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TEACHING ESP ONLINE: ACTION RESEARCH

The extensive application of online ESP teaching on account of the Covid 19 pandemic, and its tendency to become a norm, calls for comprehensive research into today's experience, to furnish us with vital clues for more efficient performance. This paper provides an overview of the basic research on online education, its pros and cons, types of delivery, and focuses on the use of the LMS Moodle platform. It highlights the benefits of the Moodle instrumental tool kit for teaching listening, reading and writing and surveys the gaps and limitations of the online mode in teaching communicative language which is essential in ESP for humanities. The paper discusses the specifics of such instruments as team work, role-play, humour and feedback in online framework. Next, it examines the instructor's part and impact in the Moodle classroom. The paper concludes with a discussion of blended education and flipped tutoring, expressing hope that targeted technological developments will soon enable to conduct fully integrated communicative online classes.

Key words: *online education, ESP teaching, Moodle tool kit, communicative language teaching, discourse, flipped classroom, social contact*

Online language teaching has been with us for more than a couple of decades, and many learners have benefited from the chance of remote learning. The scope has covered both General English and ESP courses, being a suitable option, especially for businessmen, medical and service employees and many those whose time, face-to-face learning outreach or other related circumstances were restricted. Traditionally, these were one-to-one classes conducted to the choice of the customer, and research in this field was mainly channeled to improving the LT delivery methodology and securing a better technological tool kit for language teachers.

However, with the Covid-19 pandemic, things have changed drastically, involving whole classes of students in the online education process, posing urgent

demand for proper technical support and engaging an army of language teachers with little or no experience in online teaching.

The situation calls for comprehensive research without delay, as with the forecast of prolonged or unpredicted pressing circumstances, online language teaching to wider audiences has a growing tendency to become a norm. Extensive research in today's experience can offer many explanations about what works well and what does not, and furnish us with vital clues to more productive teaching and learning. And who, if not the practicing language instructor, can provide insights into the matter through Action Research.

Background information

Online education came into existence in 2002. Since then large numbers of students have enrolled for online courses: working adults [...] to continue their studies while in the job, [...], and “kids - to help them learn additional things” /White, 2017: 7/.

It took off successfully, gaining ground fast, with the advancement of technology and the imperative of lifelong learning due to globalization processes. Best universities and educational institutions worldwide readily embraced the idea of spreading knowledge to wider masses in a more “cost-effective way”, creating a new market of online courses both for young and adult students. As Shvidkoy notes, “Online education is democratic and available to masses. It has become the great leveler” /Швидкой, 2020: 11/.

Today “some of the finest websites that offer high quality education online are Coursera, Khan academy, Udemy, MIT, University of Oxford, etc. And for many university departments for Continuing Education online courses have been widely popular” /Bettinger and Loeb, 2017: 34/.

“We are living in a world of lifelong education, and thanks to online education it has become possible for many. The processes of acceleration are irreversible. Online has come to stay,” claims Varlamov /Варламов, 2020: 57/.

Many believe that online college training and degrees may be the wave of the future. As Schinkten noted in her tutorial, “new technologies, more students in college and the growing demand for online instruction are coming together in a way that suggests that the future of higher education is digital and distance” /Schinkten, 2016: 3/.

Schools have also welcomed the introduction of online courses in their educational process. For quite a while already “Many schools throughout the US are providing the kids with the option of distance learning” /White, 2017: 15/. The word *option* is key here, as *distance learning* has existed as an *option* parallel to traditional learning, constituting a fraction of the whole system.

Along with the advent of online courses ongoing research has been in progress to outline and define the scope, the means, the features and intricacies of this newcomer in the education realm.

Many scholars believe that the mode of instruction “depends upon institutional and program standards as well as each professor’s approach to online teaching and student interaction” /Schinkten, 2016: 4/. As “The style of online course delivery matters,” the pre-pandemic research acknowledged the following types of online schooling:

1. Blended, which combines online learning with a certain amount of face-to-face instruction
2. LMS and media platforms, which are exclusively web-based, including e-mail and mobile phone
3. Synchronous online teaching, when students engage in class at the same time
4. Asynchronous online teaching, when student engagement in class does not occur at the same time.

So far, the choice of the type of an online course had rested with the institution or the professor delivering the course or the learner, in case options are offered.

