Implementation of Audiovisual Media - A Challenge in Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages

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Abstract

In a world that is in constant transformation, training through technology is becoming a necessary part of the overall education of every individual, including the learning of foreign languages. Consequently, educating young people on how to develop and enrich their language knowledge through technologies, from their very first school days, means teaching them how to continue learning and developing their knowledge throughout their lives, in other terms guiding them on lifelong learning techniques.

The purpose of this article is to point out how, by approaching young people's interests in technology, we can develop their skills related to learning foreign languages. By combining the didactics of teaching foreign languages through technology with the target language content, we can increase the level of, linguistic and communicative skills in foreign languages.

The study was conducted in two different universities, one of the humanities and the other of the exact sciences to point out if the students' interest in learning a foreign language through technology/ICT was the same. By relying on the quantitative results of a survey of these two different corpora, we aim to distinguish the significant values brought by the combination of learning through technologies within the classroom.

This research methodology has an informative character and will serve, first of all, to prepare the most natural didactic intervention of the teacher in order to increase the methodological and linguistic skills of the students. Secondly, it aims to put students at the centre of the teaching process. Meanwhile, the teacher's intervention has a supportive character. It should be flexible and built around the students' needs and questions.

The obtained results emphasize the positive role of technologies in increasing quality in the field of teaching/learning foreign languages, especially in the professional field. They require continuous research and studies, expanding those audiovisual tools that really affect the contemporary and prospective learning of foreign languages.

Keywords: didactics of foreign languages, learning through technology, audiovisual media, independence of students, authentic materials

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INTRODUCTION

The variety of foreign languages that an individual might have, at different levels of mastery, is a highly sought-after asset in today's professional labour market. Therefore, preparing young people with such language backgrounds is an obligation of our current education system.

In tertiary education, learning foreign languages is a mandatory part of the school curriculum. In professional branches, it occupies a modest place compared to language study programs, where the student has the opportunity to learn up to three foreign languages. However, it should be emphasized that, even in these branches, students have to learn another language besides English that allows them to study in a non-Anglophone foreign country as a result of connections with different universities abroad. English remains the primary language for training and communication in most companies and enterprises, so learning it and preparing young people to use it in the professional field takes on special importance.

Teaching English at UPT

The foreign language has been a permanent part of the general education of engineering students. But, over the years, the volume of hours dedicated to English teaching has seen a notable decrease. Currently, this volume ranges from 42 hours to 84 hours, with a fluctuation that is determined independently by the programs that each of the faculties of this university compiles. From this perspective, the learning of foreign languages is characterized by flexibility and a program compression that must cope with both different levels of general English and acquisition of the language for specific purposes, thus developing language skills at levels of different. The latter is determined by the available hours and the level of the group being taught.

It is important to highlight the fact that, recently, an evident disparity of language mastery among students has been noted, which requires, on the one hand, to strengthen their basic knowledge of the language and, on the other hand, to familiarize themselves with the language and terminology of the profession they will practice in the future. The presentation of the context below will allow us to recognize the problem and then dwell on our approach to providing the most efficient solution to it. Our research is focused on English as the primary foreign language in PUT, however, this problem, even more apparent, appears in all languages.

Teaching English at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Civil Engineering

Foreign language is part of the general curriculum of this faculty and takes place in the first semester of the first year of Bachelor's with a volume of 3 hours per week. The method used is that of "Express Publishing" which provides a repetition of the basic level of the language and an introduction of specific topics of their field of study, focusing on the professional terminology. However, since the book is mainly descriptive and somehow monotonous, we preferred to include in the lesson other auxiliary materials aimed at helping students acquire the terminological vocabulary of the field more actively and efficiently.

Since students are quite fond of technologies and, in most cases, they also consult materials of their field of study there, we thought that by approaching their interest in these media, we would "exploit" the same sources for an educational purpose. So, the time they spend on the Internet is channelled in the direction of

materials research and finding, in their professional field and active acquisition of its terminology.

The first and most practical approach was that of finding authentic materials on the Internet and bringing them to class, especially in the form of course assignments by students. Throughout the teaching and learning process within the classroom environment (and outside) it was noticed that for the recognition and understanding of the terms, students used many audiovisuals such as Podcast Video, Slide players, Capsule Videos (Video Clips, short videos) posted on different sites.

Since the interest of the students to acquire the vocabulary as effectively as possible was considerable, we thought "to stop at" the use of these videos and consider them as a possible didactic tool in teaching. On the other hand, approaching their point of view, we tried to teach these videos from the point of view of their own usage.

