

INCORPORATING E-LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO PHD STUDENTS

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Abstract

A foreign language (FL) learning is an extremely complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It can be seen throughout the history of language teaching that approaches and methods have been constantly replaced by another and presumably more appropriate and up– to– date set of theories, ideas and practices. Recent technological and infrastructural developments influence teacher's work and often change the teacher's own belief and understanding. Blending of methods in FL and creating the teacher's own method is recommended by many methodologists. This posits e–learning ripe for exploration. Online learning is a pedagogical approach that allows students to facilitate learning and improves their performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources. In this respect, the e–learning approach is favored in some graduate programs or in postgraduate courses. The focus of this paper is on incorporating e–learning in teaching English as a foreign language to PhD students. Moreover, it reveals the students' opinion about the approach itself. There were 16 PhD students who took part in the five months experiment. They participated in English as a FL e–learning course on Moodle platform. The students were administered a questionnaire. Additionally, the Moodle tracking system recorded all the students' performances. The paper reveals the results of the study. Conclusions from the experiment and suggestions for possible follow–up investigations are proposed in the final part of this paper.

Keywords: *e–learning, post–method approach, principled eclecticism, personal practical knowledge*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the movement toward a learner–centered approach to teaching a FL has been noted. It reflects a philosophical reorientation and shift in thinking about the roles of FL learners as well as a response to diverse opportunities for learner–initiated learning by means of the Internet and other forms of technology (Richards and Rodgers, 2018). Waters (2012) claims that “there is also evidence that the increasing ubiquity of web–based teaching and learning resources has the potential to redistribute the balance between teacher–led and learner–led interaction” (p.448). Moreover, more and more course books are nowadays supported by an ever–widening set of linked electronic resources that increase learners' independence and give their learners more opportunities to work.

As a result the learners are less dependent on the classroom learning and teacher's approach or method due to the technology. Richards and Rodgers (2018) list several advantages of the computer assisted language learning (CALL). These are:

- wider exposure to English;
- increased opportunities for interaction with native speakers and other FL learners around the world;
- various learning styles support;
- particular skills orientation;
- diverse activities reflecting different proficiency levels;
- active learning through changes in the roles of students;
- learners' autonomy encouragement;
- stress reduced environment;

- interaction in a learning community;
- increased motivation;
- diverse and more engaging materials;
- learner's support and more alternative types of feedback outside the classroom.

New technologies may also aid many of the approaches and methods such as Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, Text-Based Instruction or Cooperative Language Learning (see Richards and Rodgers, 2018 for more theoretical description). Among many technological resources, there is a number of e-learning platforms that provide learners with authentic materials. Moreover, they give possibilities for real communication by means of chat rooms and discussion boards. Another advantage of exploiting e-learning is the fact that it enables learners around the world to work together and perform collaborative tasks. The traditional FL course can be enriched by various website exploration, watching online videos and news clips. Additionally, the FL learners may share their reaction to these authentic resources or they may be given certain tasks to perform, such as their own material preparation either individually or in groups, or blog posts recoding.

In present days, teaching English as a FL requires more holistic approach to language development that makes use of tasks integrating different skills (Pellettieri, Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Another feature of modern education is a shift from methods to the teacher. The educator's role is extremely important. The teachers who are engaged in the process of developing their own teaching methods and approaches via the use of new technologies are more successful. Alternative ways of understanding the nature of FL teaching and learning are viewed as characterizing the post-methods era (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The next sub-section reveals the characteristics of a post-method philosophy.

1.1. Principled eclecticism and practical knowledge

The analysis of the teaching circumstances and learners needs with a theoretical rationale, coherent principles and the idea of exploration and reflection is the core of eclecticism. Rivers (1981) advocated the notion of a good method as comprehensive, eclectic and based on a thorough knowledge of the science of language (Rivers, 1987).

Griffiths (2012) stressed the need to be able to apply methods appropriate to the students' needs in order to help them achieve success in FL learning. It is the teacher's role to review, select and blend different principles and practices that he or she is familiar with.

"Another post-method approach to teaching is when teachers are encouraged to develop their own teaching philosophy, teaching style, and instructional strategies" (Richards & Rodgers, 2018, p.353).

Golombek (2017) claims that this causes personal practical knowledge (PPK) development. PPK has been characterized by a set of personal values and belief that create teachers approach to teaching.

Not only teacher's training and experience are extremely significant but also his or her personal philosophy and understanding that can be applied in various situation, such as e-learning environment. Bailey (1996) and Richards (1996) distinguished several principles that constitute the teachers' PPK. They claimed that the teacher should focus on the learners and make them engaged by providing various opportunities for students participation. This leads to learners' responsibility and confidence development. Moreover, the educator should be tolerant to their students mistakes, respond to their difficulties and build on them. Other examples of PPK are: the use of maximum amount of student-to-student activities, promotion of cooperation among learners, accuracy and fluency practice, teaching learning strategies and finally learners' needs and interests analysis. Above everything, FL learning should be fun. E-learning gives enormous opportunities to engage their learners.

