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INTERNET RESOURCES AS A MOTIVATING FACTOR IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

Nowadays to meet international educational standards learning foreign languages, Chinese in particular requires new approaches and solutions in terms of progressive methods. The article aims to analyse the ways innovative technologies influence motivation. In this respect, IT and Internet technologies are vital and need further development to be applied in educational process. To boost students' cognitive abilities, to motivate them to resort to additional educational Internet resources out of class while doing homework a new pattern of teaching-learning process needs to be created to develop students' creativity. Thus, an experimental design employing an empirical observation and survey were employed to achieve the aim of the study. Two different questionnaires were used with the teachers of Chinese and their students who participated in the experiment. The article presents the results of the experimental study and one of the lesson plans that was worked out by the authors. The study shows that both teachers and students find Internet technologies a very efficient motivating tool. A remarkable progress was noticed in acquiring new vocabulary, grammar patterns and culture-related information while working with Internet technologies. For a great number of students it is essential to get non-negative comments from the computer (not from the teacher) deprived of any personal attitude or remarks, which contributes to psychologically positive environment in the educational process.

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1. Introduction

In terms of globalization and continuous growth of technology, modern society urges teachers of foreign languages to work out new approaches to traditional methods of teaching to meet contemporary requirements.

The challenges of today's world encourage high school students to learn foreign languages as it positively influences their employability.

At present Internet provides a great variety of websites containing material ranging from culture studies to morphology or syntax. Thus, pedagogics focuses on individual work of students in search and processing new information and data. In this respect, internet-based technologies prove to be more resultative aiming at boosting students' creativity and motivation. These technologies "support the fundamental aims of modem languages, for example communicating and handling information is a particularly important element of any educational process" (Cajkler & Addelman, 2000, p.172).

Nowadays to meet international educational standards learning foreign languages, Chinese in particular requires new approaches and solutions in terms of progressive methods.

Teaching Chinese is built around the notion of intercultural and social aspects of education. That is why it is expedient to work out proper sets of teaching materials logically structured along with existing advanced tools and methods.

However, applying Internet technologies and resources is still a disputable issue among experts of higher education in Russia.

Some teachers believe that Internet is not a reliable source of information and may provoke forming false stereotypes and misunderstanding of foreign ways and customs (Cajkler & Addelman, 2000; Li, 2017; Sysoyev & Evstigneyev, 2008; Zubov & Zubova, 2009).

Other teachers consider Internet to be one of the main resourceful tools in developing students' skills (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Farr & Murray, 2016; Yerenchinova, 2014; Lenintseva & Burukina, 2013; Polat & Bukharkina, 2007).

As for the authors, we maintain that an experienced teacher is capable of employing internet resources properly to achieve educational goals. In addition, it is out of the question that individual psychological and physiological abilities of students should be taken into consideration in the teaching-learning process in order to avoid demotivation. In this regard new information technologies play a crucial role in the educational process and, thus, contribute to greater actualization of communicative approach which is in the main stream all over the globe.

Consequently, during Chinese lessons at RUDN University, Internet resources allow both teachers and students to solve a great number of didactical tasks, for example, forming and improving writing and reading skills when communicating on-line with their pen friends from China or searching for and discussing information and data for their presentations or term papers. Moreover, it adds to the widening students' general background, their knowledge about the potential and facilities of Internet that results in making them more open-minded and more skilful in using IT technologies.

Every year more and more students prefer Chinese as a second foreign language since China is increasing its role on the international arena. It should be noted that such peculiarities as hieroglyphs, intonation, morphological composition and syntax are different from those in modern European languages.

That is why it is crucial for teachers to keep students' motivated when they face difficulties not only at the very beginning but throughout the whole course of studying.

The importance of motivation in educational process is highlighted by many specialists. Thus, Ramage (2006) has been studying this issue since 1990. In her paper «Motivational Factors and Persistence in Foreign Language Study» she underlines the following: "Interest in culture and in learning the language thoroughly" (p. 189) is a kind of impetus in teaching and learning process. Zhang, Su, and Liu (2013) did the research "Personality Traits, Motivation and Foreign Language Attainment" "It may be ideal for teachers to employ various teaching methods to cater to students with different personality traits…and is necessary to encourage students to utilize various learning strategies and styles which benefit them most according to their personality traits" (p. 64). Apple, Da Silva, and Fellner (2016) "Selves And Motivations In Asian Contexts" stress the importance, "cross-cultural differences in learner motivation among Asian cultures and the influence of native speakerism on language motivation and cultural identity" (p. 3).

