

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING SKYPE FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

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ABSTRACT: Over the last decade, social networks have gained, gradually, considerable space and relevance not only concerning social interactions, but also concerning content transmission and knowledge generation, becoming a niche for propagation and research of various topics. This article aims to investigate the way the potential for interactivity present in Skype mechanisms of enunciation relate to the pedagogical nature of posts aimed at English teaching. For this, we base our reflections on social network studies by Recuero [23], on teaching and technology reflections by Paiva [20] and on virtual ethnography by Hine [11]. The purpose of this article is to provide knowledge about pros and cons connected with the usage of Skype during the process of study foreign languages among Russian people. Research in this sphere is not very developed as internet technologies are new method in education. Our task is to delight all sides of this research. A qualitative exploratory research method was applied to interviews and notes via Skype between students and their web teachers. The data were analysed using phenomenography. The findings are based on the pole in the Internet. The advantages were: being able to be at home; well-known being and convenience for the students; and attend ones possible regardless of geographical distance. Barriers were that the Internet connection works intermittently with audio or picture.

KEY-WORDS: Innovative methods; Skype applications; English; Education.

Introduction

Teachers and researchers are facing increasing pressure to promote student acquisition of “21st century skills” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011), which include communicative competence in local and international languages, higher order thinking abilities, such as critical thinking (CT), and proficiency in information communication technology. Both challenges and opportunities emerge from a focus on 21st century skills, often related to the role of technology in evolving learner characteristics and learning environments. In the 21st century, characterized by increased globalization, competence in international languages, such as English, is invaluable.

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This study focuses on the discovering advantages and disadvantages in teaching English using audio conferencing (Skype) to talk with small groups of students or converse one-to-one.

Skype, a software application for online communication, has been used in classes at various levels, providing many possibilities for teaching and learning. [4][7][18][19]. Skype is a communication tool that allows users to make audio and video calls over the Internet. Calls to other Skype users are free. Skype also offers a computer-to-land-line service for both local and international calls, as a fee-based service. Similar to needing an e-mail address to send e-mails, a Skype account is required in order to make and receive calls.

1. Skype in our lives

Learning English via Skype so far is a novelty in teaching foreign languages and not all people have experienced such way of learning. There are lots of debates on forums on the Internet and on the walls of language schools about the effectiveness of these classes that they have advantages and disadvantages. But the fact is that, without English via Skype, the overall picture of modern linguistic techniques will be incomplete. If it was inconvenient for students, it is unlikely this way of accumulation and improvement of knowledge would have received such widespread.

Skype is a telecommunication application software that specializes in providing video chat and voice calls from computers, tablets and mobile devices via the Internet to other devices or telephones/smartphones.[3] It was founded in 2003. Today there are more than 630 million users of Skype. The number of users rises every day. There were only 405 million users of Skype two years ago. Users can send instant messages, exchange files and images, send video messages and create conference calls. First released in August 2003, Skype was created by Dane Janus Friis and Swede Niklas Zennström in cooperation with Estonians Ahti Heinla, Priit Kasesalu, and Jaan Tallinn.[1] Skype allows users to communicate by voice using a microphone, video by using a webcam, and instant messaging over the Internet. Skype-to-Skype calls to other users are free of charge, while

calls to landline telephones and mobile phones (over traditional telephone networks) are charged via a debit-based user account system called Skype Credit.

2. Educational use

Although Skype is a commercial product, its free version is being used with increasing frequency among teachers and schools interested in global education projects.[5] For example, Skype is being used to facilitate language exchange. Students in different parts of the world are paired off, each is a native speaker of the language that the other wishes to learn. In conversations over Skype they alternate between the two languages.[16][9][25]

Teachers are using Skype in unique ways to fulfill educational goals. The videoconferencing aspect of the software is valuable in that it provides a way to connect students who speak different languages, hold virtual field trips, and reach out to experts in varying fields of study. These experiences allow students a chance to apply what they are learning in the classroom to real-life experiences and it also achieves further learning opportunities.[22][24]

Skype in the classroom is another free tool that Skype has set up on its website. It provides teachers with a way to make their classrooms more interactive and interesting. Skype in the classroom is a service that teachers can sign up for that will allow students to meet other students, talk to experts, and share ideas. Teachers can collaborate with other teachers around the world and design different learning experiences for their students. There are various Skype lessons, in which students can participate. Teachers can also use Skype's search tool and find experts in the field of their choice.[28]

2.1. Advantages in studying English via Skype

The most important argument for learning English online is the possibility in interaction with the teacher in Skype and time saving, and not on the duration of the lesson. This is about a long travel from point A, where the student lives to point B, where the

teacher works. Often these coordinates are in a completely different places and Skype helps them unite.

Therefore, learning English online via Skype was a real salvation for residents of large cities where you have a lot of time to travel to the place of study. In small towns is another problem: a lack of talented and experienced teachers who follow the new methods of language learning and are able to practice modern technology. In addition, Skype has pushed the boundaries and allows you to learn with teachers from other countries, including those who are native speakers.

