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iPad as a tool to foster bilingual learning environments

ÁLVAREZ NAVAS, MARÍA ESTER. COLEGIO SALLIVER

Abstract

Technology has become an important and integral part of the daily life of our students. Among these new technologies, mobile devices clearly stand out, facilitating communication and bringing access to foreign contents.

Teachers and researchers have been giving noticeable attention to the impact of these technologies on the teaching-learning process.

As researched and concluded from the experience at Salliver School, iPads can be used as a tool, which not only supports, but also enhances the curriculum of any language or content subject CLIL class following the premises of cooperative learning and multiple intelligences.

Key words

iPad, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, mobile learning, CLIL

Resumen

La tecnología se ha convertido en un elemento fundamental del día a día de nuestros alumnos. La tecnología móvil destaca por facilitar la comunicación y el acceso a contenidos.

El impacto que dicha tecnología tiene en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje ha sido seguido de cerca por educadores e investigadores en los últimos años.

Tal como se ha podido comprobar en Colegio Salliver, la implantación de un proyecto iPad 1:1 ha posibilitado un enriquecimiento significativo de todo el currículum no solo en lengua extranjera sino también en el resto de áreas de contenido dentro del programa bilingüe del centro, propiciando los contextos idóneos para poner en práctica las premisas del aprendizaje cooperativo e inteligencias múltiples.

Palabras clave

iPad, aprendizaje cooperativo, inteligencias múltiples, mobile learning, CLIL.

Introduction

Technology has become an important and integral part of the daily life of our students. Among these new technologies, one-to-one learning clearly stands out, facilitating communication and bringing access to foreign contents.

One to one learning, sometimes known as 1:1 Learning, is a new technology-supported educational approach. Each student has his or her own device (tablet, mobile, laptop or phone) to be used in class, but transcending from school to any other place, where core content and/or additional materials for practice can be reached.

Teachers and researchers have been giving noticeable attention to the impact of these technologies on learning foreign languages.

Bilingual education is considered one of the most important pivotal forces in language learning and teaching in education in Spain and the European Union in the recent years. According to the established National Standards, teachers must produce students who are linguistically and culturally equipped to

communicate successfully in a pluralistic world. The focus on communication and culture can be enhanced by the use of one-to-one devices, providing the ideal context to fill the existing gaps between these forces in language learning.

However, research explicitly connecting the use of technologies in class and the standards is sparse. The objectives proposed have not been clearly connected with the ways mobile devices can help students learning a second language (L2 learners) more effectively achieve fluency in the target language.

As researched and concluded from our experience at Salliver School, mobile technologies, and specifically, iPads can be used as a tool which not only supports, but also enhances, the curriculum of a language or CLIL class, following the premises of cooperative learning and multiple intelligences. But the idea of connecting teaching with the use of tablets goes beyond the simple exploitation of technology for its own sake. Technology needs to be incorporated in the classroom as a means to develop linguistic and communicative skills, but it must also expand student´s learning experiences beyond.

Mobile learning and iPad: 21st century learning

Today more than ever, humankind is experiencing changes in every area of life. In a pluralistic society, dominated by a desire for globalization and for bringing together many different ways of thinking and acting, communication plays a very important role. As mobile technologies become useful tools to provide the ideal contexts for this to take place, more and more teachers become aware of the potential impact that these mobile technologies are having on the study and teaching of foreign languages. Among these, iPad clearly stands out as a dynamic tool capable of assisting teachers in fostering learning and bringing it to exciting and compelling levels of achievement any time and most importantly, anywhere.

Though it would be an enormous mistake to consider that technology could be a substitute for the intuition of teachers, when wisely integrated into the foreign language curriculum it can definitely become a very useful tool. Therefore, the key to the effectiveness of the integration of iPad as an educational tool lies in the fact that it should not be seen as a substitute, but as an enhancement of our lessons. Our role as educators is not only new, but it turns into a more important one. The shift goes from knowledge for its own sake to giving sense to it, facilitating meaning and content by teaching our students to explore and establish connections.

According to John Dewey, "If we teach today´s students as we taught yesterday´s, we rob them of tomorrow".

Foreign language educators are in the midst of what has been described by many authors as a *paradigm shift*. How we teach must reflect how our students learn, it must also reflect the world they will emerge into. This is a world that is rapidly changing, connected, adapting and evolving. Our style and approach to teaching must emphasize the learning in the 21st century". Retrieved from http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/pedagogy?view=uk

Therefore, the use of pedagogical strategies that help teachers master the 21st century teaching skills turns crucial.

