ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM TO STUDY THE TECHNICAL PROFESSIONAL TEXT

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Abstract

The author offers a presentation of a technical Slovak course for foreign bachelor's students of the Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies (FMT) in Prešov, Technical University of Košice. E-Scripts Slovak language for foreign students contain individual professional texts, which were created gradually as additional study material based on direct specific needs and respecting the real situation in teaching Slovak as a foreign language. The author chose professional study material to enable the development of basic communication skills (listening, reading, writing, oral expression) necessary for better mastery of the curriculum in professional subjects on the basis of functional structures typical for technical Slovak. Students will find basic knowledge about Slovak orthography and the grammatical and lexical system of the Slovak language in e-scripts. The introductory lessons are focused on general information concerning the acquaintance of students with the new environment, the city and the faculty in which they decided to study. Other lessons are focused on professional subjects, such as economics, technical materials, technical documentation, physics, mathematics, as well as automotive production. At the end, there is general information from the field of culture and art within the Slovak-Ukrainian realities and issues related to the creation of presentations.

Professional texts contain multimedia elements (video, audio, images) linked by hyperlinks. Professional exercises to consolidate the curriculum from each lesson are available to students on the EnGeRu website using the university-wide Moodle platform.

Keywords: *professional text, Slovak as a foreign language, e-scripts, Moodle platform*

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, we are witnessing more and more the fact that education in the traditional way in almost all school facilities is far from sufficient. Such a situation begins in primary schools, continues during secondary education, and is not attractive to those who have decided to study at a college or university. In the field of education, as well as in other branches of society, digitization, electronization, the use of information and communication technologies are increasingly entering the lives of individuals and it is a matter of course to use e-mail or chat to communicate students with teachers. The interruption of teaching as part of measures against the spread of coronavirus has required, to a much greater extent than before, the use of distance forms of education, so teaching in many schools at shorter or longer intervals takes the form mentioned. This also applies to the teaching of foreign languages and work with foreign language professional study material at the Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies in Prešov. Foreign language teachers have long since begun to apply modern methods to the teaching process. In their scientific research activities, they began to focus on the use of e-learning, the implementation of hybrid education within the newly accredited study programmes at the mentioned faculty within the framework of two previous projects and one currently ongoing project. Part of the ongoing KEGA project was and still is the search for innovative methods and forms of education for the needs and development of language communication skills within the technical professional foreign language study material (Gluchmanova 2019). The projects were focused on the implementation of modern technologies and the improvement of teaching in study fields and study programmes. The intention was also to develop new electronic study materials with interactive elements. This also results in goals that consist in improving the level of the educational process and internationalization of teaching by applying Web-Based Training. By transferring many innovative approaches in foreign language teaching, including Slovak, which is actually a foreign language for foreign students, we tried to support

technically oriented subjects at our faculty as well as professional practice. The result of work in this area are e-scripts and additional study material on the EnGeRu website. This professional study material in e-scripts is available to students throughout the academic year. The e-scripts are located on the university-wide Moodle website, which is managed by the Department of Computer Science and provides services to all nine faculties of the Technical University. They are available to students during the semester.

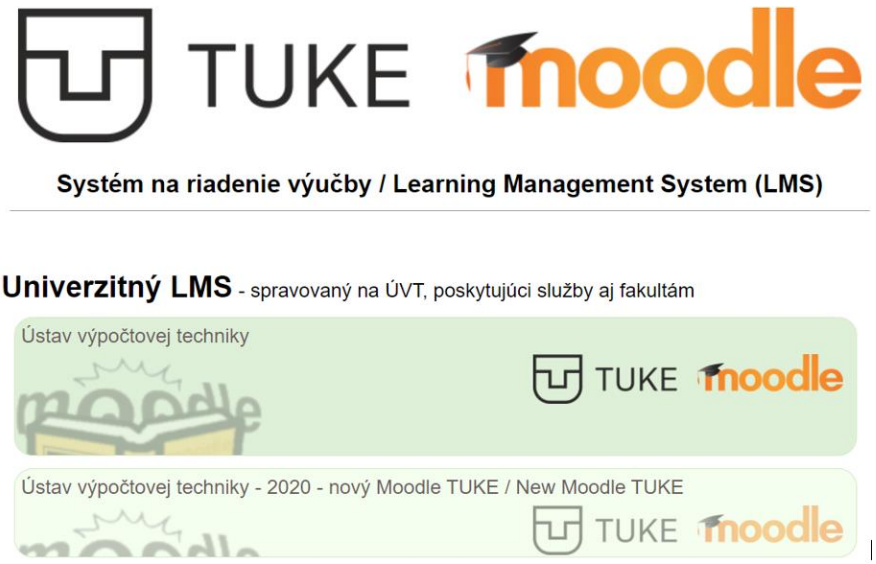


Fig. 1. Demonstration of a learning management system where e-scripts are located

