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II. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DISTANCE LEARNING AND SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF E-LEARNING

DISTANT LANGUAGE COURSES IN THE PROJECT "UNIVERSITY AS A PARTNER OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" (UPGOW)

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Abstract: *The article presents issues concerning the project "University as a partner of the knowledge economy" (UPGOW) including, among others, goals, assumptions, constituents and lines of the project. It also includes the conception of preparing and conducting distant language courses as one of the important constituents of the project: methodology, structure, specificity of the field, competence of the tutor and the student, description of each course and conclusions.*

Keywords*: distance language course, MOODLE, UPGOW, multimedia.*

INTRODUCTION

The University of Silesia in Katowice as one of Poland's biggest public higher education institutions with nearly 40 thousand students and with

highly educated teaching and research staff, following the best tradition of the ethos of European science, seeks to respond to the present requirements of the economy and determines directions of university development for 2008-2013. [8]

The priorities set out in the Human Capital Operational Programme, Action 4.1.1 *Strengthening university educational capacity* fit the guidelines of the Development Programme of the University of Silesia for 2008-2015 in the scope of education in the mathematical-natural and technical faculties, a document adopted by the University Senate. According to the priorities provided in the description of the subject matter of the competition that the University of Silesia entered submitting the project "University as a partner of the knowledge society, the prepared application focused on the development of studies in the field of mathematical-natural and technical sciences. [8]

1. ON THE PROJECT "UNIVERSITY AS A PARTNER OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" (UPGOW)

The project „UNIVERSITY AS A PARTNER OF THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" (UPGOW), prepared and submitted by the University of Silesia in Katowice, won the competition announced by the European Social Fund with one of the best scores. The project actions will focus on ensuring high quality education, close relations of the university with the regional and national sectors of the economy, in particular with high tech industry. They will find expression in the establishment of new study fields, specialisations, adjustment of learning programmes to the requirements of the economy and labour market and international cooperation of academic communities. [8]

1.1. Goals of the UPGOW project

The general goal of the project is dissemination of education of the society at every stage of learning as well as increasing the quality of educational services and their stronger linking to the requirements of the modern economy. The actions will be taken in a peculiar environment. After the introduction of market economy, Upper Silesia, previously the most industrialized part of Poland paid the highest price. Power consuming and obsolete heavy and mining industries were liquidated. After the closedown of numerous industrial plants, the region faced high unemployment. The scientific community of the University of Silesia is very well aware of the civilization changes undergoing in Silesia and in the whole country. Trying to respond to them the university has undertaken some actions including

establishing new study fields and modifying the existing ones so that the graduates could obtain education corresponding to the needs of the labour market and the knowledge economy. [8]

The particular goals include:

- adjusting of education to the requirements of the economy and labour market;

- supporting the new and existing study fields and specialisations which are top priority to the economy playing a strategic role in the development of the country and region;

- improving the quality of educational offer;

- enhancing the attractiveness of education in the field of mathematical-natural and technical sciences and increasing the popularity of SMT fields among graduates of upper secondary schools and limiting the phenomenon of outflow of students who no longer continue their studies after first year of SMT faculties;

- strengthening practical elements of teaching and increasing employers' involvement in the implementation of learning programmes;

- deepening the cooperation with employers aiming to obtain jobs for future graduates;

- adapting the profile of teaching to the requirements of the economic development and labour market and consequently ensuring young people a stronger position in the labour market;

- strengthening educational offer by learning programmes using methods and techniques of elearning;

- improving professional qualifications by postgraduate studies and courses;

- creating greater educational possibilities for persons with disability;

- developing teaching competence of the academic staff to increase the quality of teaching and the competitiveness of educational offer of the mathematical, natural and technical fields of study at the University of Silesia.

Under the project there will be opened new specialisations important for the development of the country and region in the field of mathematical-natural and technical sciences. They include the first and second degree studies: 1) geophysics; 2) biophysics; 3) econophysics; 4) bioinformatics; 5) medical

physics; - specialisations: 1) medicinal chemistry (first and second degree studies in the field of chemistry), 2) computational chemistry (first and second degree studies in the field of chemistry); 3) data analyst (second degree studies in the field of informatics) [8]

1.2. Methods and techniques of e-learning in the UPGOW project

Among the key components of the project, one of the priority issues is PREPARATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND MATERIALS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION USING METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF ELEARNING (Head of Activity 46 – prof. dr hab. H.Widła). This undertaking consists in preparing e-learning programmes and materials as well as their implementation in the following areas: medical imagining techniques, anatomy and physiology, introduction to medical sciences, biomaterials, engineering biomechanics, implants and artificial organs, compensatory courses in chemistry addressed to prospective first year students, compensatory courses in chemistry addressed to students, geoinformatics techniques in environmental protection, civilization threats and sustainable development of urban and industrial areas, biological invasions, basics of environmental protection, urban ecology, an elementary course in plant physiology, school mathematics competition tasks and methods of solving them, a preparatory course in mathematics for prospective students of mathematical-natural and technical faculties, auxiliary and supplementary materials for part-time students in the field of mathematics (subject to study programme), mathematical analysis, linear algebra, algebra, logic and set theory, topology, calculus of probability, differential equations, numerical methods, discrete mathematics, statistics, stochastic processes, quantum mechanics for doctoral students, history of basic ideas in physics, introduction to elementary particle physics, relativistic quantum mechanics, numerical methods in theoretical physics, physical calculations in Fortran 90, electrodynamics (course A), a specialist lecture: a standard model of elementary particles, theory of dispersions, a lecture for doctoral students: accounting methods in perturbation field theory, classical mechanics, introduction to quantum field theory [8].

