Joanna Sikorska

*Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza
w Poznaniu*

TEACHING CULTURE THROUGH ICT
IN A POSTMODERN WORLD
– (UN)USED POSSIBILITIES OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Abstract. Sikorska Joanna, *Teaching Culture Through ICT in a Postmodern World – (Un)Used Possibilities of New Technologies* [Nauczanie kultury poprzez technologie teleinformatyczne w ponowoczesnym świecie – (nie)wykorzystane możliwości nowych technologii]. Studia Edukacyjne nr 46, 2017, Poznań 2017, pp. 389-403. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 1233-6688. DOI: 10.14746/se.2017.46.25

Teaching culture of foreign countries was until recently done by traditional means i.e. movies, letters sent by post to schools in other countries or by means of a textbook. Now, when schools are getting more computerized, certain elements of teaching have been revolutionized. They include, for example, culture teaching, which received a new meaning through the use of eTwinning. Because of it, teachers and students can communicate much easier through the platform, Facebook or by e-mail with other schools from the EU that are in this program. They can take part in projects with other schools and learn the cultural differences between their countries together. In this article I try to point out the challenges which multicultural ICT use can bring to education.

Key words: teaching culture through ICT, culture, new technologies, eTwinning, education 4.0

Introduction

We live in a society, in which we continuously reduce the distance, in which we must renounce the destructive heritage of the past with its conflicts and compete for a new culture of convergence and cooperation.

This is a fundamental challenge that education should face in the 21st century. Progress in knowledge and technological innovation has given us the opportunity to overcome all these difficulties. What is lacking in order to be able to use it in a creative way is wisdom. Knowledge is enriched, but wisdom disappears.

Research on didactic culture has shown that language and culture are closely related. The emergence of standards for foreign language education in the 21st century drew attention to the important role of culture in language classes and culture as a core part of the process of learning the second language (L2).

Professional conferences and magazines dedicated to cultural education saw culture "as a goal just as important as communication".[1] While language teachers have recognized the need to include more cultural activities in order to promote the understanding of cultural and intercultural students in order to "help fight the ethnocentrism that often dominates the thinking of adolescents".[2] The question remains how such cultural teaching should and could be most effective at school level.

H. Douglas Brown[3] while analyzing the problems related to teaching culture, describes the mutual linguistic and cultural relationship, stating that "it is impossible to separate both without losing meaning of both language and culture. The acquisition of a second language, with the exception of specialized instrumental acquisition (…), is also an acquisition of a second culture".

A lack of an overarching definition presents many teachers, including (and perhaps above all) foreign language teachers with the challenge of determining which components or segments of the target culture should be taught. As a result, culture is perceived as consisting of many different parts, some of which are emphasized in the classroom and others are not.

Culture – the ambiguity of definitions and concepts as a challenge for educators

The complexity of the word culture makes it difficult to define. Apte,[4] writing for the 10-volume Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics, sums up the problem as follows: "Despite hundreds of efforts to properly define culture, in the early 1990s there was no agreement among the anthropologists about its character".

Kevin Avruch[5] is responsible for the historical perspective for some of the ways in which the term "culture" was interpreted. Much of the difficulty (understanding the notion of culture) results from its various definitions in the

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[1] Z. Moore, *Technology and Teaching Culture: What Spanish Teachers Do*, Foreign Language Annals, 2006, 39(4), p. 579-594.

[2] National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999, p. 47.

[3] H.D. Brown, *Principles of language learning and teaching*, New York 2007.

[4] M. Apte, *Language in sociocultural context*, [in:] *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 4, Ed. R.E. Asher, Oxford 1994, p. 2001.

[5] K. Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, Washington DC 1998, p. 6-7.

nineteenth century. Generally speaking, it was used in three ways (all of these can also be found today). First, as pointed out by Matthew Arnold in Culture and Anarchy,[6] culture referred to special intellectual or artistic undertakings or products, what we would call today "high culture" as opposed to "popular culture" (or "Folkways" in an earlier use). According to this definition, only a part – usually a small one – of any social group has a "culture". This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics than to social science.

