

Electronic Media – An Overview

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ABSTRACT

The electronic media can store and transmit information in two different ways: either in an analogue or in a digital form. Nowadays, the digital form is favored because it enables the user not only to access information, but also to develop and modify it faster and more easily. It confirms Lawson-Borders who says that “digital technology compresses information and allows text, graphics, photos, and audio to be transmitted effectively and rapidly across media platforms”. This also means that the digital media are typically the multimedia. They very often feature multiple contents such as videos or audios, which can be easily combined. For this reason, the term ‘digital media’ is generally used synonymously with the term ‘electronic media’ since now most of the electronic media convey information in a digital format. Media literacy is defined as “the ability to access the media, to understand the media and have a critical approach towards media content and to create communication in a variety of contexts” (European Commission). When a teacher uses the media in his or her EFL classroom, he or she does it primarily for the purpose of language teaching. However, he or she also indirectly teaches the students how to work with the media and how to interpret the content they offer. Therefore, language lessons can significantly contribute to the teaching of media literacy.

1. Defining Key Terms

1.1.1 Media

In Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, medium is defined as “a means of effecting or conveying something” (722). However, many sub-definitions can be added to this explanation. For instance, the sub-definitions proposed by Chan reflect the way the media are used in the educational context: the medium can be either understood as “a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment” or as “something (such as a magnetic disk) on which information may be stored” (2). The first sub-definition relates the educational media to the mass media (e.g. television or radio), the second sub-definition, on the other hand, associates the media with technological devices (e.g. cassette tapes, DVDs or tablets).

With respect to the channel, the media are traditionally divided into two groups: the printed and the electronic media. The electronic media are further split into the written and the time-based media. Balzagette explains that the first group of the electronic media is largely based on a written word, e.g. emails, websites and blogs. The media in the second group “all depend on duration as an essential part of their meaning” (Balzagette 5), e.g. radio, film, television, video and games.

Moreover, the electronic media can store and transmit information in two different ways: either in an analogue or in a digital form. Nowadays, the digital form is favored because it enables the user not only to access information, but also to develop and modify it faster and more easily. It confirms Lawson-Borders who says that “digital technology compresses information and allows text, graphics, photos, and audio to be transmitted effectively and rapidly across media platforms” (1). This also means that the digital media are typically the

multimedia. They very often feature multiple contents such as videos or audios, which can be easily combined. For this reason, the term ‘digital media’ is generally used synonymously with the term ‘electronic media’ since now most of the electronic media convey information in a digital format.

The degree of newness, which is connected with a certain type of the media, constitutes another distinctive feature of the media. Cuban contrasts the old media such as textbooks, blackboards, overhead projectors, television, and video cassettes with the new media, which encompass “the ‘hard’ infrastructure of wiring, computers, software applications, and other equipment, including laser disk players, overhead-mounted presentation machines operated from a keyboard, digital cameras, and so on” (12). He adds that the new technologies also require “the ‘soft’ infrastructure of technical support for all of this equipment, including scheduled replacement and professional development of teachers and administrators” (12). This remark stresses an important characteristic of the new media, i.e. there is usually a net of administering forces, which not only support, but also develop the functioning of them.

Furthermore, the new media empower their users to connect with one another more easily. As Meidasari explains, “through these technologies, young people are participating in a range of activities, including social networking, blogging, gaming, instant messaging, downloading music and other content, uploading and sharing their creations, and collaborating with others in various ways”.

1.1.2 Media Literacy

Media literacy is defined as “the ability to access the media, to understand the media and have a critical approach towards media content and to create communication in a

variety of contexts" (European Commission). When a teacher uses the media in his or her EFL classroom, he or she does it primarily for the purpose of language teaching. However, he or she also indirectly teaches the students how to work with the media and how to interpret the content they offer. Therefore, language lessons can significantly contribute to the teaching of media literacy.

Nowadays, the term 'literacy' is much broader than it used to be in the previous century. Baker et al. point out that in the 21st century "what it means to be literate has changed as the demands of a culture have changed. [...] Today, our culture is becoming more technological as we spend more time watching television and using computers. The changing demands of literacy in our technological society suggest that we need to reexamine previous notions of literacy" (396). Yet Douglas adds that this kind of broad understanding of literacy "is significant as people are facing many kinds of literacies during their life" (BFI 1-2). In the 21st century, being literate means to understand television, film, newspaper articles, blogs and other means of the printed as well as the electronic media.

