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Teaching Foreign Language by Using Technology – Virtual Classroom Edmondo

Abstract

Teaching and learning with technology is both challenging and engaging for teachers and students. If we, teachers, want to introduce own students to collaborative learning spaces or integrate a learning management system, we use *Edmodo*. Teaching with technology isn't just about staying up-to-date using the latest tools, it's about knowing how to successfully incorporate the best tools into our teaching. This article looks at the benefits of using technology - *Edmodo*. You'll also get an inside look at the practice of using technology to enhance teaching and learning – whether you teach in a traditional classroom or online.

Today it is difficult to imagine our life without a computer, the Internet and social networks. It is also known that students are using it for fun more than for education. So:

- How can technology be used to get maximum benefit from it?
- Can *Network Edmodo* change the teaching process for better?
- Will the teaching process be more flexible?

I think it is possible to carry out the work in the classroom as well as homework and school messages. The goal of *Virtual Classroom Edmodo* is to ensure the unity and co-operation in the educational environment.

Much has been written on this network's advantages but in the class, in the working process it still deserves studying. At the training course *How to use Edmodo in teaching* (held by the Teacher Professional Development Centre in Georgia) I learnt that *Edmodo* was a platform that can be adapted to any type of classroom. That by introducing it at a young age, we, the teachers, are able to develop the habits of the mind that are essential for students to be good digital citizens. Students learn to use appropriate language, to speak kindly and with compassion, to be supportive rather than critical, and to ask thoughtful questions.

For this reason, noting its advantages, I decided to test this new method in my teaching process.

1. Introduction

When I learned about the advantages of *Virtual Classroom Edmodo,* I decided to read the literature about this Network. I also got the information from the site www.edmodo.com. It was clear that with *Edmodo*, teachers can discover content in real time and deliver it in a personalised way to their students. For example, teachers can receive instant feedback on how his/her students perform by giving them a quiz on *Edmodo* and getting real time analysis to see how each student is grasping the material. I read that by using it teachers can put students into small groups where each group gets different content or different instructional materials to ensure that every single student in the classroom learns the concept that she is teaching that day.

I decided to test it in the language learning process. It defines itself as a private communication platform for teachers and students. *Edmodo* is an educational technology company for communication, collaboration, and coaching. It enables teachers to share content, distribute quizzes, assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents.

2. Article structure

Advantages of using the Edmodo in Foreign Language teaching

2.1. Posting homework online
2.2. Allowing pupils to return homework online
2.3. Posting spellings or other useful info
2.4. Sharing useful website
2.5. Increasing parental awareness
2.6. Sending reminders about dates or class events

3. Methodology

3.1. Research participants

When I decided to carry out research in my teaching process, I thought about how its advantages could help me in teaching English as a foreign Language. The search through objective and systematic method of finding a solution to a problem is very productive for every teacher. The systematic approach concerning generalisation and the formulation of a theory is very helpful for us, teachers, to take further steps in teaching.

So after getting some information about *Edmodo* I selected the target groups (5a, 5b, 5c classes – 61 students) Age – 10 or 11. English is a foreign language for them and they had been studying English for three years.

3.2. Instrument(s)

At the beginning of the second term, by using the quantitative method, it was clear that the majority of students spend their free time playing computer games. For getting this information I used a questionnaire. I put just one question: For what do you use computer?
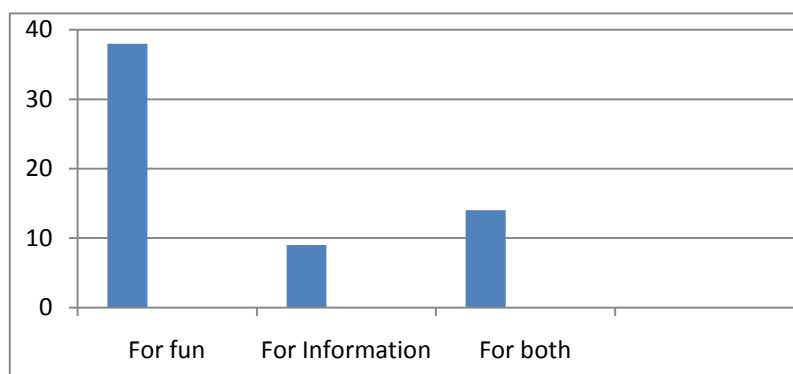
The answers were

1. For fun (38 students)
2. For getting information (9 students)
3. For both (14 students)

The students' task was to circle one answer.