According to Robert Monroe, the Director of the Online Hybrid MBA at Carnegie Mellon University, it is certain that “A high quality degree earned in an online format should not fundamentally differ from a campus-based degree. The only significant difference should be the way that the classes are delivered” /Monroe, 2010: 161/.

So, it is assumed that accredited online programs meet the same standards as accredited on-campus options. In the Strategic Goals of Minnesota State University it is stated that online students are not only to encounter all mandatory coursework, but also gain experience with new technologies, which is one of the advantages of online courses /Davenport, 2018: 17/.

However, with the pandemic situation in the world, the only format of online education available today remains media platforms and learning management systems, of which Moodle is the most widespread one. This sudden surge of Moodle implication in an immensely diverse environment calls for thorough research, in the field of language teaching as well. As K. Jeong observes: “In case of Moodle as the learning management system, follow-up research may be needed in the broader context, so that the effectiveness of the suggested method and strategy can be proved to be reliable and valid” /Jeong, 2017: 4847/.

But before turning to the discussion of online language learning, ESP in particular, a glimpse into online education research, into those numerous arguments or reasons that researchers and market experts bring forth to explain its dynamic

takeoff is important. A brief statement of the pros and cons quoted in literature will help to form a reference ground for further deliberations.

To give credit to the innovative approach and benefits that online learning has brought in the world of education, researchers specify some of the many advantages it bears:

- Online degrees open up higher education for students in poor countries.
- Online education is less expensive or costly.
- Online degrees are accepted as readily as traditional diplomas.
- There is a great variety of programs and courses.
- Students study at their convenience and flexibility.
- One can go to class when and where is best for him/her.
- By avoiding commuting, students save time and money.
- One can get a degree without quitting the job.

However, along with many pluses, authors underline certain challenges, too, that online education poses. Here are some of them.

- *Strong* motivation. The learner should be *strongly* motivated.
- Online education hampers the person's communicative development.
- Online education diminishes social aspects. It limits social interaction.
- Lack of face-to-face interaction.
- Lack or absence of practical application of the acquired theoretical knowledge.
- Possible deficiency of technical skills to deal with computer technology. Newer and more advanced software utilized by online instruction resources can leave some students (and their professors) staring at screens of gobbled-goop.
- *Self-discipline* is essential. One has to learn *self-regulation* and *self-direction*.
- Technological reliance. Submissions can be destroyed or lost by computer hiccups.
- Technological costs and scheduling.
- Conflicts in learning styles.
- Standardization of coursework materials still in process /Jennings, 2010; Левина, 2011/.

Looking into the pros and cons of online learning we realize that in order to arrive at a more or less successful outcome many factors and characteristics are to come together. These eventually evolve around the central, core actor – the student. Can online education appeal and meet all his/her needs? Can the student perform at his/her best in this new environment?

The student in online learning, as the bottom line of the effectiveness of the system and its bearer, has been the subject of many discussions. Scholars

distinguish between three different types of education for different types of students: “1. Education for creators (students with strong creative inclinations), 2. Education based on developing competences and skills, 3. The mixed type, when creators acquire competencies as well. For which group does online learning work best? What technologies are needed for each type of education?” /ИВАНОВ, 2020: 18/. This issue poses great challenges both for technology developers and academic staff alike. The field is immense, diverse and complicated, requiring long-term, large-scale fundamental research into all nooks and crannies of the phenomena, one of them being online foreign language acquisition.

Education developers (both in technological sense and contentwise) dig deeper, aiming further perfection. Language teaching researchers, too, actively study the impact of online language learning.

At present a most diverse range of English teaching online courses via online platforms are offered worldwide by many renowned universities, as well as the British Council, integrating Teacher Training courses, General English, ESP, TOEFL, IELTS courses, English for Socializing, Telephoning, etc.

The pandemic period has set its own claims for further research. It has accelerated many processes demanding new clues and a more comprehensive study.

Research Questions

The research questions we are going to tackle took shape in the process of online teaching, a several months' experience, during the pandemic lockdown. They evolve around four main issues:

1. The possibility of having an integral ESP classroom from the technical point of view. What impact does the technical management and support have in creating an integral and fully functioning ESP classroom?
2. What socio-psychological aspects enhance or hinder the pursuit of creating an integrated ESP classroom?
3. Which ESP teaching essential components are viable in online teaching and what is left out?
4. What instruments can be implemented to set up an effectively working online ESP classroom?

