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VIRTUAL CLASSES IN DISTANCE LEARNING FOREING LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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Abstract. The article studies of the problem of effectiveness of virtual classes usage in the process of teaching foreign language for specific purpose in modern conditions of pandemic.

The practicability of multimedia technologies usage for the effective training process and the future specialists' foreign language competence formation has been proved.

Keywords: virtual classes, foreign language for specific purposes, foreign language competence.

The ability to use a foreign language by future specialists fluently, both for professional and private needs is of great importance nowadays. Moreover, the integration process of our country into the multicultural global educational and informational environment enhances the problem of the necessity of foreign language communicative competence formation for graduate university students. That is why the different aspects of the problem on formation of professional communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been the issue of numerous research papers.

Nowadays, the system of education faces the pandemic and quarantine inconveniences. In such conditions, caused by the modern reality, when the students of high educational establishments and universities are transferred on the distant form of education, the problem of usage information and innovative technologies for providing effective education has become more acute than ever.

In fact, the use of distance learning has not become a real challenge for the university teachers. Many universities began to create their own websites, providing access to electronic libraries, search engines and necessary documentation as well as a free and open-source learning management system Moodle with developed remote courses so that university teachers could combine traditional learning with some of it distant elements.

Since spring 2020, universities all over the world have been innovating the way they deliver classes and teach students due to the innovative interactive techniques and the use of modern information means.

A virtual classroom is an online learning environment in which students and teachers interact via the technical tools provided by the software. To ensure hosting classes remotely while maintaining the functionality available in a traditional classroom environment, educational institutions use virtual classroom software, like Zoom, Google Meet, Big Blue Button, Adobe Connect, Cisco Webex Metings, Blackboard ant others.

In other words, the virtual classroom is a shared online space where the learners and the tutor work together simultaneously. Usually, these interactions take place through videoconferencing. The participants have tools to present learning content in different formats, as well as to implement collaborative and individual activities. In this type of interaction, the teacher has the particularly important role of the moderator who guides the learning process and supports group activities and discussions.

In fact, there is no a single definition of the notion "virtual class". In modern researches, two terms that are often interchanged are used. They are "Virtual Learning Environment" (VLE) and "Managed Learning Environment" (MLE). According to Margaret Rouse's (2011) opinion "A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance student's learning experience by including computers and the Internet in the learning process [5]."

It is clear that distance learning cannot replace live communication with a teacher. However, in order to bring the distance learning format as close as possible to real communication, teachers were also offered various tools for organizing video conferences and online meetings, online whiteboard for real-time collaboration, instant messaging tool, participation controls, breakout rooms etc.

Such synchronous virtual classrooms have the great potential to provide significant benefit to online foreign language learning by addressing the needs of the learners as they relate to social interaction and psychological safety. They can also create a new standard in the learning experience that goes beyond the physical space of the classroom and traditional teaching methods.

Unlike asynchronous learning environment, the virtual classroom provides opportunities for self-studying; allows for instant feedback, direct teacher-student interaction, and engaging activities to increase motivation and active participation. Immediate communication favors relationship building within the group, as well as a sense of community.

Distance learning is impossible without the presence of EERs. Since the available EERs on various subjects do not cover all the necessary topics and, unfortunately, are not always high quality, teachers were presented with 10 services for creating their own EERs in the form of tests, quizzes, surveys, crossword puzzles, logic game resources, infographics, etc. Depending on the purpose of a lesson, a teacher can use the necessary service and create the EER on a particular topic [3].

Melnyk O.M. having made an overview of the most popular electronic educational resources that can be used in a virtual class points out the following:

1. https://edpuzzle.com/ – the service that allows creating video clips with sound and text, as well as interactive quizzes and tasks for them. A teacher can voice a video, add voice comments and explanations to it, create classes and keep track of which students watched the video and how they coped with the suggested tasks.

2. https://www.liveworksheets.com/ – the service that allows converting materials in docx, pdf, jpg and png format into interactive material for self-examination.

3. https://onlinetestpad.com/ua/ – the service that contains a designer for creating tests, surveys, quizzes, crossword puzzles, logic games, etc., as well as many ready-made EERs in various subjects.

4. https://learningapps.org/ – the service that consists of a designer for creating interactive exercises and a collection of exercises developed by other teachers on various subjects and topics.

5. https://h5p.org/ – the tool for creating educational content in HTML5 format for all types of devices: computers, tablets, smartphones with many opportunities for studying educational material and assess the level of student‘s achievement.

6. http://www.flubaroo.com/ – the add-on to Google Forms for tests. This tool allows checking students’ answers to test questions, get a report and analysis of academic achievement for each student, and send students grades with their test results with the key to the test or without it, and more.

7. http://crosswordcreator.homacosoft.com/index.htm – the program that allows creating crosswords easily.

8. https://kahoot.com/ – the online service, which allows creating electronic educational game resources, as well as quizzes, tests, surveys, etc.

9. https://www.classmarker.com/ – the test designer, which allows creating up to 100 tests per month free, add images, videos, audio files, formulas, etc.

10. https://piktochart.com/ – the tool for creating infographics on the network, which can be shared on social networks, save to a PC, get a code and links to embed infographics on a site [3].

Unlike asynchronous virtual platforms, the synchronous virtual classroom allows for immediate feedback from both the tutor and the other participants in both an individual and a general way. The key role of the tutor here is to create an atmosphere of positive feedback by guiding the group’s interaction. The need for feedback, which acknowledges the positive aspects of the learners’ performance and gives valuable comments and recommendations for improvement, benefits the education and progress of the students. It also builds the habit in the group of trying to maintain a positive and constructive tone. All of these factors are vital in assisting the learners to overcome their mistakes without feelings of negativity, as well as by fostering confidence and inspiring them to achieve their full potential.

Virtual classes have certain *advantages*. Thus, they provide personalized learning, as students are able to choose time and place for their studies and they can spend so much time as they require. Besides, such classes are considered as easily accessed by everyone from anywhere and at any time and they are affordable as well. Virtual classes enhance collaboration and communication and provide real-time teaching and learning. They introduce both students and educators to education new

technologies; allow supplying learners with comprehensive online tutorials, improving visualization.

But, at the same time, we have to admit that there are some *disadvantages* of virtual classes. Among them we can name the following: lack or no control over the students or classroom; teachers find it difficult to keep under control learning atmosphere or environment; virtual classroom requires computers and constant Internet connection; students may experience lack real-time teaching experience ad, finally, there is always the risk to return to the traditional student-teacher collaboration.

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