2. DISTANT LANGUAGE COURSES AS A KEY COMPONENT OF THE UPGOW PROJECT

What is particularly important in the UPGOW project is its language component with materials for developing linguistic competence and skills (listening, reading, writing practice, study of grammar and lexis, interactive

tasks, materials for synchronous learning) in English, French, Italian; materials for life and institutions of target language countries.

During 2008-2009 the first five language courses were designed: General English Course (Level A2) by mgr L. Kałafatiuk, General English Course (Level B1) by mgr R.Kalamarz), General English Course (Level B2) by mgr A. Matuga), English in the Student's Career Course (Level B1+) by mgr J. Jakubiec-Bontko), English in the Student's Career Course (Level B2+) by mgr K.Kiszka). The language courses were prepared under the supervision of Methodological Consultant dr hab. Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska.

Regarding the problem of organisation of the process of foreign language teaching in the form of distance education we should consider several important factors:

1) a specific character of the organisation of a distant teaching process together with a specific character of electronic teaching means and tools and the educational technologies used;

2) a specific character of the very subject *foreign languages*;

3) preparation of teachers and teachers holding appropriate competences in the scope of e-learning;

4) preparation of learners (students) to study via the Internet.

2.1. Specific character of the study of *foreign languages*

According to the classification by I.J.Lerner, the study of *foreign languages* refers to a group of subjects whose key component includes methods of activity. Hence the *functional approach* in a given case and not only adjusting to modern tendencies of the development of educational process but also reflecting the specific character of the subject area. What this specific character consists in is that when we teach learners or students various types of language activity and while developing suitable habits we should ensure practice in such activity for each student in the group [7].

Besides, in the organization of the process of foreign language teaching we must focus on the learning objectives of a given educational institution and a particular stage of learning. We should also concentrate on the existing regularities (principles) of foreign language teaching developed for years as a result of quite complex research and decisions, which are based on the following:

1. When mastering any type of linguistic activity one should base on aural-motor habits, i.e. every type of linguistic activity should be based on oral practice.

2. Developing foreign language skills involves a necessity to base on the native language of the learner, which ensures conscious, and thus, more long-lasting acquisition.

3. Regardless of the selected methodology of foreign language teaching learning should be structured in such a way that a language system is developed in the learner's awareness.

The basic conceptual assumptions of the organization of the process of distant foreign language teaching can be presented in the following way.

1) What should underlie distant foreign language teaching is independent practice of each learner in the particular type of linguistic activity he studies.

2) Activity of each learner should be performed under the supervision of an experienced teacher, i.e. by interactivity. The educational process should be structured in such a way that the teacher could follow, correct, check and estimate each learner's activity. An excellent tool for the "automatisation" of such functions, for example in the Moodle system, is *Lesson,* which involves, among others, the division of material into small fragments, portions followed by a question or assignment. If the answer is correct the system "carries" the learner forward or reverses him in order to review and consolidate the material.

3) Independent activity of the learner requires effective feedback both regarding the training material – the single step internal feedback providing for the possibility of self-control, and the external feedback in the course of work in groups, by contacting the teacher.

4) The learner should have various contacts in the process of learning, apart from contacts with the tutor: with partners within the course (pairwork, teamwork, groupwork); with the server administrator, with the lecturer, with foreign partners. Also the types of the learner's individual activity should be varied: individual work, pairwork, teamwork – learning in small groups on the cooperative learning basis, cooperating with the whole course group (conferences, collective discussions) [7].

2.2. Information and educational technologies for distant foreign language learning

The most universal teaching structure for distant learning of a given subject, including foreign languages, which may be implemented by means of IT

tools and supporting all stages of education at the same time, is an e-learning course. A distant course – a set of scientific and methodological materials and educational services, prepared for individual and group teaching using e-learning technologies.

As far as the requirements regarding the structure of a distant course are concerned, they are thoroughly and comprehensively specified in publications ([4], [5], [6]). In short, the structure of an e-learning course can be presented in the following way as three main modules (units):

I. *Introduction to a distant course*: 1) Description of the course: 2) Literature; 3) Glossary; 4) Forum; 5) Registration questionnaire.

II. *Topical module N* (1<N<10): Pre-test (a diagnostic test); 2) Study materials on a given topic or field; 3) A set of tasks; 4) Knowledge check; 5) A set of creative tasks; 6) A set of interactive communication between the tutor and the students and the students among themselves; 7) Additional study materials on a given topic or field; 8) Knowledge check.

III. *Concluding module:* 1) Examination test (Quiz); 2) Final questionnaire (Questionnaire); 3) Reflective questionnaire (Survey).

A given course structure and all the above mentioned distant course modules can be effectively prepared in CLMS MOODLE by means of its suitable constituents: Resources, Lesson, Quiz, Hot Potatoes Quiz, Journal, Assignment, Workshop, Forum, Chat and others.