Source: http://moodle.tuke.sk/

2. PROFESSIONAL STUDY MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY OF CREATING E-SCRIPTS

At the beginning of courses with foreign (mostly Ukrainian) students at our faculty, we began to use publications by several authors on the topic of Slovak for foreigners (Dratva & Buznová 2005; Kamenárová et al. 2011; Sedláková et al. 2013), alternatively, we used online professional study material from suitable websites (LLP, 2021; JÚĽŠ, 2015). Over time, we have found that professional study material from the given works is insufficient for our students. Such professional publications were a suitable study material only in the beginning, more or less within the study of general Slovak. The truth is that students can practice ordinary communicative Slovak with their Slovak classmates during their free time, in the dormitory and in public. Many of them took shorter or longer Slovak language courses in their home country or after arriving to Slovakia. But there were also among them those who started to use Slovak, for them as a foreign language, only after coming to the faculty. Gradually, in the first year of bachelor's study, it turned out that the problem for many was understanding the curriculum in lectures and seminars, students could not express themselves correctly in the exam of the subject, they had a problem with the use of correct technical terminology. The stylization of the written speech within the bachelor's and diploma´s thesis and their subsequent oral defence at the end of the study was also a shortcoming for them. This was also the reason why the management of the faculty decided that foreign students (mostly Ukrainian) should start a compulsory Slovak language course during two semesters in the first year of their bachelor's study.

On the basis of partial short-term Slovak language courses, which we offered to foreign students before, we came to the conclusion that they must have study material available, so to speak, tailor-made. In the methodology of creating e-scripts, the advantage of which lies in the fact that we can update them according to the possibility and need from year to year, we had to take into account their branch of study and study programmes: manufacturing management, renewable energy sources, computer aided of

manufacturing technologies, industrial management and automotive manufacturing technologies. In the initial phase of e-scripts together with teachers of vocational subjects, we selected suitable topics according to the experience and requirements of students, which had to be processed linguistically into an acceptable and useful form.

The content of the paper is the presentation of professional study material of the technical Slovak course for foreign bachelor's students at the Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies. In the electronic scripts Slovak language for foreign students, I included individual professional texts, which were created gradually as additional study material based on direct specific needs and respecting the real situation in teaching Slovak as a foreign language at FMT. E-scripts are designed to allow the development of basic communication skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking) needed to better understand the curriculum in professional subjects on the basis of functional structures typical for technical Slovak. E-scripts offer students basic knowledge about Slovak orthography and the grammatical and lexical system of the Slovak language. They contain lessons that focus on general information about acquainting students with the new environment, city and faculty in which they have decided to study. Other lessons are focused on the subject of professional subjects, such as economics, technical materials, technical documentation, physics, mathematics, as well as automotive production. The final lessons contain general information from the field of culture and art within the Slovak-Ukrainian realities and issues related to the creation of presentations. We tried to incorporate individual lessons into e-scripts using the method from simpler to more complex. Similarly, we took into account the content of the lesson so that the Slovak curriculum corresponds to the professional subjects. First, we included in the study plan topics from subjects that students completed in the winter semester, and in the summer semester there were topics from other professional subjects.

The individual lessons usually have the following structure: exercises on the topic of the lesson, which have a lexical, lexical-grammatical or communicative character; the text of the exercise is intended for the development of receptive skills (listening, watching videos, reading comprehension, quick reading in order to find partial or specific information); exercises and activities designed to develop productive skills (speaking, writing); basic grammar with a link to a website with a more detailed explanation of the issue and terminology on the topic (basic vocabulary, technical terminology, word structure). Texts contain multimedia elements (video, audio, images) linked by hyperlinks. The work with scripts is also enriched by other exercises to consolidate the curriculum from each lesson, which are accessible to students on the EnGeRu website using the university-wide Moodle platform.