Methodology

Having special interest in online language teaching and after completing two certificate courses on the subject in 2019, my main concern was its practical implementation. So, in addition to being an online language instructor, I also turned into an observer, surveyor and a researcher so typical of action research. I

used note-taking, questionnaires and interviews, assignment feedback, assessment and statistics.

The participants of the study were II-year and III-year bachelor's program students of the Faculty of International Relations at YSU, doing the courses of "The Basics of Diplomatic Intercourse" and "Diplomatic Correspondence" respectively. Each group consisted of 17 students. The course of "The Basics of Diplomatic Intercourse" taken in the second semester covered 64 academic hours, while the course of "Diplomatic Correspondence" comprised 96 academic hours. 4/5 of the scheduled lessons were actually conducted online, starting with the March 1st temporary lockdown.

From lecture room to online screen classroom

The quick and abrupt turn to exclusively online education platform, because of the pandemic lockdown, was stressful both for students and professors, for some – even a shock, despite the fact that for about two semesters blended learning was being gradually introduced into the education process at YSU. The sudden cutoff from the traditional learning mode called for hasty adjustment psychologically and technically, and brought about swift changes in the management of the academic content. Instruction materials and assignments were immediately reshaped and fed into the Moodle system.

However, it took students some time to learn to use the Moodle tools properly. And more interesting is the fact that it took students some time to realize and accept the reality that online education is as serious and even more demanding endeavor than in-class learning, and that the standards and requirements are the same for both.

Which are the factors that induced this *adjustment period*? With today's digital-native generation one should assume that no such phase should have been needed. Still, in reality, the II-year and III-year students went through an adjustment phase that lasted a period of 5 to 14 days. This fact has to be taken into account for future.

In the *Background information* we quoted sound arguments of scholars that, as stated above, online learning requires a high level of discipline, strong motivation and complete self-control. As different from online learning, during in-class education the university environment, the peers, the administrative guidance and professors' physical presence create a favorable milieu for the student to keep track of learning, thus, functioning as a sort of a lead or, even for some, a straitjacket.

Whereas, in the event of online learning, the student is left of his/her own accord, in the relaxed atmosphere of his/her home study or lounge with no visible challenge to keep up and persevere. This is one of the reasons of the need of the adjustment phase.

Another reason for this adjustment phase lies in the fact that a great part of undergraduates, because of young age and the society-specific academic tradition, is being shaped as a student acquiring advanced learning skills and education standards throughout university years. So many of them are still in the process of gaining learning and socializing skills appropriate for the university level, and find it difficult to overcome that path quickly and by themselves.

It is not a coincidence that in many countries, Armenia among them, the introduction of online education started with Master’s programs, as graduate students are seen and, actually, are already shaped and well-organized learners and individuals. For information, the pioneer of online education in Armenia was the Master’s program in Management and Social Sciences organized by the National Academy of Sciences of RA jointly with the Academy of Public Administration of RA in 2017.

Thus, online education, with its full reliance on technological communication has created a cosy home nook, where students can have academic interaction at their fingertips, at the same time keeping absolute freedom to escape from the screen or class at any wishful moment. And to get an *organized* group of *responsible* students takes some time.

The adjustment phase also takes the professor great efforts to put their students back in track, to drive home the fact that the disciplines delivered on LMS platforms are as mandatory, important, regular and standard as the in-class ones.

<i>Adjustment phase</i>		
Days	Student participation (34 students -2 groups)	Absenteeism
1-5	16-21	18-13
6-14	22-29	14-5

The figures of student participation (i.e. presence and involvement in the education process) and absenteeism indicate that with little previous experience students need certain time to switch in to full online learning.

Research also shows that students with less knowledge and language competence try to avoid public exposure during online classes, and either cave in in their shells or drop the classes for all. The ratio in both groups is notable: 5 second-year students out of 17, and 3 third-year students out of 17 preferred either passive or no participation. In an in-class environment these students might have had a better chance not to fail. However, during online learning, when they have to manage and overcome all by themselves, the outcome is not always promising.

