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## THE BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) IN TEACHING ESP

*The article considers the peculiarities of using the latest technologies in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP), namely the virtual learning environment (VLE), which allows teachers to hold online meetings, get quick students' feedback, optimize the educational process, helps to develop students' creative skills, critical thinking, communication skills, problem-solving thinking, activate research work, analyze innovative professional-oriented approaches to the educational process, as well as the main ways to improve students' training.*

*Virtual learning environment, as computer-mediated, involves the use of innovative teaching methods that are closely linked, used for quality and effective organization of educational process and are based on a combination of e-learning, m-learning, u-learning, f-learning, blended learning, modular learning environment Moodle, etc. VLE is educational environment that provides the interaction of all subjects of educational process, includes the use of various elements, namely universal virtual online boards for group discussions in visual format such as Jamboard, Padlet, Twiddla, Miro, Conceptboard, Groupboard, Mentimeter and many others that can be used to accommodate a variety of content, professionally oriented learning tasks, in the consolidation, generalization of papers, envisaging of new materials and summarizing.*

*A special place in the virtual educational process is occupied by the dominance of interactive self-learning in the presence of constant feedback, creation of virtual groups, use of social networks, information and telecommunication technologies, innovative electronic game technologies, forums, such inquiry-based activities as web-quests (technology-quests), QR-quests, media quests, etc., which serves as an effective means of improving the quality of teaching English for specific purposes, provides modern approach to the formation of professional competence and deepens the professionally oriented knowledge.*

**Key words:** virtual learning environment (VLE), English for specific purposes (ESP), innovative technologies, professionally oriented approach.

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## ПЕРЕВАГИ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ВІРТУАЛЬНОГО НАВЧАЛЬНОГО СЕРЕДОВИЩА (ВНС) ПРИ ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЗА ПРОФЕСІЙНИМ СПРЯМУВАННЯМ

*У статті розглядаються особливості використання новітніх технологій при викладанні англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням, а саме віртуального навчального середовища (ВНС), яке дає можливість викладачам проводити онлайн-зустрічі, отримувати швидкий зворотний зв'язок зі студентами, оптимізувати навчально-виховний процес, розвивати у студентів креативні навички, критичне мислення, комунікативні здібності, проблемно-пошукове мислення, активувати науково-дослідницьку роботу, аналізуються інноваційні професійно-орієнтовані підходи до навчального процесу, а також основні шляхи підвищення рівня підготовки студентів.*

*Віртуальне навчальне середовище, як комп'ютерно опосередковане, пропонує використання інноваційних методик навчання, які тісно пов'язані між собою, використовуються для якісної та ефективної організації навчального процесу та, в свою чергу, базуються на поєднанні електронного навчання (e-learning), мобільного (m-learning), всепроникаючого (u-learning), перевернутого (f-learning), змішаного (blended learning), модульного середовища навчання Moodle та ін. ВНС – це освітнє середовище, яке передбачає інтерактивну взаємодію всіх суб'єктів освітнього процесу, включає застосування різних елементів, а саме універсальних віртуальних онлайн-дошок для групового обговорення ідей у наочному форматі, для прикладу, Jamboard, Padlet, Twiddla, Miro, Conceptboard, Groupboard, Mentimeter та багато інших, які можна використовувати для розміщення найрізноманітніших видів контенту, професійно-орієнтованих навчальних завдань, застосовувати як при закріпленні, узагальненні, вивченні нового матеріалу, рефлексії так і при підведенні підсумків.*

*Особливе місце у віртуальному освітньому процесі посідає домінування інтерактивного самонавчання за наявності постійного зворотного зв'язку, створення віртуальних груп, використання соціальних мереж, інформаційних та телекомунікаційних технологій, інноваційних педагогічних ігрових технологій, інтернет-ресурсів, форумів, електронної пошти, блогів, веб-квестів (квест-технологій), QR-квестів, медіа квестів та ін., що слугує ефективним засобом підвищення якості навчання студентів з англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням, забезпечує сучасний підхід до формування професійної компетентності та поглиблює професійно-орієнтовані знання.*

**Ключові слова:** віртуальне навчальне середовище, англійська мова за професійним спрямуванням, інноваційні технології, професійно-орієнтований підхід.

**The problem statement.** Informatization is a necessary component and condition of general educational modernization. To provide professional guidance in teaching foreign languages, namely English, in non-special faculties effectively, teachers must constantly use the latest innovative technologies. The use of modern technologies enables teachers and students to use educational and methodological literature, acquire professional knowledge and develop problem-solving thinking. Ilona Dychkivska, researching the conditions for the effectiveness of innovative pedagogical processes, emphasizes that innovation is not and cannot be “an end in itself” in pedagogical practice. Its purpose is to optimize the educational process, to ensure its compliance with the conditions and trends of social life (Dychkivska, 2004: 50).