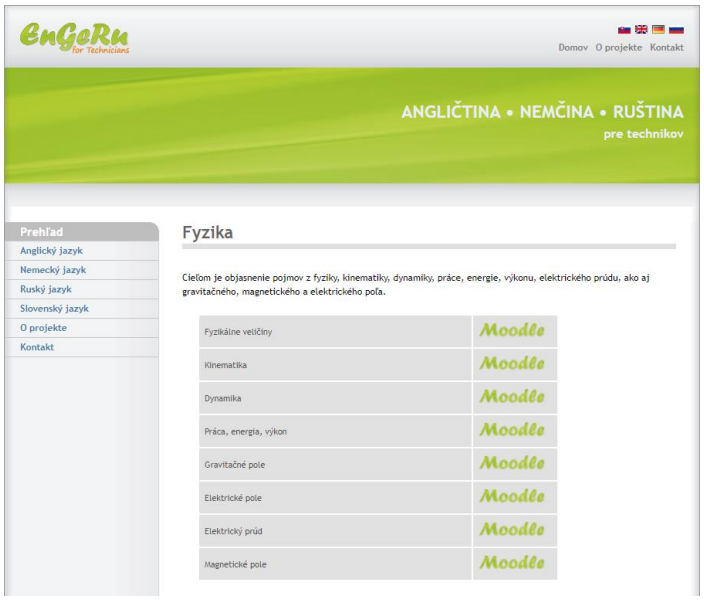


Fig. 2. Sample of the EnGeRu website with the content of a part of the Slovak language course

Source: http://web.tuke.sk/fvt-engeru/kurz2_sj_f.html

If we pay attention to the methodology of work, the basic task of the teacher is to teach students to communicate, to mock them and at the same time to fulfil methodological recommendations with the content itself and to look for suitable methods that would lead the student to achieve the desired results. Motivation for our students should be mastering the Slovak language at such a level as to develop both its receptive language communication skills - the ability to listen and read professional text with understanding, but also productive activities and strategies - oral and written expression, the ability to achieve oral and written interactions (Mešková 2012).

However, I believe that there is no universal method of teaching foreign students the Slovak language, especially when it comes to technical or professional Slovak (Turek 2010). One of the basic methods that we apply in working with professional text in class is the grammar-translation method. Within it, students work with professional texts, read and underline unknown or professional words that they do not understand. Words or sentences that are not clear to them, the teacher either tries to describe it to them and explain it in other words, or we use a translation. An important task in this method is to teach students to work with online Slovak dictionaries.



ČÍTANIE S POROZUMENÍM

1. Čítajte text s porozumením. Použite aktuálne slovenské slovníky na vysvetlenie neznámych slov.

Fyzika je jednou z najstarších akademických disciplín pôsobiacich v ľudskej kultúre. Práva samostatnej vednej disciplíny získala počas vedeckej revolúcie v 16. storočí. V súčasnosti je to prírodná veda, ktorá sa zaoberá štúdiom zákonitostí živej a neživej prírody. Prepojená je s ostatnými vednými disciplínami (matematika, chémia, biológia, medicína, technika, filozofia...). Vytvára moderný obraz sveta, pretože fyzikálne zistenia často ústia do nových technológií aplikovaných v praxi.

Fig. 3. Sample exercise from e-scripts: Reading Comprehension

I consider the correct use of online Slovak dictionaries to be very important. On the example of a search word in the dictionary, students need to be acquainted with all types of online dictionaries of the Slovak language that are on the website. They need to be explained how to use them, what these dictionaries are used for, how the meanings of words are written in these dictionaries, etc. Information on the grammar of a given word can also be found in the dictionary. They can find out what kind of word it is and within individual word types also the declension, timing, gradation and other grammatical categories that are marked next to words. It is important that students know the abbreviations that are marked with individual words, drop suffixes, or derived words, prefixes, etc.



Fig. 4. Example of working with a dictionary

Source: https://slovnik.juls.savba.sk/

Part of the work with the professional text is the application of the audio-visual method. The work consists in the use of various visual material to approach and better understood professional issues. We can use educational visual material from professional magazines, professional books, diagrams, drawings, etc. This visual material is helpful in understanding verbal communication and at the same time completes nonverbal communication.

