

PAPER

BENEFITS OF USING INTERNET EDUCATIONAL TOOLS TO FORM SOCIO-CULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

In the world we live in today, students must develop socio-cultural competence in order to succeed in various circumstances. Hence, socio-cultural competence, defined as the ability to engage effectively and responsibly with people from many cultural backgrounds, has emerged as an important component of modern education. This study investigates how internet-based instructional tools can be effective tools for developing such competencies. This research also explores the theoretical foundations, practical applications, technological advances and empirical findings that encourage the use of online resources to improve cultural understanding, empathy and global awareness among students.

Key words: socio-cultural competence, educational techniques, traditions, values.

Introduction

The educational system has changed as a result of globalisation, migration, digital revolution and cross-cultural interactions. Students, today need to develop the interpersonal and intercultural skills required for active participation in a global society in addition to academic knowledge. Traditional educational approaches, which are frequently limited by location and curriculum limitations are being supplemented or perhaps replaced by internet based educational techniques. These tools provide previously unheard of opportunities for individualized, immersive and real-world learning that promote socio-cultural competence. Therefore, students must improve socio-cultural competence not just for personal development but also to prepare for the global workforce and social life in different society. Educational institutions today are increasingly responsible for instilling this competency in students, encouraging them to become culturally sensitive, tolerant and effective communicators. According to A. A. Dragunova (2014), socio-cultural competence is important structural component of communication competencies responsible for success person in a multicultural world. As a result, socio-cultural competence has evolved as an important educational goal, encouraging growth of

students both professionally and personally.

Literature Review

The emergence of the term "Socio-cultural competence" in the Ukrainian methodology of teaching foreign languages is linked to the activities of the international organization "Council of Europe for Cultural Cooperation especially the works of Jan van Eck and John Trim. According to these documents, socio-cultural competence is one of the components of communicative competence understood as a the ability to adequately interact in everyday life situations to establish and maintain social contacts through a foreign language. (Latukhina 2014). A similar interpretation of this concept is given by VV Safonova, P.A Sysayeva, G.V Elizarova, G.A Vorovyov who considered it as one of the components of communicative competence.

The new concept of socio-cultural education requires development of new generation of textbooks, taking into account the cultural identity of everyday and professional communication of own country and countries of the target language. The most important condition for the development of the socio-cultural competence is to provide students relevant didactic material on

the cross-cultural basis (Lewis, 2007).

Taking into account the presented definitions and the identified differential features, we can say that the concept of socio-cultural competence involves not only the development of traditions, images and styles of behavior, the world of symbols, ideas and values, but also the formation of a person's knowledge that gives a vision of things in a form and semantic context which allows in the very formation of experience to organize, dismember information on images, forms, levels according to the integrity of the world.

Methodology

This study took a qualitative multiple case study approach to investigate the real life experiences of students and teachers who use the internet educational technologies for socio-cultural learning. Three educational establishments were chosen based on their implementation of digital intercultural initiatives.

1. A high school in our region that organizes a virtual cultural exchange program.
2. An international school in our city center uses collaborative e-learning tools to facilitate multicultural group collaboration.
3. A president school in the capital city uses focused games to teach cultural awareness.

Data were collected using the following methods:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 educators and 20 students;

Observation of online classes, group conversations and digital storytelling activities;

Analyze course materials, student projects. Thematic analysis was performed using NVivo (qualitative data analysis). Codes were created in order and organized into specific topics, including variety exposition, intercultural communication, empathy and perspective-taking, critical cultural awareness and global citizenship.

Results and Discussion

Virtual interactions increased students' awareness of diverse cultures significantly, according to reports from all of schools. Video exchanges, guest lectures from other schools speakers and peer-to-peer blogging were frequently mentioned. Zoom, Google Docs are examples of collaborative technologies that permit both real-time and autonomous interactions. These techniques help students enhance their multicultural communication skills by requiring them to alter their vocabulary, tone and nonverbal cues. Educators saw significant increases in students' listening skills and cultural sensitivity during conversations. According to V.P. Milrud (2004) "socio-cultural competence refers to the activity component of communicative competence". Digital storytelling tasks elicited strong emotional responses. Students who developed or watched cultural narratives demonstrated greater empathy. Students were encouraged to think on their own cultural biases after being exposed to a variety of viewpoints on forums.

Conclusion

When used properly, internet educational resources are more than just supplements to traditional education; they are crucial catalysts for fostering socio-cultural competence. As mentioned above, there were several positive aspects of using internet educational tools in order to implement and improve socio-cultural competence of students. These internet learning tools exceed cultural divides, promote cultural tolerance and prepare students to be caring, knowledgeable and responsible

global society. As the world continues to merge through digital pathways, educators, governments and technologists must collaborate to harness the full potential of these technologies, so that future generations are not only academically competent but also culturally and socially sympathetic.

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