In reaction to this definition, the second one, as pioneered by Edward Tylor in Primitive Culture, referred to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum (in Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme) from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization". It is worth quoting Tylor's definition in its entirety, first because it became the foundational usage for anthropology, and second because it partly explains why Alfred L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn[7] found definitional fecundity by the early 1950s. Tylor's definition of culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".[8] In contrast to Arnold's view, all people "have" culture, which they acquire by virtue of membership in a social group – society. Knowledge, habits as well as capabilities make up culture.

The extreme inclusivity of Tylor's definition stayed with anthropology for a long time; it is one reason political scientists who became interested in cultural questions in the late 1950s felt it necessary to delimit their relevant cultural domain to "political culture". But the greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "complex whole" formulation. This was accepted even by those anthropologists who came later and who forcefully rejected his evolutionism. They took it to mean that cultures were wholes – integrated systems. Although this assertion has great heuristic value, it also, as I try to indicate below, simplifies the world considerably.

The third and last usage of culture is the one developed in anthropology, the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas[9] and his students, though with roots in the eighteenth-century writings of Johann von Herder. As Tylor reacted to Arnold to establish a scientific (rather than aesthetic) basis for culture, so Boas reacted against Tylor and other social evolutionists. Whereas the evolutionists stressed the universal character of a single culture, with different societies ar-

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[6] M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, London 2009.
[7] A.L. Kroeber, C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Papers of the Penbody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology 47/1, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1952, p. 181.
[8] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, New York 2016, p. 1.
[9] F. Boas, *A Franz Boas reader: the shaping of American anthropology, 1883-1911*, Chicago 1989, p. 308.

rayed from savage to civilized, Boas emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not to differentially valorize cultures as savage or civilized.

Here, therein lie three very different understandings of culture. Part of the difficulty in the term lies in its multiple meanings. But to compound matters, the difficulties are not merely conceptual or semantic. All of the usages and understandings come attached to, or can be attached to, different political or ideological agendas that, in one form or another, still resonate today.[10]

ICT – a challenge for teachers in the context of education 4.0

Education 4.0[11] carries with it many important aspects that may become important elements of the changes involved in the learning process – teaching culture that takes into account the need for a full understanding of one's own nation's culture, but also foreign cultures. Such an approach seems to be essential if we want to follow the way of an "educated society" in which we not only learn ourselves, but also learn from others. While preparing for life in the present and future society, nothing will replace the "teacher-student relationship" based on authority and dialogue. This phenomenon was highlighted by all the great thinkers dealing with educational problems. Education, particularly important in the process of constant transformations taking place in the neoliberal postmodernism, is understood and defined differently in literature. It seems, however, that it is correct in relation to the problem of "learning and teaching culture, as well as its understanding in the context of the integrity of learning, teaching and educating".[12] None of these processes are less important than the other simply because education is not just about telling the students what they know about themselves and their surrounding world, but also about how Martin Heidegger wrote about "Being-in-the-World".[13] Understanding gives us a chance to co-identify, consonance – by being aware of our culture, we can appreciate others, and accepting a critical approach we can consider very different points of view. In education 4.0 among many elements important in creating the process of teaching culture particularly worthy of note are:

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[10] K. Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*.

[11] P. Fisk, *Education 4.0 … the future of learning will be dramatically different, in school and throughout life*, http://www.thegeniusworks.com/2017/01/future-education-young-everyone-taught-together/ [access: 1.08.2017].

[12] H. Krauze-Sikorska, *Edukacja przez sztukę. O edukacyjnych wartościach artystycznej twórczości dziecka*, Poznań 2006.

[13] M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, Warszawa 2008, p. 76 and next.

– The creation of such forms of support for the students' learning processes, that will enable them to assume responsibility for their own learning process. The strategies implemented by teachers in the learning process should lead to positive effects, which, for example, in the case of access to information, will allow students to personalize their learning process and become, independently of the level of their current skill set, tenacious seekers of knowledge, achieve self-awareness, develop a tolerance for ambiguity.

