Electronic second language learning: concepts and practice

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Περίληψη
Στο άρθρο αυτό προβάλλονται τα πλεονεκτήματα της ηλεκτρονικής γλωσσικής μάθησης για τους αλλόγλωσους, καθώς τα ηλεκτρονικά κείμενα και υπερκείμενα είναι εύχρηστα, λειτουργικά, μη εραιρικά και βασίζονται σε ζωντανές και δυναμικές –κατ’ επέκταση εύπλαστες– πηγές πληροφόρησης και επικοινωνίας από ποικίλα κέντρα. Στη γλωσσική διδασκαλία με Η/Υ (λογισμικά, διαδίκτυο) οι μαθητές εργάζονται σε μικρές ομάδες, οπότε εξασφαλίζουν ελευθερία κινήσεων, προσωπική εμπλοκή, βελτίωση των σχέσεων με τους δασκάλους τους αλλά και της επίδοσής τους, καθώς ελέγχουν το περιεχόμενο της οδόνης, πληκτρολογούν, αναλογίζονται ή προτείνουν στην ομάδα τους. Εμπλουτίζεται η γλώσσα, με τον εκπαιδευτικό ως στοχαστικό και προσεκτικό διευκολυντή. Ειδικά οι δίγλωσσοι έχουν τη δυνατότητα να συνδυάσουν υπάρχουσες εμπειρίες τους με νέες σε αυθεντικά περιβάλλοντα που έχουν νόημα γι’ αυτούς, να διευρύνουν τις ικανότητες και δεξιότητές τους (γνωστικές, επικοινωνιακές, αναγνωστικές, γραφής, αυτονομίας χωρίς τους περιορισμούς του έντυπου υλικού) και να αναζητήσουν και να εκφράσουν την πολιτισμική και κοινωνική τους ταυτότητα. Προσεγγίζονται πολλοί πολιτισμοί σύμφωνα με πολλές άποψεις του πραγματικού κόσμου. Οι δίγλωσσοι επανεκτιμούν την εκμάθηση της γλώσσας ως πιο διασκεδαστική και εργάζονται πιο τακτικά, συνειδητά, σκόπιμα, προσεκτικά, απ’ ό,τι οι μονόγλωσσοι. Η αυθεντική επικοινωνία όμως, για να μην κουράσει τους μαθητές μετά τον πρώτο ενθουσιασμό, πρέπει να συνδυάζεται με την ανάπτυξη ακαδημαϊκών δεξιοτήτων γραφής. Η ανάλυση συνοδεύεται από μια κριτική προσέγγιση της ηλεκτρονικής διδασκαλίας της δεύτερης γλώσσας.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά
Ηλεκτρονική διδασκαλία και μάθηση της δεύτερης γλώσσας, CSCL.
1. Benefits of electronic language teaching
In this review article I present the benefits of electronic language learning for students of different mother tongues. Electronic texts are dynamic, operative, usable, and without hierarchy. Hypertexts are also based on various centres of information and communication (Meskill et al. 2000). Language with computers’ help creates conditions of interaction and becomes collaborative, creative, and experimental activity (Chapelle 2000: 204, 216, 219). In the last years literature refers to collaborative learning with the use of projects based on technology (Myers et al. 1998: 64).

In language teaching with the use of computers, students work in a circle and are divided into small groups, whereas the teacher is behind students’ backs, in the middle of the classroom. This offers students more freedom of moving, full personal involvement and communication, while the relationship between the educator and students becomes more direct. Depending on the teaching subject, students are able to expand their language competence in a large degree, wondering or advising, as they control the content of the screen or they type down. This width and richness of the language can effect students’ language development only positively, in presumption that they are facilitated by a thoughtful, careful, task coordinator (Meskill et al. 2000).

