USE OF THE ONLINE PROGRAM “MyLanguageLeaderLab” IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES (EFL)

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Abstract
The ongoing scientific and technical progress brings us new possibilities for using different technologies for various areas of social life. In the last few years, the information and communication technologies have become an inseparable and inevitable part of our life. This is the reason why it is necessary to think about their application in the teaching process. The aim of this paper is to present basic information that is necessary for understanding the fundamental knowledge, how to use the information and communication technologies in English language classes at universities. We are presenting the online program „MyLanguageLeaderLab“ as well as its advantages in English language classes. There are two groups we work together with, the experimental group and the control one. The way of teaching in the experimental group is the combination of the traditional, classical teaching and the online one, the so called blended learning. The control group is taught in the traditional face-to-face way.

Key words: Information and Communication Technologies, MyLanguageLeaderLab, Blended Learning.

Introduction
The impact of more and more information and communication technologies (ICT) on the educational process is a necessity nowadays. It automatically creates the conditions for formation of the new methods and ways of teaching. The possibility of their use is also in teaching foreign languages. One of the latest and most modern forms is the electronic education, the e-learning.
Electronic education connects various kinds of educational content with the needs of society by the use of multimedia. It facilitates the access to information sources and tools, collaborative learning, discovery and research. The e-learning uses computer network for realization, interaction or support of teaching and provides the online availability of information, communication, education and training.

**Learning Management System „MyLanguageLeaderLab“ in English language classes at universities – Level Upper Intermediate**

“MyLanguageLeaderLab” is an online Learning Management System (LMS). This online program contains workbook materials, which can be assigned as online homework. It provides interactive exercises with automatic marking, offering immediate feedback to students and saving teachers time. Communication tools allow students and teachers to interact with each other, extending learning opportunities beyond the classroom. “MyLanguageLeaderLab” has been designed to provide an easy-to-use entry to online learning, with reliable materials that teachers will already be familiar with. This system allows you to set assignments via the Internet. Students can access the system from any computer at home or in the Internet café. The LMS uses the familiar, tried and tested content of the Language Leader language series in a more interactive way, with some added extras, to take full advantage of the exciting opportunities presented by online learning. (Pearson Education Limited, 2009)

**Advantages of the program “MyLanguageLeaderLab”**

“MyLanguageLeaderLab” saves teachers time, the language exercises can be assigned to students in seconds and are then automatically graded. Students are given immediate feedback and their scores are automatically transferred to a Gradebook. This saves time, both in preparation of homework activities and marking. It avoids the necessity of spending valuable class time going through homework at the beginning of lessons. Students have greater motivation to complete homework assignments when they are available online. It is easy to monitor student activity and progress but also any weaknesses or strengths of individuals or whole classes can be quickly identified and
remedied. This program *saves time, improves results, expands English language learning and is easy-to-use*. It is not used to replace classroom contact with students, it is used as combination of online learning and face-to-face (blended) learning. It is supplement of face-to-face classroom but very effective (Pearson Education Limited, 2009).

The topic of my research is the survey of effectiveness of the e-learning course in the environment of LMS (Learning Management System). We examine the difference between the combined form of English language teaching (blended learning – connection of traditional and online teaching) with the use of information technologies and the traditional, classical way of teaching. At present, we are carrying out the research with two groups of the English language students at our Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia. They are students of the second academic year and their field of study is Business Management at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia. The number of students is 40. These groups of students are close as far as the structure is concerned but they function under different conditions:

1. the experimental group of advanced students – combined form of education (blended learning);
2. the control group of advanced students – traditional, classical way of teaching.

The research is realized by way of pedagogical experiment, the differences of the growth of students’ knowledge in the experimental and control groups are examined. The basic assumption of the experimental group participants is mainly their ability of information literacy. Literacy includes the knowledge and skills necessary for appropriate, comfortable and productive use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the teaching/learning process and cognition. (Božiková, 2005, p. 156 - 159).

The main goal of this research is to prove successful use of the program „MyLanguageLeaderLab“ in English language classes at universities. Position of the teacher is also very important. Higher demands are placed on him because he must:

- find out the difference in effectiveness of teaching with the support of e-learning and traditional university education;
motivate students to the study of English language by using latest technologies;

- enrich the teaching process with new technologies;

- create assumptions for more quality, more illustrative and easy to remember knowledge by means of various tests, tasks and funny games.

At the beginning of the experiment, both groups wrote the pre-test. After the results had been elaborated, we determined the level of knowledge in both groups, which was almost the same, about 60 % of success. After the end of the semester we again evaluated the level of the acquired knowledge in participating students by the form of closing post-test. The results showed that students taught by blended learning achieved 86% of success unlike students taught by the form of face-to-face, which meant the 63% success. As we can see from the results, the post-test showed that the growth of students’ knowledge taught by traditional way remained approximately the same as it was the case after the pre-test. We can say that the so called blended learning has undoubtedly a positive influence on the quality and growth of students’ knowledge.

This way of education (blended learning) imposes considerable requirements on students. One of the conditions participants have to respect is also self-discipline. A great emphasis is put on meeting fixed deadlines, systematic preparation, precision and accuracy. They have to strive for the best elaboration of the fixed tasks as their results are automatically appeared. So, they have the possibility to find out about their weaknesses, to clarify, understand and refill them.

My intention is to improve the efficiency of teaching English by means of creating one more group, the third one, which would be taught only in the e-learning environment. Doing it this way, the most accurate assessment of the course would be reached. The most accurate and convincing results would be reached by comparison of the three groups enabling us to pick the best way out of the three ones. The finance is still questionable as well as material supply which is necessary for the realization of this project.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the existing current results of our research confirm that teaching English in the combined way (the online + face-to-face-blended learning) is more effective and interesting in comparison with the traditional way of teaching. The increase of students’ knowledge using the online program “MyLanguageLeaderLab“ is much higher than it is the case in the traditional way of teaching. We cannot forget about the fact that mastering this form of learning/teaching (blended learning) requires not only much more burdened teachers, but also students. Students have to be able to work individually in unlimited space and time and to be open to self-criticism. They usually have more courage to take risks and are able to promptly solve the occurred and identified problems.

(Perfect illustration of course program follows: http://www.mylanguageleaderlab.com/)

References


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