The transfer to exclusively online classes is fraught with *other complications* as well. When conducting synchronous online classes (when all students are online

simultaneously as the university standard is) where the participation of each student is a norm, poor internet connection or connection failures or power cuts disrupt the flow of the education process, dropping this or that student or students out of the screen class, thus damaging the desired outcome. Performance interruptions that happen in the LMS systems let down the required quality, resulting in distorted understanding, strained listening, unwelcome hiccups in the work which is, otherwise, at full swing and instability in the rhythm of the scheduled tasks and pre-planned lessons.

Unfortunately, we have to bear in mind that the online lesson might be fractured because of technical problems, one could never know when or to what extent. At least, this is the case with developing countries. This leads us to the fact that participants can never be sure whether the particular student or students who are to fulfil certain tasks during the session, according to pre-arrangement, will bring in their participation or not.

We can also never be sure of the true, full constitution of the group and cannot count on it, because one cannot know who, at which period of time will be there with you, connected to LMS either by private or some other technical reason.

Another hindering moment in teaching discourse is the fact that no matter how thoroughly the teacher plans his/her work, the random absence of students (be it because of power cuts or poor internet connection or some other reason) can cause disruptions, or break the flow of the ongoing task.

One can never be sure of the true constitution of the group, neither fully count on it, because it is often not clear who, at what period of time will be there with you due to various circumstances. So, sometimes it is not possible to accomplish the fully planned lesson.

I call this phenomenon a ‘hanged classroom’, which does not actually happen in conventional in-campus teaching.

ESP in action

The Moodle instrumental tool kit

The ESP online courses for the students of the Faculty of International Relations are delivered on the LMA of Moodle.

Moodle was originally developed by Martin Dougiamas to facilitate educators to build online courses with an emphasis on classroom interaction and collaborative structure of learning contents. It combines almost all instructional strategies and tools in one space and is quite effective in promoting learner autonomy /Jeong, 2017: 4851/. Moodle also creates a sort of “freedom island” for professors and student alike, enabling professors to implement a wide range of teaching instruments and unfold a significant volume of materials and subject-

specific information, combining the curriculum content with their own elaborations. Meanwhile, students enjoy the autonomous mode of work, as Moodle is available 24/7.

The Moodle front page of the Course renders an excellent opportunity to put together the course materials, using various instruction tools and present the detailed planning of the ESP course, maintaining the appropriacy and coherence of its components.

I call this functional page an *organizer*: in the weekly assignments section the instructor can feed in all the necessary information about different types of assignments, upload pdf materials or download videos from the net, set completion dates and grade standards, specify terms related to this or that assignment, and eventually set his/her mind at ease that all the major organizational points have been covered and stated, and students can in no way miss any of them. This is an important moment both for the instructor and the students, because now they can distinctly see the type and load of the work to be completed, and plan, organize themselves and manage their time accordingly.

It is taken for granted that the course material on the Moodle organizer should encompass the whole material-to-be-covered, incorporating all the units or sections or subsections of the curriculum. This will give students the opportunity to opt for the best grade when they fulfill it completely.

Another requirement to meet while putting down the assignments onto the organizer is that they should be designed so as to ensure the recurrence of the new language feed. The once passed language material should reappear over and over again, in different forms or in a more complicated mix, to secure deep fixation.

The function of the organizer which enables to regularly incorporate video materials with various tasks assigned, is another of the benefits of the Moodle platform. It gives students an easy access to those video materials with just a click, thus granting them a ready watch, which later facilitates the fulfilment of the tasks. An easy start brings a pleasant continuation.

Here is a short *list of the resources* that can be fed into the weekly organizer:

1. Course information (e.g. the course syllabus)
2. Assignment instructions
3. Sharing course news
4. Lecture materials
5. Media
6. Weekly activities
7. Weekly readings
8. General writing resources
9. Presentation resources
10. APA citation resources.

While making presentations online, instead of traditional class presentation, online students narrate slideshows and post these videos to the LMS for peer feedback /Kumar, 2015: 42/.

As to the instructor, based on the feedback loop with students, the organizer helps the instructor to steer the class with constant adjustments (new types of assignments or modification of the existing ones) into the direction that works better, adapting it in time /Погодаева, 2020: 18/.