Diverse FL courses reflect a variety of different perspectives. Whether the FL course is general or for specific purposes at bachelor, master or postgraduate level, the teachers should be flexible and creatively, focusing on relevant methods and procedures according to the teaching context and their

participants. "Some courses may be targeted at teachers who will work within a particular institution (such as private institution) or in a school system that has a mandated curriculum and an established approach or method in use" (Richards & Rodgers, 2018, p.356). The next section outlines English as a FL e-learning course program that has been designed on the assumption of PPK. The author provides useful set of techniques and strategies that can be used in the online environment or adapt for the classroom.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this section is to present details of an action research in online context. The research study focuses on the effectiveness of language-teaching techniques for the learners' FL proficiency development. The following passage provides the reader with the description of the context of the study. The objective of the study was to find out whether the FL learners increase their communicative competence. The spectrum related to the problem is described based on the reflective tool. It is presumed that certain types of electronic activities influence the FL learner's proficiency level.

Furthermore, in most cases the utility of such electronic materials was beyond the scope of many investigations. So far, the usefulness of the average textbooks and selected language-teaching techniques were analyzed (see Dubin & Olshtain, 1986 or Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). Scant scientific literature is available critically appraising the impact of e-materials on FL learners in HEIs; thus additional reliable research is required to establish solid evidence. In the scope of this research, the author formulated the following specific research questions:

1. Do selected e-materials support EFL PhD students' achievement in the online context?
2. How do EFL learners perceive the value of selected e-materials?

Crookes and Chaudron (1991) said that "looking to the future, it may be that the textbook as such will become obsolete. As desktop publishing becomes increasingly available, and particularly with increased availability of optical readers (which can input pictorial material directly into word-processed material), it seems likely that in-house materials will become increasingly used" (p.49). This is what actually is happening now and needs to be investigated furthermore.

2.1. Initiation

By the very nature of learning, a variety of language materials must be provided to learners concerning their success." Conscientious SL teachers usually come out of a class asking themselves "how the class went"– which is to say, they engage in a process of self-evaluation. We believe that this is a vital process for professional self-development, and one which needs to be explicitly structured into SL teachers' routines" (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p.46).

The author of this article is a research assistant in the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. She has eight years experience in teaching English as a FL at various educational levels starting from bachelor to master and doctoral studies. In 2018 she started running a FL course for PhD students studying literature and linguistics. All the classes were being held at the university once a week in the evenings. Each semester the students took thirty hours of English out of hundred and twenty hours available for the whole course. For most students the long commute to the University premises resulted in poor attendance. This had a negative impact on students' overall semester grades.

Therefore, the teacher wanted to solve the problem with their attendance and decided to incorporate e-learning in teaching English as a FL. As a result, she designed an e-learning course on the Moodle platform. Selected activities are presented in the next section.

2.2. Materials

“Knowledge concerning what goes on in the classroom between teacher and students is obviously the core area of information pertaining to formal second language (SL) teaching and learning” (Crookes & Chaudron, 1991, p.46). Among many important aspects mentioned by Celce–Murcia (2001) there are curriculum design, lesson planning, materials design and evaluation. They are necessary for a truly professional operation as long as there is an educator working with a group of students, the essence of classroom FL teaching is present, and FL learning is possible.

For the purpose of this research the author prepared an online course embedded in Moodle e–learning platform. The following section presents selected e–materials. Figure 1 shows a sample of a speaking activity. That was a warm–up task that aimed to get students stimulated and get ready for the lesson. The next activity was a listening task about the speed flatmating (Figure 2). After the listening the students had to answer whether the sentences are true or false (Figure 3). The last activity concerning the same audio is presented in Figure 4. The students had to match the person with the way they feel about a speed flatmating.

