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IMPACT OF INTERNATIONALIZATION ON INNOVATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)

Oksana Zabolotna

Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Uman, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0003-4901-1053, e-mail: oksana.zabolotna@gmail.com

The article presents the ways internationalization influences introducing innovative technologies in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). The author shows the difference between information technologies and innovative technologies which are often used interchangeably in Ukrainian methodology books. The shown difference stimulates presenting innovations in EFL teaching at two levels: direct communication (face-to-face), indirect communication (through information technology). The teacher's role is seen more as a role of facilitator of the process of constructing knowledge in the international learning community both directly and indirectly.

Key words: internationalization, innovative technologies, teaching English as a foreign language, informational technologies

Introduction

In Ukraine, the last decades have played a pivotal role in changing approaches to teaching English as a foreign language at secondary schools and in Universities. This interconnection is quite logical as the University student has already got some school EFL learning experience and has some anticipation from the university language course. Internationalization of education has urged the changes of different kind. They have been addressed to in a broad scope of work in Ukraine (Boichenko, Korsak, Sbruieva)) and internationally (F. Altbach, M. Van der Wende, J. Davis, C. Canningham, G. Knight, etc).

Innovations in EFL teaching in Ukraine have been dealt with in the research of Viktorova, Ponomariova, Shevchuk at al. Most of the researchers see intensive use of information technology in the classroom as the most powerful tool of introducing innovations. Only some authors make a stress on the real classroom communication as undoubtedly innovative for Ukrainian EFL teaching. Even if the concepts «communicative language teaching», «task-based approach», «language acquisition» are frequently exploited by methodologists, they have not become classroom reality yet.

What way do Ukrainian educators understand the notion of innovative technologies and how does their understanding correlate with the challenges of EFL teaching under the conditions of internationalization? The article aims at answering the questions. Owing to the fact that speaking English as a means of international

communication can be regarded as both a result and a tool of internalization in higher education, some innovative tendencies in EFL teaching can be quite indicative. Most of the lexicographical sources present the term «innovative teaching technology» through four indicators: clearness of purpose, integrity, novelty and complex change. For instance, Encyclopedia of Educational Technologies defines the term «innovation» as novelty, i.e. purposeful changes introducing new stable elements resulting in transition from one state to the other [1]. At a closer look at Ukrainian schooling one might notice that innovative technologies are fully replaced by information ones, which reflects only two out of four basic characteristics – novelty which is supported by rapid development of cutting-edge gadgets, and change which is derivative from it.

On the other hand, integrity and purposefulness of the change go far beyond information technologies. So, we can logically draw the conclusion that the things dealing with information technologies are innovative by their nature, but the field of educational innovations is wider than that and cannot be restricted to technological development. Innovative Teaching English as a foreign language deals with a much broader spectrum of issues, which as I see it fall into two categories: direct and mediated. They are so closely connected and difficult to differentiate because of one important issue – they are both based on communication, whether it is face-to face (direct) or mediated by some technological devices.

There is some research focusing at innovative technologies most intensively used under the conditions of internationalization in higher education. Firstly, innovative information technologies have broadened the field of communicative language practices as one click can give access to the English speaking community throughout the world and to millions of original sources. Secondly, programmes of academic mobility have empowered the students with all the possibilities arising from academic exchanges, study trips, mobile language courses etc.

As a result, the teacher»s role has been transformed. The teacher is no longer the person who knows everything and who is the main source of information and the organizer of learning. Teachers are now expected to be mediators between learning community and the world of natural language acquisition. Moreover, the learning community is constantly changing thus acquiring new qualities. Innovations in current language education are connected with their both dimensions which are information (dealing with broadening the information field of language education) and communication (which is targeted at interactions in the process of common activities in language learning).

To illustrate the way it works, the examples provided by the Hong Cong researcher Ch. Davidson can be explored [2]. In all presented situations, the information technologies are used in a certain context. In some of them the computer is used as a device for printing and storing texts, making presentation and searching information. In other situations, it becomes a powerful tool for innovational research. Nevertheless, the most valuable innovative power of information technologies is initiating and supporting task-based intercultural communication in natural language environment. Information technologies can introduce natural language environment into the classroom, while task-based component can be brought by

classroom culture. As M. Brin states, «Classroom culture is not just a product of teacher-student communication. It is more physical space which, in its turn, presents a broader social context related to values, traditions and political priorities» [2].

