

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING DEVELOPMENT IN FRAMEWORK OF TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Learning foreign languages is more and more necessary both in formal and informal education because of co-operation between countries and trying to understand foreign cultures. It helps to know better the culture of language speakers. Cultural approach teaching foreign language is important getting acquainted the country as a whole. Remote teaching is continuing since beginning of pandemic. Online classes are still organized and study process is gaining new appearance. Changes in the learning process because of remote learning influence both learners and teachers. Foreign language teaching methods are important keeping attention of students and studying in most efficient way. It is possible to offer new educative approaches as technology enhanced learning as one of the possibilities for individual studies. The virtual reality can be used even in foreign language learning – there are some existing programs in virtual reality already. It is very essential that students and teacher study with pleasure and keep that feeling during the process of studies and that improves study results. Qualitative research methods with open-ended questionnaire and content analyses is used. Study design is grounded theory. Research group is 9 adult students who study Swedish the second year.

Keywords: *remote teaching, virtual reality, teaching methods, learning foreign languages, adult education*

Introduction

In the context of lifelong learning teaching foreign languages is necessary nowadays because of e.g. globalization, co-operation between countries and understanding foreign cultures. Efficient learning methods help to do it fast and quite easy. It is essential that teachers are informed about the latest findings in sciences and take into consideration e.g. functioning of brain to facilitate learner's success in their studies.

Because of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has given a further boost to technological developments to ensure access to education. It is necessary to think about what exactly technology improves (Daniela, 2021). Online classes are still organized and study process is gaining new appearance.

Technology enhanced learning need for interdisciplinary approaches due to complexity of the situation and the multiple disciplines involved. It is important understanding how technologies can be used and how learners and teachers are co-evolving their learning practice by the use of technologies in complex (Chanlon, Anastopoulou, 2019). Studies are more interesting for the learners and the learning process becomes pleasant comparing with e.g. reading and translation.

Virtual Reality (VR) can provide mental and physical immersion, the sensation of being fully absorbed in the virtual environment (Pinto et al., 2021). VR system can be beneficial by bringing language learners closer to the language culture and create realistic simulations that would not even exist in the physical world (Peixoto et al., 2021).

The knowledge of a foreign language enhances the communicative skills and the level of intercultural awareness. It is daily need of every person in everyday life (Pak, Kozlova, 2022). It opens many doors to understand better the culture of language speakers and the communication is in deeper level for advanced students e.g. saying “*yarrow*” instead of “*grandmother’s tee*”.

Reading and writing is important because adults can read and write. It is easier to understand spoken language in written form for language, which is studied. First teaching speaking is appropriate mostly for children – they learn talking before other foreign language skills. Adults do not like to go through “small child’s phase” when learning a new language.

Literature review

In order to identify the latest research findings in foreign language learning, a systematic literature analysis was carried out. The information was searched in the scientific database *Web of Science*: keywords “learning foreign language” AND “methods” were entered and 5344 results appeared. 15 articles were selected after screening all materials as thematically most relevant to the study. Then regarding keywords “technology enhanced learning” 47074 results appeared. Of them 11 articles as the latest were selected.

Technology enhanced learning

Quality in education has always been a key issue internationally, and evaluations and proposals are taking place, constantly seeking for new ways that could support learning. Educators should always innovate in the use of means and differentiate the methods of didactic processes for providing quality in education to meet the criteria of each level and discipline. Science has offered to the field of education a great deal of solutions to various didactic problems, as well as new educative methods, revolutionizing the educational process in technology-enhanced learning (Nicolaou, Matsiola, 2019). Augmented reality could be used to improve teaching methods in teaching a foreign language – students have the ability to think creatively and solve problems interacting with words, phrases and sentences they are receiving increasing motivation, satisfaction and enjoyment. When a learner is in the environment of using a language, he/she receives words, phrases

and sentences in accordance with that environment and interacts with them, the learning process becomes faster and their retention in the mind increases (Mozaffari, Hamidi, 2022). Virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence are the methods for developing in the independent studies' process. Peixoto and colleagues (2021) write that it improves pronunciation and provides feedback effectively. VR may be better used for learning pronunciation, new vocabulary and even reading but in that way, writing skills are not trained as much. Interdisciplinary research regarding technology enhanced learning is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrate information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines of specialized knowledge to advance understanding (Scanlon, Conole, 2018). There is much possibilities for it's development.

There are some authors why write about immersive learning regarding watching the film and television film during the lesson. Fang, 2021 considers that this aspect organically combines pictures, texts, sounds, and images, bringing pure pronunciation, rich intonation, interesting storylines, and the real world into the classroom, giving students an immersive audiovisual experience, which has greatly inspired students interest in learning.

