

УДК 378.147

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## THE ROLE OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER IN IT- RICH ENVIRONMENT

*A new role of a language teacher in a foreign language teaching/learning process in modern IT-rich environment has been studied. Brief characteristics of teacher's functions in this process have been given. New competencies and skills which a teacher needs to apply modern information technologies successfully while teaching/learning a foreign language have been analyzed.*

**Keywords:** *IT-rich environment, role of teachers in modern conditions, up-to -date teaching/learning process, special competencies of teachers, new skills.*

**Problem setting in general and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.** Computers are indispensable in contemporary society and permeate almost all forms of human interaction. Their presence and usage have brought about changes of paradigms in communicative behaviour, above all in the spheres of business and administration. Educationalists in different countries have become increasingly aware of the need to provide education and training to meet the challenges and opportunities which the global economy, based on developments in information technologies (IT), presents.

The use of computers in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in universities dates back to the 1960s, but it was not until the invention of the personal computer in the late 1970s that computers became accessible to a wider audience. By the mid-1980s, computers were in widespread use in European schools and now they are used all over the world [4].

**The latest papers and publications on the problem.** The problems of introduction of the new media into educational institutions have been studied by educationalists and researchers in many countries. [See 1-6]. Among the recent works written on this topic we may mention the ones by Blake R. J. , Katlyn J., Sobol J. A. [4; 5;6].

**The issues related to a new role of teachers working in a media-rich environment** seem to be rather important and interesting in the task of training future engineers. The matter of a new role of teachers is so sophisticated that one can always find the aspects which **need to be developed**.

**The aim of the present paper** is to show teachers' attitude to new media and appropriate changes in their roles in order to implement particular concepts characteristic for teaching / learning process in modern conditions.

The ever - changing diversity of the media in teaching and learning in schools not only changes the places and the quality of learning, but influences learning processes from a didactic and methodological point of view, requiring special competencies of teachers. In IT-rich environment, teachers must improve their didactic competencies linked to media in order to provide more consultation in learning processes rather than information and instruction and organize group work to a greater extent.

### **New roles of teachers in IT-rich environment**

#### **1. A facilitator and a guide**

As facilitators, teachers must know more than they would as just directive givers of information. They must be aware of a variety of materials available to improve students' language skills, not only one or two texts. The language textbook is no longer the sole source of information. Multimedia programmes offer sound and vision, showing how native speakers interact; electronic dictionaries and encyclopedias are available for instant reference; online newspapers provide up-to-date information on current affairs in the countries of the target language; official websites offer background information on policy, tourism, political views. Teachers need to know how to teach learners to use all these materials effectively. As facilitators, teachers have to be flexible, responding to the needs that students have and, if necessary, work beyond the curriculum.

#### **2. A researcher**

Teachers need to know how and where they can access information for their own and for their learners' use. Knowledge and competent use of search engines and reliable information sources

are essential as the propriety and reliability of information sources must figure as one of the main criteria for the selection of background material. Familiarity with the use of electronic tools for language analysis will enable teachers to further develop their own linguistic and professional competence and increase their confidence in the use of the language.

### **3. A designer of a learning format**

In order to build up successful learning formats, teachers need to learn how to put together tasks and materials to guide their learners to successful execution and conclusion of their projects. Unlike work with conventional teaching materials (textbooks, workbooks, audio and video materials), which have been graded and completed in a chronological order, the design of a learning format within new technological conditions is much more complex. It requires higher order skills involving researching and evaluating source materials, setting overall aims and objectives and breaking down tasks into meaningful and manageable sequences.

### **4. A collaborator with other teachers**

The preparation of lessons according to a new format mentioned above requires much more time and responsibilities comparing to conventional lessons. Collaboration with colleagues will lighten the burden and make the efforts more fruitful and rewarding. Teachers may cooperate, communicate and exchange their ideas and experience concerning new technologies and ways of teaching. Teachers can also make a good profit from internet exchanges. Such collaboration helps to overcome the sense of isolation (especially for less experienced teachers in their teaching situations), ensures fair distribution of workloads and co-ordinates the tasks in hand.

### **5. A manager of learning environment (technology, learners, curriculum)**

Teachers will need to develop fairly sophisticated management skills in order to be able to provide a healthy balance between the different elements which make up the new learning environments. Mastery and confidence in the use of technology need to be applied to the learning inclinations and abilities of individual learners whilst covering the prescribed syllabus or curriculum.

### **6. A learner**

Fast developing information technologies demand constant training from a teacher. He/she has to learn the world of ever-changing patterns and tools in order to be up-to-date and apply the benefits offered by new technologies to their utmost. These skills can help teachers to search for new reliable data from trusted sources. A further challenge is often presented by learners who possess more advanced computer skills than teachers do. However, if they are ready to cooperate with their pupils, they will find it a rewarding and fruitful experience. The main point is that they are prepared to act as the experienced guide for their learners and not as the all-knowing person who just controls and dominates the classroom.

### **7. An evaluator**

If teachers use IT- based tasks in the foreign language classroom, the models of evaluation which are used in this case need to be revised. Today standard multiple-choice examinations cannot be considered a perfect tool to evaluate the learners' newly acquired skills using computers to learn English. It is recommended to use a portfolio-based approach to assess language competence and skills, to record learners' progress [5].

#### **New skills of teachers in IT –rich environment**

In order to function adequately in the world of the new media, teachers need to acquire and master a whole range of new skills [5].

#### **1. Technical Skills**

Teachers need to become completely computer-literate and have the confidence to use the available technology adequately. They should be able to cope with the most common problems arising from the use of computers.