According to the article *Top 10 characteristics of a 21st century classroom* posted in The Flipped Classroom (2016), as cited in the blog EdTech Review: Spreading Awareness on Education Technology (2016), there are 10 major trends in education that make necessary the redefinition of some roles. As we can see, these trends overlap with the pedagogical strategies established before, as they require a redefinition of not only the context but of all the parts taking place in the educational process. In this sense, mobile technologies clearly facilitate the shift as effective tools and learning engines.

First of all, there is a shift towards student-centeredness and active learning. The teacher is no longer the center of the class with his or her lecture of universal truth. A teacher becomes a moderator of the learning process, where students take part and where they take on their own responsibilities. Teachers define the goals and create the way to access and build up to them. Students discover the contents, assisted and guided by the instructor. This means, however, as mentioned before, that students must take more responsibility in their learning process.

The incorporation of technological devices is crucial. Research often shows that the use of technologies brings students beyond the four walls of the classroom (Armstrong & Yetter-Vassot, 1994). The space is no longer limited. Mobile technologies go one step further since they offer the possibility of developing students´

competencies more readily than the traditional tools inside a classroom. Boundaries concerning where, when and with whom are removed.

Learning becomes adaptive. Thus, there is shift from students all learning the same things to learning different things.

Learning environments are invitational. All the activities that are designed involve some sort of adventure, discovery-learning format. Gamification, or the use of games for educational purposes has proven its efficiency in the latest years. Gamification goes hand by hand with problem-based learning, where students are asked to look for answers, developing their thinking skills.

Students understand and follow the rules and procedures, showing mutual respect within a collaborative learning environment. A shift from competitive to cooperative social structure, where the sense of you win, I win is present. For this cooperative environment to take place roles are designated and involvement becomes one of the main axis.

Without any doubt, the use of iPads 1:1 in class brings an increased tendency towards collaboration. This connection can be among students who are sharing but are located in different places, be in in the same school or even in different ones, or can also take the form of pairs or teams of students inside the same class. As already stated, as for the introduction of technologies in the class, this type of interaction stands in contrast to the traditional model of schools in which each classroom is a self-contained and isolated unit (Kearsley, 2000).

Collaboration is not a 21st century skill, it is a 21st century essential. There are plenty of examples of companies succeeding by mainly using a collaborative model: Facebook, Twitter, Google…

In a recent blog post from the Official Google Blog, Google identifies these as the key traits and abilities: "… team players. Virtually every project at Google is run by a small team. People need to work well together and perform up the team´s expectations." Retrieved from http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/07/our-google-advice-to-students-major-in.html

Therefore, our teaching should also model collaboration. A wide range of tools that foster collaboration are available: wikis, blogs, collaborative document tools, social networks, learning managing platforms, educational apps, etc.

UNESCO´S publication *The Four pillars of Education, Learning: The Treasure within*, establishes collaboration as a key element in each of the four pillars, learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. Retrieved from http://www.unescoorg/delors/fourpil.htm

All the above statements also imply performance-based assessment, a shift from assessment based of products towards progress and effort.

Another important aspect to consider is that the use of iPads involves a multisensory experience. Learning is more effective when it involves a variety of sensory channels. Knowledge and/ or content is taught in context, while our students undertake different activities. As learning pyramid studies show, content taught just for its own sake has a low retention rate.

The final theme, one that correlates with the previous connectivity, community and shared knowledge, is authenticity. Whereas the lack of realism has always been defined as one of the weaknesses of traditional instruction, now students have access to realistic information, situations, feedback, etc. This sense of realism helps students create a sense of motivation and usefulness.

Challenges

The need to examine the role of all the elements taking place in the learning process, including here the role of technology within it, presents educators with some challenges regarding how to use this technology to promote the language learning. First of all, some teachers are resistant to experience new changes, feeling a fear of losing authority and control in the classroom due to a lack of self-confidence since students are digital natives and are, therefore, more technologically proficient.

Another reason for this fear on the part of the teacher is that the orientation of the classroom switches from teacher-driven to student-centered where teachers play the role of guides and facilitators.

In addition, issues of availability, need and funding also need to be addressed.

