PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

In all the history of teaching methodology, especially in foreign language teaching, both teachers and researchers, even students, have looked forward to find the “magical way” to learn better and faster. Now the term of learning is taking a new point of view, that of not just learning, as this can be forgotten, but acquiring. For me, teaching has to involve the students to motivate them and create the needs for communicating. Simultaneously, that communication is going to be better if it relates to them. It is exciting to discover that students are almost all up to date with using technologies, so, why not to take advantage of it? And all at once using technology in the classroom saves time, it is clearer than writing on the blackboard, and you can also include visual (pictures and movements) and audio effects to facilitate the different learning styles in the students in the class. It could seem a simple observation, but another big advantage of this type of presentation is that you can add whatever things are important for that class, and the blackboard is not going to need to be erased, you can go forward and backward, and you are always going to have your new “blackboard” well organized.

My primitive skills of my first new technologies trial of last semester have been tremendously developed in Penn State. If at the very beginning I was learning how to create power point presentations, at the moment, I can do my own ones. An advantage of using your own presentations is that you can make references to things that have happened in that particular classroom earlier in the year which creates confidence between the students and the instructor within the class.
Technology-enhanced curriculums do not stop at Power Point Presentations. Internet, for instance, can be used to get and show lots of information. It is a good source to get news on the “here and now”, because it is an immediate source of information. It is important for students to use the internet because it is “real language”; it shows the way people actually talk and write the target language. The teacher must check, however, for typos and inaccuracies before using a website in the classroom. It is not the language that is presented in books, but what is actually said and written. There are plenty of possibilities in it. They go from listening to a song, to watching a real TV program. In the later, pragmatic aspects of the language and different “accents” of the speakers can be taken into consideration. Moreover, new technologies, in this way, bring authentic materials to class, including not only language, but the culture in that particular language. The four skills may also be practiced gaining self confidence.

New technologies play also a solitary role. If ANGEL or similar online learning tools are considered, it provides a perfect environment for the students to work at their own pace. Doing so, help them reflect on the language and favors students that prefer to work on themselves. It also allows monitoring the information, as they have time to work on the content of this or that chapter. This may also make them feel safer and more comfortable in their learning process, as Prof. DeKeyser recently pointed out in his visit to Penn State University.

As an instrument for teaching, technology can be easily adapted to the language we teach. It helps maintaining, in my case, Spanish also as the instruction means, as it is easier to joint form and meaning directly, than it was in the traditional teaching methodologies, not to mention about grammar rules or vocabulary lists. Leaving apart
the idea of presenting grammar or not, in a methalinguistic way or not, it has to be
taught as the mean for language, the result that can be generalized from what
language showed, not the starting point of a foreign language class. Considering
vocabulary, in the worst of the examples, even a transparency would be preferred to a
teacher drawing, unless he has a natural ability for painting.

At the moment, I’m teaching a computer-enhanced course, which means that I employ
technology to achieve more one-on-one interaction among the students and the
instructor during class time because students are prepared for class ahead of time.
Learning Spanish by means of a computer-enhanced course is self pacing for the
students, they receive immediate feedback on the activities that they do, they have
opportunities for improvement, as activities can be done more than once, they have
easy access as online activities may be completed from any computer which accesses
the internet and the activities are of various types to reach different learning styles.

On-line instruction with ANGEL also allows the student to learn grammar (usually with
videos) and vocabulary (with PowerPoint presentations), both with following activities
of structured input and structured output, to develop listening (with audio and video
activities), reading and writing skills, and be exposed to Hispanic culture.

In the future, I am willing to learn some other tools as Front Page or Movie Maker, and
keep up to date with new technologies. All the above mentioned tools can be utilized
to best achieve the goals of helping the students really acquire the language.