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**N. O. Fedchyshyn<sup>1</sup>**

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0909-4424>

ResearcherID Q-5422-2016

Scopus Author ID 57202833382

**N. I. Yelahina<sup>1</sup>**

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5423-8327>

ResearcherID Q-4615-2016

**O. H. Permyakova<sup>2</sup>**

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9563-0851>

<sup>1</sup>I. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University

<sup>2</sup>Volodymyr Hnatiuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University

## DISTANCE LEARNING OF FUTURE DOCTORS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE: CHALLENGES OF TIME

**Н. О. Федчишин<sup>1</sup>, Н. І. Єлагіна<sup>1</sup>, О. Г. Пермякова<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Тернопільський національний медичний університет імені І. Я. Горбачевського МОЗ України

<sup>2</sup>Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет імені Володимира Гнатюка

### ДИСТАНЦІЙНЕ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ МАЙБУТНІХ ЛІКАРІВ: ВИКЛИКИ ЧАСУ

**Abstract.** The article deals with the problem of the use of foreign (English, German) language distance learning for the training of future doctors. It has been analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of modern distance learning for students, teachers and higher educational institutions (oriented learning, personalization and differentiation of pedagogical activity). The main normative documents that regulate the development of distance learning in Ukraine are proposed. Great attention is paid to the problems and methods of distance learning, peculiarities of learning a foreign language by means of distance learning, some issues in the practice of teaching a foreign (English, German) language in the distance educational system for students of non-linguistic specialties on the basis of educational platform Moodle (types of activities offered by the platform, external resources useful for the use of distance learning in foreign languages). The concept of an adaptive approach to distance learning as a motivational factor in learning foreign languages is characterized.

**Key words:** distance learning; foreign (English, German); vocational training; Moodle platform; future doctors.

**Анотація.** У статті розкрито стан проблеми застосування дистанційного навчання іноземної (англійської, німецької) мови для підготовки майбутніх лікарів. Проаналізовано переваги та недоліки сучасного дистанційного навчання для студентів, викладачів та вищих навчальних закладів (орієнтоване навчання, персоналізація та диференціація педагогічної діяльності). Запропоновано основні нормативні документи, які регламентують розвиток дистанційного навчання в Україні. Акцентовано увагу на проблемах та методах дистанційного навчання, особливостях вивчення іноземної мови за допомогою дистанційних засобів, з'ясовано окремі питання у практиці викладання іноземної (англійської, німецької) мови в системі дистанційної освіти для студентів нелінгвістичних спеціальностей на базі навчальної платформи Moodle (види діяльності, які пропонує платформа, зовнішні ресурси, корисні для використання в процесі дистанційного викладання іноземних мов). Схарактеризовано концепцію адаптивного підходу до дистанційного навчання як мотиваційного фактора у вивченні іноземних мов.

**Ключові слова:** дистанційне навчання; іноземна (англійська, німецька) мова; професійна підготовка; платформа Moodle; майбутні лікарі.

**Introduction.** Integration of Ukraine into European and world structures, rapid development of information technologies are reflected in all aspects of life, and education is not an exception. Today, the modernization of the education system in the country is increasingly

associated with the development of distance learning, which is regarded as one of the essential factors for increasing the competitiveness of the educational services market. This form of study is widely used in Western Europe, the USA and other developed countries [2, 5, 6, 10]. Accordingly, distance learning

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is actively introduced into the educational process of higher education institutions. The spread of COVID-19 coronavirus infection in the world and Ukraine has led to the development of this form of study, which allows students to study and evaluate students' success during the quarantine period online. New challenges demand new ways of their managing.

**The aim** – to reveal the status and prospects of the use of distance learning of a foreign (English, German) language in a medical higher educational establishments.

**Theoretical framework.** The transfer of educational establishments to the distance mode of work, in particular by organizing the educational process using the technologies of distance learning, was carried out in accordance with the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 211 of 11.03.2020. Due to this document and the decision of the extraordinary meeting of the Regional Commission on Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergency Situations of 11.03.2020 (Minutes No. 8), Order of the Department of Education and Science of the Ternopil Regional State Administration of 11.03.2020, No. 60-od, Order No. 129 of 11.03.2020 “On suspension of the educational process at the University” regarding the prevention of the spread of coronavirus infection was transferred to the distance learning work educational process at Ternopil National Medical University. TNMU is served with the approval of normative and administrative documents by the Regulations on Distance Learning, approved by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine of April 25, 2013 No. 466, registered at the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on April 30, 2013 under No. 703/23235 as indicative.