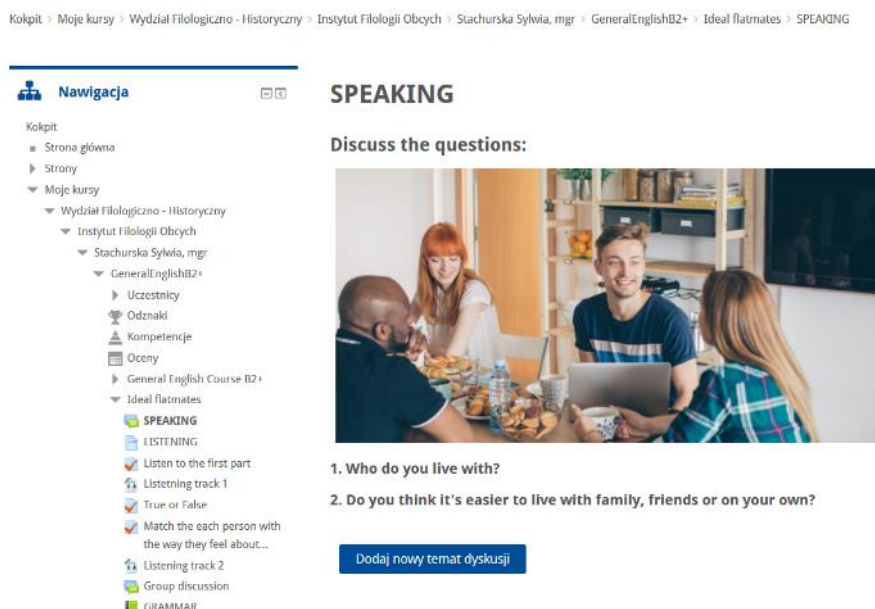


Fig. 1. Speaking activity.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=12606>

Kokpit > Moje kursy > Wydział Filologiczno - Historyczny > Instytut Filologii Obcych > Stachurska Sylwia, mgr > GeneralEnglishB2+ > Ideal flatmates > LISTENING

Nawigacja

- Kokpit
 - Strona główna
 - Strony
- Moje kursy
 - Wydział Filologiczno - Historyczny
 - Instytut Filologii Obcych
 - Stachurska Sylwia, mgr
 - GeneralEnglishB2+
 - Uczestnicy
 - Odnaki
 - Kompetencje
 - Oceny
 - General English Course B2+
 - Ideal flatmates
 - SPEAKING
 - LISTENING**
 - Listening track 1
 - True or False
 - Match the each person with the way they feel about...
 - Listening track 2
 - Group discussion
 - GRAMMAR
 - Direct vs. indirect questions
 - Can you distinguish indirect questions from direct questions?

LISTENING

Read the programme listening and look at the photo.

What do you think happens at the 'speed flatmating' event?



Speed flatmating

You might have heard of speed dating – those events for the young, free and single who are just too busy to find the love of their lives – but what about applying the same principle to finding a lodger for your spare room? In today's *You and Yours* on BBC Radio 4, reporter Natalie Steed experiences 'speed flatmating'.

Fig. 2. Listening activity.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=12606>

Nawigacja w teście

LISTEN AGAIN RECORDING 2. ARE THE SENTENCES TRUE (T) OR FALSE (F)?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Zapisz podejście ...

Rozpocznij nowy podgląd

Pytanie 1 Nie udzielono odpowiedzi Punkty: 1,00 Oflaguj pytanie Edytuj pytanie

Listen again recording 2. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

Wybierz jedną odpowiedź:

☐ Prawda

☐ Fałsz

Pytanie 2 Nie udzielono odpowiedzi Punkty: 1,00 Oflaguj pytanie Edytuj pytanie

2 The first man wants someone who will be there the bridge of the time.

Wybierz jedną odpowiedź:

☐ Prawda

☐ Fałsz

Pytanie 3 Nie udzielono odpowiedzi Punkty: 1,00 Oflaguj pytanie Edytuj pytanie

3 A pink man started looking for a room a fortnight ago.

Wybierz jedną odpowiedź:

☐ Prawda

Nawigacja

- Kokpit
 - Strona główna
 - Strony
- Moje kursy
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 - Oceny
 - General English Course B2+
 - Ideal flatmates

Fig. 3. Listening. True or False.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=12606>

MATCH THE EACH PERSON WITH THE WAY THEY FEEL ABOUT SPEED FLATMATING

1

Zapisz podejście ...

Rozpocznij nowy podgląd

Match the each person with the way they feel about speed flatmating

1. First man

2. Second man

3. First woman

4. Second woman

Nawigacja

Kokpit

- Strona główna
- Strony
- Moje kursy

Fig. 4. Second listening. Matching.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=12606>

The course offered also a few group discussions. Figure 5 presents one of them. Thanks to the tool called „FORUM” the students were able to add their opinions about the usage of speed flatmating and flatmates in general.

As far as grammar tasks are concerned, the teacher used so called „BOOK” option and created an online repository dealing with certain grammar aspects. Figure 6 presents direct versus indirect questions explanation.

Nawigacja

Kokpit

- Strona główna
- Strony
- Moje kursy
 - Wydział Filologiczno - Historyczny
 - Instytut Filologii Obcych
 - Stachurska Sylwia, mgr
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Group discussion

Answer the question:



1. Would you use speed flatmating to find or rent out a room?

2. If you were looking for a flatmate, which of the topics below would you ask about?

relationship work daily habits finances politics future plans music references weekends diet

Fig. 5. Group discussion.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/forum/view.php?id=12619>

Fig. 6. Direct vs. indirect questions

Due to the fact that Moodle e-learning platform gives an opportunity to embed other online application from outside the platform, the author used an online tool called „Educaplay”. Figure 7 presents an example of grammar activity where the students had to listen to the question and decide whether it is direct or indirect one.

