

INNOVATIVE TOOLS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH: PROS AND CONS

The digital age we are living in has changed both the way we live and the way we work. University lectures and the practical classes are no longer the same as they used to be. The traditional text-books have been replaced by e-books, the blackboards have been turned into videos, and the classical lectures have altered into online courses. It is no wonder, that everybody in a class-room has a gadget on the desk to be used not only for communication and having fun, but for learning as well. Therefore, teachers are trying to diversify the classes by applying the so-called innovative methods based on the usage of smart phones, tablets, laptops in order to achieve better visualization and to encourage active learning. But have these classes become more immersive? Are the methods and tools innovative? Unfortunately, they are considered to be innovative mostly by teachers. It would be not reasonable to deny the value and the benefits of using all the mentioned above, but many students who are the net generation still find learning boring even provided that any gadget is applied. They have been already used to gadgets, so, it is becoming more and more difficult to keep the screen-agers engaged in studying and make them feel excited about the material taught. While teachers are inventing new ways how to use modern technologies, the learners are becoming more engrossed in their online communication. The things happening on the students' Face book or VK pages are of much more interest for them, than what is going on in the class-room. It seems nothing can resolve this problem, but the solution has been found so far.

Virtual reality cannot anymore be considered as either something from fictions describing distant future, or something that may be used for entertainment only. Virtual headsets are being used to train pilots, for instance. Scientists, educators and game developers united their efforts and have developed another type of virtual headset to be applied to training science students. Now it has become possible to conduct laboratory experiments by plugging a smart phone in this headset only. The results of the headset application proved, that the efficiency of learning has increased more than twice compared to the traditional teaching. The students surveyed reported that they could spend more than two hours in that virtual laboratory without being distracted by other things. As we can see, the application of this virtual headset has absolutely revolutionized both the way the teachers teach and the way the students learn. It looks like it is about the time the teachers of English language started applying this real innovation to simulate any communicative situation or to create any necessary environment for improving students' speaking skills. It can be expected that the classes will become engaging and the students will not be supposed to ignore any language activity wearing relatively cheap headsets in language laboratories. Their peer-to-peer communication can be simulated in the class-rooms which will help learners to

overcome embarrassment while speaking and to increase their self-confidence. Moreover, it is hard to predict how helpful this tool can be at teaching ESP/ Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines the adjective *innovative* as introducing new ideas, ways of doing something. Therefore, the application of virtual headsets to language teaching is definitely innovative. But the most important issue to emphasize is a vital role of the teacher who is really willing to adopt the latest developments to the educational process. Let us become such teachers and enjoy our getting satisfied with the results of innovative approach application as well as watching the students' excitement at learning. The sooner Universities and educators will start cooperating with technology companies, the better results will be obtained.