The main objective of the distance learning (DL) system is to provide nationwide access to educational resources through the use of modern information technologies and telecommunications networks. DL offers a wide selection of educational materials that are constantly updated and additionally presented against the background of graphic images (drawings, diagrams, tables, etc.), accompanied by audio and video presentations. In addition, computerized training provides access to a variety of sources of information i.e. electronic libraries, multimedia textbooks, distance courses in different disciplines, reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, etc.). Distance learning increases the time limits of the learning process. Distinctive features of distance learning are flexibility (learning at the convenient time); an individualized approach

to the learning process (the opportunity to study at the appropriate level of complexity the subject(s) the student wants to learn from); modularity (a separate course is organized on a modular basis); concurrency (the ability to acquire knowledge simultaneously with professional activity); internationality (possibility to get degree in educational establishments of any country of the world distantly); adaptability (access to global information sources); large audience (access to multimedia sources of educational information); a new role for the teacher (exemption from lectures (materials are placed at appropriate e-mail addresses) and extension of individual work); quality (use of the most up-to-date teaching materials, involvement of world-class teaching staff) [9, 11, 12]. Taking into account the number of positive aspects of this mode of training, scientists note the disadvantages of DL. They include lack of social interaction (due to virtual learning format); technological problems (availability and compliance of technical support to the needs of the new form of training); improper preparation of materials for use in distance learning; portability of materials at the expense of electronic form (convenient, but not 100 % better than traditional textbooks); lack of the necessary cultural perception (unpreparedness for a new form of learning); lack of direct face-to-face communication between student and teacher; loss of emotional coloring of the material; difficulties in creating a creative atmosphere in a group, etc [7, 8]. To overcome such disadvantages teachers need time, money support and a considerable amount of research by teaching staff.

Considering the essential foreign experience the development of a proper theoretical base and the development of practical courses, it can be stated with certainty that the transition to distance learning should be gradual and thought-out. Some foreign researchers recommend starting the introduction of distance learning on mixed options [1]. Such a proposal seems reasonable and logical, because it will provide a gradual adaptation to the new form of teaching for both teachers and students. Certain elements of distance learning can be successfully used in the preparation of full-time and part-time students, especially taking into account the tendency to reduce the hours for classroom lessons and their subsequent compensation for the student's independent and individual work [3]. Such an approach will give scientists sufficient time to develop appropriate distance courses, which will improve the quality of the latter and help avoid many technical problems [4]. However, today the need for

distance learning is urgent and applies to all disciplines without exception, including foreign languages. Nowadays in Ukraine, distance learning of foreign languages requires, first and foremost, the development of a sufficient theoretical framework. Consider the basics of creating a distance course of foreign languages for teaching future doctors at the TNMU.

The steady volume of training material for studying and reducing the number of foreign language classes in non-linguistic specialties also encourages the introduction and use of distance learning tools. The function of the teacher as an object of information transfer is changed to the expert of students' independent work. Creation of electronic textbooks, development of multimedia presentations, and training programs provide the realization of the main educational functions i.e. to inform, to control, to systematize and to motivate students to study the discipline.

Distance learning represents the interaction between the teacher and the student, presented mostly in the form of a dialogue and isolated in space. The main purpose of distance learning is to stimulate the didactic dialogue of the student with the material of a foreign language course. The effectiveness of the dialogue between the teacher and the student is determined by the content of the course, the factors of the environment (size of the training group), the language of the dialogue, the means of communication. An effective form of communication in the course of the distance course is an internal didactic conversation, and high quality of mastering lexical and grammatical material can be achieved with proper reproduction of these issues. In distance learning, there are almost all the traditional ways of interaction between teacher and student. Modern telecommunication facilities open and expand the opportunities of students obtained during the classroom. A popular distance learning system is Moodle. TNMU has been using Moodle for a long time, so we can give it a complete description. Moodle as a learning platform is designed to bring teachers and students together. This system provides many functions i.e. task completion, discussion forums, file downloads, evaluation, messaging, calendar of events, news, announcements (for various levels: site, course, training group), online testing, etc.