– The need to develop computer thinking – CT allowing students to think and solve problems in a similar way to how the computer solves them. This is an important skill in today's digital world. Computer thinking is a problem-solving process that includes, but also exceeds, our ability to code. The basis is solving problems with computer applications, but the methods can be applied in a variety of situations and approaches. CT combines logic and deep knowledge of how computers "think". It is an important, contemporary knowledge that fosters the creativity of all students, not just those who can become programmers or computer graphics. Even if some students are not pursuing a career as a programmer, they should be familiar with vocabulary and processes specific to such a job so that they can communicate effectively with their colleagues using technical vocabulary in the future, and have knowledge not only about how the computer works but also how it influences their lives. Some CT basics include breaking down problems into smaller parts to analyze their solutions (problem distribution). Relevant here become skills such as: (1) identifying patterns and connections; (2) the automation of solutions through a number of orderly steps (algorithms); (3) the use of abstraction to represent data such as models or simulations; (4) organizing and analyzing logical data; (5) generalizing the problem solving process to solving those problems.

– Developing social and emotional competencies that are important components of computer thinking. Competences built by the CT approach to problem solving, with the basis for them being perseverance, tolerance for ambiguity, confidence in complexity and openness, as well as communication and interpersonal collaboration are necessary to solve problems together with other students.

At this point, it should be emphasized that social and emotional competences often referred to as dispositions, manners of thinking, and even "soft skills" have become the focus of discussion in both the educational and professional areas, as well as personal lives of people functioning in a constantly changing world.[14] These are extensive, often interrelated sets of attributes: perseverance, mental attitude. Much of the research on social and emotional skills is about changing our approach to the essence and meaning of "evaluation" and "self-

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[14] In Poland, the debate over these issues has only just begun.

-evaluation" of an individual, which are very often conducive with comparing oneself with others, to a more targeted and empathetic approach. Much of the research into the importance of these skills, in order to succeed in both education and life, not necessarily professional, is significant. Studies show that students who learn these skills achieve 11% higher scores than students who did not.[15] So in this context, the excuses given by some teachers that social and emotional skills, though very valuable, have no place in learning standards because they are difficult to assess do not seem appropriate because it does not seem to be the real reason teachers avoid implementing them.[16]

Education 4.0 draws attention to the phenomenon of futurism in the modern world, and points out that this field of science and philosophy, which focuses on foreseeing often the near future, can prove extremely useful for "programming" education. Labor market professionals extrapolate that future professional lives of many of today's students will look differently and that some of them will work in places that have not yet been invented. They would need certain skills that would help them find themselves in the world. Long Life Learning will do much for today's students, but they will also need the ability to find and fulfill their potential in the culture of different countries. Therefore, it is necessary to have such a learning-teaching strategy of today's students, that will allow them to fully develop themselves in the conditions that will/can occur.

Education 4.0 also emphasizes the essence of digital citizenship. This is an increasingly urgent topic, changing, with regard to earlier considerations, its meaning and purpose. It is now known that students, from the earliest stages of education, are using the Internet and other technological tools in different places. With the support of wise (and prepared) adults, students learn quickly, learn how to be safe, use legitimate sources, and behave ethically online.

The Institute for the Future[17] indicates a necessity for a change in education, and thanks to its research we are able to question the current understanding of the tasks facing the person preparing himself for the challenges of the professional world and the role that education plays in the modern world, which rarely gives the students the opportunity to be inspired by new ideas in the tasks undertaken by them.

Defining the future of learning – teaching in a world based on ever-changing technology, must be based on emphasizing the increasingly hybrid –

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[15] World Economic Forum, The Global Information Technology Report 2016, 6 July.

[16] Of course, I agree that these skills can hardly be estimated using standardized testing methods, but standard models are not the only means of assessing students.

[17] The Institute for the Future (IFTF) is a Palo Alto, California-based, non-profit US corporation bringing together an ever-growing circle of experts called a think tank. IFTF was founded in 1968 as a dedicated RAND corporate unit to help organizations plan for the long-term future, the subject Future Studies deal with.

physical and digital nature of human life, but also showing how important it is to understand how technology can violate human rights, in what way the declared by so many teachers personalized approach to student learning, often taking the form of "automated personalization", restricts openness not only towards itself, but also towards other ideas and people?