Apart from the basic part, a language course should contain a grammar reference and notes on pronunciation. By reading base texts the student can do lexical habit formation exercises. New lexis is given in phrases with relevant audio files attached. The student can not only read the phrase (using transcription) but also listen to how it is pronounced. There are texts and reading comprehension exercises for reading skill practice. There are also creative tasks designed for joint work of a small group of learners. While reading it is possible to refer to a glossary which contains explanation, translation, examples and transcription attached to a given word or phrase spotted in the text, which is especially helpful as the student gets instant explanation and the process of reading is not interrupted. Also attached to the glossary entries (words or phrases) are audio files for aural reference. [the language courses on the elearning platform: http://el.us.edu.pl/upgow]

The success and quality of distant learning largely depends on the effective organisation and methodological quality of the materials used as well as the coordination and competence of the teachers participating in this process.

If such learning is to be effective, one can mention a number of characteristics which are relevant for each type of distant courses:

- The introduction to every distant course as well as its particular units contains a detailed description of the goals of the course and particular topics, tools, methods, forms, criteria of evaluation, etc, which enable and ensure more careful and detailed designing of the learner's activity, his organisation, clear setting of tasks and learning objectives, provision of necessary educational materials as conditional on realisation of previous tasks.

- *Feedback (Interactivity)* – a key concept of distant learning educational programmes. Distant courses, especially foreign language learning courses should ensure as much interactivity as possible between the learner and the tutor, among the learners themselves, group work as the specific character of the subject involves among others being in constant touch, interactivity of the very process at every stage of learning from ignorance to knowledge.

- *Motivation* – an important element of every distant learning course. In foreign language courses it is largely achieved at an expense of the intercultural component, using possibilities of contacting native speakers, i.e. creating a natural linguistic environment. Motivation can also be achieved by preparing suitable topics with practical focus, topics that can be found useful at university, while travelling abroad, in future career etc. Such topics can arouse the learner's interest and motivate him. If the course users are first or second year students of tertiary education institutions the language courses they can be addressed to include "General English Course (Level A2, B1, B2)" and the following topics to study: "Travelling" (*On the Move*), "Student's everyday life" (*Flat Sharing*), „Modern and traditional media" (*What's On?, Well Read*), „Leisure and doing sports" (*In at a Deep End*) and others [1]. If the course is taken by students of senior years a suitable course to take is "English in the Student's Career Course (Level B1, B2)" and the following topics to study: "*Gap Year – a Good Idea?", "Getting a Job", "My Own Money", "First Job"* and others [3].

- The structure of an e-learning course should have a *modular* character so that the learner is able to become fully aware of his achievements from module to module at his own discretion or at the discretion of the tutor depending on the level of knowledge and abilities. Modules or courses of large volume significantly decrease the student's motivation to work.

- Multimedia support, which can be effected on the basis of the Internet resources and technologies, and appropriate constituents of distant courses. For example, in a Moodle e-learning course they include: Resources (audio files, videos in the form of course files or links to resources located on the Internet, on popular servers (Figure 1), multimedia presentations, etc.), Lessons with multimedia files, AudioRecorder – a course constituent for the student's recording his own audio files and sending them to the server so that the tutor can check and evaluate them, and others.
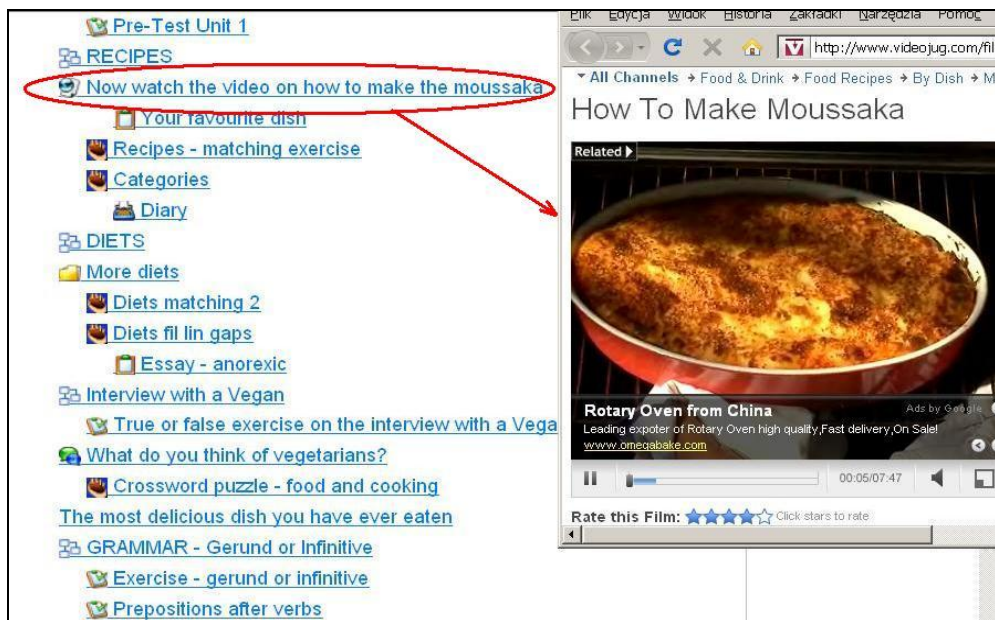
Figure 1. Resource *Link to a website*, with a relevant video in a distant language learning course [9], [2]

Technically the problem of distant learning can be solved now in a different way. Modern information technologies ensure practically unlimited possibilities in terms of location, storing, processing and supplying of materials and messages at any distance and of any capacity and content. Distant courses prepared in the Moodle system and made accessible on an e-learning platform can serve and perform the function of a „core" of the information and education space called the Internet or a supplement to a traditional or multimedia textbook which is used in the traditional process.