It is apparent that media literacy has become a fundamental piece in the pyramid of literacies, which the civilized people encounter in their everyday lives. It is not only necessary to know how to utilize the media, but also how to abstract trustworthy information from them. Warlick supports this notion by saying: "assuming a rapidly changing and information-driven future, what our children know will be less important than what they can do with it. Rather than being the end product, we must look at information as a raw material that students not only learn, but also use in some way" (50). The 21st century students of English should be trained to be successful information seekers and they should know how to process the information for their own benefit. If the English teachers work with the new media in their EFL classrooms on a regular basis, they help their students to achieve this goal more easily.

1.2 The 21st Century Teachers

What are the roles of the 21st century teachers of English? In his webinar 'Changing with the Times', Gareth Davies, the teacher trainer and materials developer for OUP1, stresses three major roles of today's English teachers, namely: teach students to ask questions, teach students to gather and assess information from a variety of sources and accept we are part of, not the only source of, knowledge. It means that the 21st century teachers of English should try to teach their students how to find and work with information, how to consider it critically and do not present themselves as the exclusive source of it. Nevertheless, he does not say that every English teacher now has to be an expert at working with the new media. He rather says that the success of the teaching process lies in the understanding of the changing learning styles of the students and the English teachers should be ready to adapt their teaching techniques accordingly¹.

Yet it may not be easy for the 21st century English teachers to adopt these roles. It is the curricula, which is

changing slower than the time and also it is the teaching myths, which teachers usually embrace and stick to that influence them. Fiedler & Våljataga explain that "the current, mainstream educational system can't keep up with the rapid rate of change in the twenty-first century" (142). They see the reasons for it in the fact that "the process of establishing a new learning culture is fundamentally restricted by the values, myths and beliefs about education and learning among the various stakeholders" (142). These stakeholders are primarily the creators of the curricula who usually do not reflect on the changes fast enough, but they are also the teachers who are apt to adopt certain teaching myths and stick to them for as long as possible. These myths are deep-seated in the culture and they produce pervasive beliefs on education. In other words, the changes of the roles of the English teachers which have been already addressed are not only about the implementation of the new media into the lessons, but also about different ground beliefs, which the teachers have about learning and teaching.

On the other hand, many teachers realize the fact that although the lifestyles of their students have changed quite much in the recent years, the school stays mostly the same. Osborn et al. support this assumption and say that "teachers are very aware of the difficulties of engaging all pupils in learning and know that schools have changed less in their deep structures in the last 20 or 30 years than young people have changed" (4). It seems that many teachers are aware of the changes which would make the education more effective, but they consider their implementation difficult. This is the reason why there may be some English teachers who do not use the new media in their lessons much or not at all.

1.3. The 21st Century Students

What are the characteristics of the 21st century students of English? It is obvious that today's students of English differentiate from the previous generations in that they have been born into the digital age. Erbaggio et al. call the current student population 'the NetGen' and they characterise them as "typically visually literate, having the unique ability to weave together images, text, and sound in a natural way, and to assimilate disparate information from multiple sources". Spector et al., on the other hand, call these children 'digital natives' and put them in contrast with their parents and teachers who are referred to as 'digital immigrants' (822).

There are two crucial points which characterize the digital natives – "they possess a sophisticated knowledge of and skills with information technologies and as a result of their upbringing and experiences with technology, they have particular learning preferences or styles that differ from earlier generations of students" (Osborn 822). Digital immigrants, on the contrary, "grew up in the pre-digital age and had to integrate technology into their lives as it has rapidly evolved to become essential. Accordingly, it is assumed that their levels of understanding of and skills with technology are not as sophisticated and fluent as those of digital natives" (Osborn et al. 822).

It means that the lives of the current generation of the English students are highly determined by the new media. For some of them, the Internet became a prominent learning tool and a primary source for information (Lawless 912) and it is

¹ Oxford University Press, 2012.

likely that the new media influence the way they learn and perceive the language as well. As Davidson & Goldberg write, "new technologies are changing how people of all ages learn, play, socialize, exercise judgment and engage in civic life. Learning environments, peers, family and social institutions are changing as well" (5). For example, nowadays there are many more channels which are widely used by the students and through which English can be learnt, e.g. social networks, television, games and smartphones.