Potential roles

As researched and concluded from our experience at Salliver School, the following potential roles for technology, and more specifically, the use of iPad 1:1 in bilingual lessons can be outlined.

As instructors, iPads help students develop proficiency in 21st century skills while mastering at the same time the traditional ones. The content-knowledge that we teach might or might not be obsolete with the passing of time, whereas thinking skills will remain with our students for their entire lives.

As learning partners, iPads can provide interaction to the students, presenting the whole learning scenario as a more attractive and appealing one.

When acting as facilitators, iPads serve as a means of transmission of information and content in a fast, convenient way. They can provide students and teachers access to information, in all variations, written, oral, pictorial, which can serve as raw materials for the development of the 21st century skills. They are able to bring any thing to its user´s fingertips from different and varied sources.

Finally, they also stand out as aid for special needs learning situations.

As mentioned before, while our students are relatively technology literate and have used mobile devices on their own, most of them are unclear about how to use technology as a tool to foster their own learning process. That is why educators must be willing to invest time and energy in developing creative and pedagogically useful activities. As concluded by Leloup and Ponterio (2000), technological tools must be integrated into the curriculum in a pedagogically sound and meaningful way.

For anyone involved in the education world, the ability to produce and distribute personalized educational material represents an exciting and crucial moment, marking the difference with traditional teaching. iPads are the ideal platform for this, because of their light weight, mobility and versatility, making the physical barrier between students and teachers disappear. More that 65.00 educational apps can be downloaded. More than 750.000 iTunes U Courses are available from different educational institutions that deliver free educational videos, audio content and study materials. Finally, iBook Author opens up the production of educational material to anyone[1].

Planning stage

And as it happens with any instructional tool, its effectiveness relies in how the tool is actually used. Therefore, a planning stage is necessary no matter how educationally relevant an app or activity might appear at first sight. Understanding the place of any technology-based activity within the larger scope of an entire curriculum will help teachers plan meaningful and effective learning experiences. Projects should be organized and well defined, just as a traditional lesson taught without technology would be (Bitter, 2002).

The major purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the implementation of a one-to-one (1:1) iPad device model, in the bilingual subject areas foster the introduction of cooperative dynamics that attend a variety of multiple intelligences.

This focus brings to the subject areas within the bilingual program of the school the possibility to go beyond the physical walls of the classroom and immerse our students in different context, developing thinking skills.

The review of literature identified and discussed the potentialities and advantages of incorporating mobile devices in class, as well as some of the difficulties and challenges that we may encounter. Given that research, the section that follows defines a set of criteria, giving a series of examples that will help teachers evaluate, select and incorporate iPad related activities in the bilingual subject areas, arising iBooks as one of the most powerful tools that iPads provide.

[1] iBooks Author, a free application for Mac, makes it simple to create and personalize digital books, adding text, graphics, movies, charts and even widgets that give the interactivity that traditional books miss.

Set of criteria

I. An iPad-based lesson can easily integrate all the different skills

iPad- based lessons can integrate the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers must maintain a balance and not concentrate only on one of the four skills. We should take advantage of the multiple dimensions of the mobile device.

A clear advantage of the use of iBooks for educational purposes is that students will be able to use a variety of authentic material that has been personalized for the subject and for them. In addition, iBooks Author turn out as the fastest and most convenient tool to embed opportunities to practice the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

II. An iPad-based lesson makes possible to integrate cooperative learning dynamics in an attempt to foster collaboration environments

Cooperative learning has been described and proven as a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve the understanding of any subject. An atmosphere of achievement and positive interdependence is created since students not only have an individual accountability but group responsibility as well, by means of simultaneous participation and equal participation opportunities.

The general principle behind cooperative learning is that students work together in a collaborative way in an attempt to accomplish a common goal by summing up all the individual contributions. Cooperative learning strategies appear to promote social skills. To keep the balance between class building and team building is crucial.

As mentioned before, teams need to be heterogeneous but balanced so that students enrich from each other in a positive way. Several digital tools such as students selectors, team selectors, timers, etc, can effectively aid teachers in following these classroom management dynamics.

Although cooperative learning dynamics may require more teacher preparation of materials, the benefits clearly stand out improving the level of academic achievement, social and collaboration skills, that is, the 21st century skills that our students will need.

Cooperative learning techniques and iPad arise as the perfect facilitators of learning environments that promote student learning and academic achievement, increasing student retention, social skills, self-esteem and level of motivation, and furthermore, enhancing student´s satisfaction with their learning experience.

