

NEW APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Still, despite worldwide demand for new language skills as well as some positive changes in the national understanding of foreign language acquisition problems, a person with fluent and accurate English is difficult to be found among the graduates of Ukrainian universities. But the need for such specialists is undoubtedly increasing taking the proportion of offers of employment in the press which require language skills into account.

Increasingly frequently, our graduate students face the problems of combining their studies with part-time or even full-time jobs. These involve the need to fit in with the timetable, time wasted travelling back and forth, opportunities missed during their absence. Electronic and distance technologies in education are likely to be a crucial answer to these and some other challenges.

Sumy State University has introduced a practice of students' working to individual schedules. Electronic means and distance courses occur rather helpful for teaching English to graduate students under such conditions.

Our practice has proved the efficiency of using e-mail in a single classroom, though the idea is not quite new [1, 35-46]. E-mail is easily applied for supplying students with electronic version of all printed materials for study, drill, and practice, as well as communicating with the teacher and peers off-line, including asking questions. But it obviously lacks direct feedback, discussion and integrity among students.

We accept that distance learning involves: managed learning, centripetal organization/distribution, the learner as a driving force [2, p.5].

Through a distance course we suggest the content, support students' work, not allowing it to turn into self-learning. It should be underlined that the success of the distance learning largely depends on the level of a student's motivation [3]. For the teacher to be at distance means shifting the focus from the teaching-learning process to the encouraging more student's learning to take place.

Hence there appears a practical problem of material design, delivery and support. First, the content of the distance modules / course should be described. We suggest that there should be two principle components developing academic English skills (common for graduate students of different majors) and job-related skills. Second, we assume that today technology determines much of how the materials look like and work. Distance educational environment provides some ways of effective feedback for training grammar, writing and listening skills. It supplies the teacher as well as students with current information about their advancements through the course.

Then, integrating telecommunication technologies (such as Skype) into the classroom we can involve distance students into live discussions held in the class.

A positive side of using elements of distance learning within a traditional single class with some students having individual schedules is that the teacher is fairly aware of the student body he or she is designing the course for.

Teachers with a high level of electronic means and distance learning/teaching technologies expertise are more likely to be aware of the range of opportunities offered by authoring and using well designed distance courses for enhancing efficiency of foreign language training.

References:

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Електронні засоби та дистанційні технології для навчання протягом життя : тези доповідей
VIII Міжнародної науково-методичної конференції, м. Суми, 15–16 листопада 2012 р. –
Суми : Сумський державний університет, 2012. – С.54-55.