There are a great number of various types of e-learning language courses. They are described in detail in [7], [4]. Distant foreign language learning courses can practically reflect all the models of e-learning on the one hand,

while on the other hand they may have their own character specific to the subject itself, and namely a basic course in the scope of foreign language learning for learners (for the purpose of supporting remote regions, supporting pupils or students who fall behind with their study, etc); a foreign language course for everybody who wishes to study another foreign language; a course in foreign language for special purposes, for example to study professional terminology or terminology of a given study field, others.

2.3. The prepared distant language learning courses, their assumptions and conceptions:

2.3.1. The course in general English at A2 level (by mgr L.Kałafatiuk).

The course in general English at A2 level is the Internet distant learning course developing language skills at the pre-intermediate level. The techniques of distant learning used in the course enable students to master the language at A2 level in a very interesting and innovative way. Students have the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge by using the language in numerous everyday situations provided by the course. The subject matter of the course covers common problems encountered by students in their everyday life, such as: finding accommodation, getting around in the new environment, meeting new people, organizing free time, part-time jobs, travelling, using banking services, health care, etc.

The course is addressed to teenagers, full-time students, external students, post-graduate students and academic teachers who want to learn English at A2 level or those who want to consolidate their knowledge or develop their language skills at this level. The course may be used as a very attractive supplement of the main course at which students meet their teacher face to face, or as an additional module which aims at helping weaker students reach the level of their group.

The basic objectives of the course are as follows:

1. Improving and consolidating practical knowledge of English.

2. Developing integrated language skills (reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing) at A2 level.

3. Preparing students for the course at a higher level.

4. Consolidating the knowledge of English grammar and its practical application.

5. Expanding vocabulary knowledge and usage.

6. Developing practical language skills to be able to express ones opinions and needs, write letters, essays, notices, speak in public, communicate within a group, understand speakers on the radio or TV.

The participants of the course learn English grammar and vocabulary at A2 level by solving different problems and completing numerous tasks, owing to which they learn to communicate and perform different social roles. The participants can then use their knowledge of English to do the course at B1 level, which will be very useful in their future professional work.

The structure of the course. In order to complete the course successfully the participants have to spend at least 20 hours online and about 40 hours off-line. The course consists of the introductory part, 10 units (modules) and final part. The topics of two-hour modules are as follows:

Unit 1. Finding a place to live
Unit 2. Getting around
Unit 3. Your daily bread
Unit 4. The world of work
Unit 5. At your leisure
Unit 6. The world of fashion
Unit 7. Holiday time
Unit 8. When problems arise
Unit 9. Be careful! You might be trapped!
Unit 10. Global issues.

The principal idea of the course is based on two parts:

- introducing grammar and vocabulary in various ways using available methods of information technology
- practical part aiming at consolidating the knowledge and testing it.
The completion of the tests and assignments successfully is essential to move to the next stage of the course. Both parts of the course are supplemented with additional creative tasks which focus on communication and practical application of the language (projects, web quests, team work and individual tasks).
Each unit (module) has a unified structure and consists of the following parts:

1. Pre-test (online).

2. Basic language material (2 lessons, a glossary, links to internet sites, text files, MP3 listening material, video films etc.).

3. Assignments (essays, reports, journals, audio recorder) (off-line).

4. Tests (self-control tests, progress tests, final tests) (Quizzes, Hot Potatoes).

5. Interactive communication between the teacher and the participants and among the participants in the synchronous and asynchronous mode (Chat, Forum).

6. Additional, supplementary language material (lessons, glossaries, PDF files, ppt presentations etc.) (online).

Unit 7: ***Holiday time***
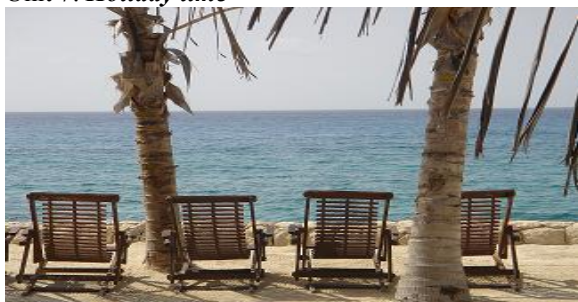
Treść:
1. Ulubione miejsca wakacyjne oraz różne formy wakacji w ofertach biur podróży.
2. Zastosowanie czasowników modalnych dla wyrażenia pewności i przypuszczenia (must, can't, may, might)
3. Wakacyjne przygody.
4. Porównanie czasów *Present Perfect* i *Past Simple*.