III. An iPad-based lesson attends all the different multiple intelligences providing a wide range and a variety of contexts and activities

The theory of multiple intelligences was developed in 1.983 by Dr Howard Gardner, professor of education at Harvard University. It suggests that the traditional notion of intelligence, based on I.Q. testing is far too limited. Dr Gardner proposes that taking into consideration the suggested eight different intelligences, we will broaden the potential of any learner, be it child or adult.

Therefore, the theory implies a major transformation in the way schools are run. The theory of multiple intelligences has grabbed the attention of multiple teachers around the world. However, to supply with a wide range of resources sometimes turns a difficult mission.

iPad clearly stands out as the perfect tool to compile in the same place this variety of activities, that will address the different modalities of intelligences.

One of the most remarkable features of the theory of multiple intelligences is how it provides different pathways to learning. If we are having problems in reaching a student, iPads and in concrete iBooks, can include several other ways in which the material might be presented to facilitate effective learning.

For example, if we are teaching about the 20th century in Social Studies class, we might ask our students to read about it (linguistic), then, make a timeline sequencing the events of the period using the digital collage app (logical smart), create a digital mind-map (spatial smart), compose a song about the topic and record it with the iPad (musical), act the event of history out and record it (body smart), interview an older person about the topic and then record it (interpersonal), describe their personal feelings about the topic using a digital comic maker (intrapersonal).

Linguistic intelligence - word smart

For these students using words effectively is a must. These learners often think in words since they have highly developed auditory skills. They enjoy when learning with readings, playing word games, making up poetry or stories.

Some suggested iPad related activities that can be easily introduced are the following:

Discuss and debate the topic with a partner. Record the conclusions that you reach.

Write a report, letter, or article on the topic using the text editor (Pages).

Write a play on the topic using any of story generators apps (Comic Maker/ PuppetPals HD).

(Example of student´s Social Studies project)

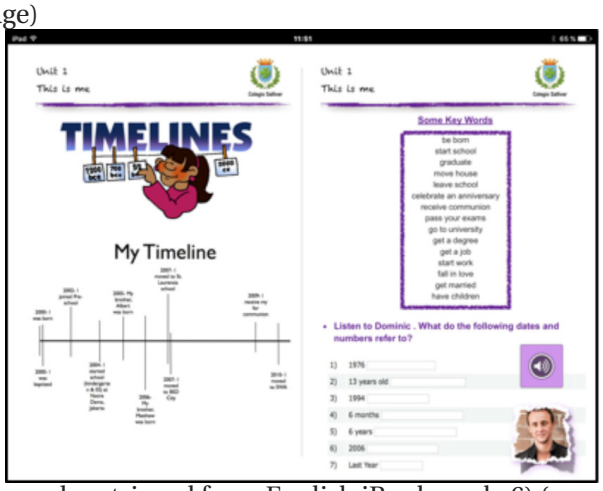
Logical mathematical - logic smart

These students need to learn concepts before being exposed to details. They learn more easily through reasoning, calculating, solving puzzles and misteries.

Some suggested iPad related activities that can be easily introduced are the following:

Create an experiment and design an invention related to the topic and record it.

Make a timeline, or sequence the events relating to the topic using any of the digital collage poster editors (PicCollage)



(example retrieved from English iBook grade 6)

(example of student´s Social Studies project)

Spatial intelligence – art/picture smart

These students think in terms of physical space. They like puzzles, maps, drawings. They are easily taught through drawings and images. iPads and iBooks can provide tools that include models, graphics, charts, 3-d images, videos, charts. iPads also allow students to create their own ones in an easy way.

Some suggested iPad related activities that can be easily introduced are the following:

Represent the concept with a drawing using the digital board.

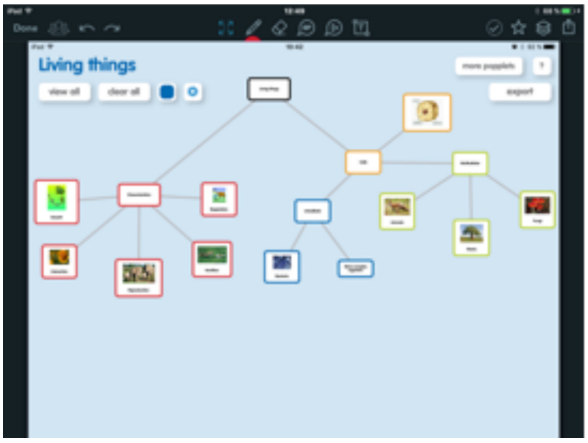
Create a collage (PicCollage).