When teaching English for specific purposes, you should constantly update your teaching methods. Demonstrating the impact of new technologies in ESP, Rosa Muñoz-Luna and Lidia Taillefer note that “innovation in the humanities brings inevitable competitive pressure to meet new upcoming challenges that require proficient use of technology” (Muñoz-Luna, Taillefer, 2018: 1). The use of innovative technologies helps to form professional reasoning, activate research work, expand the possibilities of self-control of acquired knowledge. In this area the problem of effectiveness in innovative pedagogical processes arises, which enables the teacher to be useful, not just entertaining during classes. Authors add more: “Beyond the role of technology uses, language teachers and researchers must now explore the field of digital activities and resources” (Muñoz-Luna, Taillefer, 2018: 1). That is why in modern conditions there is a need for virtual learning environment (VLE). The use of this method is quite effective in teaching a foreign language, as it improves a great feedback in the work with students.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Many Ukrainian scholars have researched the use of information technologies in ESP, envisaging VLE. Raisa Hryshkova, describing the use of creative information technologies that form real opportunities for the development of students' creative abilities in the learning process, mentions

computer graphics, multimedia, and virtual reality (Hryshkova, 2015: 176); Oleg Tarnopolsky observing the distance learning, blended learning, traditional in-class learning and out-of-class learning with using innovative computer technologies, presupposes the use of computers for communication via chat rooms, forums, and e-mails, thus the creation of virtual learning environments (Tarnopolsky, 2012: 155); Ilona Dychkivska investigating the use of innovative pedagogical technologies, innovative trends and processes in modern education, highlights the main advantages and disadvantages of using the virtual networks and virtual communication (Dychkivska, 2004: 134). There are also a lot of papers of foreign scientists who also research various issues related to the virtual learning environment. Colin Latchem studying foreign methodology on using ICTs and blended learning, mentions rich virtual environments, their interactive capacities that enable learner-teacher and learner-learner interaction, and collaborative learning (Latchem, 2017: 31); G. Motteram writing about innovations in learning technologies describes the interactive whiteboards, ICT, Web 2.0 tools, mobile technologies and 3D virtual environments (Motteram, 2013: 94); Regina Kaplan-Rakowski devoted an entire chapter to teaching foreign languages in a virtual world and developed detailed lesson plans (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011: 438-453); Jonathon Reinhardt investigating new language learning and teaching environments focuses on gameful multiuser virtual environments (MUVes) (Reinhardt, 2019: 196). Rosa Muñoz-Luna, Lidia Taillefer, Cédric Sarré and Shona Whyte consider the information and communication technologies, new developments, considering technology as the basis for innovation and improvement and much more. All these authors highlighted the best ideas of teaching with theoretical discussions and experiments on the use of innovative methods, mentioning the use of virtual environment sporadically, but there are very few comprehensive research works on the use of virtual learning environment in English for specific purposes. Thus our study offers more complex methodological consideration of teaching/learning ESP in virtual environments and examples to encourage teachers in their use.

**The purpose.** We found that the use of virtual learning environment in the educational process in the context of ESP learning is poorly understood. Thus, the purpose of the study is to investigate the role of VLE in teaching ESP and analyze the main methodological advantages.

**The outline of the main research material.** The higher education environment is constantly in need of developing new ICT-supported strategies. These strategies are aimed at preparing a new generation of qualified professionals for the needs of modern society. In order to achieve the maximum effect and results in ESP teaching, it is necessary to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the learning process. María del Carmen Horno-Chéliz and Antonio Sarasa-Cabezuelo consider that “ICT can be useful in two different moments of lexical acquisition: initially, they help to memorize lexical units using the mechanisms of gamification. Later, ICT can help minimize the fossilization of errors” (Horno-Chéliz, Sarasa-Cabezuelo, 2019: 3).

Another useful strategy is to use Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as an effective approach. CALL has many advantages. As Gary Motteram says: CALL “should now be considered an established field” (Motteram, 2013: 177). CALL is a tool that helps teachers facilitate the process of learning a foreign language. Describing new developments in ESP teaching and learning research Shona Whyte and Cédric Sarré write: “In many European countries, we are witnessing a renewal of interest in teaching and learning of English which is tied to wider processes in the internationalisation of research and English as a global language, leading to more English Medium Instruction (EMI) and greater attention to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). At the same time, increased use of technology in everyday and professional spheres is fuelling interest in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)” (Sarré, Whyte, 2017: 2).

The new methodologies combine electronic learning (e-learning), based on the use of information and telecommunication technologies, mobile learning (m-learning), carried out with the help of mobile and portable devices, ubiquitous learning (u-learning), implemented with the help of relevant educational materials that are transferred to mobile devices (so there is a need for free Wi-Fi or the creation of free Wi-Fi zones), flipped learning (f-learning), when students read the basic educational information in advance and discuss it in the class, blended learning that involves the creation of a comfortable education online, etc. These learning systems are closely connected and are used for quality and effective organization of educational process in virtual learning environment.