Curation is a very important concept of education 4.0, which, as proposed by Paul Mihaildis and James N. Cohen, means "(…) take over or organize, gather together, sift, select for presentation, heal and behave (…)" and generally refers to working with physical artifacts in libraries or museums.[18] In the digital age, however, this term is hardly a reference to working with artifacts in the places mentioned above. Internet access has slowly taught us how to be a "curator" of cyber-artifacts – how to find information we need in order to organize and demonstrate this knowledge to others. Moreover, having access to a variety of digital tools we also need to learn how to organize our own collections. In other words, finding and sorting content, identifying patterns and differences in sources, and organizing content into groups are all skills that also require creative thinking.[19]

Under the concept of Education 4.0 creativity will not only be developed by the individual, but will promote sharing of knowledge and digital resources with others. This aspect is confirmed by the research done by Rivka Gadot and Ily Levin, which emphasized that students motivated by "digital learning" not only gained the means to acquire, construct and demonstrate profound knowledge, but also willingly shared it with others.[20]

Blended learning (BL), sometimes called an integrated hybrid teaching system,[21] or Mixed-mode[22] may also be the way to go. The standards of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) 2017[23] presuppose that BL, thanks to the integration of technology and the traditional educatio-

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[18] P. Mihailidis, J.N. Cohen, *Exploring Curation as a core competency in digital and media literacy education*, Journal of Interactive Media in Education, 2013, (1), p. Art. 2. http://doi.org/10.5334/2013-02 [access: 1.08.2017].

[19] "Curation" in the web edition meaning is the filtering and selection of the most vital information from the flood of content that reaches us from every side of the global IT network. It is interesting that in the terms of traditional media (conventionally referred to as media 1.0), the journalist was our "curate" – he chose, selected and presented information condensed for reading and it was then presented by him in media such as magazines (it was in essence his social role). The popularity of a newspaper was based on how much – and in principle how how well – it could consolidate and present information for a given group of people.

[20] R. Gadot, I. Levin, *Digital Curation as Learning Activity*, Proceedings of EDULEARN12 Conference, 2nd-4th July 2012, Barcelona, Spain.

[21] K.M. Kapp, C. McKeague, *Blended Learning for compliance training Success*, New Jersey 2002.

[22] M. Nichols, *Teaching for Learning*, Palmerston North 2001, p. 34.

[23] The International Standards for Technology in Education (ISTE) 2017 for students are not intended solely for the mixed-education environments, but it is assumed that the educatio-

nal process, allows for the individualization of education, and this enables the child/student to experience a more personalized learning-teaching experience. Being a coherent part of the education program BL allows students not only to use the resources they already have, but to also act creatively, and set educational goals for teachers involving the implementation of different forms of activity and organizational forms (individual work, in groups, in teams). Proper work strategies should be matched by the achievements of children's specific creative competences both in the cognitive and social-emotional and motivational processes.[24]

From the point of view of the conducted analyzes one of the most important elements of Education 4.0 is the "creative movement", which creates the possibility for children/students to "launch their imagination" to find out how a certain object works in a practical and exploratory way. Students also acquire knowledge and skills to create their own prototypes, as the processes involved in creating innovative solutions have become easier and more dynamic nowadays, but also important when dealing with programmable production machines or 3D printers. The overarching vision of education manifested in the "creative movement", however, also includes other assumptions such as:

– project-based or problem-solving learning;

– situations, in which students develop social and emotional skills;

– the ability to learn critical thinking, creative communication and dynamism in relationships with others (including those, who function in a different reality from the one known to us).

The "design-make-play" assumptions are an illustration of a significant change, as students benefit from design processes, which allow them to solve problems in a meaningful, organized and ingenious way, while gaining in--depth knowledge of how things work or can work if the processes of creating and developing curiosity, exploration, and passion for learning through fun are set in motion.[25]

This diversity of skills is reflected in the ISTE standards for students,[26] which pay attention to, among others, the need to develop computational thinking (Standard 5). They are most evident in Standard 4 – Innovative Projects that put students in situations, that allow them to express themselves,

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system in which we are dealing with hybrid education is conducive to multi-dimensional student development https://www.iste.org/standards/standards/for-students [access: 1.08.2017]

[24] J. Sikorska, *Microsoft Kinect i jego zastosowanie w hybrydowym modelu uczenia się – nauczania dzieci w wieku wczesnoszkolnym*, [in:] *Świat małego dziecka. Przestrzeń edukacji, cyberprzestrzeń i inne przestrzenie dzieciństwa*, Eds. H. Krauze-Sikorska, M. Klichowski, Poznań 2017, p. 327-340.