Fig. 7. Direct vs. indirect questions. Listen and match.

Source: https://www.educaplay.com/learning-resources/4071759-direct_vs_indirect_questions.html

The next activity is a short dialogue which students had to complete with one word (Fig.8).

Fig. 8. Complete the dialogue.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/quiz/attempt.php?attempt=127399>

The last but not least task concerns vocabulary. The students had four short texts to read (Fig.9). There were some words and phrases in bold. The students had to guess the meaning from the context. Later on the learners completed the exercise with the synonyms (Fig.10).

VOCABULARY personality

9A Read the descriptions from a flatmate finder site. Which person would be the best flatmate for you? Why?

► Mikhail, age 24

I'm a post-graduate student studying geology. I'd be a good flatmate because I tend to **keep myself to myself**. I'm not unfriendly but my idea of a perfect evening is to spend the night in, order a takeaway and watch a DVD or maybe play computer games. I'm not a computer **geek**, though. Like any student, I'm often short of cash, but I'm not **tight-fisted**, I don't mind paying my share. I can be quite messy – I often bring rocks home to work on. I'm usually up and out before 7.30 in the morning.



► Claudia, age 34

I'm a professional cook in an Italian restaurant. I work late so I don't like being disturbed in the morning. I'm a **people person** and love inviting friends round and cooking for them. I **am very particular about** order, especially in the kitchen – if there's one thing I hate, it's a messy kitchen. I also get annoyed if I'm the only one cleaning up or people don't **pull their weight** around the house. My friends say I'm very sensible and practical, really **down-to-earth**.



► Pat, age 28

I'm a lawyer and sing with a band in my spare time. I've got a good job and a decent salary, but at the moment I'm being careful with my money as I'm saving up for a new sound



Fig. 9. Vocabulary– personality.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/course/view.php?id=419>

Match the meanings with the phrases in bold from the descriptions in the previous exercise.

someone who is sociable

be introverted

away from home very late

someone who is obsessive and boring

do one's share of work

realistic about things

someone who is fun to be with

mean with money

feel this is important

enjoyable

Wybierz ...

Wybierz ...

pull their weight

a geek

get into

a good laugh

down to earth

tight-fisted

keep to myself

a people person

out until the early hours

am particular about

Wybierz ...

Wybierz ...

Fig. 10. The synonyms.

Source: <https://enauka.ujd.edu.pl/mod/quiz/attempt.php?attempt=127330>

The last activity was a vocabulary game where the students had to identify English with Polish equivalent of the word. This time the teacher used the application called “Wordwall”. Figure 11 depicts this type of activity. It is important to mention that “Wordwall” is an enormous database of free interactive activities. Nevertheless, if the educator wants to create something on his or her own it is not very complicated.

