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TECHNOLOGY ON OUR FINGERTIPS

ТЕХНОЛОГИЯ НА КОНЧИКАХ ПАЛЬЦЕВ

Аннотация

В настоящее время мы наблюдаем ускоряющийся темп изменений в области технологии, и в лице наших учащихся. В частности, мы замечаем переход к употреблению маленьких смартфонов. Наши учащиеся все больше занимаются ежедневно играми, текстами и другими приложениями на мобильных. Как мы, преподаватели, сможем стать руководителями для наших студентов, эксплуатируя эту мобильную технологию, но без того чтобы стать специалистами этой новой, пожалуй, временной технологии?

The past 40 + plus years of my teaching career have seen fundamental and indeed monumental changes in the paradigm of how we teach, what we teach, and how our students learn. One of the key elements in this changing environment has been the introduction of technology or information technology, beginning with the personal computer, enhanced by Macintosh computers that provided new ways to input foreign language, then to laptops, notebooks, and today to one of the more powerful computers of them all, the smart phone.

I have written extensively on this topic, and much of what has been said before still is valid today.¹⁵ I have also recently been impressed by the work of my colleagues Ibraim Didmanidze, et. alii. Who discuss “The Issue of Student Distance Communication and Collaboration (For Foreign Language Teaching).”¹⁶ Svetlana A. Asanova, our colleague here in Dankook, addresses “Innovative

¹⁵ "Novye vremena, novye tehnologii." *Informatsionnoe i obrazovatel'noe prostranstvo* (Yerevan: 2009), 14-18. "Novaja stranica v prepodavanii russskoj literatury v 21-om veke." *Informatsionnye i kommunikativnye tehnologii v rusistike: sovremennoe sostojanie I perspektiva*. (Yerevan: 2010), 10-14. Also at www.middlebury.edu/~beyer/Yerevan2.ppt. Recognized as best scholarly and methodological work of 2010 by Russian Academy of Natural Sciences; "Литературоведение в 21-ом веке." *Fourth International Conference on Russian Studies, Literature and Culture*. (Yerevan: 2011); "Новое учебное пособие и новый подход к преподаванию русского языка как иностранного." *Vyučovanie ruštiny ako cudzieho jazyka vo viackultúrnom priestore*, ed. Anna Petrikova, (Presov, Slovenia: 2012, pp. 21-26); "Новые формы в учебном процессе: Вызовы и угрозы для вузов в 21-м веке." *Модернизация образования в контексте современных педагогических парадигм*. (Ереван: 2014), 21-24; "Enhanced Learning: Blended, Mixed, Student Centered Classrooms." *Социокультурные и филологические аспекты в образовательном и научном контексте*. (Kyoto: Sangyo University, 2014), 77-80; "Fifty Years of Russian: What has Gotten Better?" *Special Issue of the International Virtual Forum, Art Sanat*. (Istanbul: 2016), 583-587.

¹⁶ Ibraim Didmanidze, et. alii. discusse "The Issue of Student Distance Communication and Collaboration (For Foreign Language Teaching)," *CCS:E&S*, Volume 3, Issue I, March 2018.

Technologies at an Early Stage of Teaching a Foreign Language.”¹⁷ The works were published in our journal: *Cross Cultural Studies: Education and Science*. (The Russian word **найка** embraces both scientific and other scholarly inquiry.) I have also followed with interest the recent change in 2018 by the Russian government to create two ministries in the place of the older Ministry of Education. There are now the Ministry of Education directed toward primary and secondary education, and the new Ministry of Science/Scholarship and Higher Education/Universities.

This paper is both about the content, but also about the form, in which that content is developed. It also begins with the premise and an observation. The premise is simply that the past forty years have been a movement of transition: moving from the teacher as giver, (The Sage on the Stage), to a leader (Guide on the Side), while the student is an active participant in the educational process. One of the things that we know about acquiring a foreign language is that to a large degree, progress or learning is dependent upon the amount of time one spends on task. In simple words: one learns to do what one practices doing. The observation is one each of you can do when you next time ride the metro, visit a cafe, or sit at the gate waiting for your flight. Look around! You will be astonished (or maybe not) by the number of smartphones and earphones. In particular the generation of our students interacts almost exclusively with this medium. On a recent ride on the Moscow metro I counted in my train car one book, one newspaper, and twenty-two smartphones.