Pre-Test (Quiz)
Going places (Lesson)
Crossword 7 Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
Test yourself 7.1 (Quiz)
What might happen (Lesson)
Jumbled sentence 7.1. Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
Jumbled sentence 7.2. Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
Jumbled sentence 7.3. Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
Jumbled sentence 7.4. Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
Jumbled sentence 7.5. Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
My weekly diary (Journal)
Test yourself 7.2 (Quiz)
Matching exercise 7 Hot Potatoes (Quiz)
The best holiday destinations (Wiki)
Task 7.1 My favourite holiday photo (Assignment)
Task 7.2 My holiday adventure (Assignment)
Holidays for students (Choice)

Figure 2. The table of contents of one module [9]

The most attractive elements of a distant learning course is the use of multimedia. Students can practice and develop their language skills by reading, writing, watching, listening and speaking. The course contains all those elements.

The required competence of the course participants :

Essential:

1. The basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary at A1 level.

2. Basic communication ability.

3. The knowledge of English spelling and pronunciation.

Computer literacy:

1. Word-processing skills.

2. Using electronic mail.

3. Using Internet browsers and search engines.

4. Using Acrobat Reader (Fine Reader) and Power Point.

5. Using Skype communicator to be able to take part in audio and video conferences.

6. Using Media Player and Voice Register.

Figure 3. The example of the listening activity [9]

The competence after the course completion:

1. The participants have developed practical knowledge of English at the pre-intermediate level.

2. They are ready to do the course at a higher level (B1).

3. They have gained practical experience of using the techniques of distant learning.

4. The participants are familiar with modern forms of communication, they know how to use the Internet resources and exchange information with the other learners.

2.3.2. General English Course (Level B1) (by mgr R.Kalamarz).

The General English Course Level B1 is an online course which enables the student to develop his English language skills at intermediate level (B1). The techniques of distant learning used in the course will allow the student to acquire the language material easily thanks to the lucid and interesting approach. Acquired competence can be consolidated and used in a number of practical applications within the course. The subject matter of the course centres round topics connected with the student life, deepening knowledge or understanding not only by studying and reading but also by travelling, exploring new cultures, doing sports and responding to different challenges. It also concentrates on some practical aspects of studying such as living conditions, eating, making contact and solving problems.

The course is dedicated to university students as well as students of various types of schools, courses or postgraduate programmes who wish to learn English at the target level or consolidate their command of English. It can serve as a supplement of a core English programme at B1 level (blended learning) or as its module to level off or to extend the student's competence within the core programme.

Goals: The General English Course Level B1 aims to upgrade and improve the learner's qualifications in the scope of his command of English, develop the integrated language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) at intermediate level (B1) and prepare to study English at a higher level of language learning. Its goals also include deepening knowledge of English grammatical structures and building up vocabulary as well as making the most of this knowledge by using both grammar and lexis effectively. The course also aims to develop practical skills of using English to express and exchange personal opinions, solve problems, prepare essays, letters, projects, evaluations, summaries, forum posts and to communicate within a group or team.

During the course its participants study English grammar and lexis at B1 level to use it in different ways to do a number of practical tasks and assignments which allow them to learn to communicate with other people, use English in different everyday situations and function in different social roles. Finally the student is ready to use his command of English at next stages of study and in his future job.

Structure: The course is designed so as to offer at least 20 hours of effective online study and further 40 hours of offline learning. It consists of an introductory part, ten basic topical modules and a final part. The basic topical modules are ten two-hour units:

Unit 1. On the move (Travelling)

Unit 2. Flat sharing (Student's everyday life and problems)

Unit 3. In focus (Exploring the world around us)

Unit 4. Have a break (Gaining experience in a gap year)

Unit 5. Well read (Books and reading)

Unit 6. In at a deep end (Sports and challenges)

Unit 7. What's on? (Film and entertainment)

Unit 8. The spice of life (Food and eating)

Unit 9. Making contact (Ways of making friends)

Unit 10. Food for thought (Mind matters)

As showed in Figure 4, each unit consists of two complementary and intertwined parts. The first part is made up of a presentation of grammar and lexical material in various forms using accessible online techniques (Moodle's lessons, glossary, other teaching resources in the form of text files (doc and pdf) and ppt presentations as well as videos, audio files, links etc.). The second part aims at practising the new material, consolidating the language already studied and checking knowledge and skills in the form of online tests and quizzes (Moodle's quizzes and Hot Potatoes Quizzes).

Figure 4. The example of Unit2 FLAT SHARING

To move on to another unit the student has to pass the tests and complete the assignments and other prescribed tasks and activities. Both parts are

complemented by a short online pre-test to give the student a hint of what he can learn in the unit, additional creative tasks and activities which focus on communication and a practical use of English: projects, webquests, teamwork (journal, workshop and wiki) and individual tasks (assignments), both written (letters, reports) and oral (using the AudioRecorder feature) , a set of interactive activities to practise communication between the teacher and the learners and the learners among themselves in both synchronous and asynchronous manner (chat, forum, choice, workshop and wiki).

Requirements and final results

To start this course knowledge of English at A2 level is required. The student should know basic English grammar and lexis and be able to follow the instructions (in English) and communicate in English at elementary level. He should have no difficulty in using the correct spelling and pronunciation at elementary level. A certain extent of independent use of dictionaries, reference books and internet resources is needed.

Technically, the student should be able to use a computer effectively enough to be able to follow course instructions smoothly, and specifically he should be able to use electronic mail, an internet browser, create and edit files, use popular software at work, for example Acrobat Reader (Fine Reader), Power Point, audio and video players and voice recorders. The ability to use the Skype program is necessary to take part in audio- and video conferences.