The importance of their involvement in teaching proved to be multifaceted.:

First, considering the limited number of hours devoted to foreign language learning, this tool enables students to learn and use more terms of the professional field than if we were to use only the book.

Secondly, since the foreign language also serves as a precursor to their professional training, they could get many notions of the field directly through these audiovisual tools where their presentation is given in a more simplified way.

Third, since young people today use technologies a lot to access knowledge, we could use them in teaching by adapting to their way of learning and by processing these videos by adding new elements that are directly related to active language acquisition. So, the videos could serve not only to acquire the terminological vocabulary of the field but also to debate them, that is, to give the language a wider professional spectrum, as a means of communication and discussion between engineering students as future professionals of this field.

Fourth, the development of the spoken language, wherein the meaning of the videos takes a special place, allows them to understand everyday spoken English in most cases by native speakers. On the other hand, debate and discussion on them and oral expression on the part of the students flow quite naturally. Moreover, they are pushed to look at other materials related to the topic being studied, thus deepening the professional field. So, language plays, in this way, a very important role in introducing the meaning and terminology of their professional field. Especially since most of the literature available to students is in English.

Fifth, working with videos, they would also *learn the way or methodology* of how they can acquire and retain the vocabulary of their field of study or extract the main ideas from the use of this audiovisual tool. Such a way would serve them to deepen further in their field of specialty, and to continue and learn independently through this methodology even after finishing university, helping them establish some *lifelong learning techniques.*

Consequently, we thought that the *didactization* of videos for professional purposes in the field of teaching could give better results than learning only through books. Therefore, in the last academic year (2022-2023), we carried out a preliminary experiment to see if our perspectives in this field are an added value of teaching in the professional area and how they should be further refined by considering the problem posed by their implementation in the foreign language class.

Foreign language learning at the University of Tirana supported by ICT

In general, at the University of Tirana, foreign language learning is oriented towards preparing students for an international career in various fields such as diplomacy, human rights, international trade, law, etc. The combination of foreign language knowledge, terminology, and information technology makes students competitive in the international labour market. The infrastructure of the University of Tirana is important to provide the necessary conditions for foreign language learning, including suitable learning environments such as interactive whiteboards, language laboratories and the use of foreign language library resources. The use of information and communication technologies is also important in foreign language teaching. Students learn to use technologies and information resources to improve their foreign language skills, including the use of the Internet, specialized software for teaching and online communication. Students learn the methods and techniques of teaching foreign languages, including grammar, lexicology, and communication skills, the ability to speak, listen, read and write. In addition to the foreign language, students also learn about cultures and the context in which it is used.

The Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana supports students to become proficient in their chosen language. They prepare to be future foreign language teachers or to work in other institutions where foreign languages are in demand, following a specialized study program that prepares them for this role. The study program covers many aspects of foreign language teaching, including teaching methods, pedagogy, learning psychology, and the development of foreign language communication skills.

The use of ICT, specifically interactive boards in foreign language learning is valuable by making teaching/learning more motivating and engaging. 97% of students are interested in this type of ICT-supported learning, as it improves student engagement in learning and facilitates the development of language skills. Technology allows personalized learning using specialized applications and software specially designed for learning foreign languages, offering interactive learning and personalized exercises, adapting the learning to the level of each student, (this is particularly important when students have different levels of foreign language knowledge). The use of video materials in foreign language learning can improve students' ability to listen and understand authentic communication in the foreign language through online communication tools, such as video conferencing, which help students communicate in the foreign language by making the teaching and learning process as practical and comfortable as possible.

Since the mission of this university is to develop future teachers of foreign languages, one of the goals is to prepare new teachers to teach through distance learning technologies. Therefore, support and training of teachers is needed for a more successful process.

The University of Tirana has a growing focus on the use of technologies in teaching, to make students as proficient as possible in the use of foreign languages and new technologies and to prepare them for a very dynamic and competitive future.

Theoretical and methodological framework

The theoretical framework is based on a double cognitive source that is based on the interweaving of theories that exist in the use and mastery of technological tools in the

field of teaching/learning a foreign language and their didactics, with the aim of using them as an aid in the classroom by the teacher her/himself.

