (http://eslvideo.com/) JClic (http://clic.xtec.cat/en/jclic/), Hot Potatoes (http://hotpot.uvic.ca/), Quia (http://www.quia.com/);

Lingt (http://lingtlanguage.com/) is designed for exercises that develop speaking skills, the spoken exercises, while Listen and

Write (http://www.listen-and-write.com/) offers exercises focused on listening.

In the language teaching process, besides the content of the course, it is also very important to plan and manage following organic processes of the teaching process correctly: motivating students, encouraging and supporting them, giving adequate feedback, assessing them. All these activities can be done using digital tools, but it requires from the teacher the ability to using different technologies and the ability to communicate correctly. Digital communication channels make this process more diverse and make it closer to the natural environment the learners have in everyday life.

1.6.8. Dictionaries and concordances

In language teaching process dictionaries are mostly used:

- To see the meaning of a foreign word;

- To translate from native language to target language;

- To check spelling;

- To check how the plural form of a noun or the past form of a verb are used;

- To find grammatical information about a word;

- Find synonyms and antonyms of a word;

- To place words in word combinations;

- To see how a word is pronounced;

- To determine the register of a word;

- To find an example of the word used in natural language.

The role of concordances in language teaching is no less important. According to

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/concordancers-elt, with the use of concordances it is possible:

- To access authentic language corpora, check and see whether our assumption about the use of language is correct;

- Check the words and phrases we teach, the most often used ones, modern and correct ones;

- Find authentic examples for demonstration;

- Create our own resources based on authentic material.

Students can:

- Connect the words. When learning new words, the concordances will help the students find out which words the given word is combined with most often;

- Follow their own mistakes instead of being corrected by the teacher;

- Determine different meanings. When teaching a word with more than one meaning, the teacher takes sentences out of a corpora, groups them by meaning and gives them to students to learn.

- Real examples. When teaching students new words or phrases, the teacher can instruct them to use concordances to find and write down their own examples of the use of the word.

- Create materials. Teachers often create their own activities, when they teach the students words for which not enough materials exist. They also create sentences the students must fill with correct words. Using concordances, we can get authentic text which we can use to create necessary activities. We can even assign students to create such activities.

Digital resources are:

Free resources *Dictionary.com* (http://www.dictionary.com/) , *Merriam-Webster Online* http://www.merriam-webster.com/ and *YourDictionary.com* (http://www.yourdictionary.com/), English and French *Compleat Lexical Tutor* (http://www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/), pronunciation dictionary *Forvo* (http://www.forvo.com/), For English pronunciation *How I say* (http://www.howjsay.com/), graphic dictionary *Visuwords* (http://www.visuwords.com/), dictionary search engine *OneLook Dictionary Search* (http://www.onelook.com/) and server based *VLC Web Concordancer* (http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/concordance/).

For Georgian language learners: English-Georgian dictionary http://www.margaliti.ge; online-dictionary voov (http://translate.voov.me); English-Georgian dictionary http://www.translate.ge/. An important resource is http://ena.ge/, which contains Georgian orthographic dictionary, explanatory dictionary etc.

2. The language of instructions and communication

Most of the messages sent with digital communication means are verbal (graphic messages also play a significant role, but their number or importance in not even close to the verbal ones). When teaching second/foreign language generally and while using digital tools, more specifically, we must not disregard the main peculiarity of this course – it is radically different from any other subjects that the students study in their native language, or on a language the knowledge of which corresponds to the difficulty of the course. Thus, choosing the correct instruction language, to maintain the balance, decrease instruction language gradually, offer instructions in both languages at some level) is one of the main challenges of the course creators. Based on my own pedagogical practice, it is very effective to use so called mediator language for double pedagogical goals. i.e., besides delivering the main meaning given message carries, it can be used to increase language competence. Specifically, teach how to choose language style and register based on the communication task at hand (this can be

done in Skype, chat rooms, video-meetings, during the interactions on social networks etc.). Intonation, if we use audio recordings to communicate with our students, nonverbal language if we use video recordings should be clear, without grammatical or orthographic errors. Internet-communication language should be simple, easy to understand and without grammatical or stylistic errors. If the use of abbreviations is necessary, all the participants of the communication process should be aware of these abbreviations beforehand. Each word and phrase should be directed so that the receiver understands the message correctly and a misunderstanding doesn't stop the communication process. Figural and metaphorical speech might sound pretty, but they have different meanings for people from different cultural and historic experiences. It is often impossible to determine what cultural experience the person you are communicating with has, so it would be better to restrain from using such types of speech. This will increase the chance of successful communication significantly.