On completing the course the student will have a good command of English at intermediate level and will be able to start another course in English at a higher level. He will acquire practical English language skills and will gain more practice in using modern distant learning techniques. He will be open to new forms of communication, internet research and information exchange with other participants of the course.

General characteristics

In the General English Course Level B1 the author uses Moodle features effectively. They specifically include the following functions: forum, chat, quiz (both Moodle's quizzes and Hot Potatoes Quizzes), lesson, wiki, glossary, choice, workshop, journal, etc.

Knowing that the Moodle lesson allows to combine instruction and assessment, the author could make use of its flexibility (it is similar to a web page), interactivity (a quiz feature), and branching capabilities. Each unit of the course contains two lessons which reflect the main topic of the unit in the teaching material (text, audio tracks, short videos, links). The material serves to expose key vocabulary and grammar and takes the form of presentations,

tables, grammar reference, hypertexted notes, links. It is supported by the interactivity of quiz questions. Hypertexted commentary is added to guide the student (Figure 5a), feedback is provided for each correct and incorrect answer and study links are included for further reading (Figure 5b) multimedia. For example, in a unit lesson audio files are used to accompany a presentation of language material, a dialogue, a single phrase, a gapped text or a checking question. It is also used to build an essential part of a listening comprehension quiz (Figure 6). Also, videos are used in a similar way.

The Moodle lesson is flexible in many ways. It can be navigated easily. The student can reach its selected parts by taking particular Study Paths. They serve as a signpost guiding the student or as a shortcut to a specific study point that the student wants to return to (Figure 7).

Figure 5a   **Figure 5b**

Figure 5. Examples of the interactivity of the course's lessons

Figure 6. The part of a listening comprehension quiz.

Figure 7. Menu of the Lesson. An example of the course's flexibility

2.3.3. General English Course (Level B2), by mgr Agata Matuga

General English Course (Level B2) has been designed as a multimedia supplementary course for students who have mastered English language at the intermediate level. The target group are teenagers and adults who wish to revise, practice or develop their knowledge of general English at the upper intermediate level. The course consists of 5 modules (4 hours of online studying each) and takes 20 hours. Each module is concerned with a different topic (1. food and diets, 2. body and ailments, 3. crimes and criminals, 4. sport and leisure, 5. the USA and the UK). Due to the limited number of classes covered by the course only selected grammatical issues have been presented in the course. They are: gerund or infinitive, prepositions after verbs, passive voice, the use of past tenses and reported speech.

As mentioned above the course has a modular character and the structure of each module is similar. They all start with a pre-test, which consists of 10 grammatical and lexical questions referring to the topic of the module. The purpose of the pre-test is to enable a student to check what skills and knowledge he/she already has in the field which is presented in the module. The score for the pre-test is not included in the grade which the student gets on completing the course. Each module contains one grammar and three lexical lessons. The most important elements of the course are lessons, which provide the students with multimedia study materials on a given topic. Each lesson is divided into usually three small parts (texts with photographs, video recordings, audio recordings) which end in a few comprehension questions (multiple choice, true/false, short answer, matching). Depending on whether the student answers the questions correctly he/she is either allowed to go forward to the next item or reversed to the part of the lesson which he/she did not master properly and made to do it again. The key phrases in the lessons are linked to the course glossary so that the students may check the meaning of the unknown words while reading without having to open a dictionary and being distracted. Most of the words in the glossary are first explained in English and then translated into Polish, and usually there is an example of a sentence containing the given word. The grammar lessons are also divided into smaller parts, which present grammatical problems step by step in a form of colourful charts, explanations and examples. They also contain various comprehension questions at the end.

The main lessons of each module are supplemented with extra practice interactive exercises (e.g. Hot Potatoes Quizes: multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises) connected with the material presented in the lessons. The purpose

of these exercises is to give the students an opportunity to test their knowledge and practice the words and phrases which they were supposed to learn from the lesson. There are also plenty of assignments which encourage the communication between the student and the tutor or other students (journals, essays, voting, workshops, chats, Wiki). Most of them are creative tasks and hopefully the students will find them challenging. Finally, there are links to other websites which contain more study materials (language games, videos, other texts) connected with the presented topics. The students who wish to have more practice are advised to take advantage of these resources. The time which the students are expected to spend on doing the additional tasks offline is not included in the time of the course (it is estimated to take about 40 hours in addition to the 20 hours spent online). Each module ends in a final test which contains 10-15 quiz questions of various types (multiple choice, true/false, short answer, matching). There is a time limit for each quiz and the score is important for the final grade, which the student obtains on completion of the whole course.

LONDON EYE

It has been opened in March 2000 and since then it has been an iconic landmark and a top tourist attraction. The height of the London Eye is 135m and it is the fourth tallest structure in London after the BT Tower, Tower 42 and One Canada Square in Canary Wharf. It took seven years and the skills of hundreds of people from five countries to make the London Eye a reality. Each of the 32 capsules weighs 10 tons. It can carry 800 passengers per revolution and it welcomes 3,5 million customers every year. Each rotation takes about 30 minutes, meaning a capsule travels at a stately 26cm per second, or 0.9km (0.6 miles) per hour allowing passengers to step on and off without the wheel having to stop

Question 1:
How many passengers can the London Eye carry per revolution?