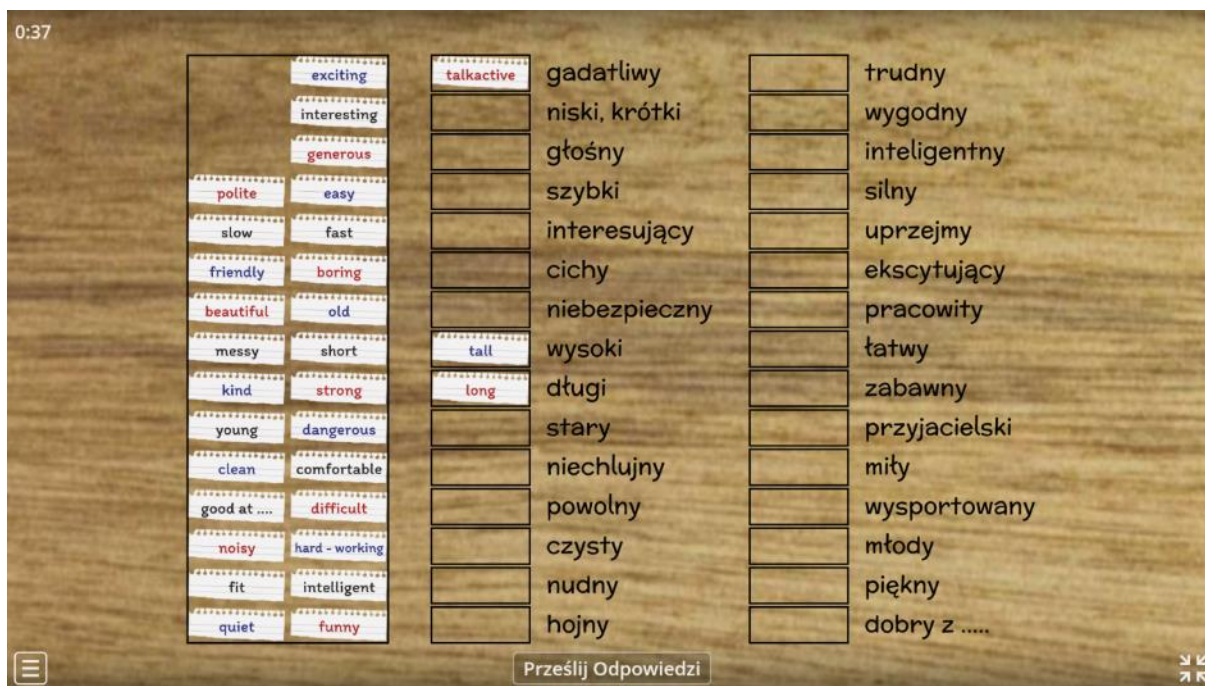


Fig. 11. Match the words.

Source: <https://wordwall.net/pl/resource/334245/adjectives>

That was the last activity as for the first unit. The whole course consists of four more parts. The rest of the tasks concerned reading, word formation, language function, brainstorming, tenses, dictation, DVD clips, group work (for instance students had to prepare a dictionary with the most important words and their definitions together with their examples), project work and many others. The next section describes the method used for this study.

2.3. An action research

As professionals, most teachers would claim that occupation they have chosen should undergo constant development. One of the strategies which serve the needs of professional progress with special emphasis to language teaching is action research. In other words it is a way of reflecting on English language teaching. It is an organized and systematic collection of data that deals with everyday teaching practice. All the details, information and materials are later on analysed in order to draw conclusions about what further training should be done (Wallace, 2010).

Gregory, Kemmis and Mc Taggart refer to action research as “teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of class room teaching and learning, and to bring about change in classroom” (cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1994, p.12).

Action research entails smaller investigations done in teacher's classroom context and constitute number of loop stages. Wallace (2010) professional development that involves the process called 'reflective cycle' and is presented in Figure 12.

From the above model it can be concluded that gathering and analyzing the data connected with teacher's professional practice are parts of the whole action process. It relies on reflecting on what the teacher has found and applying it to his or her professional action. As far as the tools of the action research are concerned, the author used a questionnaire.

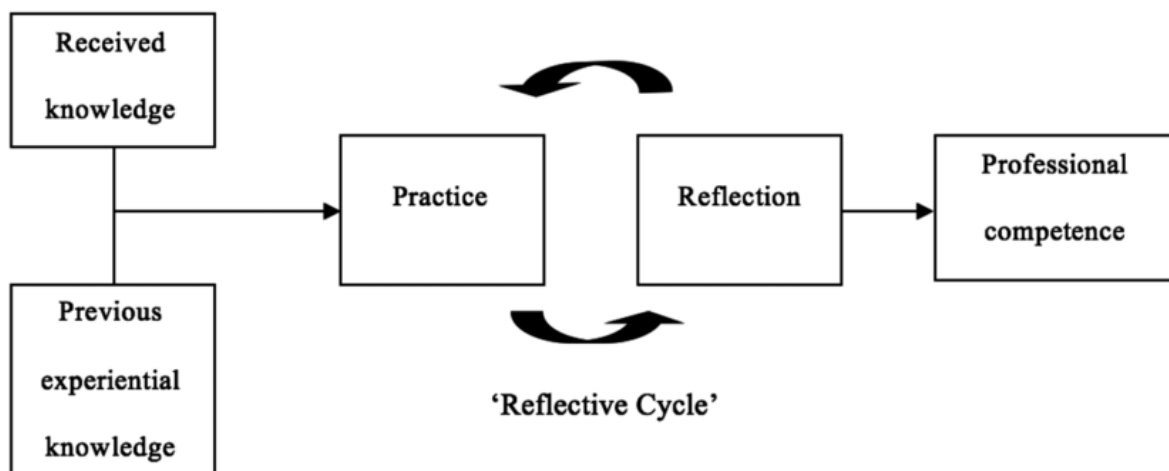


Fig. 12. The reflective cycle.

Source: Wallace, M. J. (2010). *Action research for language teachers*, p.13.

2.4. Participants and instruments

The study was carried out at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, Poland. They were 16 students of doctoral studies at Philological and Historical Department who took part in the experiment. 6 of them were studying linguistics (2 males and 4 females) and 10 PhD students were the students of literature (3 males and 7 females). Both groups studied purely online. The students participated in the English Language General Course that consisted of the following components: the use of English, listening, reading and speaking. The purpose of the course is to develop all language skills at the B2+ level in accordance to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) (Consejo de Europa, 2011).

The author of this research used two instruments. These were a pre- and a post- test and a questionnaire. Both groups were pre- and post- tested in order to check whether they made language progress. The pre-test was prepared by the leading teacher. It consists of four sections such as vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening. The students could score 34 points total. Moreover, the pre- test was administered at the beginning of the course and the post- test at the end. Both tests were the same.