We believe the goal requires proper educational material which would present enough tasks to develop communicative skills and stimulate mental activity. Each stage of the course should contain not only linguistic component of Chinese but should be based on cultural and historical information. Moreover, interpersonal relations in a group and creating emotionally comfortable atmosphere contribute to the effectiveness of educational process. Monotonous and predictable exercises, on the contrary, demotivate students and lead to worse results in tests and exams.

Going back to the issue of employing Internet resources in teaching and learning of Chinese we are convinced that it is the very tool that provides a great number of opportunities to overcome communicative barrier and develop creative potential of students through the prism of sociocultural values.

There are different approaches to the functions of computer in the educational process such as:
- communicative (audiovisual tools)
- information providing (on-line dictionaries and encyclopaedias, e-books, news agencies' websites)
- training (educational and training programmes)
- managing (setting of a programme to a certain level)
- controlling and evaluating (Karamysheva, 2001, pp.19-26; Sofronova, 2004, pp. 39-46).

As for Internet-based lessons they fall into two types: on-line and off-line lessons. Unlike off-line internet lessons, which comprise the material and exercise downloaded in advance and provide limited amount of information, on-line internet-based lessons give students access to numerous resources under their teacher's supervision. Both types of lessons have a great number of advantages: independent work of student when preparing reports and presentations, not only communication with their Chinese-speaking peers via e-mail, Skype, etc., but participation in various international projects such as webinars and on-line conferences. Moreover, students can virtually tour countries, museums, libraries.

Nowadays the so-called innovative technologies in pedagogics comprise interactive technologies (cooperative learning, seminars, disputes, thought-provoking tasks, brainstorming), project method technologies, and computer technologies. A teacher should have a thorough understanding of advantages of using Internet resources by students. For example, they, on their own, can search for necessary

information to prepare a project; to develop listening skills on the base of authentic soundtracks; to expand vocabulary; to communicate with native speakers; to watch films and cartoons, and etc.

2. Problem Statement

The article aims to analyze the ways innovative technologies influence motivation. In this respect IT and Internet technologies are vital and need further development to be applied in educational process. To boost students' cognitive abilities, to motivate them to resort to additional educational Internet resources out of class while doing homework a new pattern of teaching-learning process needs to be designed to develop students' creativity.

3. Research Questions

In what ways does application of Internet resources during Chinese lessons influence the growth of students' motivation to learn the foreign language?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to establish new understanding of IT methods and their application in teaching-learning process in contrast with "traditional" manual-based methods, to further develop innovative methods, and to analyse the ways these methods can be applied in the teaching of foreign languages in higher educational institutions in Russia.

5. Research Methods

This study was done at the Department of Modern Languages of the Philological Faculty in RUDN University (Moscow, Russia), in the 2016/2017 academic year. The main aims of the study were to trace the degree of motivation, detect the most effective factors influencing students' motivation and the proper time to begin working with Internet resources. To achieve the aim of the study, an experimental design was employed involving an empirical observation, and a survey.

The sample included six teachers of Chinese and thirty-two first-year students of Chinese. Two different questionnaires were placed on the department web site. The participation in the experiment was voluntary.

The teachers were to answer the following questions:

1. What educational tools do you prefer in your work?
2. Do the tools from question 1 meet the goals of the lesson?
3. What, to your mind, motivates student to attend your classes?
4. What are the ways to increase students' motivation to learn Chinese?
5. Are you computer-literate?
6. How often do you apply computer-based technologies?

Thirty-two students were to answer eight questions:

1. What is your attitude to the Internet-based technologies?
2. Do you use Internet resources in class?
3. If yes (see question 2), which Internet resources do you use (e-dictionaries, blogs, etc.)?
4. Are you satisfied with the way Internet resources are used in class?
5. Do Internet technologies encourage you to learn Chinese?
6. Is the volume of the Internet-based material suggested in class enough for you or you would prefer to get more?
7. Do you use Internet-based technologies out of class while doing your homework?
8. What is the most efficient way to boost your motivation to learn Chinese via Internet?

In the framework of the experimental design to investigate the problem, the authors worked out a set of lessons. Presented below is a plan of the lesson "New Year".

The topic of the lesson: «过新年» [Guòxīnnián] "New Year".

Educational technologies and materials: Internet resources, textbooks.

The aim: to demonstrate the advantages of using Internet technologies and resources; to analyze vocabulary and grammar.

The main tasks: educational (analysis of the new vocabulary and the text); developing skills (developing reading skills on the basis of the text); encouraging (stimulating students' interest towards the country and its culture).

Internet resource: www.studychinese.ru/topics/272/

Stages of the lesson:

1. Introduction and warming-up.

The teacher greets the students and announces the topic, aims and tasks of the lesson. Then students are to answer some routine questions.

今天几月几号? [Jīntiān jǐ yuè jǐ hào?] What date is it today?