Learning through Virtual reality can be suitable for different learning tempo. Studies show that it is possible to learn foreign languages effectively by fully immersing yourself in language learning. Benefits of VR: authentic, real-life environment, multi-sensory environment, higher motivation of the learner, increased retention of new knowledge and skills, active student participation, development of student autonomy. "Traps" could be dependence on the use of VR technology and being not cooperative in the learning process. VR technologies allow the student to interact through the senses: sight, hearing and touch. Communicating with virtual beings in a foreign language in a virtual world is a great way to practice pronunciation, create a dialogue and understand a foreign language (Klimova, Pikhart, 2021; Kondratiuk et al., 2022). There are many issues to be researched concerning effect of VR.

Foreign languages' teaching methods

Traditional Method (*Grammar-translation*) was essential already at beginning of the 19th century. In the end of 19th century grammar was not a priority anymore and the *Direct method* was used developing four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the 1940s the Audio-oral or *Audio-lingual method* appeared. In the 1960s *the Audiovisual method* started to be used. In the early 1980s the *Communicative approach* became important because of the need to teach foreign languages to immigrants. In the 2000s in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages two aspects in learning a foreign language were essential: The Actional perspective with social action and the Multilingual approach for the development of multicultural communication. *Post-method* also appeared allowing the teacher to create content program. The "Ideal method" of teaching foreign languages is still in development (Meira, 2020). Every foreign language teacher should try his/her best and use the most ideal method possible in the classroom.

Authors describe the *Direct method* differently: Homeniuk (2019) writes about this method that the foreign language was taught in the beginning of 20th century with the same principles as mother tongue (memory and feelings are crucial in speaking – not thinking). The main goal was considered to be teaching speaking, which allowed learners to communicate at an early stage. Then they started to learn reading and writing. Teaching phonetics was based on the repetition of certain sounds and words after the teacher. Vocabulary training took place basically on texts, poems and dialogues. When the learner first saw a new word or expression, its meaning was clear just from the context. Teaching grammar focused on the texts with grammatical constructions. Teaching speaking was closely connected with reading. Reading was a fundamental skill for learners. Writing was taught through textbooks with written exercises – the dictations, grammar excises and rewriting of words and verses. It is important to recognize, that reading and writing are skills which are essential already in the first lesson because adults can read and write and it is easier for the learner to understand spoken language if it is in written form. Foreign language environment positively correlates with student’s academic achievement and with their proficiency in a foreign language. It boosts motivation, and may play a protective function against negative emotions. It might unlock the learners’ full foreign language potential. Enjoyment may be experienced not only by students but also by educators – the progress they make and the pleasant atmosphere in the classroom (Mierzwa, 2019). Positive atmosphere in classes is very important to reach study goals.

Table 1 Frequency of teaching methods mentioned in literature review

Grammar-translation	Meira; Hovorun et al.; Preradovic et al.; Ranjan, Philominraj, Saavedra
Audio-lingual	Meira; Preradovic et al.; Fang; Biletska et al.; Ranjan, Philominraj, Saavedra
Post-method	Daniela; Meira; Fang; Biletska et al.
Direct method	Meira; Homeniuk; Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Fang
Communicative approach	Meira; Williams; Dai; Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Biletska et al.; Fabian et al.
Sociocultural approach	Homeniuk; Klimova and Pikhart; Preradovic et al.; Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Fang; Biletska et al.; Ranjan, Philominraj, Saavedra; Fabian et al.; Grosu-Radulescu and Stan
Individual work	Preradovic et al.; Biletska et al.; Fabian et al.
Homework	Preradovic et al.
Group work	Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Biletska et al.; Fabian et al.; Oronzio-Messana, Martinez-Rubio, Gonzalez-Pons
Computer corpora	Preradovic et al.; Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Fabian et al.
Watching videos	Daniela; Hovorun et al.; Klimova and Pikhart; Lushchyk, Pikulytska, Tsyhanok; Fang; Ranjan, Philominraj, Saavedra
Virtual reality	Daniela; Dreimane; Peixoto et al.; Pinto et al.
Augmented reality	Daniela; Mozaffari and Hamidi; Dreimane; Oronzio-Messana, Martinez-Rubio, Gonzalez-Pons

Another methodical approach in effective teaching a foreign language is *Cultural approach* based on information from a foreign-language culture. Obtaining information about the country as a whole, the social structure, description of the realities of life and culture (Homeniuk, 2019).

There are various methods available in teaching foreign languages. Analyzing 26 articles from Web of Science database literature review was based on the following frequency of teaching methods observed in Table 1.