Another organizational feature of the Moodle, which is equally beneficial for ESP students or any other language class, is *the progress indicator*. Through assignment completion and grading charts students are alert and informed of their own progress concurrently. It is a good stimulator and, at the same time, a spurring aid for those students who are more dependent on grades. When students see their grades for the completion of various assignments on the chart, which is being updated constantly, they better assess their own progress and adjust accordingly.

It is worth to note that during in-class teaching we do not practice such a comprehensive, detailed and flexible schedule organizer widely, probably missing something essential, something that would stimulate more vigorously students' further work and motivate them.

Communicative language learning and limitations of social contact

With a second look at the resources list of assignments and types of activities that students can successfully complete, we see that Moodle fully deals with multiple facets of listening, reading and writing. The Moodle platform is also well used for making presentations, talks and speeches.

But how do things stand with *the communicative aspect of language learning*? Does Moodle give enough facilities, opportunities or milieu to each student to develop these competences? We all know that for the students of the Faculty of International Relations first and foremost in ESP is communication, discourse.

And as any discourse implies at least two parties, in case of LMS, too, it should be built on the interaction of two or more students online.

While dealing with the listening, reading, writing or presentation assignments, one student participant could be considered enough, with discourse – it is not. The above-mentioned activities certainly presuppose student speech, but it has a declarative rather than discursive character. Definitely, some clarifications and Q & A are being under way while referring to this or that task, which, by nature is discourse. But it comprises only a small part of the work. Whereas, we are speaking about the dynamic, fully communicative interaction of two parties, which in many cases turns out to be the only way of the actualization of the newly acquired communicative language – essential part of the ESP concept for future diplomats.

During in-class lessons a *very effective instrumental tool* is inviting students to make up a dialogue ad hoc on a given topic with the given language material in twos or threes, collaborating, discussing and preparing, then to present it in a role-play in just about 2-5 minutes.

Is this kind of activity possible during online classes? Unfortunately, no. It is impossible to put 2-3 students together in a team, which technically breaks the group into about 8 pairs, on a screen and ask to elaborate different scenarios working together in separate groups. The screen does not give that possibility. Even if the instructor asked the designated pairs to collaborate on a different online platform and then return to the general one to role-play the final version of their work, it is both time consuming and technically complicated. The result is a mess and a waste of session time with very little outcome. Whereas in the lecture room, it is one of the most dynamic, creative and productive ways of learning new communicative language, which students adore.

So, this type of work, even if we challenge the LMS possibilities, breaks the rhythm and dynamics of the online lesson, only to create little. After a couple of failures students quitted the idea to repeat it.

A contrary statement might claim that special group or peer assignments can be given to students to prepare out of online classes by collaborating with each other at a different time, in a different format, and eventually present the “ready” produce to the online classroom as a teamwork /Kumar, 2015: 41/. The counter argument has many “buts”. First, this is not a spontaneous, on-the-spot work, which is essential while teaching/learning discourse. So, it does not meet this purpose. Then much extra time and effort is spent on behalf of students to set things going, arrange the meetings, discuss the materials, elaborate the creative component, etc. It is practically not feasible. The efficiency rate on the scale of communicative language acquisition is rather low. Too long, too much effort, little result. Though with pairs of bright and diligent students the implementation of discourse in this format is possible and can be quite successful, the downside is that you cannot apply it for the whole group because of individual differences. In the two groups studied it was possible to form only 6 workable pairs for this activity: 2 pairs in the III year and 4 – with the II-year students.

Online education promoters claim that *group work on LMS*, in our case – completing certain team projects, is possible. It is surely another possibility of language learning through embodying the ESP language material into a new content. However, the type of the team work, where team members collaborate shoulder-to-shoulder often preventing or foretelling each other’s thoughts and actions, where there is a “wireless” bioenergy and synergy, an overlapping and give-and-take of ideas and enthusiasm during online classes is missing.

Students' learning setting and behavioural dualism

Each student, being in a totally different environment rather than the lecture-room, is already placed within the limitations that the space boundaries imply. From different settings of their home students are not fully able to switch into one common line of ideas transmissions and discussion.

That is, online creates a group rather than a team, and the effectiveness of group work is far less than that of team work.