#### **2. Organizational Skills**

Learning/teaching process in modern technological conditions calls for new organizational and pedagogic models. It includes IT to educate teachers (using a learning by doing and reflecting method), and dissemination of successful models. The innovative potential of languages going online must be fully covered and applied, which will allow teachers to:

- build and sustain language communities;
- dismantle these communities when they have exhausted their function;
- negotiate everyday concerns or complex vocational issues.

It is necessary to emphasize that true success with the new media will be attained only when these media are combined and integrated successfully with approved and trusted conventional routines and materials. Modern means of learning English may serve a useful purpose but cannot replace face to face exchanges with the teacher and fellow learners. Language use is and remains a social activity for which you need real partners for communication.

### **3. Conceptual skills**

There is a challenge for language teachers moving from well- approved, controllable media like a textbook with its accompanying supplementary materials to the more open, inquiring approach required when using the new media to the full. Teachers find themselves in the situations in which they are designing learning experiences and planning encounters for their learners with the target environment. In this case learners have no direct support and control from teachers. Teachers should bear in mind that these difficulties are likely to happen and develop appropriate concepts and prepare good practical examples with convincing theoretical base.

### **4. New literacy: scientific, digital, critical, linguistic, cultural**

The skills, competencies and attitudes which are required from teachers to participate in all spheres of life have changed. Teachers in particular should be given the opportunity to update, extend and acquire new skills so that they are better equipped to meet changes in the workplace and in society. Teachers need to understand and master the new scientific, digital, linguistic, cultural literacy which is emerging and the demands this literacy places on both language learners and teachers. It is essential to be aware of new types of language forms and genres, and this language acquisition must be complemented by language socialization.

**4.1 Scientific literacy** relates to the ability to think scientifically in a world which is increasingly shaped by science and technology. This kind of literacy requires an understanding of scientific concepts of new methods of teaching.

**4.2 Digital literacy** relates to the ability to use information technologies adequately and apply them accordingly to the subject matter at hand. For the language teacher, it refers in particular to the ability to make use of the World Wide Web for language research, to the use of linguistic tools and standard programs for exercises and testing.

**4.3 Critical literacy** implies the ability to evaluate the credibility, usefulness and reliability of any given sources of information. It also involves skills in surfing and identifying the relevant and important materials in the flood of information which threatens the unprepared to feel under pressure.

**4.4 Linguistic literacy** refers to the ability to recognize different up-to-date phenomena in language, sources of their origin and to track their developments. This linguistic skill enables teachers to use the newly-acquired knowledge in the changing situations of language acquisition.

**4.5 Cultural literacy** relates to observing and recording changes in the society or societies of the target language. Such changes may be of a general nature leading to convergence between own, native culture and the target culture or these changes can be only particular to the target culture. The new media is a great source to track all these changes in both cultures; why and how these changes originated, how they developed and what influence they have on the current state of cultures in societies.

### **5. Intermediary skills**

The role of an intermediary is not new for language teachers as it has always been their task to act as a connector between two cultures as they introduce learners to new linguistic and cultural concepts. However, modern means make this role more significant and give it a new weight. Traditional textbooks have safe, monitored and proved by time pieces of information about foreign culture which teachers can introduce in small manageable sections. Access to the “real world” of the target culture and, at times, confrontation with it, requires new strategies and approaches that need to be learnt and practised.

### **6. Analytical skills**

Teachers must also be made aware of the dangers of using the new media as well as how to

avoid or overcome them. Analytical skills have always formed part of the teacher's professional experience, but immediacy and general availability of content mean that teachers must be prepared to make quick judgements about the suitability of sources which their learners may access.

### Conclusion

The media literate teachers have to master a wide range of skills and competencies. Teachers need to focus on the design of situations, sequences and activities conducive to learning languages. A new complex role of teachers calls for training which is a key factor in the effective use of the new media. Teachers need not only to be completely familiar with the hardware and programs available, but also to know exactly what the potential of the different media at their disposal is. They need to learn how to evaluate and select learning resources and how to solve practical and theoretical problems linked to the introduction of information technologies to learn target language. The integration of technology into the syllabus and the successful planning of lessons confront teachers with new challenges. The new literacy linked to IT (cultural, digital, critical, visual, etc.) must be mastered by teachers if they are to benefit fully from the new tools and procedures at their disposal.

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*Стаття надійшла до редакції 15.03.2012.*

### **О. І. Куксіна, Н. В. Соколова. Роль викладача іноземної мови в інформаційно-насиченому середовищі.**

*Розглянуто нову роль викладача – лінгвіста у процесі навчання / вивчення іноземної мови у середовищі, насиченому сучасними технологіями. Наведено коротку характеристику функцій викладача у даному процесі. Проаналізовано нові компетенції та навички, які викладач повинен мати, щоб успішно використовувати сучасні інформаційні технології при навчанні / вивченні іноземної мови.*

**Ключові слова:** *інформаційно-насичене середовище, роль викладачів в сучасних умовах, сучасний процес навчання / вивчення, особливі компетенції викладачів, нові навички.*

### **О. И. Куксина, Н. В. Соколова. Роль преподавателя иностранного языка в информационно-насыщенном окружении.**

*Рассмотрена новая роль преподавателя – лингвиста в процессе обучения / изучения иностранного языка в среде, насыщенной современными технологиями. Дана краткая характеристика функций преподавателя в данном процессе. Проанализированы новые компетенции и навыки, необходимые преподавателю для успешного применения современных информационных технологий при обучении / изучении иностранного языка.*

**Ключевые слова:** *информационно-насыщенная среда, роль преподавателя в современных условиях, современный процесс обучения / изучения, особенные компетенции*

*преподавателей, новые навыки.*