The purpose of using this method was to discover answers to questions through the application. The main aim of it was to find out the truth.

The question: *For what do you use computer?*

3.3. Data collection procedures

After the data have been collected, I analysed them. During the second term I systematically used this tool in my teaching process. Once a month I repeated the use of the questionnaire with the same question and possible answers. The changing of the percentage of answers to the question was clear and obvious. Also, I had my diary where I was writing down the notes – how students were
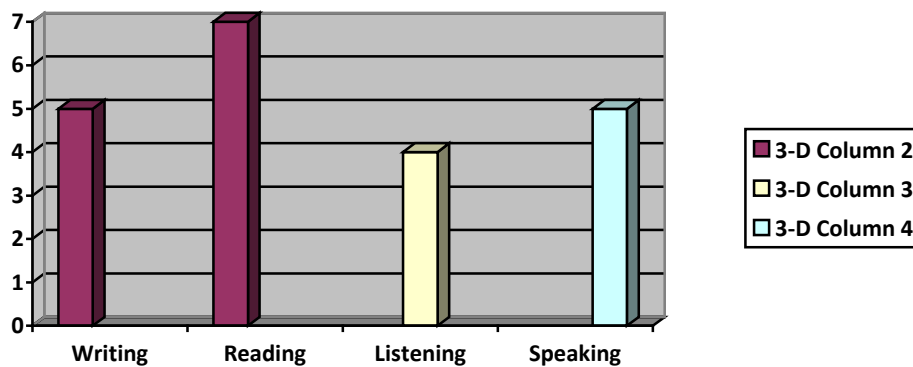
working, what difficulties there were in the process of using *Edmodo*, how students adapted to it, how did the usage of *Edmodo* help me to achieve a good result in classes?

Posting homework online

Edmodo helped me to differentiate homework. Meeting the varied needs of students in any classroom is one of the most difficult aspects of teaching. So differentiated tasks helped students to study easily and helped me to see their progress by testing. So, how did *Edmodo* help me? As we know learning Foreign Languages needs some skill development – writing, speaking, reading, listening… To be clear in which skill Students are good at I used *Edmodo* Poll –

The question: I am good at … (Students were polled about the skills)

(One class example)

After analysing the results I created small groups to send homework assignments to. I send them different homework assignments to these individual groups. For example, *Edmodo* has an opportunity to upload the reading and listening materials in *Library* as well as to upload the topics they should speak or write about. Homework differentiation resulted in their progress – they were not shy, they took an active part in different activities, were not afraid to make mistakes in writing, speaking English…. They became more self-confident…

Teachers know that students differ in their readiness to learn about their interests, their styles of learning, their experiences, and their life circumstances. So *Edmodo Homework Online* helped students to learn best when supportive adults push them slightly beyond where they can work without assistance. It's also known that they learn best when they can make a connection between the curriculum and their interests and life experiences as well as when learning process is natural.

After using the *Edmodo Homework Online* students became more effective learners when I created a sense of community in which students felt significant and respected. The effect was evident. They had a desire to reduce the time between assignments. They often wrote their own positive emotions and were sharing their opinions.
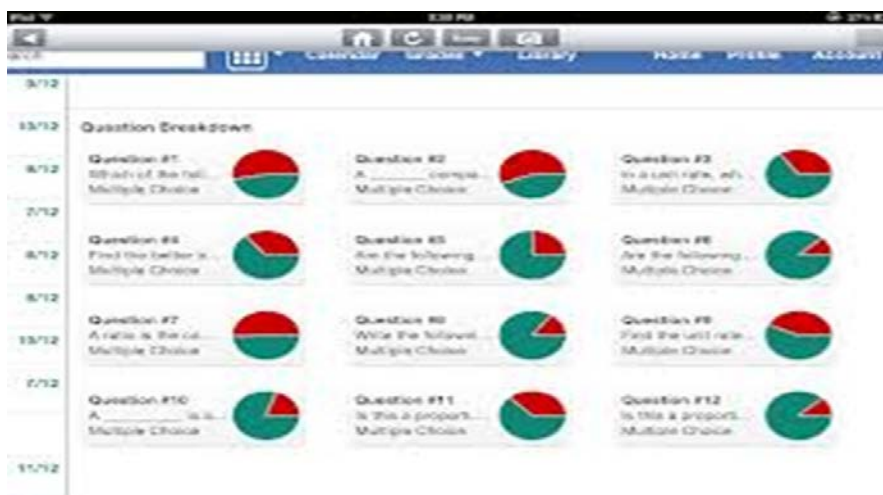
It was very simple and emotional at the same time.