Nevertheless, although the 21st century students of English may have some solid abilities to work with the electronic media, it was proved that they still need training in using them effectively (Osborn et al. 824). It is for this reason that media literacy should be perceived as one of the key competences provided by schools. Jacobs highlights that "while more young people have access to the Internet and other media than any generation in history, they do not necessarily possess the ethics, the intellectual skills, or the predisposition to critically analyze it" (138-9). One of the actual results of this is the fact that many students "are unable to focus for sustained periods of time and they cannot deeply and reflectively read long texts" (Rama 32). It means that the 21st century students of English should be not only taught with the new media, but they should also know how to use them effectively.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that much of the research conducted on the digital natives was based on "limited profiles of Millennial Generation students who come from affluent suburban areas around large cities" (Osborn et al. 825). It implies that the scope of the research on this topic may be limited and the results cannot be absolutely generalized. In addition to the socio-cultural and class factors, gender plays also a significant role in this context. Zammit confirms this presupposition by saying that "gender can often assume a key role in the acquisition of digital literacy, especially when articulated with other social, cultural, and material factors" (131). The motivation of women to use the new media is traditionally perceived to be lower.

1.3.1. Students and PC Games

Playing PC games became one of the most popular free time activities in the 21st century. Especially boys like to play them often. For this reason, it may be worthy to examine their effects on teaching English a little further.

Firstly, Davies says that there is nothing so bad about playing PC games and that not only students, but also their teachers can profit from it in many ways. In reality, the PC games teach students to live in a try-again culture in which failure is not perceived as something bad. Quite on the contrary, the PC games encourage their players to experiment or ask friends for help. Seely Brown further explains that "the first thing to realize about game play is that most video games are incredibly difficult to master. [...] In this world, you immerse yourself in an immensely complex, information rich, dynamic realm where you must sense, infer, decide and act quickly. When you fail, you must learn from that failure and try again and again and again" (15). It means that the PC games train

their users to make fast decisions, which can be well employed in the English-speaking activities targeted on instant reactions and improvisation. Moreover, getting used to the life in a try-again culture can have a positive effect on tasks solving as the students may be less stressed and fearful. That may also have a positive effect on students who are afraid of mistakes when talking in a foreign language.

Secondly, the PC games foster collaboration, role-playing and multi-dimensional problem solving, which are useful skills for the English language learning as well. As Ravenscroft et al. point out, "immersive environments and games are specifically suitable for acquiring the 21st century skills such as problem-solving, collaboration and inquiry, because they are based on the fact that what needs to be acquired is not explicit but must be inferred from the situation" (295). Davies compares this new culture with the traditional school culture and says that it is time to start thinking reverse. It means that it is important to teach the students of English how to fail, not to be ashamed of doing exercises again and learning from the mistakes, to focus on the why and to show the working out.

On the other hand, although the PC games can be used as an effective tool for learning and teaching and there exist even some schools which are entirely built upon the game-based learning (e.g. the Quest to Learn school in Manhattan) and some English textbooks already offer their users an online support partly in the form of the PC games² targeted on the language practice (e.g. *Headway2*), it is important to emphasize the fact that not all games are suitable for learning. They have to be carefully designed and properly used.

1.4. Media in Education

Education should prepare students for the real life. Nowadays, many people live in the world where the media are ubiquitous and as Tafani points out, "media are important because we get to know the world through using them" (2). They work as tools which provide people with the information about the world. It is the reason why the media can be considered to be a useful instrument, which can help students with their learning. Clark & Morrison approve this assumption and point out that "educators have examined the impact of media on learning since at least 1912, when the American psychologist Edward L. Thorndike recommended pictures as a labor-saving device for instruction".

Nevertheless, the English teachers have used many more different types of media for conveying instruction and supporting learning since 1912. The mass media such as newspapers, movies, radio and television have been used alongside with the traditional educational media such as textbooks, chalkboards or overhead projectors. However, the range of the media available today is much wider. Now, the English teachers can work with the interactive whiteboards, notebooks, tablets etc.

