

PROFICIENCY EMPHASIS IN DISTANCE LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES

Distance education has become increasingly commonplace in today's colleges and universities. More areas of study are now offered online as potential degree options for students. Foreign language is one area in which distance education can prove to be particularly beneficial for students. Foreign language study can often involve audible repetition of words and phrases. This way of learning can be embarrassing to some students in a classroom setting. Distance education may allow some students to overcome this barrier to learning a foreign language.

Language teaching by the way of distance education program has come into getting great attention recently due to supply a flexible environment in which individuals who leave their education undone either to have obligations or have to work, will be able to have education without adhering to space and time.

For distance learning to be a viable alternative to conventional classroom instruction, it must be consistent with current research and practice that focus on developing the learner's language proficiency. Proficiency, that is, what the learner can do with the language rather than what he or she knows about it, is the major principle around which today's foreign language teaching and curricula are organized. Distance learning programs must, therefore, provide a mechanism for a major portion of class time to be devoted to meaningful language use and practice and to authentic communication.

The classroom in online learning gives access to different educational institutions for example to Voice of America news content designed for EFL students. Interactive, self-monitoring quizzes accompany audio, visual and written media. Through social media, users will be able to know where they are relative to other users as they develop their own learning portofolio. "Faceteaching" section uses Facebook to explore the opportunities to bind the teaching community online.

Skype is the teaching environment that will directly take advantages of the strengths of working with a native speaker (listening, pronunciation and conversation practice), but it will also require teachers to develop working relationships across great distances; an additional time commitment from classroom teachers is required as well as the development of new and innovative training and planning methods to connect to students. Teachers should take advantage of the visual aspect of Skype to share cultural images and information, not only for listening and speaking. The usage of information and communication technology will allow students to advance at the student's own speed with the highest effectiveness for each of them.

Internet opens a great variety of authentic literature, texts, sites, video and audio materials. However, students should be careful with these resources, because sometimes it is difficult to verify their reliability. In this respect, the teacher can create his/her own internet resource, for students' close consideration. There are certain programs like treasure hunt, or hot list, and others, which can be used for this purpose. Hotlist benefits in developing the following students' skills: search for information, highlight the key words, define the topic/problem, separate the main information from the secondary one, be concise in presenting the read information, and summarize the read information.

A podcast is a type of digital media consisting of an episodic series of audio files subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer

or mobile device. The word is a neologism derived from «broadcast» and «pod» from the success of the iPod, as podcasts are often listened to on portable media players. A list of all the audio or video files currently associated with a given series is maintained centrally on the distributor's server as a web feed, and the listener or viewer employs special client application software, known as a pod catcher, that can access this web feed, check it for updates, and download any new files in the series. This process can be automated so that new files are downloaded automatically. Files are stored locally on the user's computer or other device ready for offline use, giving simple and convenient access to episodic content. In this way it is contrasted to webcasting (Internet streaming). As discussed by Richard Berry, podcasting is a converged medium bringing together audio, the web and portable media player, and a disruptive technology that has caused some in the radio business to reconsider some established practices and preconceptions about audiences, consumption, production and distribution. This idea of disruptiveness is largely because no one person owns the technology; it is free to listen and create content, which departs from the traditional model of 'gate-kept' media and production tools. It is very much a horizontal media form: producers are consumers and consumers become producers and engage in conversations with each other.

Adventure games are computer managed role-plays where the user is presented with a situation that he/she has to deal with. The user has to choose what to do and input the result as text, speech (speech recognition software), or by clicking on options. Based on the input the program branches to resulting situations / gives feedback. Adventure games can be very entertaining when constructed for language learners. Apart from adventures, the teacher can organize different games like matching games, quizzes and crosswords with the help computer and special software (Quandary, Hot potatoes). The course book that students use can be accompanied with CD-ROMs and Multi-ROMS, which contain additional exercises and activities to practice certain topics in an enjoyable way, and which can also provide active practice in listening and viewing.

Electronic or online simulations are different from role-plays because the activities undertaken in a simulation are real and not just acting. The tools for electronic simulations can be plain e-mails, mobile phone SMS, chart boards etc. the advantage of an electronic simulation is the possibility of having participants from different countries.

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