Technology plays an important role in creating innovation and motivation for learners. Several studies have been conducted to study the role of ICT in teaching and learning English. According to Stockwell (2016), the teaching and learning process has seen significant changes as a result of the incorporation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) into the classroom environment. According to Dudeney and Hockly (2012), the integration of technology began with the use of word processors, text reconstruction, simple games, and simple feedback, and learners could only interact with the text rather than produce language in a communicative manner. ICT in general terms refers to any use of "computing devices such as desktop computers, laptops, software, or Internet for instructional purposes" (Hew & Brush, 2007, p. 225). Recent innovations like Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL), and E-learning have been increasingly used in the English language classroom (Holmes & Gardner, 2016) and on the other hand, have contributed in changing teacher's role in the learning and teaching process. These advances are also evident in the work of the European Commission to empower people with the use of digital technologies (European Commission 2020). The field of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), and more specifically English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has not remained unaffected by all these shifts in the field of language teaching and learning; ICT's role in it has been studied and observed the las decades. Dashtestani & Stojkovic (2015) based on more than 50 studies reported on the positive impact of ESP learning through these three technologies:

(1) CMS/LMS (Course/Learning Management Systems) which tend to increase the quality of ESP instruction and promote the development of listening skills; (2) corpora (large collections of texts in electronic format combined with specific tools s) increase ESP students' knowledge of specialized vocabulary and collocations and foster academic communicative skills; (3) wikis enhance ESP students' knowledge of academic writing through collaborative writing activities.

However, there are many other specific tools and applications contributing to ESP learning and teaching, but mobile-based learning has prevailed because of the attraction of students towards Smartphones.

Smartphones (Due to their shared focus on current requirements and societal contexts, MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning), and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) are synergistic in some ways). According to Hashemi et al., "Mobile learning is currently the most useful tool in the ICT world. It is believed that mobile learning could be an essential factor in involving young adults in learning, where more traditional methods have failed" (Hashemi et al. 2481). Regarding ESP, more specifically English for Engineering purposes, students can learn more about their field of study in English at the same time by utilizing a variety of MALL resources. These include games (quizzes on everyday lessons, science, physics, mathematics, etc.), online dictionaries, grammar correction apps, social media platforms, videos, films and documentaries, and chat groups where they can create contacts with other students from all around the world and exchange ideas using English and the terminology of their field of study.

Li (2018: 11-13) also outlines several potential affordances of ICT to ESP teaching and learning: in addition to the fact that ICT can support language learning by addressing learner needs, it also facilitates the creation of authentic materials (digital

web materials in particular), mediates thinking (in network-based learning and computer supported collaborative learning), provides a learning environment that makes interaction possible, facilitates self-directed learning (ICT offers learner the degree of control they need for self-direction), and motivates and engages learners.

ICT and Audiovisual means in particular, in the methodology of foreign language teaching require constant improvement, and the creation of new didactic materials, because their competent use helps to increase the effectiveness of learning, and is an effective way to stimulate the educational process. (Efimova.O et al, 2021).

The use of ICT in the field of teaching is considered a challenge whose main purpose is to "increase the level of mastery of the content learned for each student" (Mangenot, 2003). We aim to analyse cases of ICT use in teaching/learning to analyse new situations that appear in the field of foreign language learning.

This study considers ICT as a tool in the function of a pedagogic project that will allow students to use information while also developing **critical thinking** towards it (Bullat-Koelliker, 2003). We adhere to the opinion that, in the field of teaching, the support and help from the teacher should lead to **independent work** from the student which will accompany him throughout his life, serving as a *lifelong learning technique.*

Realization of the experiment and emerging problems

The experiment was carried out in parallel at the University of Tirana and the Polytechnic University of Tirana. The goal was to see if the answers would be the same or different.

At the Polytechnic University of Tirana, the sample of the study is a group of 60 students from the Faculty of Civil Engineering, Hydrotechnical Engineering study program and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Mechanical and Textile and Fashion branches.

They were subjected to a survey with 10 questions which were designed by the English language teacher for the students of the aforementioned study programs. The purpose of this questionnaire was to highlight the students' attitude towards the use of ICT, mainly audiovisual tools in foreign language learning for specific purposes, focusing on the terminology of the profession. Next, we analysed how useful these interventions are in the field of foreign language teaching.

The design of this questionnaire was based on a general observation of students who, while learning the terminological dictionary of their field of study, different sources of information were used to learn a foreign language.

The selection of questions was made keeping in mind the students' approach to the use of technology in the classroom and outside it.

The questions of the questionnaire aimed to highlight and define some of the audiovisual resources used by the students to improve their technical language writing skills and to enrich their terminological vocabulary related to their field of study. Regarding writing competence, wide use of various language correction applications has recently been noticed, but to have some more accurate data about the use of these programs by our students, we decided to ask them. Listening competence was also the focus of one of the questionnaire's questions, where students were asked to clearly define the benefits, they gained from listening to foreign language materials. Subsequent to the previous query, students were questioned on conceptual frameworks and their application. We decided to ask students about conceptual schemes because we consider the latter a very efficient technique in organizing thoughts or information as

well as a very good intermediate tool for connecting prior knowledge with new knowledge. In addition to the two aforementioned skills, speaking competence is extremely important for our students, both in the classroom and later in their work environments, so two of the questions were about the presence of audiovisual media during the learning process in the classroom, the role of these videos in creating discussions and students' attitudes towards videos as an effective classroom teaching tool that increases and improves communication skills in their professional language.