English classes online give you an opportunity to plan your schedule of classes the most efficiently, without giving sacrifice other important things. This is especially convenient in cases where you need intensive language study, for example, more than 3 times a week. Lesson via Skype can be carried out on Sunday morning, because it does not need to spend time on the road. Nevertheless, it can be fun to start your day with use.

Another undeniable positive side in study English via Skype - it's free to move without stopping your process of study. Wherever you are, you just have to have a laptop, smartphone or tablet and a good Internet connection to complete lessons with a teacher. As for the students and housewives, this problem is not so huge, the businessmen who want to hone their excellence and language skills, can not estimate the benefits of learning via Skype.

This study English online allows you to develop your language skills in the most comfortable environment for you. The most important thing is a high-speed internet and a complete focus on employment. Your geographical location plays no role anymore.

The use of modern technical capabilities should also be included to the benefits of learning English teacher online. The teacher can send you any time a text document, spreadsheet, an audio file to link to a video or presentation on the topic being studied. Some of the teachers also use the opportunity to create personal vocabularies to record audio pronunciation of words. Besides, at the end of the classes a student has access to a list of words that he needs to remember for the next lesson. Audio recordings, made with the teacher, help him not forget how to pronounce new words and phrases. In addition, doing English using Skype, you can always quickly find the information on the Internet, and the

English version of Wikipedia will always be at your fingertips. This advantage is equally appreciated by students and teachers.

2.2. Disadvantages in studying English via Skype

Like any other method of learning foreign languages, lessons via Skype have not only advantages but also disadvantages, which, however, if you wish, you can safely forget. Most claims are made by followers of the classical tools of language teaching because of the question of psychology student - teacher relationships, interacting via Skype. It is the lack of personal contact for individual classes. With this, of course, it is difficult to argue, as online classes provide the same sense of preserving constant distance. But you can handle it. And experienced teachers return this drawback into benefit and use game time.

They can offer the student to play a phone conversation with a friend or business talks with a representative of a foreign company. There are lots of options for role-playing games that make learning more interesting and exciting. In addition, Skype allows you to adjust the degree of contact: at any time to disable or enable video. It especially helps shy people who just can not open up to a stranger.

The disadvantages of learning via Skype also include the inability to control actions of the student by the teacher. Thus, the main claim is that the teacher does not see what the student writes and can not correct the error in time. In fact, learning English via Skype provides more live communication, not writing. Grammar exercises student performs independently and at the beginning of the next class teacher points to mistakes and explains new material. For clarity, corrections teacher can use the function Skype «Demonstration screen", which replaces a real whiteboard in the classroom.

Of course, learning English via Skype largely depends on the proper operation of equipment and an internet connection. Without them, effective lessons are impossible. Experienced teachers recommend for easy learning process to use the headset, so background noise does not interfere neither you nor the teacher.

Generally, the main factors for successful learning English via Skype are dedication, desire to acquire knowledge and perform all the tasks of the teacher, without which you can not succeed in learning a foreign language.

3. Methodology

Since our research goal is to determine the appropriation of elements that facilitate, on Skype, the focused interaction for sharing teaching and learning experiences, we analyzed the samples using the qualitative model to elucidate what purposes the reusers suit the use of the tools available on the site. Therefore, it was necessary also our participation as users Skype, as we understand with Hine. [11]

According to British Council in 2013 [28], it is estimated more than 1.7 billion people which learning English, that characterizes it as the most studied foreign language in the world. Council projects say that if the growth of English as the lingua franca continues at the same pace, by 2020 it will have more than 3.8 billion speakers - native and non-native. Still, according to Graddol [8], even with the presence of other languages on the Internet, English is still responsible for 68% of the exchange of information taking place via the internet and dominates the 32% content of all sites on the web.

Much has been discussed about promoting interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and transversality in educational programs and curriculum guidelines, as they cover the expansion of understanding of the world and the social inclusion of an individual. Thus, education would be aimed at teaching students to understand the relationships between school subjects and their connection with reality experienced by them. The expected result of this process should enable the use of knowledge to the understanding of social complexity in which citizens live, characterized by constitutive hybrid languages, identities and cultures [6].

In English language teaching, in particular, the Internet can provide students contact with different language communities in different parts of the world, and through this contact, provide conditions for them to add new knowledge of the language to its real development zone [2]. In addition, the forms of social behavior of studied language communities and their culture, art and significant ways, become contrasted with the student, thereby making him aware of the heterogeneity characteristic of the English language and knowledge and cultures in which the language is inserted.