1.4.1. The Use of Media in the EFL Classrooms

² 2 the games are available at <https://elt.oup.com/student/headway/?cc=cz&sellLanguage=cs>

No matter what type of media is used in the EFL classroom be it a magazine picture, a short video or a tablet application, it is commonly used for the purpose of bringing a piece of real world into the lesson. As Chan observes, “media are essentially realia to be brought into a classroom from the outside world in an attempt to make language activities appear more realistic, more interactive, and therefore, more meaningful” (132). Moreover, the authentic materials “are regarded as motivators and as a means to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning” (Erbaugh et al.). Erbaugh et al. further observe that “using authentic materials allows students to connect with the target culture in a more personal way than if the culture is presented uniquely through someone else’s narrative” (e.g. the authors of the English textbook). It means that the use of media in the EFL classrooms is essential for a successful second language acquisition.

The purposes of the use of media in the EFL classrooms can be summarized in the following way (Knill 2):

- shake up old paradigms
- rethink the subject
- illustrate real life applications
- explain things better
- tackle real life problems
- add a discovery component
- add color to the subject
- break the monotonicity of a lesson
- use audio-visual channels
- share teaching tools with other teachers
- better organize a lesson
- have students become more involved
- mine other interests of students

It is obvious that the media can spice up the English lesson in many ways. Their great advantage is that some of them can run on a multimodal level, i.e. they are a combination of words, sounds and images or they sometimes even work through the tactile channels. It helps the students with their learning of English because it is generally assumed that the more senses are involved in the learning; the better is the understanding of the topic. Moreover, the media can help teachers to implement various discovery techniques into their EFL classrooms, which also usually brings positive learning outcomes. For instance, students can be asked to read a magazine article or an online text and with the help of the accompanying pictures elicit the structure and the meaning of the given words.

On the other hand, because of the fact that the content of the authentic media is designed for native speakers, some students may consider the language used in them too complicated. In addition, the authentic media “may be too culturally biased and difficult to understand outside the language community or there may be a problem with material that can become outdated easily” (Lancouchová 8). The solution to this may be the use of semi-authentic materials³ or the engagement with online materials. As Erbaugh et al. point out, “by presenting authentic materials online, students have all the advantages offered by authentic documents, but can also determine how and when they engage with them: by replaying

key sections of an audio recording or by taking more time than is usually available during an in-class activity to decipher a text”³.

1.4.2. Old Media

Among the old media are traditionally counted the printed media such as books, newspapers or magazines and the electronic media such as radio, tapes and records, television and films. As Lawson-Borders writes, their basic function is to gather and disseminate news, information and entertainment (1). Tanriverdi & Apak add that the old media are a good source of current data and they make the students more culturally competent as they provide them with linguistic and cultural authenticity (6). Because of these “they motivate students to speak and help them integrate listening, reading, talking and writing skills through various kinds of activities” (Tafari 2). The reading of newspapers in English, for instance, “helps a student advance their knowledge of current lexical items and idiomatic expressions and increases their ability to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate cultural texts beyond the comprehension of simple facts” (Tanriverdi & Apak 6). Furthermore, the use of the old media in the English language classrooms brings positive motivation, interactivity and collaboration into the lessons. It can be achieved through activities such as analyzing a text on a popular topic in a magazine, watching and discussing a teenage film or a short video or reconstructing a book story in pairs or groups. Such activities provide students not only with the language practice, but also with information. Since most of the students are familiar with these types of media, the activities done at school can be easily extended and continued or finished at home, which may help the students to bring English into their daily lives.

On the other hand, some students of English may consider the old media rather demotivating because they find them obsolete and not interactive enough. Many today’s teenagers prefer the digital media, which they regard as entertaining and easy to access. Besides, teachers have to take into consideration the fact that the mass media are not innocent. For instance, as Tanriverdi & Apak observe, “teachers must be aware that newspapers and magazines are commercial enterprises aimed at a particular target readership; and as such they may reflect the values, interests and biases of the readership; as well as those of the owners, editorial staff, and the political milieu” (6). For these reasons the students of English should be taught how to interpret the media, so that they could identify the possible disparities between the texts and the reality.