It is important to know the basic facts about the culture where the foreign language is spoken – not every word and concept could be translated directly without the context of culture. Another method is grouping the new words regarding themes – it is easier to memorize, students get all information about the particular subject and then they practically analyse some dialogue about this subject. For some of the students a good way to study is individual work – e.g. to find new words in text during the lesson. Homework is very important even if it is a small exercise of grammar or some pages reading in a book. A22 level students read some pages in book which is written in Swedish by a not native speaker as homework – in the next lesson they tell the content in English. Level B22 reads novels of Swedish authors as homework and tells the content in the classroom in Swedish. Beginners devote most part of the homework memorizing new words and simple grammar through materials given by the teacher with different aspects regarding new words and grammar. Some methods like group work are maybe not as effective as is assumed nowadays because not all students like them.

Research methods

The particular research group consists of 9 students who study Swedish (their studies are paid by their employer SEB bank in Latvia). The students were informed that their answers to open-ended questionnaires were anonymized by numbering as Student 1, Student 2 etc. and summarize results will be used for research. The question is: how is their knowledge of Swedish language at this moment and how the knowledge develops. They study Swedish language the second year remotely. 7 of students are women and 2 students are men. Now the group has reached level B11. In this project Swedish is taught through in English because half of the group does not understand Latvian. For the particular teacher it is more complicated because teacher's native language is Latvian and she has to teach in one foreign language another foreign language.

Nowadays in the Development of foreign language skills according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – learning, teaching and assessment – are evaluated: understanding, reading, talking (monologue, dialogue) and writing through levels ABC where level A – student is a beginner, B – student understands the most of the foreign language but still there are issues to becoming better and level C – native language speaker. These levels are divided into A11, A12, A21 and A22, the same with level B and C – each of them e.g. B11 contains 60 academic hours of learning in the classroom in the project where the author is working at the moment.

In this research case study is used as a research design with qualitative methods as open-ended questionnaires, interviews to understand better in detail the attitude of students towards teaching methods applied (Cresswell, 2018; Pipere, 2011).

The aim of the research is to prove teaching Swedish and observing that traditional methods using the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing are efficient even now and as Fabian and colleagues (2021) state combining with the needs of the labour market, integration into the international space, scientific and technological progress.

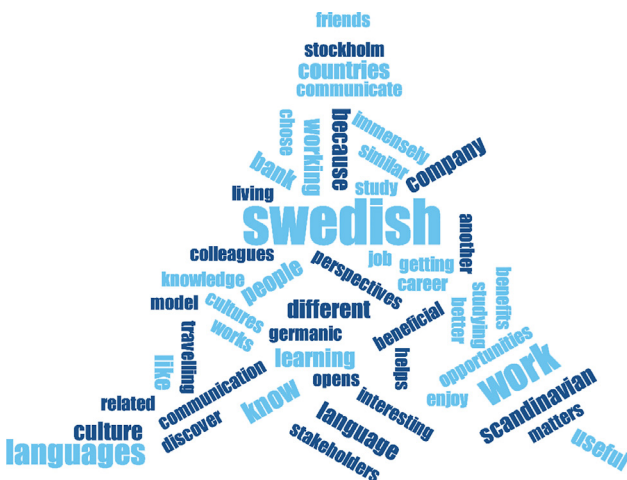
Students in particular project in Latvia have experience of studying foreign languages before. They study Swedish as their third, fourth or even fifth foreign language. Swedish belongs to Germanic language group and there are 40% similarities with German and 25% with English language.

Results

Qualitative research – 15 open ended questions grouped in 6 themes were used asking about reasons why 9 students study the language, about the process of studies and their attitude to it. Content analyses was attempted to find out opinions of particular group of students. Questionnaires were analyzed by coding and finding similarities, differences, grouping into groups, subgroups.

Age of 4 students in the research group is 18–30 years and 5 of the students are 31–50 years old.

Theme 1: Most of all the responses showed that the aim of studying Swedish language are work-related reasons regarding career to meet future goals as well as personal interests both as communicative and self-investment goals. One student answered “my colleagues, stakeholders are Swedish and it is one way to get to know them better and also discover similar but different culture” (Student 7). In the next picture reasons for studies are reflected in word cloud made with Qualitative data analyses program MAXQDA.



Picture 1 Word cloud showing Swedish language studies' reason in particular research group

Theme 2: Preferable teaching methods indicated are grammar and vocabulary teaching, reading and translating, group work, listening, watching videos with subtitles, reading books. One answer was “I like taking some texts about various situations, learning phrases that could be used on daily basis. Take some grammar tasks for practicing the knowledge. Listen to news or songs, trying to guess missing words” (Student 5).