今天星期几？[Jīntiānxīngqíjǐ?] What day is it today?

你们家庭作业是什么？[Nǐmen jiātíng zuòyè shì shénme?] What is your homework for today?

你们知道什么样的俄罗斯的节日？[Nǐmen zhīdào shénme yàng de èluósī de jiérì?] What Russian holidays do you know?

请你给我们介绍你最喜欢的俄罗斯的节日。[Qǐng nǐ gěi wǒmen jièshào nǐ zuì xǐhuān de èluósī de jiérì] Please tell us about your favorite Russian holiday.

2. Pre-reading stage.

The teacher gives the link to the text "中国的节日" ([Zhōngguó de jiérì) "Holidays in China") from the website *www.studychinese.ru*. The teachers points out new words and their pronunciation.

3. While-reading and comprehension stage.

While reading the text the students identify new words and words combinations with the help of on-line dictionaries (大BKRS – Chinese-Russian dictionary): https://bkrs.info/; Zhonga (Chinese on-line dictionary) http://www.zhonga.ru/; 成语大全(Dictionary of Chinese idioms): http://chengyu.xpcha.com/).

4. Post-reading stage.

After reading the text on their own the students are to answer some questions so that the teacher can evaluate the degree of comprehension and make sure that the students use new words and phrases properly.

- 什么样的中国的节日你们知道？[Shénme yàng de zhōngguó de jiérì nǐmen zhīdào?] What Chinese holidays do you know?

- 中国人怎么过春节？[ZhōngguórénzěnmeguòChūnjié?] When do the Chinese celebrate Spring Fest (Chinese New Year)?

- 春节后第一个节日是什么样的节日？Which holiday follows the Spring Fest?

- 中国人怎么过这个节日？[Chūnjiéhòudìyīgèjiérìshìshénmeyàng de jiérì?] How do the Chinese celebrate this holiday?

- 几月几日中国人过中秋节? [Jǐ yuè jǐ rì zhōngguórén guò zhōngqiū jié?] When do the Chinese celebrate Mid Autumn Day?

- 中国人怎么过中秋节？[Zhōngguórénzěnmeguòzhōngqiūjié?] How do the Chinese celebrate Mid Autumn Day?

5. Practicing stage.

Now students feel comfortable to read the text on the topic of the lesson and after discussing it they are to use new vocabulary on the basis of grammar patterns from the textbook («因为……所以» [Yīnwèi … suǒyǐ] *as/because of*…; «……的时候» […de shíhòu] *during*, «或者/ 还是» [huòzhě/ háishì] *or* in affirmative and interrogative sentences, 又and 再[yòu/zài] *again* in Past and Future Tenses) and make sentences or short stories of their own.

6. Final stage.

At this stage the teacher, firstly, summarizes the main points of the lesson, secondly, divides the students into groups so that they can prepare for further projects devoted to the traditional holidays in China. The students have to find informative audiovisual materials using Internet resources.

We would like to highlight that to facilitate the educational process students are recommended to study individually or in groups in the IT class. The teacher provides them with the list of useful links:

- to practice pronunciation and intonation (www.forvo.com, www.lingomi.com, http://www.sinosplice.com/learn-chinese/tone-pair-drills);
- to develop listening skills (www.glossika.com/shop/learnchinese/sku-ruzh-f123-mp3,www.bliubliu.com, http://russian.cri.cn/);
- to improve grammar and writing skills (http://studychinese.ru/, https://www.interpals.net/);

- to expand vocabulary and develop reading skills (www.zhonga.ru , www.linedict.com, www.igimu.com, www.china.words.ru, https://librivox.org/, http://linguadrive.ru/chinese-reading/).

6. Findings

On the basis of the data collected the following findings are presented. Figure 01 illustrates the teachers' answers to question 1.
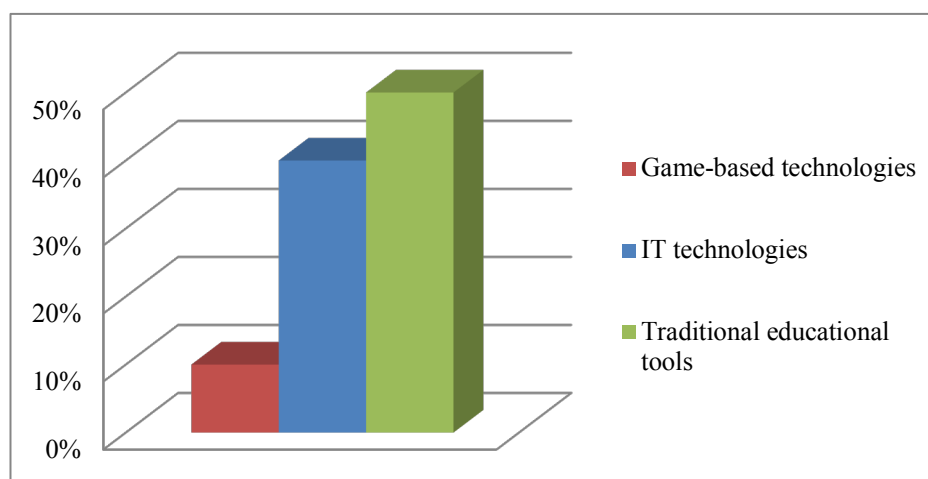