³ simplified materials which appear authentic

type of media		its use in the ELT classroom
printed	newspapers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transmit the culture and reflect the current language offer a variety of text types, language styles, subjects and topics a source of many of the varieties of English real-life events arouse curiosity and may motivate students in their further reading can be interpreted or used as they are also suitable for mixed-ability classes, depending on the activity exercises based on them are suitable for developing reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, writing skills, grammar skills, vocabulary, geography skills, social study skills etc. <u>examples of activities</u>: headline combinations, categorizing articles, exchanging the news, ranking articles, press conference, predicting photographs, putting the picture in the story, classifying adds, job interviews, problem page letters, acting out cartoons, predicting the weather, newspaper reading corner etc.
	magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in use similar to newspapers offer a wide range of topics - political, scientific, fashion, cultural, entertaining, sport etc. rich in pictures – they stimulate verbal or written stories <u>examples of activities</u>: introducing topics like colours, clothes, means of transport, famous people and many others, making up short stories, stimulating picture discussions etc.
	books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack the immediacy of other mass media, but they are more enduring entertaining, motivating and they promote reading <u>examples of activities</u>: acting out the story, writing letters to the characters, changing the plot, continuing the story, reading aloud in groups, turning the story into a film etc.
electronic	radio, tapes, records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stimulate the imagination helps the pronunciation, the intonation, the rhythm etc. develop greater confidence in the ability to cope with English as it's spoken outside the classroom <u>examples of activities</u>: listening to the headlines and making predictions, discussions on the topic, reconstructing the events, reporting on the story
	television, films, videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in use similar to radio attractive and entertaining can be exploited for language practice or for developing more active literary skills use multiple channels, which can help students to understand the subject better may be used as warming-up activities, pre-activities for the coming issue, as supplementary materials for a certain topic, for up-to-date information, to update the information in the textbooks, etc. <u>examples of activities</u>: setting questions about the film, commenting on various things, turning the sound down and guessing, making own dabbling, comparing the film with the book etc.

1.4.3. New Media

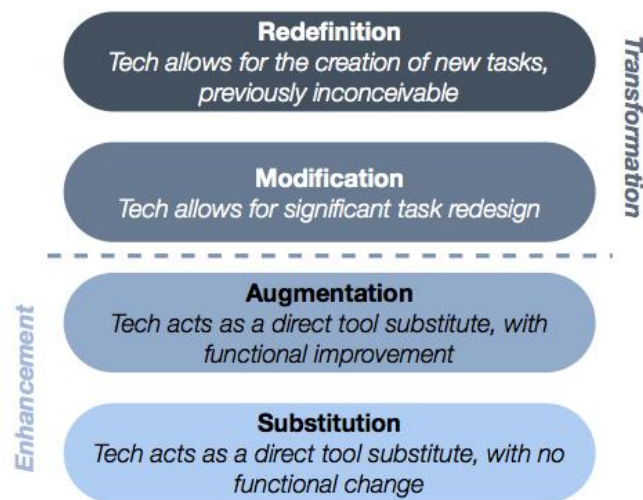
Whereas the old media are commonly perceived as a means of delivery of information or instruction, the new media open up new possibilities of working with the tasks, e.g. they

can help the English teachers to support the student-centered, the collaborative or the problem-based learning. Moreover, “online technologies have the power to make authentic materials instantly accessible to learners in the language and culture classroom” (Erbbaggio et al.). They enable the English learner to stay in touch with a wide range of materials, which are transmitted through various modes.

Nevertheless, some teachers may be reluctant to utilize the new media in their English lessons. One of the reasons is the fact that the use of the new media in the EFL classroom presupposes the reality that the teacher is able to cope with technology. However, as the following model by Dr. Ruben Puentedura shows, the implementation of the new media into the English lessons has its benefits. It is depicted in the model that the new media can substantially improve the traditional teaching techniques and make the teaching of English more efficient. (Bannister & Wilden 23)

The following table was designed with the aim to make the workings of Puentedura’s model

SAMR (Puentedura)



The following table was designed with the aim to make the workings of Puentedura’s model clearer. The ideas were taken from Bannister & Wilden (23-24) and they were adapted to the

context of the EFL classrooms by the author. The techniques operating with the old media are compared with those using the new media.

old media	level of use	new media
student reading a list of vocabulary items from the textbook	Redefinition	student producing visual dictionaries of lexical sets using a camera in the tablet or cell phone and turning the pictures into an e-book
teacher controlling the tape recorder	Modification	student using headphones to listen to the recording on the tablet
	task redesign	playing the tape as often as they need
student looking up a word in a paper dictionary	Augmentation	student looking up a word in a dictionary application
	functional improvement	the possibility to hear the pronunciation
writing down on the paper	Substitution	using Microsoft Word for typewriting