For data collection, we used Google Forms. The questionnaire was addressed to 70 students of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, but only 58 of them managed to complete it, while from the Faculty of Foreign Languages, only 40 students participated in the questionnaire.

The focus of the questionnaire was students' familiarization with the foreign language using audiovisual tools, such as videos.

The obtained results point out the great interest that technological tools represent, especially in the approach to professional knowledge. Students prefer those tools where pictures and sound are present. This helps them to illustrate their knowledge in practice with the objects and phenomena covered in it.

Fig.1. The benefits obtained from listening and watching videos
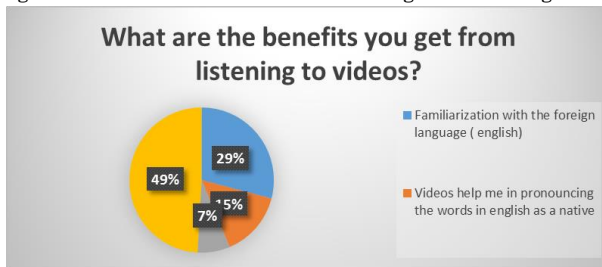
The answers to the first question imply that the majority of students see the benefits of videos in the professional field as multifaceted. Almost half of the respondents, 48.2%, said that the benefits of videos are in many directions. Almost 30% say that the videos help them become more familiar with the English language, without including other specifics such as learning terminology.

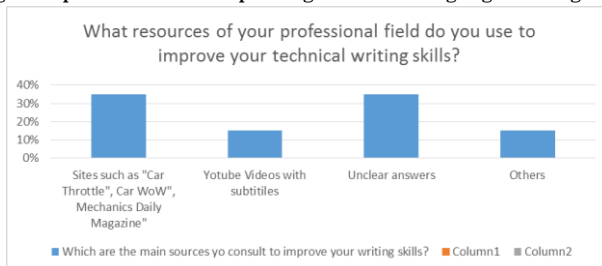**Fig. 2. Top resources for improving technical language writing skills.**

Figure no 2. shows the answers students gave regarding the main resources they use to improve themselves in writing in technical language. A considerable part, more than 30% of the answers are not clear, considering the question addressed to the students. It

is worth noting that just 30% of the students mention accurate sources related to technical writing, which are "Car Throttle", "CarWoW", "Mechanics Daily Magazine" and "Digi Books". The rest of the students mentioned sources such as YouTube with subtitles, authentic materials, etc.

Figure 3. Conceptual Schemes
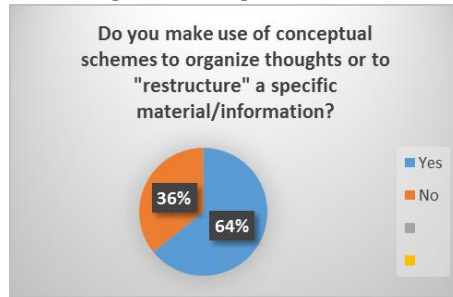
When asked if they implemented the conceptual scheme techniques, to help them organize and express their thoughts or reproduce a certain material 64.3% of the students said, and the rest, 35. 7% No.

Conceptual schemas serve as a useful and effective intermediate point between thinking and articulating whatever is one one's mind. Conceptual schemas are a conceptual and linguistic preparation. They are tools that help in structuring and organizing a new material and reproducing this material. For this reason, we decided to ask the students if they use them and what benefits they get from using them. When asked if, among other things, the schemes help them make the connection between prior knowledge and what they see and hear in the video, more than 80% answered yes. Attached to these questions, the students were also asked a more general question, where they were asked to say if they take notes while watching videos (movies, documentaries, or video tutorials on YouTube and social networks) more than 75% said yes.

Figure 4. Films/Movies and documentaries as a source for enriching the terminology of the professional field of the students.

Bearing in mind the fact that, in the curriculum of the subject of ESP, terminology is one of the most important aspects of this subject, but also essential for students, they were asked if two specific sources such as films and documentaries, help them to enrich technical terminology. More than 87% answered yes, while only 12.5% said no, they don't watch videos and documentaries to serve this purpose.