Apart from that, the author administered a questionnaire in order to find the information about students' perception of certain language-teaching technique. The questionnaire consisted of 16 statements. In order to categorize the students' achievements received from the Moodle e-learning platform the author used Crookes and Chaudron's (1991) taxonomy of language-teaching techniques.

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The following passage presents the results of the study that began in March 2019. The author displays the evidence in the form of statistics, tables and graphs to support the findings. The students between the age of 25 and 40 were pre- and post-tested. The pre-test was performed in March 2019. At the end of the semester in July 2019 all the examined PhD students completed the post-test that measured the level of all the participants' academic achievement. The results of the pre- and post- tests are

presented in Table 1. The chart is divided into four communicative competence components, namely vocabulary (V), grammar (G), reading (R) and listening (L). Table 1 also presents students' total mean scores.

| | pre-test | | | | | post-test | | | | |
|-----------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | V | G | R | L | T | V | G | R | L | T |
| M | 4.68 | 3.31 | 3.43 | 3.18 | 14.62 | 8.06 | 6.12 | 6.06 | 6.31 | 26.56 |
| SD | (0.94) | (0.79) | (0.89) | (0.75) | (2.02) | (1.12) | (1.08) | (0.77) | (0.70) | (1.83) |

Table 1. Pre- and post-tests results. Descriptive statistics. Key: (M)–mean given in raw scores, SD–standard deviation, V– vocabulary, G– grammar, R– reading, L– listening, T– total.

Analyzing the results from the pre-test and the post-test it can be seen that the students received quite low scores on the pre-test. This is true for all the competences. After the experiment, a notable increase was recorded for all communicative competence components. The students received the highest results on listening and reading, reaching successively 90% and 87% (Fig. 13). The vocabulary and grammar results were also quite impressive as the learners reached respectively 80% and 61% on the post-test. It can be seen that even though grammar increase was as much impressive as the other results, the students had the most difficulties with this particular communicative competence component. Comparing the total mean result of pre- and post-test it is clear that the treatment was successful as the students' results increased on the post test to 78%. Figure 13 presents a comparison of all students' mean percentage results in terms of pre- and post-tests.

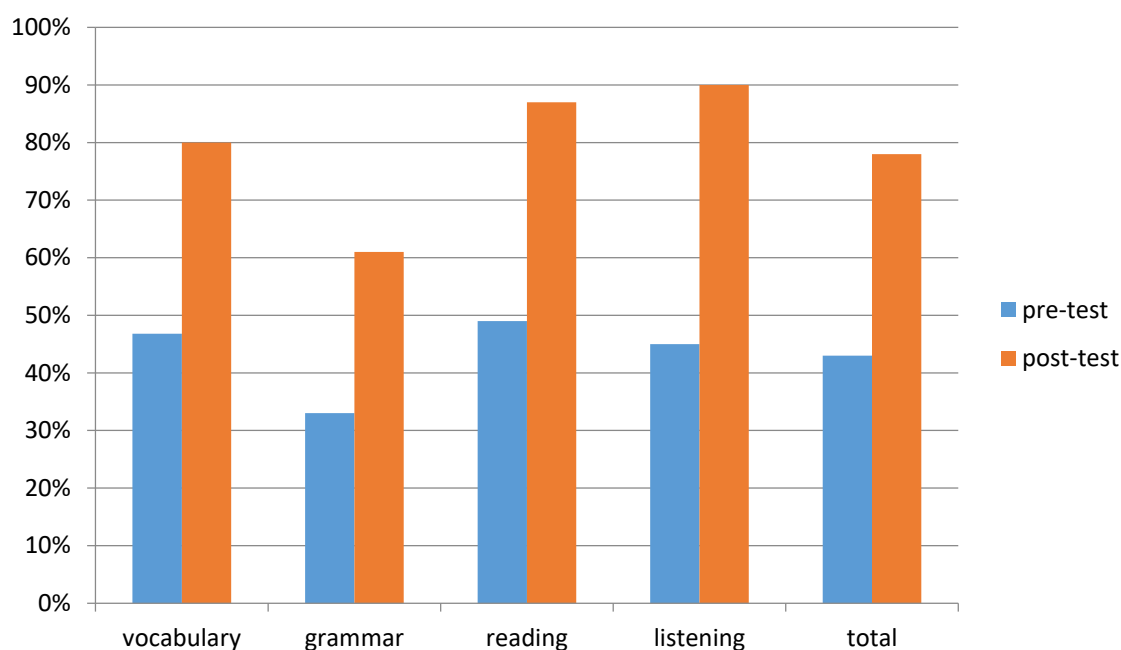


Fig. 13. Comparisons of the students' mean results in terms of pre- and post-tests.