The importance of the language classroom is often underestimated in traditional language education. At the same time, each more or less progressive approach should set requirements for the classroom space and communication. In spite of different external factors, the classroom atmosphere is shared, used and created by the learners. It sets the question: where does the classroom start and where does it end? What is the particular role played by the four walls in which the students meet to learn the language? The idea defining the answer, though subjective, can be reinforced by some examples. Some of them are based on the Ch. Davidson»s research, the others are the combination of international experience of language learning and current Ukrainian practices of EFL classrooms.

The project described by Ch. Davidson had the title «Virtual connections: classroom as a space for intercultural learning». It was targeted at creating natural environment for email communication of students from different countries. Such projects can also function if the communication has real aims and content. Without them it may follow the way of the Peace Letters so popular in Soviet times. The initiative naturally died away, like a fire without new firewood.

Davidsons project was quite successful owing to the properly shaped virtual communication triangle made of two students» groups from Germany and the third one – from Canada. The project was also successful due to the fact that one angle of the virtual triangle was in the authentic language environment. Communicative approach supporters as well as project method researchers stress that the character and attitudes of the communication agents define their communicative patterns, consciously and unconsciously chosen for coding and decoding ideas in the classroom context and out of it.

Information technologies have notably broadened the spectrum of possibilities to involve native speakers into language classroom without leaving their natural environment. Taking this into account, let us readdress the question about the boundaries of the classroom. Firstly, if there is a will to find authentic speakers for classroom task-based interaction, there are many ways to do it. Secondly, the students in their learning can virtually transgress, that is to cross the physical boundaries of the classroom, university, local community, the country, or even the continent. Thus, the thought that logically occurs is that the classroom is not restricted to the four walls – it starts where the motivated student is, and never ends – either in space or in time.

Owing to rapidly developing information technologies the students can communicate with people from various backgrounds. Most courses are targeted at English as lingua franca, without special ties to the speakers residing in the countries where English is an official or semi-official language. That is because people who speak English as a foreign language constitute a considerable majority compared to the native speakers. With synchronous and asynchronous natural interaction with people from all over the world, there is not any necessity to engage the students into «make-believe» activities like role plays, imitations, simulations etc. Instead, their principal task is to organize real communication. Information technologies bring

communication agents from all over the world into the classroom, or it would be right to say that they expand the classroom so that it coincides with the world. Nevertheless, the teacher requires more tools to engage students in communication. The most powerful tools are related to task-based approach, which is still innovative in Ukraine. With so many publications about communicative language teaching and task-based approach it seems that nothing new can be said and that it is widespread in school practice. However common it might seem it is often misunderstood or misconceptualized.

In the 70^s of the 20th century in Europe and the US, communicative language approach was introduced in theory and in practice. It was further developed through task-based або activity-basedlearning).

Since that time communicative language teaching has passed through some stages. At the first stage, the main focus was on developing communicative methods. As a result, there was a shift from Grammar structures to communicative functions. Later on there was much research devoted to communicative needs and classroom activities and tasks to satisfy communicative needs.

Today, communicative approach to teaching Englishis the combination of key principles for learning [4].

Jacobs and Farrel [3] define eight innovational changes in language education:
1. Learner autonomy.
2. Social nature of learning.
3. Curricular integration.
4. Focus on meaning.
5. Diversity.
6. Thinking skills.
7. Alternative assessment.
8. Teachers as co-learners.

As a result, the teacher»s role undergoes a shift from the medium of data concerning a second language grammar, phonetics and vocabulary to the facilitator of communication in the process of mutual performing tasks together with students.

Within the New Generation School Teacher which is a joint project of Ukrainian Ministry for Science and Education and British Council Ukraine the project team visited the Institute of Modern Languages in Tashkent. The purpose of the visit was to observe the outcomes of the similar to Ukrainian project in Uzbekistan that had already been piloted for more than five years. The observed classes demonstrated the efficiency of Teacher-Student partnership in organizing communication that crosses language and geographical barriers.

The novelty of the learning modes was not primarily targeted at the intensive use of information technologies (though they can also be regarded as a powerful tool), but at communication skillfully facilitated by the teacher in the process of task-based learning.

American researcher E. Rogers by his diffusion model demonstrates that in any innovation the participants are divided into five categories: innovators;early adopters; early majority; late majority, and laggards [5, c. 281].

Conclusions

As a result, we can draw the conclusion that those who belong to the first category realize how to plan different tasks and activities with regard to the advantages of internationalization in higher education, and which information technologies can be used to facilitate the student's transgression, that is crossing the borders of the limited choice of language for language's sake.

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