[25] M. Honey, D.E. Kanter (eds.), *Design, Make, Play: Growing the Next Generation of STEM Innovators*, New York 2013.

[26] ISTE, op.cit.

engage creatively in solving real problems and creating new products or solutions. The essence and importance of the previously described blended learning environment, which gives students some degree of control over the tempo, individual rhythm, as well as the focus and control of school work, is also highlighted by the fact that student empowerment is at the heart of ISTE 2017 standards.

Education 4.0 is about dealing with being a "global citizen". Confirming the value of global citizenship is an argument that is certainly not new, but seems necessary. From the perspective of ISTE, the importance of the topic comes from several factors. First of all, technology makes it easy to connect with virtually anyone. With a few clicks of the mouse, the student can contact both an expert in the field and a colleague working on a similar issue at the other end of the world. So there is the possibility not only of direct access to knowledge from all over the world, but also the possibility of synchronous or asynchronous work with other students in any geographical location (technology therefore connects in a meaningful, dynamic way). Secondly, many current problems are global problems and require global solutions. Regardless of whether it is climate change, culture or social inequality, students should learn to sympathize with others outside their direct sphere of experience, find information that helps them understand the problem and collaborate with others in ways that are enabling them to find meaningful solutions to legitimate problems.

Digital media in the educational process towards the world of multicultural ICT
– new opportunities for knowing and understanding others

Despite extensive discussion on language teaching in foreign language classrooms, teachers and pedagogues are still looking for effective methods, that will allow language teachers in the 21st century to teach culture in a way that promotes authentic communication, because knowing a foreign language is not synonymous with knowing and understanding the culture of its society.

The world of culture is connected with the world of ICT. It is for us, that ICT opens new doors of understanding and knowledge about the world and its diverse cultures.

Technology has changed the nature of learning and teaching. Teachers are exploring digital technologies to make learning more effective and actively engage students. Technology promotes socially active language in many authentic contexts because of "availability, flexibility, speed of communication,

and the independence of the methodological approach".[27] This gives foreign language teachers different opportunities to create better and more effective instructional materials in teaching not only the language structure, but also the target culture. Students can use technology to learn in formal and informal settings through interactive social spaces.[28] Technological devices such as smartphones, laptops, computers, tablets, PDAs, etc., as well as Web 2.0 technologies are widely used to support classroom learning, and have opened up new perspectives of language learning and teaching in particular.[29] One of the advantages of technology is that it provides authentic communication in an interactive environment facilitating teaching culture.[30] By using interactive media, students become less dependent on the printed versions and more engaged in an authentic culture, that they are free to move about in because they have greater control over the choice and use of materials and resources. These numerous resources and materials allow teachers to adapt digital media to make the culture more relevant and accessible to students in the classroom.[31] By incorporating technology into day-to-day activities teachers and students become a part of an interactive environment. Technology creates an "open"[32] space, in which the results are not predetermined. What is important, thanks to interactive web resources, that provide the benefits of web communication and real-time communication, so that students can continue learning the target language and enhance their cultural understanding beyond the classroom[33] at the same time. Technology allows teachers and students to go beyond quick and superficial stops on the information highway and to establish meaningful scenarios for interactive learning.

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme[34] and Lina Lee[35] provide a list of various activities, which have emerged during the period of 2005-2010, that can be used in a foreign language classroom. These activities include social applications (e.g., Facebook) and blogging (e.g., Twitter); mobile Internet access (browsing websites and reading news); use of multiple media (watching movies,

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[27] J.A. Gonzalez, *Technology and culture in the language class: Adding another ingredient to the old dilemma… and a taxonomy and a database structure*, AsiaCall Online Journal, 2009, 4(1), p. 62.

[28] A. Kukulska-Hulme, *Learning cultures on the move: Where are we heading?* Educational Technology & Society, 2010, 13(4), p. 4-14.

[29] L. Lee, *Promoting intercultural exchanges with blogs and podcasting: A study of Spanish-American telecollaboration*, Computer Assisted Language Learning, 2009, 22(5), p. 425-443.