Figure 8. Lessons Part of the distance course

Module 5 is a little different from the previous ones. Instead of introducing a grammar problem, as it was the case in the previous modules, it deals with differences between British and American vocabulary. The charts show most commonly used British and American equivalents as well as spelling differences are discussed. The new vocabulary is introduced in the texts

containing information about historical sights worth visiting in London and around it. They provide the student with useful tourist information and some historical background.

Lesson 3 of Module 5 is concerned with Denali National Park and the highest mountain in North America – Mc Kinley. The texts are accompanied by picturesque photographs and some geographical and historical details. Thus, Module 5 has an additional function of developing the student's general knowledge about the countries where English is a native language and hopefully the contents might be useful when visiting the UK or the USA.

Undoubtedly, the advantage of the course is the fact that it may be used in different ways: by students who learn the language in a traditional way and want to supplement the handbook, by part-time or post-graduate students who cannot afford to spend much time in a classroom and prefer to be able to study at home or by those who do not have to attend English classes but wish to study at home to brush up their English. Hopefully, the use of multimedia resources makes it attractive and fun to use. However, on the other hand, the author is aware of the technical imperfections of the course, which she created herself without much professional support. Although the author is an English teacher and not an IT engineer she did her best to apply multimedia in it.

2.3.4. English in the Student's Career Course (B1 level) by mgr Joanna Jakubiec-Bontko.

The description of the course : Distance learning techniques have in view to enhance traditional language courses and to provide a student with a wide range of resources that could help them in their path to professional success.

The Student's Career Course (B1+ level) is an online course aimed at improving and developing all integrated language skills and in particular it focuses on aspects referring to a professional career of a student. The language material used in the course enables its participants to consolidate, practise and master their general English which intertwines with the specialist subject matter relating to a student's or graduate's career. The student is presented with a number of content-specific topics which include CV writing, job interviews, internships, grants, coping with stress at work, delivering speeches, as well as non-professional activities, such as travelling, looking for a flat, doing sports. The lexical material revolving around work and employment, and practical every day topics, is supported by clear explanations of grammatical points and plenty of practice.

Target participants of the course : The course is dedicated to college and university students being at the very start of their professional life, to students of any educational programmes who wish to deepen their knowledge and self-learners who are offered a practical approach to learning general and specialist English.

Goals of the course : The general objectives of the course aim to raise and develop the student's language qualifications at an intermediate level (B1+), to improve all linguistic skills (reading comprehension, listening, speaking and writing) and to upgrade and practise grammatical and lexical issues. The specific goals of the course are to encourage the student to use the language effectively in an English-speaking environment through expressing and exchanging opinions, preparing projects, assessments and summaries, communicating in a group and problem solving.

The course structure : The course includes 20-hour online learning and 40 hours of study offline and has a modular structure which consists of an introductory part, units covering various topics and a final part.

The basic thematic modules are structured as ten 2-hour units. Every module (unit) consists of two complementary lessons which comprise grammatical and lexical points presented by accessible online techniques in their first part, and a number of exercises to practice the new material in the other part (by means of different kinds of quizzes, Hot Potatoes quizzes, wiki, journal, assignments, letters, reports, AudioRecorder tool etc.).

Unit 1 "*Gap year - a good idea*?" and Unit 2 "*Time for travelling*" are mostly addressed to graduates who are about to get prepared for their professional life, but they seize an opportunity to travel, take a gap year and do some volunteer work.

Units 3 and 4 "*Getting a Job*" provide the learner with the most practical hints and advice concerning effective jobsearch, writing a CV and cover letter, and getting ready for a job interview.

Unit 5 "*My own money*" and Unit 6 "*Moving out of home*" are directed towards young professionals who face a necessity to manage their first own money and to find accommodation.

Figure 9. Unit 2: TIME FOR TRAVELLING

Unit 7 "*First job*" and Unit 8 "Job stress" give examples of a typical job contract and job description and deal with solving potential problems at first job, such as sex and disability discrimination, and present techniques of managing stress.

Unit 9 "*Presentations and conferences*" enables the student to learn about ways of giving presentations and speeches and how to manage in a professional environment at meetings and conferences.

The final module, Unit 10 "*Time to rest*", focuses on various ways of spending leisure time ranging from book reading and Internet surfing to shopping and taking up extreme sports.

A VERY BAD START

One of Murphy's laws says: If something can go wrong, it will. So, no matter how hard you try to impress your first/new boss and colleagues, some things may look different from what you have expected to see.

Listen to Mark, Helen and John telling about their first day at work which turned out to be quite unsuccessful.

MARK'S STORY ▶▮▬▬▬▬

Answer the questions:
1. Was Mark on a business trip with his boss on the first day of his work?
2. What time did the boss want Mark to wake him up?
3. What was the reason why Mark didn't tell the truth about an alarm clock?

Click here to check your answers.

Figure 10. Unit 8: PROBLEMS AT WORK

SHOPAHOLICS

It's hard to believe but for many young people, who have just started working and earning their own money, the best way to have a rest is doing shopping.

The film "Confessions of a Shopaholic", now on general release across the country, tells a story of a 25-year-old college graduate who gets a boring job as a financial journalist but can't handle her own finances. Her problem is that she has a shopping addiction and she spends so much money that it puts her in extreme debts.