The notes in bold depict that when the teacher decides to use the new media in the EFL classroom, there are additional levels, which can enrich the participants of the learning process. It can be illustrated on two practical examples, which are related to the teaching of vocabulary in English. Reinking & Rickman, who have investigated the effects of computer-mediated texts on reading, provide the first example. They found out that when reading computer-mediated texts, where definitions of difficult words were provided with a click of a mouse, the students were more motivated to read them and they performed better in vocabulary and comprehension tests than the students who read the same texts in print using a paper dictionary (Reinking & Rickman 404). Erbaggio et al., who have compared the vocabulary teaching using a textbook with teaching the same using the Internet, give the second example. They observed that “employing internet-based activities permits teachers to address another deficiency evident in many foreign language textbooks, i.e. the lack of interactivity that enhances engagement, particularly among contemporary students, who prefer learning in a social environment. In language textbooks, vocabulary is often presented as a list of words to be memorized and used in the context of grammar-based exercises. Websites, with their active links, images, sounds, and texts, are purposely interactive and user-friendly, and consequently more engaging”.

However, which types of the new media can be used in the English lessons? Nowadays, when the methodologists talk about the new media in the language teaching, they usually mean by these the computers or more precisely their portable versions, i.e. laptops and tablets with the wireless Internet access. But they may also include smartphones, digital cameras or other types of the electronic media. In the following subchapters, the beneThe notes in bold depict that when the teacher decides to use the new media in the EFL classroom, there are additional levels, which can enrich the participants of the learning process. It can be illustrated on two practical examples, which are related to the teaching of vocabulary in English. Reinking & Rickman, who have investigated the effects of computer-mediated texts on reading, provide the first example. They found out that when reading computer-mediated texts, where definitions of difficult words were provided with a click of a mouse, the students were more motivated to read them and they performed better in vocabulary and comprehension tests than the students who read the same texts in print using a paper dictionary (Reinking & Rickman 404). Erbaggio et al., who have compared the vocabulary teaching using a textbook with teaching the same using the Internet, give the second example. They observed that “employing internet-based activities permits teachers to address another deficiency evident in many foreign language textbooks, i.e. the lack of interactivity that enhances engagement, particularly among contemporary students, who prefer learning in a social environment. In language textbooks, vocabulary is often presented as a list of words to be memorized and used in the context of grammar-based exercises. Websites, with their active links, images, sounds, and texts, are purposely interactive and user-friendly, and consequently more engaging”.

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1.4.3.1. Tablets in the EFL Classrooms

From the group of the new media, tablets were chosen as the media on which the benefits and drawbacks of their use in the EFL classrooms will be portrayed. This choice was determined by the fact that the implementation of tablets into several schools all around the world now appears to be of interest. Recently, there have been huge investments into the implementation of portable devices into the Czech schools as well⁴.

Bring Your Own Device

Teachers often ask about why they need tablets for teaching and if they can really facilitate learning. The answers to these questions will be sought in the following subchapters. Yet the following findings can be similarly adapted to the other types of the new media, e.g. notebooks or net books. Most of the findings on tablets are cited from Bannister & Wilden since their publication appeared to be recapitulating the most recent discoveries concerning this topic.

The benefits

Firstly, tablets can be compared to laptops and mobile phones. However, the English students can freely travel with them because they are not as big and heavy as laptops, but they are bigger than pocket-sized devices and students can work on them for a longer period of time. If some students are not familiar with the touch screen keyboard, tablets can be also used with a stylus.

Secondly, their implementation does not have to be exclusively school-led. It can be based on the BYOD5 situation in which the students are allowed to bring their own tablets and the school does not have to fund all of the devices. Nonetheless, BYOD has also drawbacks; the biggest one is probably the fact that it is unlikely that all the students will have the same applications on their tablets.

