

USING INTERNET-BASED TECHNOLOGIES WHEN DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STRATEGY OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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Abstract. *The purpose of this study is to present some of the results of the use of the BlackBoard platform for teaching English at Saint-Petersburg State University. Nowadays the Internet technologies are widely used in educational process, especially when teaching foreign languages for specific purposes at tertiary level. Courses of foreign languages should be developed taking into account specific needs of the learners, they should provide variety of simulation activities replicating real life situations. Special attention should be paid to developing communication skills and to training terms. Developing modern teaching strategies requires using authentic materials – texts, video and audio recordings, etc. These materials help to increase students' cultural awareness. The BlackBoard platform, designed for both individual and group learning, provides better educational opportunities and has enormous potential for tailoring courses of English exactly to students' needs. It allows access to all Internet resources. The BlackBoard platform is particularly useful when teaching foreign languages for specific purposes, The BlackBoard platform helps to develop different skills (listening, speaking, etc.), contributing greatly to improving the level of teaching foreign languages, as well as to preparing students for the exam and for their future successful professional activities.*

Key words: *the Internet technologies, the BlackBoard platform, professional communication, learning styles, legal terms*

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern development of technologies automatically implies more and more intensive use of the new computer technologies in the educational process and this fact allows for conducting training on an absolutely new level. Computer technologies are widely used in teaching foreign languages to university students. Using the Internet technologies allows teachers to create and to design modern learning strategies that take into account both psychological features and personal characteristics of students. It is a computer program that allows combining different learning styles using different forms of perception - visual, acoustic and kinetic. The computer technologies provide plenty of opportunities to use authentic materials in the classroom (Benson 2016, Herero 2016, Clavel-Arroitia 2014).

2. ADVANTAGES OF USING THE INTERNET-BASED TECHNOLOGIES

Modern Internet technologies help to synchronize the studied course materials with various Internet resources such as YouTube and news tapes, with video and audio recordings from various sites and forums which replicate a real situation and help students to study the presented material actively. Many researchers point out that with the help of the Internet technologies students can improve their knowledge of a foreign language and acquire the skills of international communication and cooperation which will allow them to enter a higher level of proficiency in a foreign language, since the teacher can not only upload teaching materials and tasks the students are assigned, but also give examples based on potentially possible situations.

Another advantage of using the Internet technologies is also worth noting. Training through various Internet platforms involves both an individual approach to each student and allowing students to create a collective creative work. The collective creativity can be realized in creating thematic publications on topics, special databases, sites in the studied language. The students' achievements in acquiring knowledge depend on the ability of a teacher to develop an effective strategy of teaching a foreign language and opportunity to use different techniques (Artemieva, Nikitina and Rubcova 2017). In this case the Internet-based technologies can help immeasurably.

3. TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

As long as the English language is studied by students of different faculties at Saint-Petersburg State University, both the individual lessons and the collective work can become the basis for interdisciplinary connections which are especially important for students who intend to use a foreign language in the sphere of professional communication.

English for specific purposes (ESP) is focused on meeting specific needs of the learners. A course of ESP is developed in accordance with the activities of the discipline ESP serves. As for activities, they should give opportunities for language work in on-duty situations. If legal English is concerned, it could be giving advice, debating, conducting a lawyer-client interview, phone calls, speechmaking, etc. This will replicate the real life situation and provide the opportunity for real interaction. The topics chosen should be connected with the students' future profession (international law, commercial law, criminal law, contract law, etc.). The students should learn language functions, e.g. exchanging information, presenting facts, reaching consensus, expressing similarity. A writing component is required, which is focused on legal documents and legal correspondence, e.g. a letter of advice, a letter before action, a reply to a demand letter defending or denying the allegations made, etc. Special attention should be paid to vocabulary, there should be plenty of word exercises focused on the meanings of terms used.

Internet technologies have enormous potential and provide great opportunities for teaching foreign languages for specific purposes, especially when developing communication skills students will need in their future professional activities. In addition, they make it possible to apply language skills in practice while using authentic video and audio materials which increase the motivation of students to learn a foreign language.

4. USING THE BLACKBOARD PLATFORM

One of the Internet platforms on which foreign language teaching can be conducted is the BlackBoard platform. For the first time the training on the BlackBoard platform was introduced at St. Petersburg State University in 2014. At the moment the students of the program of distance education are taught at the Faculty of Law of Saint-Petersburg State University. The BlackBoard platform is designed for both individual and group learning. All students have personal pages and access codes (individual login and password) that allow them to participate in the educational process in two ways: to listen to lectures, seminars and to participate in practical classes in real time and to watch all kinds of activities in the recording if necessary.

Most classes in the BlackBoard system are held in groups when students have the opportunity to communicate with the lecturer and among themselves. However, the BlackBoard platform is also successfully used for teaching students with developmental features, i.e. disabled people for whom the individual lessons are held in a number of subjects and in a foreign language in particular. When conducting classes in English, teachers also use their access codes (login and password) to the personal page in the BlackBoard system.

On the teacher's page there are training records of groups in which the teacher is the lecturer of the subject. The teacher has the opportunity to upload the materials of the course to the page in advance and to open access to the students as the material is being studied. The curriculum in the BlackBoard platform can include textbooks, grammar and vocabulary aids, audio recordings. On the other hand, the BlackBoard platform allows to access resources such as YouTube, TED, etc., giving students the opportunity to go to the relevant site and to watch the video during the lesson.

5. OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP A NUMBER OF SKILLS

The simultaneous use of classical teaching methods with the use of textbooks and grammatical aids in a foreign language involving performing of a number of exercises and tasks with the help of the BlackBoard platform is supplemented by a very important aspect such as authentic site materials which allows one to solve several tasks in the field of basic skills when teaching foreign languages:

- The expansion of vocabulary corpus of students. When watching videos students have the opportunity to learn and to use new words and phrases, to determine the sphere of their application (general, scientific, professional, everyday words, etc.).
- The repetition and application of the grammar structures. In the process of watching video clips students learn to recognize and to understand the grammar structures of the language which allows them to reproduce them in monologues and dialogues in the future.
- Training phonetics. Students have the opportunity to listen to native speakers paying attention to the intonation, the articulation of sounds in words and in coherent speech.
- Socio-cultural aspect. Using authentic video materials, students have an opportunity to become acquainted with history, culture and traditions of the country of the studied language which allows them to understand better the features of the language tradition. This point becomes especially important with the increasing development

of technologies and the pace of life which puts new communication tasks for representatives of different cultures (Toffler 1984).

According to the program of teaching foreign languages (English) at Saint-Petersburg State University the result of studying of this discipline for students of all specialties is the passing of the final examination equivalent to level B2. The students have the task of learning of the English language at the appropriate level and, of course, this issue should be taken into account by the teachers in preparation for the classes during which students should be prepared not only for the exam, but also for successful professional activities with foreign colleagues.

6. TRAINING LEGAL TERMS

One of the main points in teaching English is the possibility to speak on professional topics. So the oral practice is quite important for students of all levels. There are various exercises on speaking but the level of students should be taken into account. The main aim of the following exercise uploaded for the group of students of intermediate level is to discuss legal terms and expressions.

Explain the meaning of the following legal terms, or rephrase them:

- a) enforcement of judgements,
- b) an unusual degree of political continuity,
- c) applicability of laws,
- d) interagency,
- e) pre-trial phase,
- f) covenant,
- g) doctrine of precedent,
- h) civil codes,
- i) an equitable principle,
- j) litigation.

The exercise is suitable for group work. Students can discuss the terms together in group and offer their interpretation to other students. Or each student can suggest his own explanation to others.

The use of special terms can cause problems while making utterances. The problem of correlating of the parts of statements is one of the most essential for students of all levels. The following exercise is made up for those law students who experience difficulties with expressing their ideas in law English. The task assumes that each student makes sentences with the proposed terms. But the legal terms should be used correctly. Other students may evaluate the sentences done or propose their own variants.

Use the following phrases in sentences of your own:

- a) to decide on an outcome;
- b) to be binding on;
- c) to be bound by;
- d) to apply to;
- e) to eliminate the confusion;
- f) to become a signatory to;
- g) to formulate a comprehensive system;
- h) to settle a lawsuit.

A variety of word exercises gives students opportunity to learn how to give examples, to give further details, to rephrase and to simplify while dealing with terms.

7. CONCLUSION

The BlackBoard platform allows coping successfully with the task of developing necessary skills and preparing students for the exam by connecting groups of students through the BlackBoard platform to various Internet resources in the process of teaching, as well as the task of improving the level of teaching foreign languages at Saint-Petersburg State University.

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