Online Study Support For Business English Courses

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Abstract
The paper deals with the project called Online Study Support for the Subject of Business English within the Fund of Higher Education Development of the Czech Republic. It will be created in the form of a twelve-module course in the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) on the B1 level of the Common European Framework of References for Languages. The course will be focused on the development of business and economic terminology, reading comprehension, listening comprehension and the work with up-to-date authentic audio-visual materials. The course will comprise the topics such as business and its basic terms, business letters, business organizations, macroeconomics and microeconomics, personnel management, marketing, email, accounting and finance etc. Single units will have the following structure: lead in, key words and definitions, specialist material, various activities such as filling in the gaps, multiple choice, matching, word formation, word order etc. Online support will be intended for students of all faculties and fields of study at the Czech University of Life Sciences (CULS) in Prague, including incoming Erasmus students and academic staff as well as the students of other universities.

Introduction
The paper deals with the project called Online Study Support for the Subject of Business English within the Fund of Higher Education Development of the Czech Republic [1]. It will be created in the form of a twelve-module course in the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) [2] on the B1 level of the Common European Framework of References for Languages. A current trend in university teaching is the lowering of the number of contact lessons and a higher emphasis is put on e-learning method of studies. The project is designed in accordance with a long-term intention and key priorities of the CULS development that include the development of indirect teaching forms and methods, electronic teaching aids creation, enhancing the quality and effectiveness of studies and self-studies within the LMS Moodle which is the software with an open code, independent of the platform and is used for study purposes. The results of the project will be freely available on the university web pages for a period of at least two years after the year of commencing the solution of the project.

Objective
The main objective of the project is creating the complex online support for the Business English course intended for students of all fields of studies at the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, particularly for the students of the Faculty of Economics and Management [3] and for the Students of the Engineering Faculty [4] majoring in Trade and Business field of study. It is designed for at least intermediate students who mastered general grammatical principles and basic vocabulary in their previous studies. Online study material will support an interactive form of the teaching by means of multimedia application on the condition of the increasing of specialist demands for studies and of course the quality of studies. It concerns the usage of information and communication technologies for more effective access to education for a bigger number of learners at the qualitatively higher level. One of the basic prerequisites of this type of studies is the quality of study materials. They will
substitute, if the need be, immediate contact of teachers with full time students as well as with distance students.

**Material and methods**

At present, Business English is taught in the form of contact teaching (once in a week for 90 minutes) with the use of a textbook and additional audio-visual materials. The time that is available for the lessons does not enable to use the potential of authentic materials and current events in the field of studies. This can be effectively offset by the online study support which will also strengthen the motivation of the students and support them as autonomous learners. Moreover, the students of distance studies, which have a substantial support within university studies, have very limited opportunities to consult with the teacher owing to their jobs, time and distance limitations. This project and computer technology will enable them to control solved assignments and a feedback.

The way of solution follows from the following schedule:

1st phase: The gathering of material and its analysis from the methodological point of view as far as single phases of lessons of Business English are concerned and with regards to using knowledge in business and management spheres, in negotiations with foreign partners, in the sphere of research etc. The complete gathering of material will include specialist topics that are encompassed into online study support.

2nd phase: The processing and the arrangement of specialist texts with exercises, listening, videos, picture materials and independent tasks so that they would correspond with the requirements stipulated for self-studies within e-learning teaching.

3rd phase: Teaching material will be evaluated together with foreign colleagues from partner University of Plymouth and Slovak agricultural university in Nitra and then will be placed on web pages of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague within LMS Moodle.

**Results**

The course will be focused on the development of business and economic terminology, on reading comprehension, listening comprehension and the work with up-to-date authentic audio-visual materials. Online study support for Business English will be in the form of a 12 module course in the learning management system (LMS) Moodle with the following topics:

- Business and its basic terms
- Business letter: layout, content, style
- Business Organizations
- Company profile
- Macroeconomics, microeconomics
- Enquiries, replies, orders
- Personnel management
- Curriculum vitae, letter of application, job contract
- Marketing
- Email
- Accounting and finance
• Invoicing, quotation, payment

Module structure

Single thematic units will be of the following structure with respect to the principles of e-learning teaching:

• Lead-in
• Key words and definitions
• Specialist material – reading/audio-visual
• Various activities
• Resources

The course will be focused primarily on:

• development of specialist vocabulary
• reading comprehension
• listening comprehension
• work with authentic and up-to-date audio-visual language materials (web pages and presentation of firms, products, services, business chambers, specialist journals).

The content of the course will be the following:

1. authentic materials concerning the topic (a follow-up to the contact lesson and the work with a textbook)
2. autocorrective exercises such as filling in the gaps, multiple choice, true/false, word formation, matching, synonyms/antonyms etc.
3. on-line handing in of written assignments (translations, letters) in some modules
4. test (it can be for training purposes with limited or unlimited number of possibilities or it can be a credit test with just one try and a time limit)
5. other additional activities

Fig. 1: A page from the Moodle Business English course showing a specialist test intended for reading comprehension practice
Fig. 2: A page from the Moodle Business English course showing a fill-in gap exercise intended for students’ vocabulary practice.

Fig. 3: A page from the Moodle Business English course showing a link with a listening comprehension exercise on the Internet.
Conclusion

Online support will serve for students of all faculties and fields of studies at the Czech University of Life Sciences (CULS) in Prague, including incoming Erasmus students and academic staff as well as the students of other universities. It will be the advantage for the students to have this material, which can be used for improving the communication with foreign partners, extending the terminology for specialist literature studies, whenever available on the Internet. New online study support will be focused on business and economic vocabulary and will be available to all students in time that will be the most proper for their studies. They can return to it, practice it and enhance it whenever they need. Language teaching will correspond to a modern way of teaching based on using new didactic procedures and technologies in the lessons.

References