Thirdly, tablets are suitable for working on the English projects because students can easily access information on the Internet and process it immediately into a presentation or use it in their further work. In this way, students can practice not only communication in English, but also collaboration with the others. Moreover, “by using the tablet for creative projects students are able to put language into meaningful practice both in and out of the classroom” (Bannister & Wilden 8) and “taking the device home encourages learning outside the classroom

⁴ More information on this topic provide e.g. Daňková (2014) - <http://zpravy.ihned.cz/c1-61805160-miliardovy-nakup-kazda-skola-dostane-az-dvacet-novych-tabletu-nebo-notebooku> (accessed on 6 April 2014)

and helps integrate English into the real life of the students” (Bannister & Wilden 10). The synthesis of formal and informal learning has a positive impact on students’ future learning of English and other subjects. Chen approves it and explains that “by synthesizing learning inside and outside of the classroom, students are encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning, thus developing their independent learning skills and benefitting their future studies” (21).

Fourthly, many of the educational applications come from the Anglophone countries so they are perfectly suitable for the EFL classrooms. There are also many free language applications and technologies available to the students (e.g. Learn English Grammar developed by the British Council or Two Min English targeted on developing fluency). The applications are usually colorful and attractive for the students. They can be mostly also easily navigated.

Lastly, tablets enable the English teachers to personalize and differentiate learning more readily because they offer a wide range of applications which are at hand. This is an advantage because almost in every EFL classroom there are students who are faster and good enough to be able to work on more challenging activities whilst some other students struggle to complete the task and need some further help. It also reinforces the role of the teacher as a facilitator. On the other hand, as Bannister & Wilden observe, “when the students are engaged in project and collaborative learning on a tablet, the teacher may need to take a less active role” (20). They add that “this can at first feel daunting as the teacher may feel less in control of the lesson” (Bannister & Wilden 20).

The drawbacks

Firstly, nobody has the inborn ability to work with tablets. That means that not only students, but also their teachers have to invest some time and effort into learning of how to operate them skillfully. Moreover, as the functions and applications of the device perpetually change, it is necessary for the teachers to refresh their knowledge regularly and actively take part in the lifelong learning. Many teachers may find this procedure too much time-consuming and especially older teachers may find the manipulation with these too difficult.

Secondly, the typical fear of the teachers is that the tablets would go wrong and they will not be able to repair them on the spot. A good preparation course should prepare teachers for these situations and reassure them that they do not need to be technological experts to be able to use the tablets. The faculties of education should be probably the first institution, which should provide the teachers with an appropriate training.

Thirdly, “there is a huge concern among teachers that students will be involved in other tasks during the lesson and not be focused on what they should be doing” (Bannister & Wilden 17). This may be solved by fixed rules about what is acceptable or not and with limited functions on the tablets, e.g. with the limited access to the Internet.

Lastly, teachers using tablets in their lessons are in risk that they forget about the general aim of the lesson, i.e. to teach English, and rather focus on the technology itself.

However, it is all right to use tablets just for one stage of the lesson (e.g. as a warm-up or for the presentation of the topic) and then put them aside. It is important to bear in mind that the tablets should be primarily used with the aim to make the process of learning and teaching of English more effective.

1.4.3.2. Web Based Teaching

Nowadays, the English teachers can base their teaching on the use of the online tools and start the so called ‘web-based teaching’. As Erbaggio et al. write, web-based teaching has a positive effect on communicative language teaching because the use of web-based activities helps to foster an independent learning environment and the activities are largely student-centered. Moreover, there are technologies which are now immensely popular among the 21st century students. In addition to e-mails and smartphones, these are social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter and You tube or web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis and podcasts.

The social networking tools are attractive in that they “enable more user-centered information creation and sharing” (Spector et al. 824). These two characteristics are in fact the basic properties of the so-called Web 2.0 and it is useful to examine this term a little further since its applications can be easily employed by the teachers of English who decide on using the new media for the purpose of trying out the web-based teaching.

Motteram explains the term ‘web 2.0’ as “a shift from what were primarily informational tools to what we may call relational tools – so that if Web 1.0 was the informational web, Web 2.0 is the social web” (51). The idea behind the Web 2.0 is that the Internet user can freely contribute to its content either on his or her own or by collaboration with other members of the Internet community. Anderson highlights that there is “a group of technologies which have become deeply associated with the term: blogs⁶, wikis⁷, podcasts⁸, etc., which facilitate a more socially connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space”⁵ (5). Whereas a wiki is for its flexible structure more suitable for project work, “the blog is better as an ongoing record of class work as the latest work is always displayed at the top of the page”⁶ (Motteram 52). Both technologies allow quick and easy publishing⁷.