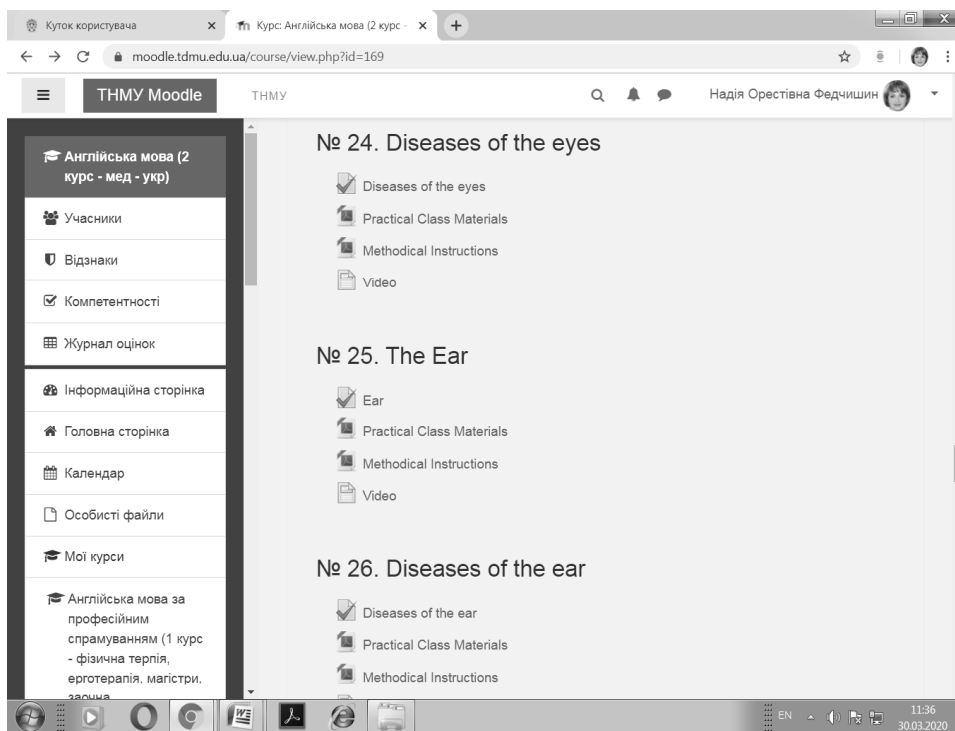
At the Department of Foreign Languages of TNMU the appropriate educational base was collected and the project of the distance course “Medical English Language” in order to provide students, who already have a basic knowledge of foreign (English, German), with effective material for the formation of linguistic

and speech competence. It will expand their vocabulary, deepen and consolidate the knowledge of foreign (English) grammar practically, to implement communicative intentions properly in accordance with the topic and purpose of communication. The project consists of training, communication and information blocks. The core of the training unit is an automated English course which provides for the processing of appropriate lexical and grammatical minimums. The communication block provides an opportunity for the student to carry out an educational dialogue with the teacher, who leads the course, to communicate with other users. The information unit offers course description, grammar help, sample exercises, instructions, and comments on their completion (Fig. 1, 2).

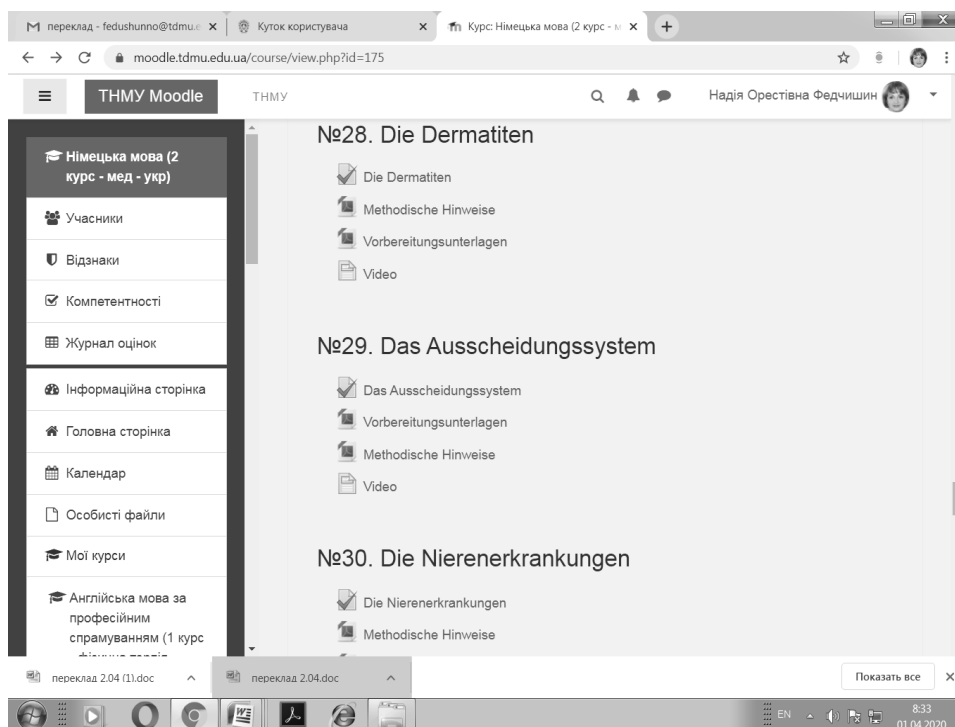
The main means of distance learning in a foreign language is an electronic textbook, the material of which must be compiled, taking into account the principles of programmed management of the process of learning. Such materials provide the implementation of the leading didactic principles, i.e. clarity, consciousness, activity, systematic way, consistency, accessibility, strength of learning, etc., as well as meeting the requirements of a personality-oriented approach in the teaching of foreign languages [4]. According to the topic of the class, students are offered to complete individual tasks using electronic information provided in the study materials before each lesson. Students can send completed assignments to e-mail (Fig. 3, 4).