Computers offer alternate colours, shapes, animation, and they respond to students, encouraging interaction. Thanks to computers, exercises are also interactional, so that the pupil takes attention and better remembers his/her mistakes corrected by the machine than by the teacher. The machine corrects patiently and the pupil is not criticized by the teacher or his/her classmates, so he/she does not experience negative emotions for his/her mistakes. In addition, he/she is not forced to listen to the teacher explaining others’ mistakes that he/she himself/herself already avoids making, so that he/she saves enough time to be informed for his/her own progress and to take control of it (Ariew & Frommer 1996: 178). Nevertheless, teachers help students construct their understanding and the possibilities of taking responsibility of their task (Serrano & Alford 2000: 198-199).

2. Benefits of electronic second language teaching
With the use of computers students’ interaction is possible without racial or gender discriminations (Miller & Olson 1998: 348). Bilinguals may adapt their existing experiences to new ones and may broaden cognitive, communicative, reading, writing and independence abilities and skills to choose electronic texts, free from the limitations of printed material. Both cultures are approached, in line with the real world’s multiple aspects. Bilinguals view language learning as more enjoyable and work more tactically, more consciously and deliberately, more carefully than monolinguals (Meskill et al. 2000), thanks to that natural language acquisition (Rivers 1996: 6).

Students are free to use dynamic electronic learning environments, such as Internet, e-mail, forum, chat-room (Crystal 2002: 3, 10-17). Concerning second language teaching, Internet offers:
– student’s participation in authentic activities which are meaningful to him/her,
– chance for written language development,
3. **Difficulties and solutions according relevant literature**

However, continuous occupation with the authentic communication would tire students, after the first enthusiasm, so it should be combined with higher and more important aims, which are development of academic writing skills and promotion of language and culture. These objectives lead up to proposals, such as student-centered approach, authentic communication, students’ thesis and a tendency for reality differentiation, and offers chances to students to search and express their developing identity (Warschauer 2000: 57).

During second/foreign language teaching, teachers should:
- focus on the ways that students express their opinions than commenting and correcting them,
- view linguistic mistakes as weakness of adaptation to interaction, so as to re-place them than to overemphasize in them,
- avoid evaluate, criticize, overpraise students, compare children’s opinions with others of an authority, or use pupil’s opinions to expand theirs,
- offer feedback in a natural way (Kramsch 1996: 23-24),
- make sure that students understand the text (Papalia 1996: 72, 76).

4. **Critical conclusions**

The previous analysis showed the necessity of language teaching with the facilitation of new technologies. I have pointed to the possibility of autonomy and communication, of atomic and collective exploration, of dealing with various interesting information, and of written expression through personal or team texts. Nevertheless, critical pedagogy has underlined the educational deadlocks in capitalism. Computers, as machines designed simply to perform and canalize information, except from the danger of becoming a short-term over-information that causes cognitive load and intellectual tiring, they are transformed into selection tools for the distributive, ideological, and suppressive mission and operation of the school system: cultivation of formal literacy, transmission of the dominating culture, infusion of basic values of polity, students’ preparation for an antagonistic economy, addiction to atomicity and consensus, acceptance of control-discipline-punishment tools. Defenders of new technologies in no-terms, who do not emphasize to the contents of information but to its technical characteristics and, at the most, to its presentation, refer to the promised spatiotemporal flexibility with the new technologies and to collaborative projects, that keep pace with current commands of capital for flexible work and profitability through skilled electronic teamwork in production and sales.

In addition, it is not the use of computers that ensures education without discrimination but an –absent or ineffective today– educational and social policy for the rights of non-privileged regarding class, race/ethnicity, gender, social and geographical background, educational status, health, choice of lifestyle. Besides, what costs leads to apartheid, so computers will probably intensify it. This reality is under consideration, but it is up to indigenous and heterogeneous active citizens if they would accept these associativities and regulations in their lives or they will organize non-conformist innovative technologies for their benefits, that is to inspire their electronic messages for social-political movemental actions from-below, to create URLs with social-political-cultural radical content for dialogue, to compose their alternative electronic archives of
sciences, literature, fine arts, and intercultural contacts. That means that discussion about teaching heterogeneous the dominating language will be eliminated and the necessity for experienced mutual teaching of multilingualism will be projected.

Bibliography