Besides homework resource sharing, collaboration, communication and organisation helped me in my teaching. In *Edmodo* teachers and students can attach and share a variety of file types (word doc, PDF, MP3, MP4, PPT, Excel, .gif, .jpeg etc) and links to websites as well as embedding flash objects like games, Google forms, YouTube videos etc. You can attach multiple files and links to each note or assignment. *Edmodo* is designed to be a social network for education and collaboration is facilitated.

All this has contributed to the development of the cooperative skills, as well as collaboration.

After each new community the *Edmodo Test* was used for checking understanding, to check the students' knowledge. Test tool is my favourite as it helps me to analyse the result, to think and plan the next step. Another advantage of *Edmodo* Test is that it allows teachers to share the Quizzes and Assignments we create on Edmodo.

Sharing a Quiz or Assignment is easy -- just attach the Quiz or Assignment from your Library to a Note! Any teacher recipient of the note will be able to add the Quiz to their Library so they can assign it to their students.

(One class Test example)

By using an observation method (observation notes were recorded in my teacher diary – how students were working, how they were involved in the process, what worked well…) It was found that the students had great expectations of the new network resource usage.

Such cooperative and productive activities were reflected in the academic results of the class, as well as being reflected in the use of computer time.

Teaching and Learning

The advantage of the usage of *Edmodo* in the teaching process was that some teachers may just want to use *Edmodo* to share resources and learning objects with the class. These can be accessed during the class to save paper, prevent students searching for inappropriate resources etc.

Other features that could be incorporated into a class lesson are: polls, quizzes, videos and embedded learning objects like games. I often used Edmodo as my presentation tool, embedding all slideshows (PPT) and all videos and links that I wanted to show during my lesson.

And the activity we carried out by using Edmodo was the 'quiet discussion' activity. I as a teacher put up one or more discussion questions and my students were discussing this topic(s) via *Edmodo* – there is NO verbal discussion, it is all written. This is obviously a nice way to keep your students quiet but really it gives a voice to all students and provides a great hook for discussing register and tone through typed text and even the importance of spelling and punctuation!

Communication

School domain: *Edmodo* gives you the option to have a personalised *Edmodo* domain for your school (and district too if you like) which is completely free. You can register for one and read about them here. The benefit of a site is that an administrator has the ability to send notes/links/polls/alerts etc to the whole class or school, to all teachers at the school or to all parents of the school. It also allows the administrator to add events and reminders into the whole-school calendar that can be viewed by teachers and students. Oh, and you get some useful user statistics and the ability to view student data to assist with forgotten passwords etc.

Parent accounts and codes: *Edmodo* is all about education being about community and because of this, they have ensured that parents can be a part of the education community as well. How? By creating parent accounts that allow parents access to their child's grades and assignments and

teacher-directed communication. This is great when you, as a parent, can start using parent accounts. It's very productive when parents cooperate with teachers – they are allowed them to see their children's assignments and grades. I, as a teacher, can also send alerts to them about school events, missed assignments, and other important notices through *Edmodo*.

Organisation

Here are some more tools*:*

Calendar: This is personalised to the teacher and student. You can add personal memos for days, like birthdays and anniversaries, meetings and deadlines. Teachers can also add to the calendar of students in their classes – this is done automatically whenever an alert or assignment is sent to a class group.