[30] Ibidem

[31] Z. Moore, *Technology and Teaching Culture: What Spanish Teachers Do*, Foreign Language Annals, 2006, 39(4), p. 579-594.

[32] J. Hellebrandt, *Multimedia and foreign language teacher: A humanistic perspective*, [in:] *Foreign language teacher education: Multiple perspectives*, Ed. Z. Moore, Maryland 1996, p. 257.

[33] Z. Moore, *Technology and Teaching Culture*.

[34] A. Kukulska-Hulme, *Learning cultures on the move*.

[35] L. Lee, *Promoting intercultural exchanges*.

listening to audio books, podcasts and vodcasts); location-based activities (using GPS to find a place – Geocaching); and user created content (making a film, creating a podcast).[36] Such activities allow language learners to maximize the opportunity to be exposed to L2 in meaningful and authentic contexts and audiences. This leads to learners' construction of their own L2 cultural knowledge.[37] In addition, these tools increase opportunities for students to communicate in L2 not only within the classroom walls, but also outside the classroom. Teachers and students find blogs attractive for at least two reasons – interactivity and collaboration.[38] Blogs promote reading and writing, knowledge sharing, feedback and reflection, as well as cultural learning. By reading blogs written by native speakers, students can gain cultural understanding of different perspectives of L2 native speakers.[39] There are a number of freely available blog publishing tools, such as LiveJournal, Edublogs, Blogger, etc., that can be adapted in a foreign language classroom. Blogs are powerful tools for self– expression and self-empowerment.[40] Jo Ann Oravec[41] suggests that blogs can enhance students' critical – thinking abilities, literacy skills, as well as assist in using the Internet as a research tool.

The platform that gained popularity in recent years, primarily among L2 teachers – eTwinning aims to encourage European schools to collaborate using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by providing the necessary infrastructure (online tools, services, support). Therefore, teachers registered in the eTwinning action are enabled to form partnerships and develop collaborative, pedagogical school projects in any subject area with the sole requirements to employ ICT to develop their project and collaborate with teachers from other European countries eTwinning provides an easily accessible platform for sharing materials and ideas.

ETwinning Projects such as e-cultural Kaleidoscope can greatly extend students' awareness of cultural differences i.e. when the Saints and Scholars Integrated Primary School (Northern Ireland) decided to look at the differences and similarities between Christmas festivities in different countries, they twinned up with Zespół Szkół nr 2 w Czerwionce (Poland) and Scoala CU Clasele I-VIII (Romania). Students prepared paintings and drawings of traditional Christmas Trees and cards with traditional Christmas wishes, which

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[36] A. Kukulska-Hulme, *Learning cultures on the move*, p. 8.

[37] Ibidem.

[38] L.C. Ducate, L.L. Lomicka, *Adventures in the blogosphere: From blog readers to blog writers*, Computer Assisted Language Learning, 2008, 21(1), p. 9-28.

[39] L. Lee, *Promoting intercultural exchanges*.

[40] R. Blood, *The weblog handbook: Practical advice on creating and maintaining your blog*, Cambridge, MA 2002.

[41] J.A. Oravec, *Bookmarking the world: Weblog applications in educations*, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 2002, 45(7), p. 616-621.

they sent to each other, or the students from Kirkwall School in Grammar School (Scotland) twinned up with Realschule Am Salinensee (Germany) to further both their ICT skills and explore more about Global Citizenship, to do so they described and shared local cultural experiences and aspects of their own lives via the use of personal Blog pages. Such projects can also change parents' perceptions, especially when teachers and their students present their projects during meetings and exhibitions.

Through effective electronic communication students can establish new friendships and tackle difficult problems from the viewpoint of students from different cultures. Students and staff gain first-hand knowledge of other educational systems, customs and the reality of life in a country different from their own.

Discussion

Umberto Eco, one of the most famous writers of the twentieth century while referring to the problem of human functioning in the postmodern world, pointed out that the future society

> (…) will be divided into three classes. The lowest will be the proletariat composed of those who cannot use a computer and whose only source of information is television. People in this class will be excluded from participation in governments. The medium class – will be the petty bourgeoisie who can use the computer but cannot program. At the top of the social hierarchy will be the aristocracy, a group of people who can cooperate with the computer (…).[42]

The world in which we function becomes increasingly a world that requires people to use the potential of new media to discover the real and virtual reality but above all to facilitate learning – to acquire knowledge about the multiplicity and diversity of cultures in which we function, to acquire the ability to communicate with other people in their own language, to participate in their world of values, but also to create (or cultivate) their own world of important individual and social values.