Fundamental theory

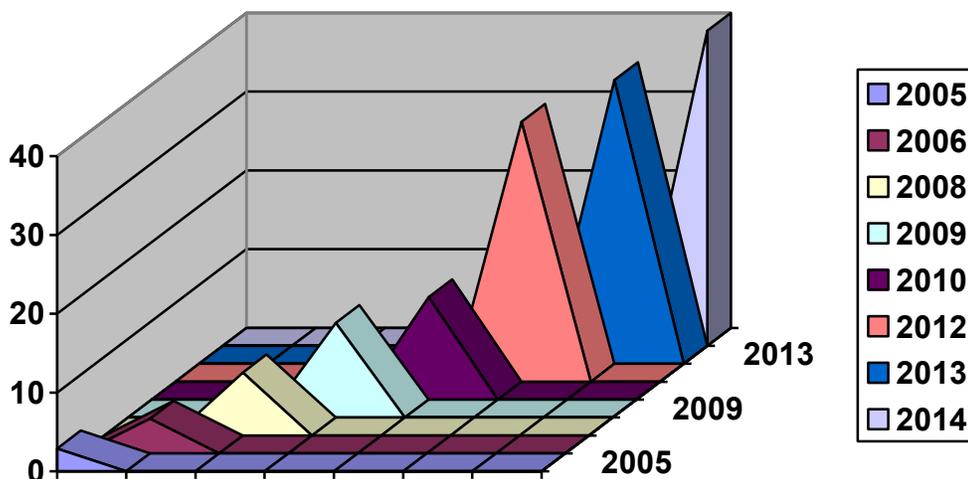
With the constant evolution of ICT technology emerges to revolutionize the way man communicates bringing benefits never seen before and decreasing in general communication barriers. As pedagogical tool ICT and help create modern alternatives to the teaching-learning LI which allows that the use of these technologies helps in the development of skills in the language fundamental target.

3.1. Analysis

This chapter aims to analyze data collected, in order to identify and point out the benefits that the Skype software can provide for russian-speaking people, checking how was this process, and feedback from the people about the importance of their use in learning process as well as the skills that were more developed. In addition, we sought to understand how the Skype helped in general to acquire a higher level of proficiency. The differences noted on the grammatical differences perceived in the formal and informal use of the English language as well as other tools which these students use together with the Skype software were also analyzed.

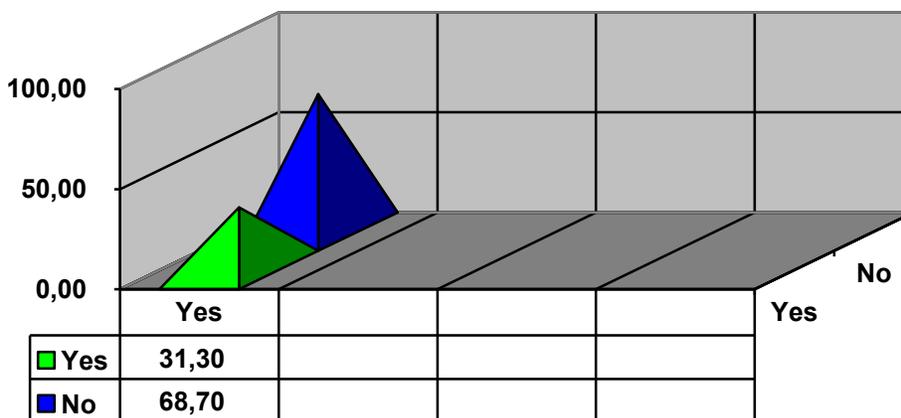
3.2. Results

This statistics shows us the usage of Skype as an educational technology all over the world. As it is seen from the table, the number of people, using Skype, increases year after year.



After our research, held in the Internet among russian-speaking people, about the usage Skype as a tool of education, we have got some results. For data analysis was developed an online questionnaire, using the tool "vkontakte", the questionnaire is available on the website: https://vk.com/id13404228?w=wall13404228_1440%2Fall.

The questionnaire is composed of two questions, in order to ascertain the benefits noticed by Skype users over the course of their use, focusing on English learning and the need for tool to assist in this process.



All numbers are given in per centages

The questionnaire to be answered automatically sends the answers to the online database and it converts them quickly to the most common document formats currently used.

Using the online questionnaire was well accepted by the people because they could responded in convenient for them time. There was no need for file downloads, or any kind of attachment to be sent via email, saving time, and making it easier to use.

4. Conclusion

Of course, using Skype as educational communication has its drawbacks. You do need to be on time for meetings- although many students live in different time zones or are unable to utilize Skype to its best capacity due to slow internet speeds. It also may inhibit introverted learners and allow extroverted learners to dominate the conversation. Although the opposite is said of online threaded discussions; introverted learners are generally more successful in this environment [21]. Perhaps utilizing this tool will allow for a greater balance among learners.

Once students have logged in, they enter an environment where the freedom to contact someone through chat or voice becomes their decision. Due to the potentially chaotic nature of the conference calls or chats, educators may have difficulty in managing the interactions and maintaining records or transcripts. As much as the educator can request to have a space within a chat session or a conference call to monitor progress, students can choose an alternative time and space to carry on interactions because of Skype's accessibility.

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