Archive/delete: Once a class has finished, teachers can elect to 'archive' or 'delete' a group. Archiving means that the group becomes invisible to the teacher's 'thread' but can be revived later if necessary. Deleting a group means the group is gone for good.
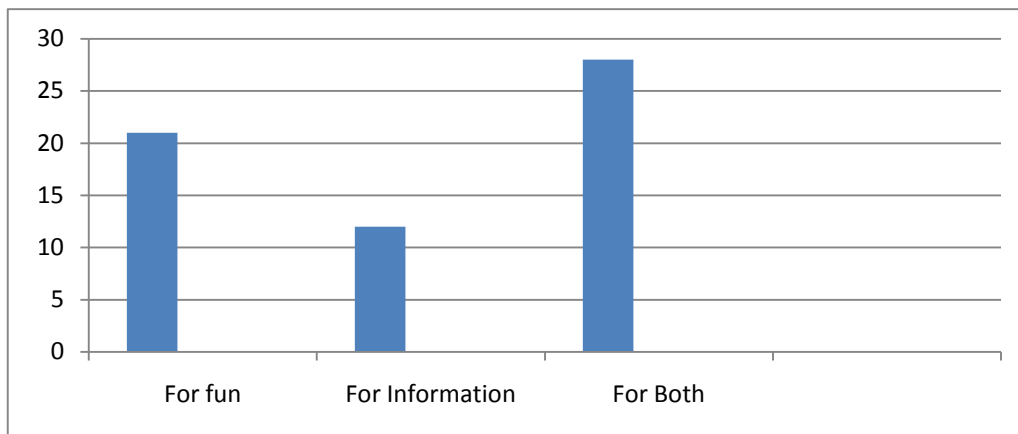
Others: I have already covered other excellent features that will help keep teachers and students organised: tags, folders, library and notifications.

So they are many…. That's why I loved *Edmodo* and used it every day in my classroom and at home. When I recommended this site to my colleagues they agreed with me. So, Edmodo has the BEST features for you and your students.

4. Results/Findings

I have been using *Edmodo* in my teaching process for five months (during the term). At the end of the second term the same questions was put.

Question: For what do you use computer?

When I compared the first and second questionnaires the progress was clear. Students changed their attitude towards the computer. They were encouraged to share their work socially. As well as class assignments, students were responsible for evaluating each other's work. Because the class was online, social media played an essential role in connecting students and creating an online community. Students shared their work. It means that *Edmodo* helped me to create a social, digital classroom. On *Edmodo*, we can vote, post assignments, create a class assignments calendar, and upload photos and messages to students.

I want also to mention that teachers could also engage socially with one another by sharing lesson plans online and asking questions to their online communities.

5. Discussion

By comparing the results we can say that the method was successful. Students could participate in online discussions and they were friendly to the environment. One of the most important thing for us, teachers, is that after posting their work, students can receive feedback and suggestions and parents can stay connected by viewing their child's work and grades.

Students can upload homework assignments. Teachers also can give feedback and post grades. All these advantages and the results of the research were presented to my colleagues. They noticed that when I started using *Edmodo* as a method to distribute assignments the student very naturally started using the text /comment.

Especially they were interested in homework performance. My colleagues liked the fact that the students could research and discuss their findings.

The best part was that teachers had had the discussion about the advantages of using *Edmodo* as well as about the advantages of teaching with technology. The 21st century skills are a set of abilities that students need to develop in order to succeed in the information age. *Edmodo* contributes to the development of these skills. For example,

Learning Skills - Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Collaborating, as well as Communicating.

Literacy Skills - Information Literacy, Media Literacy, Technology Literacy.

Life Skills – Flexibility, Initiative, Social Skills, Productivity and Leadership

These skills have always been important for students.

6. Conclusions

Since *Edmodo* was used in classes, numbers of good changes have been made to those classes, including a better way of management of large-sized class, an easier and more effective method of assigning homework, a more convenient way of giving a test and assessment, and powerful way of giving preliminary discussion. It can be clearly seen that *Edmodo* has been successfully blended into the curricula of these three classes.

Students were able to learn a different model of the teaching process and they could independently improve their computer skills.

By using *Virtual classroom - Edmodo*, the motivation was increased. The result is even more clearly seen in the observation schemes. Therefore, we can say that the new method was successful and it was reflected in students' academic performance.

The new method was also more effective for colleagues. We decided to use *Virtual Classroom Edmodo* systematically as its use offers the potential to provide students with new ways to develop their problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills…

So, use the *Virtual Classroom Edmodo*, enjoy and get better results…

References

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Author's biographical data

Khatuna Kumelashvili has been teaching at school for 20 years. Her goal, as a teacher, is to prepare students for life and give them proper knowledge. Thus she believes in student-centered, constructivist learning, where students are given responsibility for their own learning. That's why she tries to use new technologis and methods in her teaching.

http://portfolio-kumelashvili.blogspot.com/