Figure 01. Educational tools and technologies used by the teachers of Chinese]

According to the chart, 50% of the teachers stick to the traditional educational tools (teacher's books, student's book, CD, etc.), 40% prefer IT technologies and only 10% use game-based technologies.

As for the next three questions, it turned out that the majority (80%) of respondents believe that traditional educational tools do not always meet current educational goals and highlight the importance of IT technologies, with the main motivating factor for students being employability.

Figure 02 shows that 85% of the teachers are advanced computer users and use computer-based technologies systematically, while 15% use this type of technologies from time to time.
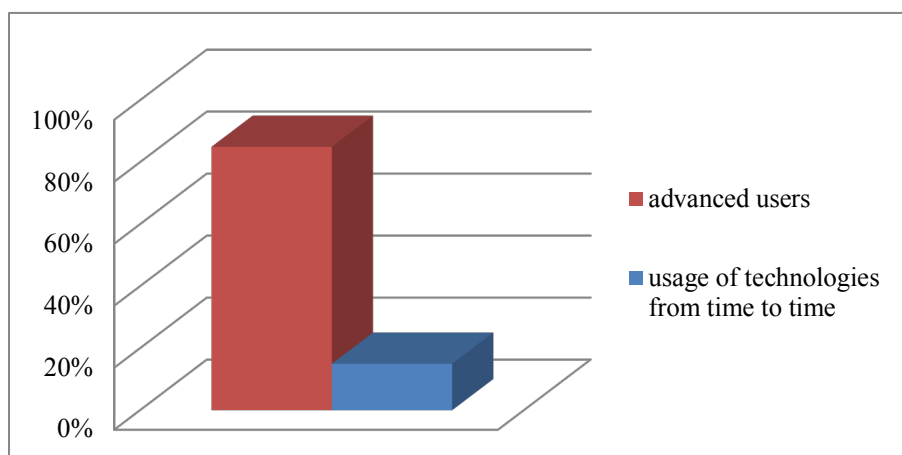

Figure 02. The level of frequency of usage of computer-based technologies

Table 01 shows the students' answers to the questions.

Table 01. Students' responses

Question	Students' responses
1	100 % like the idea of using Internet as an extra resource in class
2	100% use Internet-based technologies in class systematically.
3	95% use on-line dictionaries (bkrs, zhonga), 5% use mobile app "Trainchinese"
4	100% of the students are satisfied by the use of Internet resources in class and are eager to continue such kinds of activities.
5	100% believe that such extra resources contribute to the increase of their motivation.
6	80% are satisfied with the volume, 20% expressed their desire to increase it.
7	60% use Internet-based technologies out of class.
8	70% consider video and audio materials the most efficient way, 30% stand for reading stories and novels.

It should be noted that both teachers and students felt quite enthusiastic about the participation in the survey. None of them ignored or refused to participate, which proved their willingness to combine traditional educational tools with innovative ones.

7. Conclusion

As mentioned above, computer technologies provide great opportunities for both teachers and students especially in forming communicative skills. On the one hand, students get into natural language environment and apply their knowledge in real communicative situations. Students are involved in doing challenging tasks as a result they overcome language and cultural barriers and widen the range of speech patterns. On the other hand, when getting assignment and test results student do not experience psychological discomfort as results provided by the computer are emotionally neutral and do not influence negatively on the educational atmosphere. IT technologies help evaluate each student's progress and analyze dynamics of educational process and help teachers to identify which activities prove to be more resultative and motivating.

The study shows that IT technologies prove to be a very efficient motivating tool. Students demonstrated a greater progress in acquiring new vocabulary, grammar patterns and culture-related information.

Internet technologies present such advantages as improvement of students' cognitive functions, mastering language skills and problem solving, and contribute to positive learning educational experiences. For a great number of students it is essential to get non-negative comments from the computer (not from the teacher) deprived of any personal attitude or remarks.

However, despite the advantages of using IT as a motivational tool in foreign language lessons, it needs to be to stressed that it is very important to avoid underestimation of a teacher's role in class. Even the most advanced technologies and resources cannot replace the crucial role of an experienced teacher.

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