Correctly chosen humor can make the message "come alive" and make it easier to understand. But badly chosen jokes can destroy the relationship completely. Joke about situations, not people. Exclude offending comments and sarcasm (http://blog.tradepressservices.com/content/using-humor-in-business-communications/).

Do not use symbols too often, without need. This may scatter the attention of the readers. (Lominadze, Gochitashvili, 2012; 5-15).

Besides these, following factor can become obstacles in the way of a proper communication:

- Fast pace of speaker

- His/her quiet voice

- Simultaneous speech from several speakers

- Difficulty and big volume of new words and phrases

- Difficult structure of sentences etc.

The first three cases are to be considered in chats, presentations and other communication forms where it is necessary to speak, while last two cases can become obstacles in spoken communication as well as written one.

3. Conclusions

3.1. Inclusion of digital means in educational process should ensure the development of all the necessary skills and competences which are required to achieve the goal of the learner. It should correct the flaws that the traditional, face to face teaching method usually has (especially in case of small, non-international languages the demand on which is not so big on the educational market): the lack of teachers, the lack of teaching materials, non-authentic or monotonous texts and exercises; lack of the ability to communicate with the native speakers of the target language. It is known that diversity of teaching, giving material with different means makes teaching-learning process easier and more entertaining. The student who receives information in different situations with different forms will be able to create a coding system and organize the information sooner.

3.2. Integrating digital means in a language course makes the long and difficult process of language learning more diverse. The student is not limited with time and space anymore (he/she can take the course when and wherever he/she wants). The student has the ability to return to the material as often as necessary. One of the distinct advantages of digital language courses is the fact that the learner can access the natural carrier of the language (Tutors, video or audio recordings, chat). This means that the student can interact with the natural carrier of the target language even from another side of the globe (especially important with small, "unpopular" and less wide-spread languages) and go beyond artificial material created only for teaching purposes, which limit the practical use of the language greatly. The use of diverse synchronic and asynchronic communications in the teaching course (chat, blogs, social media, forums, emails, whiteboards…) allow the students to take part in real, live communication, including with the people who are native speakers of the target language. This is one of the distinct advantages of using digital means in second/foreign language courses.

3.3. Digital teaching platforms are important resources for self-learners of second/foreign languages, who represent a growing segment of modern educational space.

3.4. Additionally, we offer you a table showing which activities will help second/foreign language course authors and pedagogues in the process of designing and teaching a course:

Teaching Task	Teaching activities using digital means recommended for the course
Reading	Texts integrated in the teaching course; links to internet-resources; PDF and/or Word documents integrated in the course or given by the teachers; feedback from teacher using E-mail or forums (in case of group or positive feedback).
Oral Presentation	Audio/video clips; presentations end reports made on videoconferences and webinars.
Participation in dialogues	Open audio conferences of students; Chat sessions; verbal communication on social networks; Q&A sessions between teachers and students or students among themselves using Skype or chats.
Grammar and vocabulary, assessment and correction	Lessons integrated in the course (theory + practical exercises) and dictionaries; very detailed answer sheet; recommended answers; additional and correctional activities and explanation on the demand of students. Useful links to resources outside the course.
Development of writing skill	Thematic exercises integrated in the course. Detailed answer sheet of correct and/or estimated answers. Test creation tasks and comments from the teacher about its completion. Real communication with students using e-mail is very effective, also giving an opportunity for feedback.
Development of additional skills during the course (e.g. socio-cultural and multicultural competences)	Existing web-resources in target language, fragments from movies, TV-shows and TV-programs about the studied subject integrated in the course. Textual material included in the course: journals, restaurant menus, tourist brochures, advertisement texts, depending on the thematic.
Motivating and encouraging students	Examples of "success stories" included in the course (audio/video recordings of the alumni, or textual material

	telling others about the success the course has brought), verbal praise/awards using email, forums, videoconferences…
Feedback from teacher	Written feedback with email. Verbal feedback using chat and verbal communication with different speaking styles.
Developing listening skill	Audio recordings of instructions, texts, presentations; communication with course mates and teacher in chat; audio/video recordings, short scenes, movie fragments, song lyrics etc. integrated in the course.
Test to examine the understanding of what was heard	Audio recordings; test.

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