The author of this investigation also received the data from the Moodle e-learning platform. The results received from each activity were categorized according to the Crookes and Chaudron's (1991) taxonomy of language-teaching techniques in order to see which language-teaching technique was the most effective. The detailed data are summarized in Table 2. It is divided into three types of

techniques. The next column depicts different examples of techniques. Later on, the maximum scores the students could receive are presented. The last two columns show mean scores and standard deviation. Taking all the three language-teaching techniques into analysis, it can be seen that applied semi-controlled techniques were the most successful as the students received the highest mean score that was 93%. The second technique favored by the learners was a controlled technique. The students received 83% on average. The highest scores were obtained on warm-up activities, picture presentation and a dialogue. Regarding the quizzes it appears that the results of vocabulary quizzes were higher than grammar ones. The students received the lowest scores on dictation. The data shows that the learners had the biggest problems with problem solving activities and group discussion. They received respectively 54%. Nevertheless, they were fairly successful on interactive tasks as they had almost 90% mean scores.

| | | Max | M (%) | SD |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----|-------------|------|
| Controlled Techniques | warm-up activities | 5 | 4.93 (98%) | 0.25 |
| | focus on the topic (picture presentation) | 5 | 4.93 (98%) | 0.25 |
| | dialogue | 8 | 7.75 (97%) | 0.68 |
| | vocabulary drills | 10 | 8.56 (86%) | 1.03 |
| | dictation | 15 | 9.18 (61%) | 3.12 |
| | identification (labelling/identifying specific target form/function/definition) | 20 | 15.25 (76%) | 3.37 |
| | vocabulary quiz | 30 | 26.93 (90%) | 2.2 |
| | grammar quiz | 30 | 17.06 (57%) | 4.32 |
| | meaningful drill (activities involving responses with meaningful choices) | 10 | 8.37 (84%) | 1.02 |
| Semi- controlled technique | brainstorming | 5 | 4.87 (97%) | 0.34 |
| | information transfer (eg. student fills out diagram while listening to a description) | 10 | 8 (80%) | 1.36 |
| | information exchange (eg. creating dictionary) | 10 | 9.93 (99%) | 0.25 |
| | preparation (activities that aim to prepare for later tasks) | 5 | 4.93 (99%) | 0.25 |
| Free techniques | interactive content | 30 | 26.87 (89%) | 4.42 |
| | problem solving activities | 5 | 2.68 (54%) | 0.94 |
| | group discussion | 5 | 2.68 (54%) | 0.94 |

Table 2. Moodle results. Descriptive statistics. Key: Max– maximum points, M–mean given in raw scores, (%) - mean given in percentage, SD– standard deviation

Apart from pre- and post-test results the author received questionnaire outcomes. They are presented in Table 3. The students agreed that warm-up activities were interesting. The teacher focused students' attention to the topic by questioning or picture presentation. Moreover, they admitted that the structure and the purpose of the each unit on the Moodle e-learning platform were clear. Regarding grammatical, phonological, lexical and sociolinguistic content, the students stated that grammar and

vocabulary were well explained. They did not express either positive or negative opinion on sociolinguistic content. Nevertheless, the students rated phonological system as not sufficient. Most of the participants admitted to receive the feedback and some prompts when completing the activities during the controlled stage. The students expressed neutral opinion about dictation and vocabulary drills. The majority of participants assessed the interactive tasks as interesting and the activities involving responses with meaningful choices as useful. Moreover, most of the students enjoyed brainstorming tasks. 11 out of 16 respondents admitted that the materials for rehearsing were helpful.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | M | SD |
|--|---|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| 1. Warm– up activities were interesting | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 50 | 4.62 | 0.5 |
| 2. The teacher directs attention to the topic by questioning or picture presentation | | | | 44 | 25 | 4.31 | 0.4 |
| 3. Structure and the purpose of the each unit was clear | | | | 4 | 75 | 4.93 | 0.25 |
| 4. Content was well explained | | | | | | | |
| grammatical | | 4 | | 16 | 45 | 4.37 | 1.02 |
| phonological | | 30 | 3 | | | 2.06 | 0.25 |
| lexical | | | 3 | 60 | | 3.93 | 0.25 |
| sociolinguistic | | | 30 | 20 | | 3.37 | 0.5 |
| 5. The feedback was provided | | | | 8 | 70 | 4.87 | 0.34 |
| 6. Activities involved prompting (by means of displayed questions or some hints) | | | | 4 | 75 | 4.93 | 0.25 |
| 7. Vocabulary drills were useful | | | 9 | 52 | | 3.81 | 0.4 |
| 8. Dictation helped me to work on my listening and writing skills | | | 30 | 24 | | 3.37 | 0.5 |
| 9. Interactive tasks (labelling/identifying specific target form/function/definition) were interesting | | | | 8 | 70 | 4.87 | 0.34 |
| 10. Activities involving responses with meaningful choices were useful | | | | 56 | 10 | 4.12 | 0.34 |
| 11. I enjoyed brainstorming | | | 3 | 52 | 10 | 4.06 | 0.44 |
| 12. Students share information to achieve a goal | | 2 | 30 | 16 | | 3.12 | 0.61 |
| 13. Materials for rehearsing were helpful | | | 15 | 24 | 10 | 3.81 | 0.65 |
| 14. I was willing to play the interactive games | | | | 4 | 75 | 4.93 | 0.25 |
| 15. The cooperation between students was productive | | 20 | 15 | 4 | | 2.46 | 0.64 |
| 16. I participated in group discussions willingly | 1 | 18 | 12 | 8 | | 2.64 | 0.64 |