Would you like to see the film trailer? Go to the following link on www.youtube.com

Figure 11. Unit 10: TIME TO REST. Part of the Lesson "SHOPHOLICS"

Each unit is made up of two lessons which are a combination of teaching instructions in the scope of grammatical and lexical issues and various forms of online exercises assessing the acquired knowledge. In addition, the acquisition of language skills is facilitated by online quizzes and consolidated by offline tasks, such as oral practice (AudioRecorder), creative assignments (journals, wiki and teamwork) and interactive activities (forum, chat or choice). At different phases of the unit, the student's competences are evaluated by means of a pre-test, mid-test and final test.

The author's essential goals have been to create the course meeting the expectations of students taking up their professional career so as to upgrade their qualifications and strengthen their communicative competences. The student has been offered the up-to-date course supplementing traditional face-to-face courses. Its attractiveness and accessibility is its main asset since the participant may take advantage of diversified forms of learning, such as online and offline exercises, grammar reference, glossaries, tables and links to internet resources.

2.3.5. English in the Student's Career Course (Level B2+), by mgr Katarzyna Kiszka.

The B2 level course (former upper-intermediate level) is a web-based course aimed at students, who may need English for their studies, as well as graduates and young professionals, who need practical English in their career. The on-line tools and facilities used enable students and graduates to acquire and revise a lot of B2 material.

There is a wide range of topics connected with students' and graduates' life such as practical aspects of studying in English or looking for a job, making contacts and solving problems. The course supports better use English skills both receptive (reading and listening comprehension) and productive (speaking, participating in meetings, presenting, writing letters, e-mails, etc). At the same time the course revises the most practical aspects of grammar at B2 level.

The target users:

The course is designed for students, university courses participants, extra mural students, and academic teachers. The course may be combined with a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component or as a separate course may be used both as a training course apart from students' syllabus as well as a supportive course.

The course consists of 20 on-line hours and 40 off-line hours. There is an introductory part, 10 2-hour units and 2-hour finishing part.

The topics of units depict typical career development, from a student and a graduate looking for a job to a professional starting to think about settling down.

The first three units concentrate on the initial sages of professional life, such as: looking for a job, preparing to work in a multinational company and building up and maintaining business relations.

Unit 1. How to find a job of your dreams?

Unit 2. At work.

Unit 3. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy - chill out!

They cover such areas as CV and covering letter writing and interview preparation. They practise presenting and participating in meetings.

The following two units:

Unit 4. Internet? - International English.

Unit 5. Good food ends with good talk.

Firstly, they cover areas connected with the Internet language for private and professional use, i.e. viral marketing or broadly used abbreviations and vocabulary commonly used on web-pages. Secondly, they develop the language of a professional participating in international meetings: such as food vocabulary and vocabulary of socializing (how not to make a social gaffe).

Units 6 and 7:   **Unit 6.** Here and there, travel for pleasure and for profits.

Unit 7. School after school? Yes, school after school!

Cover areas connected with travelling and training and further studying. They prepare both a business person and a student to travel and study.

The following: **Unit 8.** Money doesn't grow on trees, covers the area of business and capital market.

The final units: **Unit 9.** World Issues. and **Unit 10.** Settle down. You are a big boy/ girl. Start real life...GOOD LUCK! eventually reach the stage where either a student or a graduate faces world issues or professional problems. The professional may also see the need to settle down. Thus the areas

covered are: global issues, presenting arguments, giving reasons or letters to a bank as well as vocabulary connected with living in a house.

Each unit above contains various tasks connected with grammar at B2 level, such as: conditional sentences, prepositions, modals, tenses or punctuation revision, etc.

The choice of areas has been the result of the author's experience in teaching students at all levels of general English and ESP, in-company teaching of business and examining at Cambridge Exams (general and business). The linguistic needs of students and graduates and professionals are similar in many ways. The course content covers the areas where both similarities and differences were considered.

The uploaded materials provided by the author: Word documents, online quizzes, audio and video files, hyperlinks and a recorder.

As copyright regulations referring to uploading video files available on web sites are not quite clear only 2 "home-made" video files were uploaded. The audio files are the result of recording sessions with native speakers and Polish students. Another possibility is a recorder that may be customized to any course.

Figure 12. Quiz "Listen about scholarships".

2.3. Competences of the teacher in the scope of e-learning

Competences of a teacher as an e-learning course author and a tutor are described in detail in [4], [5]. Obviously, an online foreign language teacher should be a foreign language teacher and first of all should hold necessary qualifications in this scope. By no means should e-learning be an opportunity for the teacher to conceal his incompetences and failures in traditional teaching, but he should rather most naturally, effectively and efficiently integrate his teaching competences in both traditional and online modes and keep on upgrading and improving his abilities. The content-related, methodological, IT-related, organisational and other aspects of the development of distant teaching competences go beyond the scope of this article and are covered in other publications of the author.

CONCLUSION

The language courses prepared under the UPGOW project ([8], [9]) have proved the correctness and effectiveness of the proposed e-learning technology applied to foreign language teaching. Definitely multimedia and distant courses cannot compete with real personal contact with a teacher provided that this contact is individual. However, as traditional classes, for example English classes, are attended by dozens of students and each student requires individual approach, the advantages of appropriately designed e-learning seem to outnumber its disadvantages and thus it becomes a modern, flexible and effective teaching technology which meets the needs of the learner, the teacher and the society.

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