Let us first to do a quick review of some of the methodologies that have accompanied this change through the past decades. Even in the 1960s when I was in high school there was a movement from the teaching of simple grammar exercises to what was called the audio-lingual method. In fact, throughout the 1960s and 1970s there was an emphasis on work in language laboratories, at home with record players, work with instructors, or students on their own repeated pattern replacement drills. By the 1980s there was a new push toward what became known in the United States as the proficiency moment. This began to measure not what students had covered or were supposed to have learned, but rather what they could actually do in authentic situations. It also placed great emphasis on oral production, that is spoken word, and understanding or listening comprehension, largely because this was what could be readily measured or assessed.

If we turn our attention to the student population then and now, there have also been significant differences. What has not changed is that student performance is related directly to the amount of time they are willing to spend in contact with the language (time on task). The more active that participation, the more valuable the time expended and the material learned. I would submit that the primary difference between earlier and this generation of students is the inability or lack of desire to spend concentrated amounts of time on a given task, in particular reading. Students of today are quite familiar with multitasking, and indeed, seem to desire multiple stimuli on the screens with which they interact. The result is that many are incapable of or unwilling to devote extended concentration to a single task, such as reading a novel for two or three hours. Curiously, they are more than willing to apply themselves for hours at a time to texting, listening to music, watching videos or playing

¹⁷ Svetlana A. Asanova, “Innovative Technologies at an Early Stage of Teaching a Foreign Language.” *CCS:E&S*, Volume 3, Issue II, June 2018.

games.¹⁸

We still know far too little about this phenomenon although it has come under increasing investigation by scholars. The coming years and still-to-come technologies will certainly impact even more upon this type of student, and on what she or he is able to and willing to do in the pursuit of the study of a foreign language

There is also, I might add, a new sense of instant gratification. Not only students, but we ourselves, are less and less patient with things that seem to waste or spend our time, or simply take too much time. Remember how long it took to have your computer actually turn on. Nowadays we want an instant screen on our phone or computer with which to interact.

Finally, some thoughts on computers themselves. The first computers that I worked with at the University of Illinois were in a dedicated separate room with terminals connected to a large mainframe system. In the early 1980s we saw in a financially accessible form what were mini computers on one's desk. This included the IBM Personal Computer (1981) and DEC Rainbow (1982). A major revolution came about with the introduction of the Macintosh in 1984, for instead of treating text on the screen as simply letters generated from code, the Mac introduced a system of what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG). This treated not only graphics, but also every letter of the alphabet, as a picture. This permitted, of course, immediate access to computers for students of Russian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.

In the beginning and for the next twenty years, much time and energy was expended upon simple things, from the development of fonts in Cyrillic to the ability to place accent marks on letters for text materials. These were all time-consuming activities and not possible in all programs. I can remember instructing my students how to install Russian fonts even in the infancy days of the World Wide Web so as to be able to read webpages that were produced in Russian. Nowadays, it is a simple matter on your laptop or your tablet or your phone to switch between fonts at will.

The creation of computer assisted language instructional materials (CALI) or computer assisted language learning (CALL) has also become far simpler. The code, which some of us were required to learn or hypertext markup language (HTML), has been replaced by programs that do on most all of this work on scene or in the deep background. When you ask a student today to edit a webpage, s/he asks if you mean a blog.

But what has really changed from 50 years ago?

We still have a textbook or computer materials in the foreign language along with explanations in the native language.

We can insert drills for work either inside or outside of class, and the technology permits us to have students perform these drills and have them self-corrected.

There is the immediate access to a rich world of authentic materials. One simply need to go to www.rambler.ru to see all of the possibilities: from news reports, weather, links to radio and

¹⁸ Arlene Hirsch, "10,000 Hours of Video Games: Is it a Good Idea or Wasting Time?" (<https://arlenehirsch.com/10000-hours-of-video-games-building-skills-or-wasting-time/>).

television stations, a vibrant set of graphics, sound, and video

At one of our earlier conferences I spoke about the multiple activities available electronically to our students. Some connected to social networking, Facebook or kontakt.ru and other ways of dealing or interacting with one another. There also existed Skype, which permitted students and colleagues to speak to one another in virtual space, and we now have WhatsApp and Facetime. The concept of virtual reality, represented in part by Second Life,¹⁹ is also undergoing rapid development. Unfortunately, one of the realities of the emerging technologies is that many sites disappear within a few years, to be replaced by new but different possibilities. This admittedly makes it difficult for instructors to keep apace. What worked yesterday may no longer even exist today.

