Moodle as Innovative Tool in English Language Teaching for Students of Economic Specialties

Abstract. The article reveals the structure and content of the English language course downloaded into the Moodle platform. The analyzed course is used in tertiary education of students acquiring economic specialties. From the perspective of the present pandemic situation, when the global education requires substantial adjustment, Moodle system tools prove to be effective, and challenging.

Keywords: Moodle platform, English language teaching, tertiary education

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, distance education has rapidly been adopted to deliver training services via the Internet without close contact between students and tutors. Moodle platform in the contemporary situation of distance learning involvement has proved to be a powerful tool in the field of foreign language education [1]. This study has aimed at focusing on the peculiarities of the Moodle technology use and organization of teaching professional English for students trained for economic specialties in technical institutions of higher learning in Ukraine.

Our investigation shows that Moodle is the most popular education platform in all tertiary institutions of Ukraine. Moreover, it continues to dominate in the European education system with a 64% market share which is 5 times more than the second-best education technology known as Blackboard Learn [2]. In the recent “European Dynamics report” released by e-literate with ListEdTech, Moodle emerges out as the leader. The report is based on a survey from more than 1600 higher education institutes throughout Europe, providing insights into educational market share [3]. Generally speaking, a Moodle platform offers tutors to facilitate remote teaching during these challenges after pandemic times. Especially it can be
used to share English language course content with the students and support online teaching [4].

The analysis demonstrates that in the Ukrainian dimension the course launched to the Moodle platform of the University should correspond to the program requirements of the discipline. As the subject matter of our research is an English language course for students of economic specialties, we study its structure, and content, making the comparison with the curriculum items.

Educational program outlines the purpose of teaching a foreign language course in a non-linguistic high educational institution (economy belongs to this division) is to develop the necessary competences in the fields of professional and situational communication in oral and written forms [5]. The course also aims to prepare for the First Certificate Examination and involves the development of reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills to the intended level (B1 on the scale of the Council of Europe) [5]. The discipline "English Language" aims to develop students' language competence to the level of careful and conscious use of English in a wide range of real situations at the interpersonal, professional, and educational levels. The study of the basics of a foreign language is aimed at the formation and development of logical thinking of students, their foreign language speaking abilities, different types of memory, imagination, ability to work independently with the educational and professional material [6].

The main tasks of studying the discipline "English language" are to acquire the skills of practical knowledge of a foreign language in the different types of speech activity in the scope of topics due to professional needs; the use of oral monologue and dialogues in the context of domestic, socio-political and professional subjects; translation texts in the professional field from the foreign language into the native [5].

So economic English course in the Moodle platform can fulfill these requirements, as due to its use, the tutor may help students to develop their functional language abilities through online exercises of listening, reading, and writing activities. Moodle makes it possible for a tutor to build the learning situations as an active discovery procedure with practical applications of results. At the same time,
the students’ roles are changing from passive consumers of knowledge to active participants in the eLearning process [7].

Moreover, valuable in this case is that the tools provided by the Moodle platform generate the folding of the curricular structure according to the individual learning styles of students [7]. So foreign language learning may be divided into levels, to meet the needs of every student, and facilitate individual language learning, and build personal trajectories, routes and strategies. Each level subsumes the level below. The work over the language material can be organized as a range system: the same task can be done differently at the same level. Besides, the language activities can be planned as an ever-expanding system without traditional in-person lessons [1].

The standard content of the English language course in Moodle is competence-based. According to European pedagogical research in foreign languages teaching and learning, the term “competence” denotes the ability of future specialists to use their foreign language knowledge and skills in practical professional activities [8].

Judging from the curriculum the total amount of modules is equivalent to 150 hours or 5 credits ECTS, comprising 2 hours of lectures (at the starting point), 100 hours of practical classes, 46 hours of individual problem-based research work. The number of themes completely corresponds to the educational program [5]. In Moodle, the curriculum structure is presented within 12 Units embracing everyday and professional economic English topics.

The survey reveals that the majority of economic English courses embraces the following topics, represented in the Moodle: acquaintance; working day; Ukraine; healthy lifestyle; University; tertiary education in Ukraine and abroad; profession; career; economics; enterprise management; finance; accounting and auditing in enterprises; types of business organization; money; types of banks and systems; pricing; types of markets and market relations; international business; trade; forms of ownership [5]. These topics are drawn from a variety of international vocational contexts, including the USA, the UK, and the UN, offering a skills-based approach to learning grammar and lexis which is immediately transferable to professional (economic in this case) language exercises.
Intensive Moodle English courses are offered in small groups and one-to-one with a tutor. Every topic highlighted in the Moodle comprises:

– basic lexical section, including texts for reading and translation (may be represented in the form of documents, pictures, and presentations);

– listening part with objects from the internet resources with the native speakers' exercises (a tutor may configure activities flexibly using, for example, the BBS and Cambridge English official websites);

– grammar blocks of theoretical material combined with the grammar in use workout, and drills (in theoretical part it is very important for students to have adequate and overwhelming access to well-known libraries, during practical part a tutor may design a good panel discussion in the students’ mini-group);

– testing division (questionnaire survey with automatic quantitative evaluation will help teachers to realize the students’ strong and weak points).

The continuous formative feedback is provided with the help of a “blue button” function with video and audio communication through synchronous and asynchronous interactions between students and a tutor [2]. On the whole, the Moodle lesson can easily be filled out with up-to-date information enriched by the explanatory video material, references to various virtual sources.

At the end of every unit, professional English students are asked to complete analysis assessment tests, enabling teachers to evaluate their particular language progress and to formulate further learning programs, tailored to the needs of each student [2]. Students’ progress is constantly monitored, and the course is adapted to meet students’ needs and priorities. All students receive an individual written evaluation of their progress. What is more, to ensure understanding of the language material a tutor may introduce some tools of self-assessment, thus motivating students to pass the autonomous educational route.

Further investigation of an English language program for the economists determines that the course also comprises modules for independent extracurricular work of the student, including the study of program material using the recommended literature. We have the information from the English language tutors that such kind of individual work may also be conducted as problem-based interdisciplinary tasks.
downloaded in the Moodle, and tied to the basic material of practical modules themes that combine English language discipline with one or more professional topics [4].

Making the conclusion we must stress that Moodle platform performs an important role in assisting teachers’ staff in their blended lessons, making education flexible, creative, and accessible for all. Moreover, application of the Moodle platform technologies may be worthwhile as a model of foreign language teaching and learning while the pandemic goes on, and it may continue to be worthwhile after the pandemic period, as it represents the effective answer to the specific challenges of the contemporary postmodern educational environment.

References: