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Examination of the Role Videos Play in Teaching English with Elements of Distance Education at University

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Abstract. *The article deals with the concept and principles of distance education, or, as it is also called, distance learning, as well as its application as an element of the English teaching course at university. The main emphasis is on teaching students, including those who are studying at the technical faculty, English as a Foreign Language and English for Specific Purposes. The clarification of the notion "authentic videos", their examples, and the role in teaching the aforementioned types of English are provided. Clips (fragments) from movies, TV shows, and programmes have been identified as the most effective types of authentic videos in terms of teaching English, in particular at the technical faculty. That was due to the fact that such kinds of records provided the students with useful information on the speciality and made up for some missing knowledge simultaneously with the presentation of "live" English vocabulary that is actually used by native speakers, and so, in the students' professional field abroad.*

Keywords: video, teaching, English, distance education, university.

Introduction. At present, it is crucial to provide an uninterrupted education for university students under any circumstances throughout the academic year. Authentic videos in English are steadily becoming the basis for both in-class (at university) and distance English teaching, which includes English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

The goal of the research is the comprehensive examination of the role (authentic) videos play in teaching English with elements of distance education at university.

Materials and methods. In the course of study the article's subject matter, various

types of literature were analysed, including the ones on distance education, authentic videos and their use in teaching and studying English. Concerning methodology, inductive and deductive approaches were adopted.

The role videos play in teaching English with elements of distance education at university. Classroom education means study on-campus at the university, whereas distance learning implies lecturer-student work off-campus using means of modern technology (Internet, PC/laptop/tablet, web-camera, etc.). Distance education (DE) is a set of methods and means of study in a purposefully organized

process of synchronous and/or asynchronous interaction of lecturers and students based on the use of current information and telecommunication technologies. Thus, the key distinction between conventional (in-class) and distance study is the latter's prioritizing of up-to-date technological means in the education process, including information transfer.

The core principles of distance learning of the English language and its different types (EFL, ESP, etc.) are (Holovenkin, 2019, pp. 268–269):

- flexibility (university students study at a convenient time, place, and pace, dividing work on their home assignment into as many parts at a time as needed);
- long-distance (distance from the student's place of residence to the educational institution and/or their lecturer is not an obstacle to an effective educational process (may be subject only to the Internet connection quality));
- mass (the number of students is not a critical parameter);
- manifold modalities (students use multiple senses and diverse skills during a single foreign language lesson, being provided with numerous kinds of presentation and experiences of the content, e.g. videos, articles, interactive tasks);
- variety of work conduction synchrony (students and the lecturer can work on curriculum synchronously and asynchronously: the former means "online, simultaneously", and the latter – on a convenient schedule, not necessarily at the same time);
- individualization (provides an opportunity to draw up an individualized learning plan and adjusting the educational trajectory, taking into account the level of students' skills, subject matter background knowledge and understanding, as well as the results of a running check);
- interactivity (student-student contacts are improving since, in the process of distance learning, the intensity of information exchange between students is greater than that between the student and the lecturer);
- a new role for the lecturer (distance learning expands and updates the role of the teacher who is the coordinator of the partially self-learning process; the EFL/ESP lecturer should gradually improve the cognitive pro-

cess and content of the discipline, taking into account the latest scientific information and students' needs and suggestions).

Following the principles of distance education, the key tasks of universities in adding DE elements in the EFL and ESP curricula are: 1) ensuring the individualization of the learning process according to the needs, skills, and capabilities of the students; 2) improving the quality and efficiency of the educational process through the use of state-of-the-art educational means and aids; 3) provision of quality control of the educational process; 4) creation of additional opportunities for communication and collaboration of students with their group-mates and the scientific-pedagogical personnel of the university within the framework of active, innovative, and up-to-date mastering of the curriculum.

In order to properly include the elements of distance education, its modes should be examined. One or several of them may be chosen by the lecturer of English as a Foreign Language or English for Specific Purposes depending on the educational purposes of the upcoming lessons. Among them, the under-mentioned are suitable (Chandni, pp. 45–47):

- *Synchronous and asynchronous distance education*. The former requires strict time frame and deadlines, whereas the latter gives students more freedom of study schedule and pace, therefore it is sometimes called "open schedule course". Students studying in asynchronous mode are provided with e-forms of textbooks, articles and other learning aids, including links to websites with uploaded authentic videos in English that thematically correspond to curriculum topics. It should be mentioned, though, that students still have a set of deadlines to complete their tasks, but the work can be done at any reasonable pace. Open scheduled courses will be highly suitable for students who particularly love and able to do independent work.

- *Hybrid distance education*. It is a combination of asynchronous and synchronous learning: students must follow the precise deadline to do their assignments and submit them via the online chat but they are allowed to do that at their own pace.

- *Video conferencing DE*. This distance learning mode is particularly of benefit to EFL

and ESP students studying and practising oral speech. Among crucial advantages are the improvement of communication skills and the development of collaboration skills. The whole class meets online at the designated time every week, which means they are not provided with an open schedule.

- *Fixed-time computer-based online course.*

It is the most common type of distance education and is somewhat similar to the above-mentioned mode in terms of synchronicity, i.e. students need to log-in to their learning website at a specific time in order to perform some tasks, but oral communication is limited to several times of mandatory live chats whenever it is needed for an exercise.

Even though distance learning implies getting an education without visiting the university and attending a class physically, it can be more productive in terms of increasing students' active and passive foreign language vocabulary while teaching listening and speaking in English. For that, EFL and ESP lecturers employ such efficient education techniques as watching topic-related authentic videos and doing various exercises based on the information seen and heard.

It is worth mentioning that authentic video recordings are fragments and full-length videos that were created primarily for native speakers, not for pedagogical purposes (Richards, 2001). Among them, most common are clips from movies, programmes, and TV shows. In teaching students of technical faculties, popular science programmes and shows, as well as parts of Hollywood feature films related in terms of topics to students' speciality are used.

The specified kinds of audio-visual authentic aids are multifunctional. For listening comprehension tasks numerous video-based vocabulary activities may be employed: filling the gaps, combining the given words into the heard phrases etc.). To practice speaking skills, role-plays, online discussions and debates, answering the questions (it is, basically, a listening-speaking exercise), and even business games are popular. Moreover, videos in English can be used even for the advancement of reading and writing skills through performing tasks based on video records' subtitles (English terminology) and writing essays, summary, critical reviews etc. on the topic/issue depicted in the film.

Among the benefits of distance learning (Dolidze, 2013, p. 1441) using authentic videos are study flexibility, as well as convenience of work and obtained knowledge control for all participants of the educational process (students and lecturers). In addition, authentic audio-visual aids have such advantages (Aloraini, 2012) over conventional printed materials as turning the educational process into a dynamic one, clarification of the issue/topic/technology, boost of interest in the English language and speciality, creation of the connection between the study material and the real life, motivation increase with the help of interesting and up-to-date aids and diverse types of work, development of incentive to continue improvement of English language knowledge and skills after the lessons.

Taking into account numerous benefits, the usefulness of authentic videos and the rise of interest they create in the process of distance education, what should be also remembered is that the duration of such a mode of ESP and EFL lesson delivery as the university course via distance learning also matters significantly. It has been experimentally proved (Dwivedi & Shruti, 2017, p. 39) that the longer the distance course duration (and the less variation of the types of work), the bigger the possibility of the "drop-outs" number increase. Considering the borderless quality of the distance education model, once the students start 'skipping' English lessons due to invariability of work (online-classroom activities/tasks), it might be hard to bring them back and maintain the constant high level of attendance and performance. As a result, the less the number of students with high attendance and productivity throughout the distance course, the lower the value of such education.

The experiment (Shevchenko, 2017) was conducted with the 3rd-year students of the Institute of Energy Saving and Energy Management of the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" to prove the study efficiency, as well as enhancement of motivation, lessons attendance, and overall academic performance in the process of classwork based around multiple clips from finest Hollywood feature films thematically directly connected with students' speciality. Each of such video recordings was

accompanied by assignments, which the experimental group received to check their understanding of the presented audio-visual material, vocabulary, and the issue or topic in general or in details. The experimental verification was successful since the ultimate results of the experimental group (the students who had authentic videos thematically linked to their speciality shown to them) were 33% higher than those of the control group, who were using only standard printed materials. That proved the usefulness of authentic multimedia in class.

Experimental verification. Because of the positive results of the above-mentioned research, it was decided to conduct the same experiment with the 3rd-year students but this time in the form of distance education. The number of students is approximately the same as during the previous experiment – 13 – in both experimental and control groups, and they are also from Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. The 4-week experimental verification has started on March 31, 2020 and is still ongoing. As of today, the two-thirds of it have already been completed, and the preliminary results are optimistic. So far, the average ESP online-lesson attendance of the experimental group (who are studying with authentic videos in English and are doing tasks based on them) is 98%, the academic performance has already improved by 2 times (according to the comparative analysis of pre- and post-experimental tests), and the current motivation to study ESP while continuing watching film fragments and doing exercises has increased by 3 times compared to the pre-experimental survey results. The control group (who are studying with e-books, articles, etc.) have shown the attendance index at the same level and once even lower than it was during on-campus education. The quality of done homework has not improved. At the same time, their incentive to continue distance learning further remains high throughout the weeks of the experiment, as their answers show in the weekly questionnaires: in average, 80% of the control group students give a high assessment of their motivation. This may be because of the flexibility and comfort of study the distance learning provides.

Conclusions. Distance education is adaptable, comfortable and student-centred, but it is

authentic videos (fragments of films, programmes, shows) that make study interesting, encouraging and diverse. They may be used in various ways: as a basis at the stage of the lessons' topic presentation, as support – being a sample for doing conditionally communicative exercises of receptive-reproductive and productive character, and as stimuli in the process of the improvement of students' speaking skills via fulfilling conditionally communicative and communicative-productive tasks.

Authentic videos play the central role in any type of EFL and ESP lessons at university – in-class or online. Nevertheless, it is recommended to develop the English language course only with the elements of distance learning, which implies the addition of a required number of online English lessons to the planned on-campus lessons when it is vital for the fulfilment of the university subject curriculum for any reason. Elements of distance education throughout the academic year should complement and boost classroom study process, not being its substitute, since the foreign language study only wins from communication in real life.

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