Being in *different settings* distances students psychologically, too. For, at home any person behaves differently than at work place or school. There are different behavioral norms and dress codes. During online sessions these two behavioral norms mix and come into clash. No matter how great the teacher's unifying efforts are, the societal and class differences project more vividly during online classes, especially in team projects. Students are on their own territories and they do not feel much obliged to comply to the general, common norms. Some students succeed, some fail to successfully merge because of this psychological dualism. Being in a segmented, fractured classroom on the screen students often lose track of the sense of unity, something which is so characteristic to in-campus classes.

Another factor which glues the language class together is *humour*. Unfortunately, it has little room in the onscreen class. Being a group phenomenon, humour sparks within interaction and facilitates understanding and language acquisition. Meanwhile, communication in online setting tends to be more formal and restrictive for the use of humour.

In the same way, and because of the reasons stated above *role-play*, when students simulate negotiations, summits, conferences - an essential tool for teaching language for diplomacy, is also a rare guest on the screen. My attempts to use role-play during my online classes can be marked as "failed".

As a consequence, the lame, insufficient implication and opportunities of the discourse tool kit leave students with the reality of grasping the required ESP language but not being able to learn to use it properly and to the full.

The instructor in the grip of technological constraints

Another important issue is the question of *feedback during the discourse practice*. In the lecture room, where stimulated language discourse among students is on, the instructor intensively, though unobtrusively, corrects or puts things right, and the conversation is not cut off, it goes on.

While online, it has proved to be incomparably difficult, both technically and psychologically, to wedge in into students' speech easily and harmlessly in order to

correct the errors. Online students turn unnaturally tense at interruptions, and the flow of their speech is broken.

Thus, online creates problems with the teacher's feedback, because of a) technical difficulties, b) excessive openness to online public attention for the students, c) impossibility to use body language and extra-lingual means to make or provoke corrections. Teacher-student contact proves to get rather formal.

I cannot agree with the statement by K. Jeong that "As a whole, the use of Moodle and flipped instruction could help not only students' English communicative competence but also their interactional and socio-cultural competence" /Joeng, 2017: 4850/. We should separate interactional communicative competence from that of the 'socio-cultural' one, as these are totally different faculties, though interconnected. Practice shows that online learning is way far more distant from achieving proper language communicative skills than in-class learning for the reasons discussed above. Live contact and immediate physical proximity are essential in the development of communicative competence.

Different urgent situations can oblige to resort to only technical intercourse, but it can never fully exchange the natural social activity. The author of the article "What happens when students lack social interaction" claims that the "social aspect of learning doesn't disappear entirely... It only "changes" by making classes interactive through various technical tools (videos, email, social media, etc.)" /Kumar, 2015: 41/. But how well does all that work with ESP or language learning in general? Deficiently. Practice shows that simply due to its technical structure online learning favours more teacher-centered rather than student-centered learning, though many claim the contrary, which is actually true for one-to-one classes only.

The task of the *language instructor* who is delivering online classes to a group of students is more difficult and energy-consuming. It is a truism that it is the teacher that makes students love the subject and work hard on it, by imparting his/her energy of mind and spirit.

During in-class sessions the teacher's enthusiasm and zest are multiplied by the energy of those students who have already caught the spark, and the joint effect is mesmerizing, pulling into the stream the neutral or passive ones. In this way the energy and knowledge exchange proceeds easily in a sort of naturally electrified atmosphere.

Meanwhile, during online classes this *energy convergence* does not happen because of technical restrictions, and the whole burden of keeping up the needed energetic mainstay lies with the instructor.

The instructor pursues the goal of quality perfection on the one hand, and crafting an individual who will be carried on with education, new knowledge and long-range goals on the other. This requires hard preparatory work, high level of

focus and commitment and the ability to choose and compile the best for the students to gain the most for quality education. Only such approach and attitude bring about trust in the instructor and student's free choice to learn more and better.

This is why, it is no surprise that most professors/instructors end up their online working day absolutely exhausted.