TNMU's Moodle system for foreign language curriculum allows teachers to create online courses, manage the content of the site, offers various ways (audio, video) of submission and assimilation of educational material, testing knowledge and control of success, assists in learning new vocabulary and skills of reading, listening, writing.

Thus, for the second year students of foreign languages (English, German) different types of texts and test tasks are offered for the processing of language material and training of students' receptive, reproductive and productive skills and at the same time to control the level of formation of their speaking competence. Educational materials include a vocabulary-minimum, grammar help, and lists of basic language formulas to express different communicative intentions. The process of material development provides for independent work of students with the educational base and the possibility of their interaction with the teacher by e-mail correspondence and video conferencing with voice feedback. After completing the study of a particular



**Fig. 1.** Learning Resource Package on English for Specific Purposes.



**Fig. 2.** Learning Resource Package on German for Specific Purposes.

topic, students should operate an appropriate lexical minimum, practical grammar, and communicate on medical issues fluently.

Distant control of foreign languages is carried out in the form of tests, translation and oral communication

with the teacher. Moreover, in the case of a test, the evaluation and assessment of the answers are carried out automatically by the distance learning system. The platform has also additional tasks for better learning of the material, performing grammar, lexical tests,

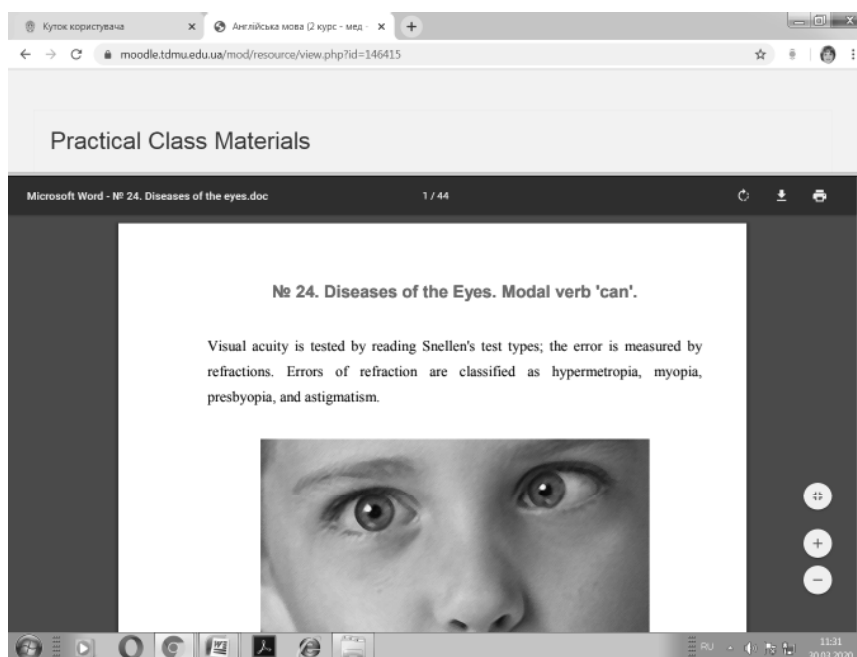


Fig. 3. Practical Class Materials on English for Specific Purposes.



Fig. 4. Practical Class Materials on German for Specific Purposes.

and tests for listening, reading and writing. Computer tests are perceived positively by students, as the results are automatically verified and thus human factors are eliminated. In addition, such tests contribute to a better absorption of the material, since in the future students will easily reproduce examples of them. These elements of distance learning greatly facilitate the control of students' learning activities, as they allow to monitor the work of each student and the quality

of its performance separately, as well as to stimulate students to work more effectively (Fig. 5, 6).

