The Peculiar Features of Digital Tools in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: This article contains information about how modern digital technologies are used in the learning process and their creations of new possibilities in a contemporary society. It will list some digital tools that need to be utilized during the educational sphere.

Keywords: Digital tools, teaching, online, students, technologies, education, platform, literacy.

Introduction

Digital tools are various websites, programs and online platforms that facilitate modern life and allow to perform various tasks much faster and easier. The introduction of digital technologies is much faster than the introduction of other innovative developments, and recently has managed to capture more than 50% of the population, which has significantly increased the standard of living in many of its areas. For instance, the introduction of digital assistants based on the use of artificial intelligence in the field of medicine has made it possible to diagnose diseases and increase the lifetime of people in many countries. Or, taking into account other activities related to communications in everyday life, it is worth noting that digital technologies have made it possible to create conditions under which it has become faster and easier to communicate with people and transmit important news. The use of digital tools in the field of education is no exception. Digital advances for education purposes are defined as auxiliary tools for conducting innovative classes using various presentations, videos, animations, quizzes. Usage of digital technologies are directly related to digital literacy, since utilizing tools requires a certain awareness in this area. The American Library Association (ALA) defines digital literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."[1] Cognitive skills or functions encompass the domains of perception, attention, memory, learning, decision making, and language abilities.[2] Technical skill is the ability of a person to perform tasks that are directly related to the use of technology.

Body part

In the field of education, the provision of a virtual learning environment and distance learning allowed those students who otherwise would not have had such an opportunity to participate in the programs. The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), which is a pandemic and the main disease of the last two years, has spread rapidly around the world within a few months. The outbreak of this virus has forced the entire population of the world to change their usual life and move to new conditions. Education has also changed, moving to an online format. All teachers, without exception, had to switch to new levels of digital competencies in software in order to continue the education system, since almost all over the world a complete lockdown was declared, when none of the students and

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[1] The New London Group (1997). New Literacy Studies.
[2] Kiely, Kim (2014). "Cognitive function". Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research. Springer. pp. 974–978.

teachers were allowed to study in the traditional form. To conduct classes, teachers had to use various online both meeting and educational platforms. The most popular in use for video calls with students and pupils was the *Zoom* video conferencing platform, which allows to conduct online classes and save them. It is also possible to share the screen with students, showing presentations and documents. *Google classroom* is a platform with which teachers can easily create their own "online classroom", post assignments and tests, evaluate students and even chat via e-mail. It was a tool, along with others, that helped students stay in touch with teachers during quarantine. There are plenty of educational websites to enhance students reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. For instance, *CommonLit* is a treasure trove of literary resources that teachers can use to build lessons that target students' reading needs. Another example for listening skills is *ELLLO*. There are over 1400 audio lessons, and among other activities, students can find games where they listen to a short audio description of a picture and choose the one that fits.[3] Moreover, the ministries of education all around the world had prepared a television broadcast of lessons for all classes in accordance with the curriculum. Thanks to these and hundreds of other educational platforms, the level of education during quarantine did not decrease, but on the contrary revealed the importance of using digital technologies.

The use of digital tools has greatly influenced the way the teacher conducts the class. The effective use of digital learning tools in classrooms can increase student engagement, help teachers improve their lesson plans, and facilitate personalized learning. With the increasing use of technology over the past decade, teachers are changing traditional forms, excluding the use of the "blackboard and chalk" method during teaching and including teaching materials on concepts related to digital literacy. A study conducted in BSU in the field of using digital tools during classes showed that 9 out of 10 students easily mastered the material using video materials and equipment to show presentations. Many students noted that digital technologies during classes were able to attract their attention and made classes more interesting and informative. According to the teachers, the use of video materials of the *Khan Academy* educational platform made it possible to organize the educational process for the entire class. Many of them noted that 90% of students were satisfied with the effectiveness of this program and could receive information without problems. Using the so-called "interactive whiteboard" (a large interactive display board in the form of a whiteboard) allowed to save time and complete more tasks. Interactive whiteboards promote collaboration among students and group discussion and participation.[4] They can be an effective tool for brainstorming due to the fact that notes can be taken on the board and saved to be shared and distributed to students later. Digital tools can not only enliven the lesson and make it more interesting, but they can also arouse students' curiosity and create an inclusive learning environment. An inclusive learning environment is the process of conducting a class where a student of any ability level learns with the rest of the students. Thus, the average student can study with other students who have special educational needs.

One of the advantages of learning with digital tools is their convenience. Universal gadgets such as e-books and tablets open up new opportunities for students. They can replace hundreds or even thousands of books. These are intelligent tools consisting of text, images, or both. They have a built-in light source, can enlarge or change fonts, use text-to-speech software to read text aloud for visually impaired or people with dyslexia.[5] (Dyslexia, also known as reading disorder, is a disorder characterized by reading difficulties in people with unaffected intelligence.)[6] In addition, these

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[3] https://www.fluentu.com/
[4] "What is an interactive whiteboard?" BBC Active.
[5] Harris, Christopher (2009). "The Truth About Ebooks". School Library Journal. Vol. 55 no. 6. p. 18.
[6] Phillips, Sylvia; Kelly, Kathleen; Symes, Liz (2013). Assessment of Learners with Dyslexic-Type Difficulties, p. 7.

technologies allow readers to search for words or immediately find additional information on a topic using an online dictionary.

In addition to the positive aspects of using digital tools, there are a number of negative ones. The main disadvantage is that the part of the world's population that does not have access to the use of digital technologies for self-development behind the rest. Many of these "stragglers" are women, the elderly, the disabled, representatives of ethnic or linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples, as well as residents of poor or remote areas. In some areas, progress in connecting to new technologies is slowing down, and in some places, there is even a regression. For example, in areas remote from the city, people have a problem with connecting to the network, and this affects their quality of education. That's why many people are starting to move to the city, because the use of digital tools during training is the key to development.

Conclusion

Having considered such aspects as the acquisition of knowledge, comfort during learning and the development of education, it was found that the use of digital tools for learning purposes is beneficial and opens up new opportunities. The introduction of digital tools and educational platforms into the educational process allow to increase interest in the classes, activate the educational process, and increase the volume of independent and individual work. Moreover, it develops creativity and inspires.

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