Digital resources enable teachers to create new techniques, and to re-evaluate and improve more traditional techniques that help to introduce the target culture into the classroom. Research has shown that language learning should be done in a dynamic and active way. The technology-based approach and learning-to-search approach enable students to interact directly with the second language and its culture without the limitation of time or place, and explore and construct a deeper understanding of L2 culture knowledge. However, the

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[42] U. Eco, *Czym grozi Internet*, Forum, 1996, 19; press interview for the "Corriere della Sera".

analysis of my research results indicates that most foreign language teachers could have a significant impact on the introduction of a student into the cultural world, taking into account differences and dissimilarities in cultures. Even though they declare that they value the ICT's ability to learn and teach culture and assess themselves as competent ICT users (Fig. 1), my research shows that what teachers declare is not consistent with what the students say. This aspect is indicated by the research I conducted with a 50-person group of foreign language teachers and a 50-person group of secondary school students about on the objectives of Internet use. Teachers indicate their high level of multimedia skills that they use to develop the students' multicultural competences. Students asked to assess the skills and activities of teachers primarily indicated work with the traditional textbook (very often and often categories – 47 responses). Use of the Internet in connection with the implementation of i.e. Virtual Field Trips was placed in and rare and not done at all categories – 46 indications. Similarly, students rated the use of multimedia tools in their own search for information in a foreign language (i.e. regarding the culture of a given language area) – 45 indications in rarely and not done at all categories.
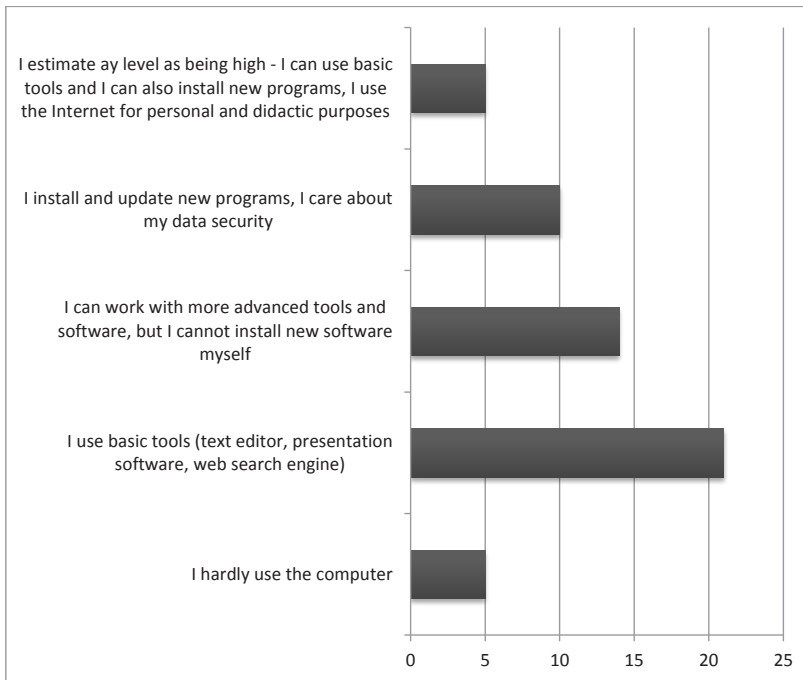

Fig. 1. Teachers computer skills (N = 50)

Living in the world that Marc Prensky[43] described as the world of Digital Natives, we often forget that in order to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by learning – teaching through multimedia tools, we need the skills to use these opportunities and to build the basis for "Long Life Learning". Developing the teachers' ability to overcome the barriers of communicating in non-native languages, creating a well-thought-out learning process – teaching foreign languages, making sense of the fact that modern students are the New Age of Communication[44] generation, will not only be a window into new countries and cultures, but it can also be a challenge for Long Life Learning.[45]

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