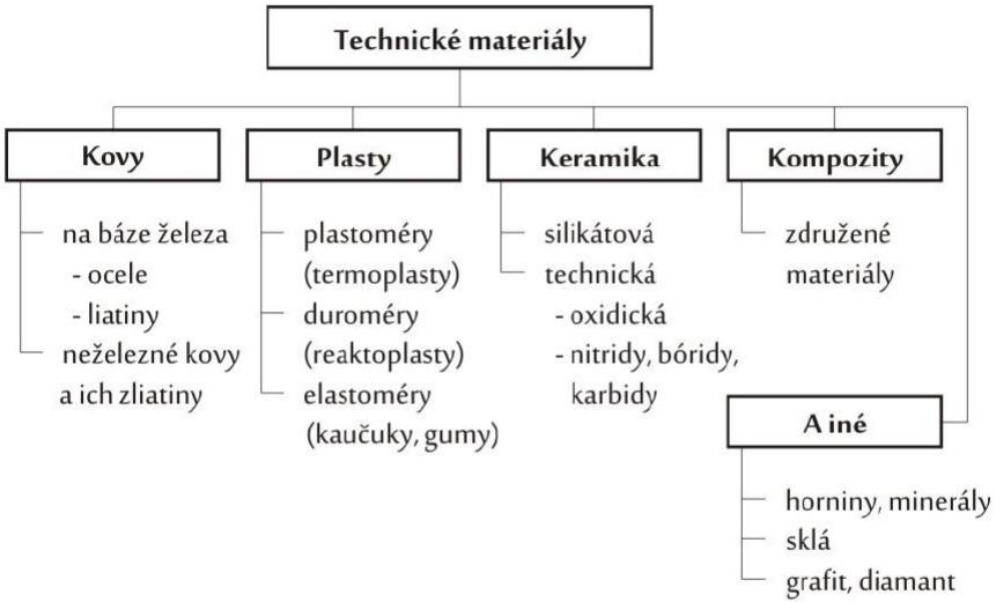


Fig. 5. The structure of the technical materials distribution

Visual pictorial material can be illustrative, where the student may describe the picture or situational, where the student can describe or even talk about the issues he sees in the picture. The pictorial material can be used: 1. to explain professional terminology (in our case, the division of technical materials, the extension of basic lexicon and foreign words associated with materials), 2. for drilling grammatical phenomena (declension - How do we divide technical materials? What do we classify as plastics? What materials are composites?); comparison - Which materials are harder? Which material is soft?); 3. for completing speech skills - speaking when describing a picture or diagram. Visual material is part of our

e-scripts. It is used to illustrate and explain professional issues. It should be large enough, colourful and unambiguous.

Within the audio-oral or audio-lingual method, dialogues are the basis of teaching. In this case, I prefer oral to written - listening, speaking. In e-scripts I try to incorporate listening exercises with professional issues. After listening to the recording, I will prepare various tasks and assignments for students. They either have a corpus of questions at their disposal, which they answer orally after hearing the recording or video, or they work them out independently and then read the answers. They can also have the task of listening carefully while filling in missing words in the text. Exercises can be variable.

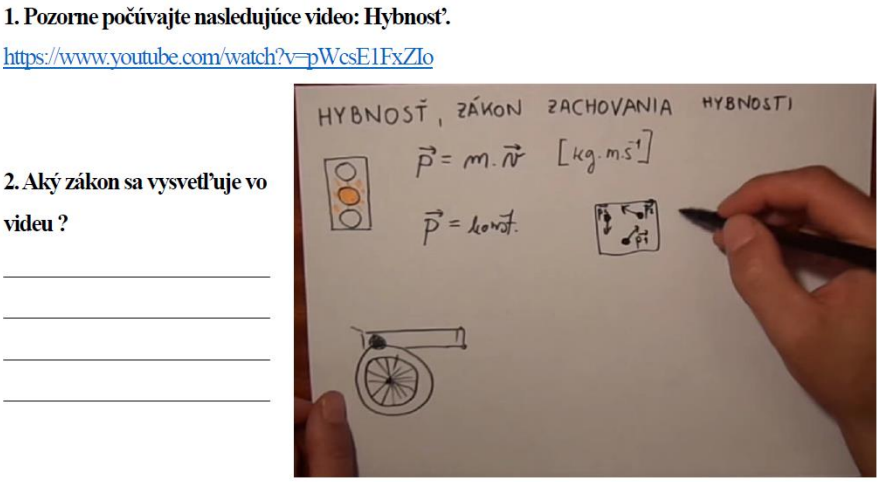


Fig. 6. Demonstration of the listening exercise.

E-scripts contain various types of exercises with professional issues. They have a lexical, lexical-grammatical or communicative character. Exercises are focused on the development of receptive and productive skills - completing sentences, completing dialogue, assignment, text reproduction, problem solving, etc. We use e-scripts during the full-time form of study, but they are available on the university-wide website in the Moodle system, so students can also use them for self-study during the distance form of study. In addition to e-scripts, there are online tests in which students practice and consolidate the material covered.