Table 3. A 5–level Liker scale for a series of statements included in the questionnaire. Key: M– mean, SD– standard deviation, 1– strongly disagree, 2– disagree, 3– neutral, 4– agree, 5– strongly agree

The data presented in Table 3 revealed that the students were not willing to participate in group discussion. The respondents claimed that the cooperation between them was not very productive. Moreover, they were not eager to exchange information in order to achieve a goal. The last section of this article deals with conclusions and discussion.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The challenge of this investigation was to find out more information on incorporating e-learning in teaching English as a foreign language to PhD students and to better understand the learning processes engendered by specific digital technologies. This article is critical for teachers who are looking for language-teaching techniques that affect the success of their learners in the online context. It also helps to make choices and provide guidance.

The author tested a group of PhD students studying purely online on the Moodle e-learning platform. The results of the study proved that the participants of the study increased their language proficiency level as their post-test results were higher than the pre-tests ones. Nevertheless, the research revealed that some language competences are more affected than others by computer assisted language learning (CALL). The data proved that CALL not only influences receptive skills (listening and reading) but also it boosts the students' lexical competence.

Moreover, the investigation showed that selected e-materials support EFL PhD students' achievement in the online context. No matter the context of the lesson is whether it is stationary or extramural, any FL lesson incorporates a series of language-teaching techniques that allow students to practice and reinforce the target language or skills. This investigation proved that the students are most effective during semi-control stage. The results of the semi-controlled techniques were the most impressive. This may be explained by the fact that during this stage the learners have increased amount of freedom, which maintains interest and challenge for them. Most of the semi-controlled techniques proposed in this study were extremely effective as the results of all of them, namely brainstorming, information transfer, information exchange and preparation were higher than 80%.

Furthermore, it appears that controlled techniques were also very effective. The participants received the highest scores on warm-up activities, picture presentation and a dialogue. A possible explanation is that the students assessed the warm-up activities as interesting. Hence, it can be assumed that they were motivated and that their encouragement caused higher achievements. The majority of students received high scores on meaningful drills (activities involving responses with meaningful choices) and dialogues. The reason for such outcome may be that controlled activities allow the students to focus on the new structure or skill. Moreover, there is usually only one correct answer so it is more difficult to make an error.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that the students appreciated feedback very much. Nikula, Dalton-Puffer and García (2013) underline the way in which correction takes place as a crucial aspect of language learning. This investigation do not support Nikula et al. (2013) findings that showed the students make significantly more lexical errors while grammatical errors are almost entirely ignored. The research reported in this article revealed that the learners made more grammar mistakes as the results of the grammar quizzes show relatively lower score than vocabulary quiz outcomes.

Among good practice resource materials, the interactive activities must be mentioned as the students declared their willingness and the findings were very positive as well.

Surprisingly, this investigation showed that the participants were not eager to participate in group discussion. The results of the questionnaire also revealed that the cooperation between them was not very productive. Such situation may be due to the fact that the students were not socialized with each other. This might be the reason for hindering online conversation. Moreover, they admitted to be unenthusiastic over exchanging. The rationale for learners doing so may be that more and more students struggle with so called rat race as they constantly battle for scholarship. The statistics from National Polish Scholarship Program indicate that there have been 2082 candidates submitted to the program but only 705 scholarships were granted (attention deficit disorder, 2019). Nevertheless, it is suggested to encourage students to produce more involved talks, shared meaning negotiations and collaborative forms of talk as any group interaction increase both quality and functional scope of students' language output (Nikula, Dalton-Puffer, García, 2013). Possible solution to the problem revealed in this investigation is that the students may work in smaller groups in the future. Hence, they can feel less overwhelmed.

Summing up, continuing professional development is necessary to develop language teachers' ability to understand and integrate the use of e-learning applications in their guided FL teaching. Apart from the strategies and techniques the educators choose to employ in the classroom, there are several other aspects that contribute to the whole process of teaching a FL. Therefore, features such as individual teacher belief, experience of FL teaching, the students' language level and the types of interaction in the classroom that take place between the teacher and student or the teacher and students may be the scope of further studies.

To finish off this part of discussion and conclusions it is worth to mention Richards and Lockhart's (1994) statement that "teaching is a very personal activity, and it is not surprising that individual teachers bring to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching" (p.36).

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