Theme 3: Regarding group work, not all responses show liking that way of learning because of following reasons: classmates do not speak completely correctly in B1 level; discussion is successful if everybody in the group have equal knowledge; too many people in the group is not an advantage; hard to speak at once; not easy to imagine what to say about the particular topic. An answer was “when working in groups I like building some dialogues, having discussions on various topics: that is how we practice our speaking/communication skills” (Student 5). Another student was writing: “I like discussing basic themes such as what did you do on weekend, tell about your friends etc., because those are the basics in a conversation with people and helps getting used to speaking” (Student 9).

Theme 4: Watching a small video (15 min) in the end of the lesson is considered as one of the best parts of the lesson: relaxing; subtitles preferable for better understanding because with no subtitles “the spoken sentence often seems like one word”; need to know spelling of the new words; the pronunciation differs if for example a child is speaking. One student says: “This is a very good method, especially with subtitles” (Student 2). Another student’s opinion: “This is a good way to relax a little from the studies while learning new words and listening to the language at the same time” (Student 6).

Theme 5: Regarding independent studies *Duolingo* application is popular to use as well as 8sidor, Radio news; to go through materials for the next lesson teacher has sent by e-mail; language profiles in social media; communicating with native speakers; making home task – the group is reading a book at home. One student acknowledges: “Regarding learning by myself at home it is going slowly due to limited amount of time” (Student 1).

Theme 6: Answers regarding digital technologies in independent studies can be grouped into three main groups: I support any new technologies; we have enough methods already; I am not familiar with latest digital technologies. It is a new trend using Virtual reality in independent studies and there is possibilities for including it in the learning process.

Discussion

One’s interest to learn a second language started in the Roman Empire, when Romans showed interest in studying the Greek language having Greek tutors who taught them the language. From then on, people became interested in learning another language besides the native, e.g., people from Europe started to think about Latin’s teaching methods (Pinto et al., 2021).

Theme 1: Learning a foreign language is a goal in the field of professional communication in the future, the training will be more effective than when it is only a subject,

the level of professional readiness of future professionals (Fabian et al., 2021). The students are investing their time and efforts in their future working carrier.

Theme 2: (Klimova, 2021; Lushchik et al., 2021) stated that regarding teaching methods there is high demand for the use of authentic materials and teaching is almost the same as teaching business language because learners are professionals who should be provided with materials related to real-life scenarios.

Reading authentic texts contributes to the development of communicative foreign language competence at the following levels: linguistic, speech, socio-cultural, compensatory, training-cognitive (Lushchik et al., 2021). It is important to mix methods of teaching because it is a way to keep interest in studies during the whole lecture.

Theme 3: Regarding group work students are divided into teams and, working with annotations and/or reviews of the text, select keywords that in their opinion, specific to the offered text, When the time is up, the results are compared and discussed. Thus, students develop new vocabulary, develop thinking, learn to argue their thoughts (Biletska et al., 2021). Students practice speaking skills during the dialogues.

Theme 4: In the study it was discovered that students find it useful watching video as part of the lesson. Hovorun and colleagues (2021) have mentioned that 50% students and 70% teachers admit using video content in the study process as best benefit after an important topic.

Authentic film and television works have an important role in teaching a foreign language and not only impresses foreigners with vivid stories and vivid characters. The difficulty of film and television works is different, and the language ability of students is different, so in the process of selecting materials, it is easy to select film and television works that students find difficult to learn (Fang, 2021). To choose subtitles is a good solution, which helps to adjust the difficulty level for different knowledge levels of students in the group.

Theme 5: The student is a personality (age, gender, psychological composition, motivation, etc.), that contributes to the selection of individual tasks to stimulate the activity of each student. The student, as a subject of learning, independently chooses the way to achieve the goal and in the process of solving the problem situation acquires new knowledge (Biletska et al., 2021).

A good way of independent studies could be immersive studies in VR.

Theme 6: A part of the research group had positive attitude regarding digital technologies being used during independent studies. Pinto with colleagues (2021), and Peixoto with team members (2021) have admitted that VR can be successfully used as a tool to learn a foreign language.

Regardless of survey results presented in this paper, to find answers on question how to use technologies in foreign language learning there should be done more research about VR in foreign language learning.

Conclusion

A large variety of foreign language teaching methods are used nowadays. Sociocultural approach is essential while teaching a foreign language as literature review affirms. It is important also the gesture and smile of teacher under study process. Authentic teaching materials are essential. Immersive learning is also usage of film and television works during the lesson as a 15 minutes long activity and is very positively evaluated by the students as research shows. It may be a good solution that the last lesson during the study course students are watching a movie in foreign language with subtitles as a gift from the teacher that for participating in the course and passing the final exam. Covid-19 pandemic and the following remote learning has caused the situation that people study alone by their screens and more and more used to co-operate with technologies. Technology enhanced learning and Virtual reality could be used as an additional method that could be recommended for independent studies. Learning through Virtual reality can be suitable for different learning tempo.

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