**Conclusions and Prospects for Research.** The analysis of distance learning courses for studying a foreign language (English, German) indicates a sufficient level of distance learning under the prevailing conditions, an opportunity to implement an individualized approach to learning, to combine educational and cognitive activities with professional skills; the ability to provide visual and

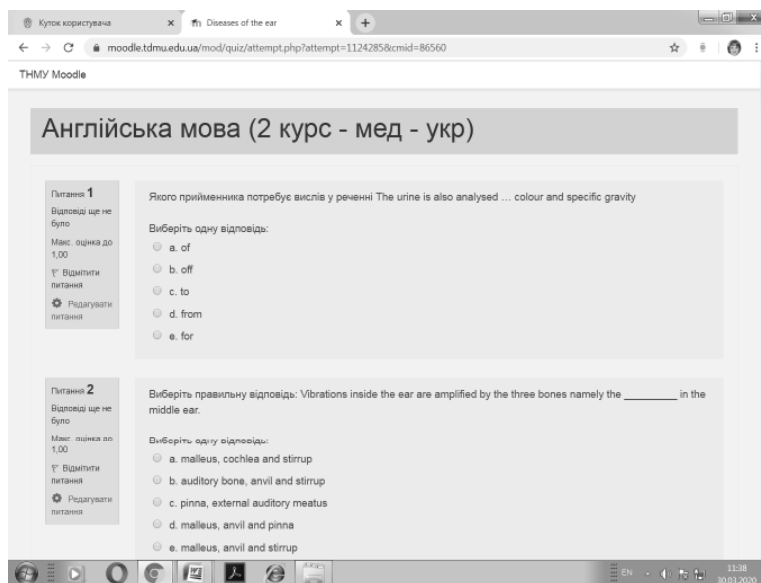


Fig. 5. Lexical and Grammatical Tests on English for Specific Purposes.

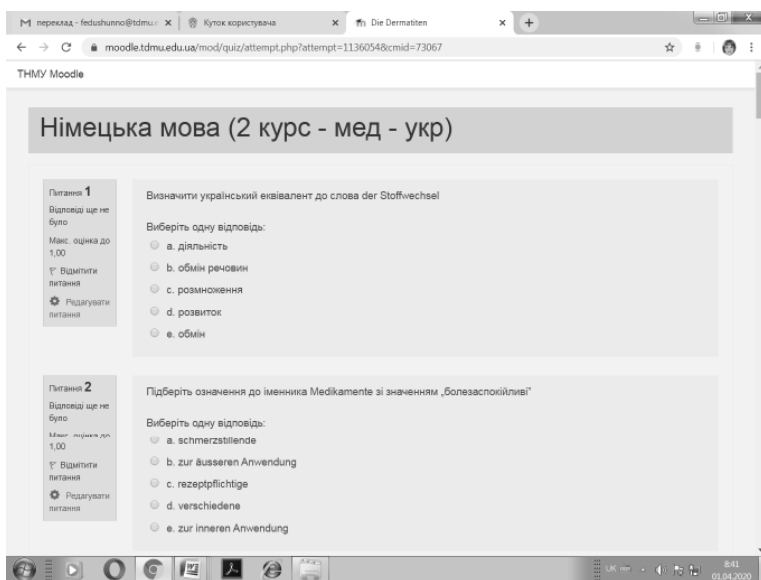


Fig. 6. Lexical and Grammatical Tests on German for Specific Purposes.

auditory perception of information, to carry out an objective control of the level of students' linguistic and speech competence formation, etc. In addition, the development of a process of distance learning of a foreign language (English, German) provides ample opportunities for access to the basic training resources needed to master the technique of foreign language communication.

Recent research in the field of interactive technologies has confirmed that the potential of computer-based distance learning can be most effectively used in the study of foreign languages, including discussion, reflection and coherent teamwork. Thus, distance learning has a number of advantages, and the use of its

individual elements can contribute to the effectiveness of student learning. The development of distance learning courses is a complex and time-consuming process that requires painstaking work and the development of a significant theoretical base.

One of the promising areas of work in the system of foreign languages distance learning is an integrated approach to solving the main tasks that combine a complex of technologies with high didactic potential and telecommunication technology; computer language learning, multimedia technology, and intensive language learning techniques.

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E-mail address for correspondence: fedushunno@tdmu.edu.ua