I think the most significant development of the past few years has been the introduction of the Smart phone. The iPhone is only ten years old, but its real possibilities have only exploded exponentially in the past few years. Last semester my students created a 30-minute feature film using simply an iPhone, both to record the material, then to edit the film, and finally to publish the film on the Internet for general consumption.²⁰ Other students in a seminar on Chekhov produced shorter film interpretations of Chekhov's stories, also on their iPhones.²¹ Indeed we have reached a point where we have passed the responsibility for developing these materials on our own, and transferred them on to our students. My instructions to the students were to produce a film. The mechanics of how to do that were left to them. They are far more capable and knowledgeable about these technologies than we ourselves.

I wanted to put my own smart phone to the test. The paper which is provided in the published in English in the proceedings of our conference and my own presentation here in Russian was prepared in its infancy on my iPhone.

I admit to a little anxiety and trepidation when I began to dictate my entire paper into my mobile device. (Some here may remember a day when we used a Dictaphone²² to record a letter that was typed by an assistant, then corrected only to re-typed again.) I forced myself to explore the possibilities that our students are already quite familiar with. In addition to text, one can embed graphics, audio and video providing a 21st-century presentation.

The key to almost all of this is the Application (приложение). Android has almost four million and the Apple App Store over two million. Some are beginning to state that the Internet or Web as we know and love it is all but dead, having given way to the mobile world. This is somewhat like the prediction in 2006 that "E-mail is for old people."²³

In this new mobile world, there is almost nothing that cannot be done with an app. "Today, right now, you have more power at the tips of your fingertips than entire generations before you."²⁴ There are multiple programs available for app development both for Android (PC) Systems and Mac IOS.

¹⁹ <https://secondlife.com/>.

²⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEQs_Z-2Q2g&feature=youtu.be.

²¹ <https://youtu.be/55s24rRZfIM>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dieVKPEEsd0>; <https://youtu.be/Oj4te1CEYGA>.

²² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictaphone>

²³ <https://arstechnica.com/uncategorized/2006/10/7877/>.

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tucY7Jhhs4>.

Increasingly the ability to develop apps or so called mobile websites that transfer effectively to mobile devices is becoming as easy as producing a text document or blog. (The distinction between an app and mobile website is that the latter is designed to provide content across traditional devices as well as smaller mobile devices.)²⁵

The amount of applications and the material within them are enormous, Just one site, russinpod101.com, offering material for Russian study, claims to have 750,000 resources.²⁶ The number of apps to learn Russian numbers in dozens, with the most popular offered here.²⁷ One of the most popular sites along with an app for language learning including Russian is Duolingo.²⁸

Given the availability of access to information (but also its mass) there are two corollaries for me to end on. The future (at least for the next few years) more than ever before calls upon us to be guides for our students. We can and should embrace enthusiastically what technology can do to enhance learning. Especially at the novice level we can help with the selection of the material. Beginning students may not be able to distinguish the quality of the quality of the programs. We can identify and provide direction to the best of the apps. It is also important that we integrate them into our courses inside the classroom and offer suggestions or assignments for outside of the classroom.

As I have learned, whatever we can do today is likely to become old-fashioned in a very short span of time. This is less important for our students who spend four or five years with us, than for those of us whose careers can extend from five to forty or more years.

Consequently, at the same time, we should transfer to our students the responsibility for identifying, using, and even creating or scripting new applications that best meet their needs. Most of us are neither capable or efficient at designing apps or adapting whatever new system will emerge in the next ten years. Our students are the real experts in this new mobile world. With encouragement, they can discover their own learning styles and strengths and apply them in in their own individual cases.

For them the future is now and they have access to it on the tips of their fingers.

²⁵ <https://www.hsolutions.com/services/mobile-web-development/mobile-website-vs-apps/>.

²⁶ <https://www.russianpod101.com/>.

²⁷ <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/russian/russian-apps/>.

²⁸ <https://www.duolingo.com/>.