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DISTANCE LEARNING AS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN NEW KNOWLEDGE

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"Distance education emerged in response to the need of providing access to those who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face courses. It encompasses those programs that allow the learner and instructor to be physically apart during the learning process and maintain communication in a variety of ways" [1]. In general, distance learning is the interaction of students and teachers with each other at a distance by using contemporary technologies. Currently, Internet technologies have made it possible for the majority of those who wish to study remotely, forming a huge network with an unprecedented amount of data for students and teachers involved in training. Actually, it was impossible to imagine in the last 50 years, however nowadays this is a reality that claims a dominant role in the education system of both world universities and Kazakhstani one. The main advantage of Distance Learning lies in the fact that it is an extremely convenient and flexible form of study, which improves the quality of education via the use of modern technologies. Furthermore, DL assists to save time since it does not require a laborious walk to the place of study and learners can study without leaving their home. Nevertheless, this format has its drawbacks, in which the basic disadvantage is the lack of empirical knowledge, that is, training in specialties that involve a large number of practical lessons is remotely difficult. Even the most new simulators will not replace "live" practice for future doctors or teachers. Moreover, there is an inadequate computer literacy and a lack of the quantity of contemporary technologies. To be precise, a special need for distance education arises in remote regions of Kazakhstan, and so, not everyone, who wants to study, has a computer with Internet access. In addition, the student loses the desire to learn and shows weak motivation, since the distance learner studies almost all the educational material on his/her own, and this requires developed willpower, responsibility and self-control. Definitely, not everyone manages to maintain the desired pace of learning without external control.

Contemporary society is facing a very difficult situation due to the global pandemic; therefore, distance education plays a pivotal role in the continuation of the curriculum in universities and schools. It should be noted that the alteration in the education format affected the Eurasian National University, and some difficulties arose in the spring semester. The scientific staff and students of ENU had changed the ordinary way of studying and pursued the efficient methods of teaching corresponding to DL. The disciplines were taught distantly and such vital discipline as "English for Specific Purposes" was not an

exception. This discipline is considered to be absolutely crucial because the improvement of 4 main skills as listening, reading, writing and speaking are taken into account. Turning to details of these skills, students improved their listening skills and it became possible to teach it via distance learning. Furthermore, reading and writing skills had been improved markedly with online assignments. Unfortunately, the majority of learners faced problems in the spoken language section, because the online format cannot replace face-to-face communication, that is why, this leads to the appearance of insufficient communication skills. In addition,the development of speaking skills became very topical and the problem of improving communicative way of studying was tackled widely among students.

Therefore, the necessity of finding effective ways of improving speaking skills arose and they had to choose the appropriate types of applications. The 3rd year students of FL theory and practice department paid great attention to the usage of diverse applications in order to develop communicative skills.

We conducted a survey for students. There were questions about how many years they studied English and how they felt about studying subjects online. The results showed that the majority of students have been learning the English language since school time (76,9% to be exact). Only about 23 percent of students have studied this language for over two years. Moreover, it was observed that many students felt that distance learning was uncommon; hence they had some difficult points in their study. However, some of them (about 39 percent) found it interesting and did not have any problems while studying online. To be precise, half of the students failed to improve their speaking skills. This showed that students had communication problems. Also in the second place of the survey, it was depicted that some students had difficulties in improving their writing skills in English. In addition, a small proportion of students were unable to improve their listening skills through distance learning. Students were asked if they find it difficult to improve their speaking skills through distance learning. It was clearly seen that most of them agreed that their speaking skills were difficult to improve through distance learning. Moreover, the other half of the students did not agree and hesitated to give an answer to this question.

Taking into account the results of the questionnaire, the followingapplications - Elsa, Supiki and English Conversation Practice – were catered to improve speaking skills for students.

English Conversation Practice: This is app from TalkEnglish.com. The app is available for all Android and IOS devices. English Conversation Practice has over 200 lessons, including listening exercises, varied quizzes, speaking practice and conversation recording features. Therefore, this application is considered to be extremely handy and great for enhancing the level on spoken language. Most importantly, the app is designed for all levels of English. Moreover, the student can touch the conversation on any topic and for this the application gives new words on different topics. In addition, speaking on a Dictaphone gives the student confidence and the ability to see mistakes in pronunciation. The application is a live experience in the development of communication based on unique techniques.

ELSA: It is English Language Speech Assistant that provides learners plenty of exercises and examples which assist them to tackle speech issues. This application has seven million users from over 100 countries and this shows the effectiveness of this. Furthermore, ELSA offers state-of-the-art speech recognition technology and personal virtual pronunciation coach which helps students to learn English fluently and confidently like their own mother tongue. To be precise, it is an app that teaches students to pronounce English like an American through real-world conversations. Students can choose the skill or sounds that interest them. Most of the activity involves recording phrases of their choice. The app

simulates the correct pronunciation and then records the student's attempts. They can listen to recordings of their voices and read or listen to instant feedback on their performance. In addition, there are some other tasks, such as Listening Tasks for Discrimination, and also some dialogues are performed as they represent real conversation, which would be great practice to improve the level of speech of students. In general, the application has great prospects.

Supiki: This application is different and smart which talks with learners. Supiki provides a topic and starts a conversation. From what the students say, Supiki will react differently. Their spoken English will improve as they practice real conversations. This application has unencrypted conversations related to real-life situations. In addition, students receive visual feedback and earn points based on how good their conversation is. The student can record, review and share their conversations with friends, family and instructors. They don't need to worry about the conversation because this app offers conversation ideas. Furthermore, the game factor of this app definitely increases the enjoyment of using Supiki. The graphics are cute and give students a great backdrop where conversation takes place, right down to the bowls and clinking of food and background chatter. Supiki completely immerses students in the environment where each lesson takes place. This gives a sense of a larger environment than an instructional lesson.

While using the given applications it is necessary to demonstrate the results of 3 main applications mentioned above.
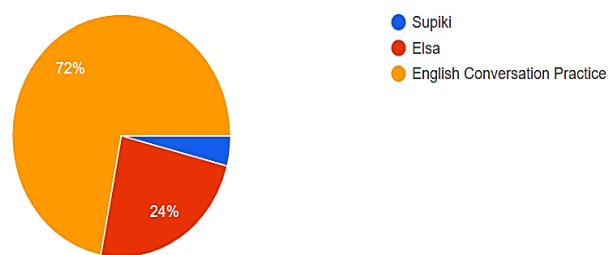

Figure 1: The effectiveness of these applications

It is noticeable that the most efficient application is "English Conversation Practice" as,in our opinion, it is proved by the empirical method of providing material for all levels of students' knowledge as well as it gives a golden opportunity to extend knowledge via the given application.

Distance learning provides a unique opportunity to gain new knowledge. Analysis of students' responses shows that the development of speaking skills is difficult for them; therefore, we provide an opportunity to conduct a lesson using cutting-edge technologies that will help alter the monotonous educational process. The aforementioned apps have various exercises and examples to give students a feel for real-life conversation. This teaching methodology offers new knowledge and assists students become good specialists in the future.

References

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