However, ICT is definitely not limited to audiovisual media in which videos are at the centre. Many other applications serve students in professional foreign language learning, as well as correctional applications for grammar, spelling, etc. When asked what such applications students use, their answers varied.

Figure 5. Correction Applications in English for grammar, paraphrasing and other functions
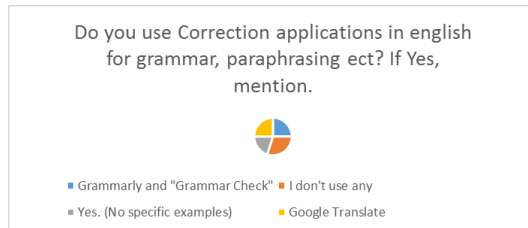
As can be observed in Figure 5, more than 30% do not use any of the correction applications whose significance is considerable because these apps help students make an assessment of themselves and learn through the correction of mistakes. Some of the students answered by mentioning "Google Translate" as a correction tool, but it remains unclear how they make use of this resource to correct their English. 25% of these students use the "Grammarly" and "Grammar Check" applications.

The last data we required from students through the questionnaire is related to the implementation of videos and their role in promoting interaction among students as an effective source of discussions and knowledge exchange in the classroom setting.

**Figure 6. Students' approach towards the implementation of videos in the classroom**

87% of students approach the use of videos in the classroom quite positively, stating that they would prefer videos related to their professional field to be used regularly in the classroom. On the other hand, they say that the videos are a stimulating source for discussions with each other. Out of 50 answers given by students about the role and importance of videos in the classroom, only 7 of them say that videos are not important. 87% of students think that the presence of videos leads to inclusiveness of students, better and productive communication with each other as well as exchange of knowledge and opinions about what they see in the video.

The results obtained from the same questionnaire addressed to the students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages were the same except for two points.

The first difference that was noticed, as we can see in Figure 7, was in the question that asked the students to define the correction applications that they used to correct and improve their writing skills.

While some of the students of the Faculty of Polytechnic University defined specific applications such as "Grammarly" and "Grammar Check", on the other hand, the students of Foreign Languages did not mention any specific application, but only the presence of grammar exercises and Google Translate, which is not clearly understood where the help of this program lies in writing and improving writing. These data highlight the fact that students need to orient themselves around some applications that can help them more in improving certain skills as well as increase their technical terminology.

Fig 7. Comparison on the Usage of Correction Application
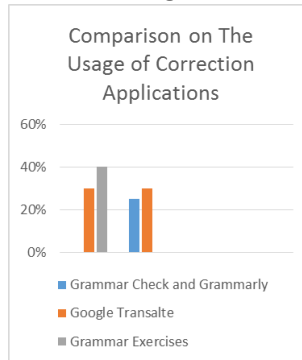
The second difference was about the main sources they make use of to enhance their writing skills most of the students of the UT mentioned only 4 main sources: Books, different websites, YouTube, and online dictionaries, however, these answers are not relevant to the question being asked.

Different from students' of ME students where the sources used to enhance their technical writing are specific and mainly professional field-related such as CarWOW ect, these students don't mention a specific one.

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

This research, aimed to get a piece of preliminary information on the students' approach to technology and, on the other side to distinguish and create a "database" of resources, in which students had an interest during the teaching process in class. However, the success of using this methodology lies in the *natural/organic acquisition of knowledge*. The student chooses those technological resources that facilitate their understanding and the gained knowledge. The choice is somewhat individual and he/she returns to them as often as he/she deems necessary or when time permits.

By creating a base of data that he/she can access, the student saves time, but also avails him/herself of the rest of the time to learn more and to preserve/update his/her knowledge in another way.

On the other hand, *the didactization of these tools* by the teacher increases students' acquisition and retention of the concepts and the terms they express themselves with. Seen from this point of view, the processing of authentic audiovisual documents should be at the centre of the professor's teaching process.

For this purpose, the teacher must be trained not only to process these tools didactically but, in some cases, *to create them, even in common projects with students* to

engage students in their learning, fulfil students' needs and interests as well as, why not, become role models for the upcoming students.

CONCLUSIONS

Technology is taking an increasingly important place in teaching, which means that it requires trained professionals to teach with and through it.

Being concise and diverse, audio-visual tools educate the reading and acquisition of the topics covered in the classroom differently, so they should be an integral part of the teaching process in the classroom, either through additional literature or through their discussion in the classroom.

The didactization of these tools creates a new reality in universities where hybrid learning (in the classroom and at a distance) directly affects the learning methodology, for active and independent learning of knowledge.

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