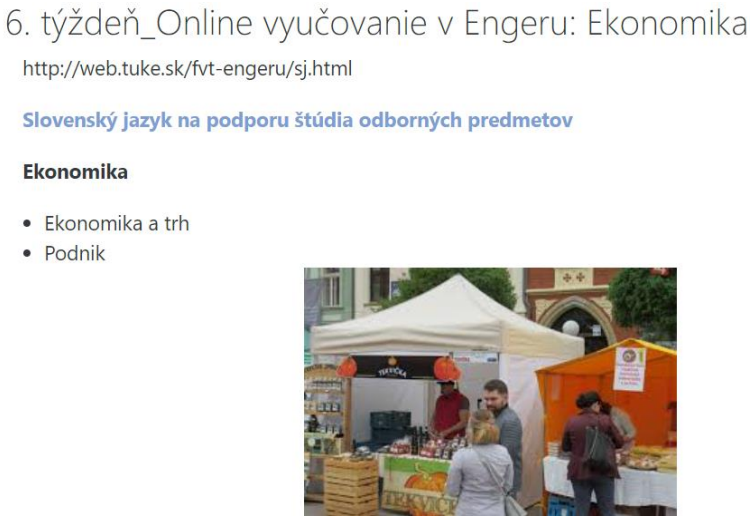


Fig. 7. Example of entering online tests in EnGeRu

3. DISCUSSION

Many disinterested people believe that foreigners can be taught Slovak by anyone for whom this language is their mother tongue. The truth is that in the past there was no study field of Slovak as a foreign language, because at that time it did not require it. Kvapil (2018, p. 63) states that the problem on the Slovak market at present is the absence of teachers of the Slovak language as a foreign language. At the same time, it draws attention to a mediating language such as English. According to him, the advantage is that the teacher of Slovak also speaks English, (or in our circumstances Russian), which can be used during the study to clarify concepts, grammatical phenomena, etc.

It can be said that there are currently Slovak textbooks for foreigners in Slovakia, as well as for different age categories (Uličná 2018; Bernáthová, Reinterová & Somorová 2018). Nevertheless, there are few suitable and available textbooks. There would certainly be more, especially focusing on specific needs. One of these reasons was our case at the faculty, where students needed study material to help them study professional subjects (Gluchmanova 2020). The result is also presented e-scripts and elaborated tasks and assignments on the EnGeRu website, which are used to consolidate the curriculum (TUKE 2021).

In addition to university students and in connection with migration or arrival of people to Slovakia for work (Ukrainians, Serbs), some authors claims that at present it is necessary to ensure the teaching of Slovak as a foreign language mainly for this group and also for children of foreigners. Many foreigners claim that Slovak is a difficult language. Each language has its specifics in lexicon, stylization, pronunciation, problematic sounds, letter differentiation, or accent (Tancerová 2018). It is similar with our students. Sometimes it's a good idea to remind them of a few words, such as: university, student, bank, hotel, movie, discuss, weekend, etc., to motivate them to understand something. So the specificity certainly applies to the Slovak language as well. However, it must be borne in mind that even any native speaker may not be fluent in his language, as he may not understand everything within another region of the country. I argue that motivation should play an important role in this regard. If the person has a strong motivation to learn the language, then he can and does not rely only on studying the language at school or with the teacher. Students who came to the faculty to study and possibly find a job in addition to their studies have a strong motivation to progress in the study of Slovak and subsequently professional subjects seem much easier to them. I keep emphasizing to them that they have to absorb Slovak from their surroundings in order to read books, watch television, movies, Slovak songs, so it is not enough to rely only on a textbook, e-scripts or a teacher.

4. CONCLUSION

I believe that the conditions for studying Slovak as a foreign language for students, workers and other interested parties are acceptable in Slovakia, which does not mean that they could be better. Finally, the important role of the teacher as a facilitator of the teaching process needs to be emphasized. It happens that, in addition to the teacher of Slovak as a foreign language, for foreign students the teacher is often the only contact person who helps students to orientate themselves in a foreign environment. However, the primary role of the teacher in the conditions of teaching Slovak as a foreign language at our faculty is that, in addition to general Slovak, they acquire professional terminology from their study programme. The teacher must teach students to develop their communication skills and abilities, to be able to understand written and spoken word, to be able to discuss, to be able to defend their statements in the examination and defence of their bachelor's and diploma's thesis. At the same time, as future professionals, engineers, technicians, programmers and managers, they must learn to conduct a productive dialogue in their professional focus. In any case, they need to be encouraged so that they are not afraid to engage in conversation in a multicultural student group, nor with experts in practice in the company, etc. All this is part of foreign language education in Slovak as a foreign language at the Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies.

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