Gary Motteram, describing virtual world, space and exhibitions, emphasizes the convenient practical use of “Virtual Learning Environment Moodle” (Motteram, 2013: 11). The use of Moodle platform also provides many benefits for VLE.

Virtual learning environment (VLE) is a software system designed to support the distance learning process with an emphasis on learning, as opposed to a managed learning environment, which focuses on managing the learning process. This environment provides great opportunities for teachers to supplement and conduct online courses, receive instant students’ feedback, helps to develop their creativity, critical thinking and communication skills. Jonathon Reinhardt notes that “virtual world (VW) is another term used to describe a constructed online digital environment that may or may not contain educational or entertainment-focused games and simulations, like the well-known Second Life or Trivinity. Usually VWs are massively multi-user online environments where users develop avatars to interact and socialize with other users” (Reinhardt, 2019: 5). The ideology of the VLE is based on an object-oriented approach to learning, which is characterized by the use of various educational facilities.

The use of VLE in classes can involve the use of information and telecommunication technologies, multimedia, distance learning technologies, Internet resources with professionally-oriented content, project work in ESP. It offers the computer environment with the help of forums, blogs, e-mail, online communication. Students must be psychologically ready for learning process in a new environment to achieve high results. Anastasia Trofymenko and Oksana Horodyska emphasize that the use of online educational resources, the creation of an electronic student portfolio helps the teacher to identify and remove language difficulties, to plan a set of teaching aids individually for each student (Trofymenko, Horodyska, 2021: 196). Each student needs an individual approach, so the use of the latest technologies can provide the following criteria and requirements.

All higher education institutions have long since begun to adapt the teaching aids, programs, content and objectives of their ESP courses to the new type of virtual target class, to the use of VLE, as well as Learning management system (LMS) and Learning content management system (LCMS). Teachers continue to encourage students to take a socially constructivist approach to learning. Envisaging an issue in teaching foreign languages in a virtual world, Regina Kaplan-Rakowski notes: “To organize a class in a virtual world requires experience and planning



because the difficulties that an instructor encounters are different from those in a traditional classroom” (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011: 452). The author notes that every virtual lesson, and not only a virtual one, cannot be unplanned, or conducted in spontaneous way” (Kaplan-Rakowski, 2011: 439).

When we talk about the development of students’ critical thinking, we understand that students need to be focused on the ability to analyze or defend their opinions. The virtual environment involves the use of various elements. Therefore, you can use universal virtual online boards Jamboard, Twiddla, Popplet, Padlet, Mentimeter, Groupboard, NoteBookCast, OpenBoard, Educreations, Linoit, Rizzoma, Realtimeboard, Bitpaper, IDroo, AWWApp, Miro, Whiteboard Fox, Whiteboard.Chat, Classroomscreen, Ziteboard, Milanote for group discussions, expressing ideas in a visual format, to organize collaboration, because they are editable. You can apply virtual interactive whiteboards Wikiwall, Glogster, Canva Education as online graphic editors that allow to create interactive posters, presentations, videos, comics, photo collages, infographics, logos, resumes, etc.; whiteboard-projects for creation and saving the notes such as Scrumblr, Conceptboard; virtual drawing boards Scribblar, Drawchat, DrawNote, Limnu, Drawonte, FlockDraw, CoSketch, etc. All these whiteboard-projects are networked social resources designed to organize joint work on the creation and editing of images, documents and real-time communication. C. Latchem also initiates the efficiency of application of “audio and whiteboard virtual classroom presentations” (Latchem, 2017: 70).

All these interactive boards have different interfaces, but are very easy to use.

With the help of interactive whiteboards you can well train students’ communication skills, which is important at the moment. Communicative language teaching ESP as “a kind of interactive method, the purpose of which is to master the skills of spoken language” (Kruk, 2022: 78) can be reflected in the use of various exercises aimed at developing critical thinking. Oksana Popadynets considering the issues of communicative competencies notes that ESP programs are aimed at forming students’ foreign language communicative competence, attention is paid to mastery of terminology, grammar and discourse inherent in the professional sphere, while semantic aspects are of secondary importance (Popadynets, 2022: 303). The study of professional terminology required by the discipline-oriented programs can also be mastered with the help of virtual boards.

Conclusions. Considering the use of virtual learning environment in teaching ESP, we saw that there are many benefits of its implementation. As a result of using such an environment, there is a significant motivation of students to study. Students can improve their knowledge through the introduction of various online techniques. Teachers, in their turn, can use four basic components such as reading, listening, writing and speaking with the help of various virtual boards. All these components can be diversified and complicated by exercises with the help of online services. Also, the use of different techniques in a virtual environment promotes an individual approach, which is so important for each student and deserves further study on this issue.

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