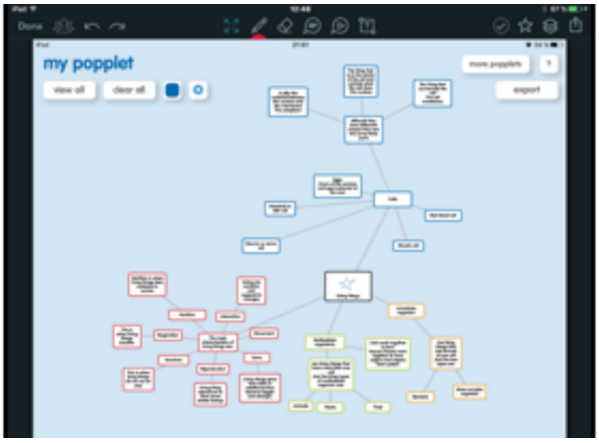
Illustrate a book using the editing tools.

Create a mind map (Mindomo/ Popplet).

Report on a film or video on the topic

Organize a trip to a museum: record it with the iPad and write a report using visual aid.





(examples of student´s Science project)

Musical intelligence - music smart

Since these students show a special sensitivity to sound and rhythm, they are easily taught by turning lessons into lyrics. Audio tracks can easily be embedded into iBooks. Students can be asked to compose and sing a song about the topic using the Garage Band tool for iPads.

Bodily kinesthetic intelligence -body smart

These students have a strong sense of body awareness. Since they enjoy movements, making things, touching, and they communicate efficiently through body language, we can ask them to act or dance the topic or a related topic out and record it, create hand gestures to represent related topics, …

Nature smart

These students have a strong sense of nature awareness and about the impact that any other topics have on the environment. They learn when they are asked to compare and contrast, make a list of observations on the topic, sort related items into categories… All these activities can be easily carried out using a variety of digital tools. If we think in a wider sense, we can ask students to carry out a research project by analyzing the impact the topic has on nature, and for which the iPad can be a more than useful information generator tool.

Interpersonal intelligence - people smart

People smart students learn through interaction with others. They enjoy cooperative projects. Educators can ask these students to interview students from other countries about the topic using the videoconference option.

We can also ask them to teach someone about the topic and record it so that it can be shared with the rest of classmates, or plan and represent a team project on the topic using the DOCERI App that allows them to integrate voice with written and visual aids.

Students can thus, easily learn about the topic and teach others what they learned.

Intrapersonal intelligence - self-smart

On the other hand, and in opposition to the previous one, self-smart students tend to shy away from others and their main goal is to understand one´s own interests. They usually have strong beliefs, intuition and inner

motivation. Therefore, as educators, we can ask them to reflect in and record their feelings about the topic, draw, sing, or write their feelings, describe their personal experiences relating to the topic, or even make a journal entry on the topic, including drawings and opinions. In any case, iPads provide the ideal tools to generate creative materials, for private individual study when students need independent work time. Both iBooks and all the digital resources generated with the iPad can be used offline so that students can work in class but also individually in any other physical space they may choose.

Conclusions

This paper presented an insight into both the theory and practice of 1:1 Learning, including a wide range of dynamics and activities to take advantage of mobile devices within English teaching or the teaching of any other content subject area within a bilingual school project.

As shown, the main role of the device is to extend time on task outside the classroom, anytime and anywhere, facilitating the learner´s autonomy. In addition, when in the classroom, the dynamics and activities that iPads allow, enable more interaction of the students with their own individual learning process and towards teams and the whole class group.

More authentic materials can be used, keeping the balance of the four main skills when presenting the information. It also enables the development of authentic tasks using different apps and functions of the device.

The main benefit is without doubt the extension of practice outside the classroom, being able to work off-line. Therefore, the number of hours available per week to the subject within the curriculum, can be greatly extended.

In summary, new forms of structuring the class emerge if we want to teach using 21st century pedagogy, facilitating the learning environments that foster cooperative learning and the attention to multiple intelligences. Only this will establish a safe environment for our students, where they are not only encouraged to collaborate in but also to discuss, reflect and give feedback, developing higher order thinking skills.

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