However, this list of technologies is not finite. It can be expanded by services such as multimedia sharing or audio blogging. The popularity of these applications presumably lies in the fact that although individually produced, they are shared and evaluated by other people. For this reason, “many teachers also now encourage their learners to blog, publishing their written work and projects online in ways that go beyond sharing their work with an audience beyond the teacher, and which help prepare learners for the digitally-driven post-industrial world into which they’ll graduate – a world where our

⁵ a short for web log; a kind of online journal that is used to publish information (Motteram 51)

⁶ edited by multiple users easily without any knowledge of web design (Motteram 52)

⁷ from the Hawaiian word for ‘quick’; a collaborative web space allowing for pages that can be created and

understanding of knowledge, culture, truth and authority are in the process of being rewritten" (Motteram 52).

This kind of openness, which the web 2.0 offers, can be perceived as a huge benefit, which can be exploited in the EFL classrooms too. While writing a personal blog in English, administering a website in English or uploading a podcast, students are asked to take on an active role and be the creators of the content. This is a good motivating factor since the role of the students is now of the thinkers and doers. Their work is shared and can be evaluated or modified by the peers, which may be encouraging as well because the students know that they are doing their work not only for the teacher, but also for the whole assembly of readers. Furthermore, the products can be archived at the click of a mouse, so the students can store their work for a long time and go back to it whenever they need. Such creation of e-portfolios⁹ is good for monitoring and assessing students' progress in English.

A digital version of a portfolio; it can be word processed documents, blogs, wikis, mind maps or other tools and can include a wide range of digital assets such as video or audio recordings, saved chat room discussions or forum contributions and a whole range of other electronic artefacts (Motteram 158) 10 it is an initiative led by the European Commission; it offers a platform for staff (teachers, head teachers, librarians, etc.), working in a school in one of the European countries involved, to communicate, collaborate, develop projects, share and be part of the learning community in Europe.

On the other hand, the web-based teaching requires good knowledge of technologies and both teachers and students need to be skilful web users willing to learn new things as the applications are being continually developed. Also, the schools have to support the idea of web-based teaching financially as well as ideologically. Nevertheless, the web-based teaching is perfectly suitable precisely for English language teaching since many applications and online resources are published in English. It may be also beneficial for the teachers, who become more flexible. For instance, they can put or check the assignments online at any time of the day or they can run an e-learning course, which is perfectly suitable for the students of distance learning. Schools can be also involved in eTwinning¹⁰, which promotes collaboration among schools.

1.4.3.3. Open Learning

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Open learning may refer to open resources available online to everyone or it may be related to e-learning, i.e. the education via the Internet. However, according to Regolith, the core of the open learning is that "the individual determines how to proceed based on his or her unique needs, perceptions, and experiences, distinguishes known from unknown, identifies resources available to support learning efforts, and formalizes and tests personal beliefs" (119). In open learning it is the student who decides when and how he or she will proceed and what he or she will learn. Such learning is supposed to promote autonomy, interactivity, working with different resources, questioning and critical thinking and all these skills may be utilized for the benefit of the English learning as well. Open learning may help the students of English to explore the language actively and to proceed in their own pace.

1.4.3.4. Networked Learning

In the 21st century, using the Internet for the English learning and teaching became a reality. However, using the Internet in and out of the classroom may change the nature of the learning process. For instance, when the teachers support their students in working with information on the Internet, they may come up to the tendency of moving away from the individualized learning to the so called networked learning. Davidson & Goldberg compare these two notions as following: "whereas the individualized learning includes taking turns in speaking, posing questions, listening to and hearing others out, networked learning goes beyond these conversational rules to include correcting others, being open to being corrected oneself, and working together" (2) (Davidson & Goldberg 30).

The networked learning is built upon the premise that today's students are increasingly used to sharing and editing information or correcting oneself and the others as they do it regularly via the social networking tools such as Facebook or Twitter. In the EFL classrooms, the networked learning can create a basis for a good communicative environment in which the four key competences of the 21st century learners, i.e. critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity (Bannister & Wilden 24) can be developed. In the EFL classrooms, the networked learning can be realized by working on online tasks in pairs or groups. Students are supposed to arrive at the solutions by means of discussion, collaboration and sharing of the information. It is assumed that the students not only support, but also correct each other.

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