ESP within the frame of the flipped classroom

When discussing online education, *the issue of flipped classroom* arises. Within the limits of this article we can only cast a glance and single out certain points related to ESP. The notion of “a flipped classroom can be described as a setting where that which is traditionally done in class” is now done at home and that which is traditionally done as homework, is now completed in class /Basul, 2015: 29/

It is true that flipped classroom “serves the principle of personalized-differentiated learning, student-centered instruction and constructivism”, when students take responsibility for their own learning /Basul 2015: 34/.

And the idea of flipped classroom is a welcome novelty for different lecture courses that aspire to transform the dull delivery of a set of facts into a lively discussion and transmission of knowledge.

But in the ESP course, all learning is, in fact, based on the flipped system – the students study the material thoroughly at home, and in class the validation and correction and further consolidation of the language material proceeds. This is, actually, what we always do, be it in-class or online teaching, as language learning already presupposes the type of preparation which a flipped classroom requires.

We believe that ascribing certain extraordinary features to flipped classroom in language teaching, “... including videos of real-life situations” or “ready-to-use rich content”, is not a prerogative of a flipped classroom, it is simply a norm in language education. Flipped classroom is an inherent feature of any language class, be it online or in-class. And to present it as something new that online teaching brings, ascribing novel clues to it, is not fair towards the traditional language teaching as a whole, ESP including.

Final considerations

The paper analyzed the practice of teaching ESP online during the pandemic lockdown, which had left LMS and media platform as the only available format of online education.

The study revealed that the switch to online language learning required an adjustment phase stipulated by many factors of socio-psychological and technical character.

The diverse and multifunctional instructional tool kit that the LMA Moodle platform provides, helps to create a comprehensive and well-organized curriculum that serves best for teaching listening, reading and writing competences. While the development of ESP communicative skills leaves much to desire. Due to technological limitations, such important language learning activities as ad hoc simulations of negotiations and interviews, team-work discussions and role-play are practically not feasible. The restricted use of humour and underuse of body language result in a more formal onscreen contact, which, in its turn, complicates instructor's feedback on students' speaking performance.

These findings bring us to the conclusion that online ESP teaching is best when incorporated in blended education, because in the case of ESP for international relations specialists, where communication is key, only online teaching and learning leaves a big gap in the acquisition of language skills and competences, which can only be filled by face-to-face group tuition.

We, surely, do not discard the vision that due to targeted technological progress, in the near future it might be possible to organize such communicative online classes, when multiple algorithms of team and peer-to-peer work will enable every learner, individually and in groups, to participate in the discourse process simultaneously, without disrupting or being disrupted, working towards a common goal of learning, revising or consolidating the required language material.

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Ա. ԲԱԲԱՅԱՆ – Հարուկ նպատակների համար անգլերենի հեռավար ուսուցման փորձառության շուրջ. – Հոդվածը Moodle համակարգչային հարթակում հատուկ նպատակների համար անգլերենի ուսուցման փորձառության վերլուծություն է, որտեղ անդրադարձ է կատարվում ունկնդրում, ընթերցանություն և գրավոր խոսք դասավանդելիս Moodle-ի գործիքակազմի ընձեռած հնարավորություններին, ինչպես նաև՝ այն սահմանափակումներին, որոնք առկա են հաղորդակցական լեզվի հեռավար ուսուցման ժամանակ:

Բանալի բառեր. հեռավար կրթություն, լեզվի ուսուցում հատուկ նպատակների համար, Moodle-ի գործիքակազմ, հաղորդակցական լեզվի ուսուցում, դիսկուրս, շրջված լսարան, սոցիալական շփում

Ա. БАБАЯН – Преподавание ESP онлайн: исследование в действии. – Данная статья посвящена исследованию опыта преподавания английского языка для специальных целей онлайн с использованием образовательной платформы Moodle. Рассматриваются практические возможности базового инструментария Moodle для обучения аудированию, чтению и письму. Отмечаются те сложности и ограничения, которые встречаются в процессе преподавания коммуникативного языка при дистанционном обучении.

Ключевые слова: дистанционное образование, преподавание английского языка для специальных целей, инструментарий Moodle, обучение коммуникативному языку, курс, перевернутый класс

Ներկայացվել է՝ 25.01.2021
 Երաշխավորվել է ԵՊՀ Դիվանագիտական ծառայության և
 մասնագիտական հաղորդակցման ամբիոնի կողմից
 Ընդունվել է տպագրության՝ 14.04.2021