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## **ONLINE LEARNING: IMPROVING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION BY MEANS OF ONLINE TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS**

***Анотація.** Інформаційно-комунікаційні технології надають широкий спектр інструментів та застосунків, які можуть бути використані на заняттях з англійської мови під час дистанційного навчання та у якості доповнення до аудиторних занять у формі самостійної роботи студентів, зокрема у процесі формування англомовної фонетичної компетентності. Процес викладання англійської мови за допомогою електронних підручників, онлайн курсів, онлайн платформ для навчання для спілкування, медіаресурсів, тощо забезпечить ефективне формування англомовної фонетичної компетентності, яка відповідатиме викликам та завданням сьогодення.*

***Ключові слова:** онлайн навчання, інтерактивні вправи, англомовна фонетична компетентність, електронний підручник, фонетичний онлайн курс.*

Online learning is becoming a highly demanded tool in the foreign language learning process in recent years. The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic followed by a lockdown has moved higher education from classrooms and university labs to personal computers and smartphones. New language learning tools and methods that used to remain in hibernation are now rapidly developing and are being actively used by English teachers and university lecturers in schools and higher education establishments.

The advantages and disadvantages of media resources and online learning in general, and online language learning in particular, have been actively discussed by many scholars in the spheres of linguistics, foreign language teaching methodology, computer linguistics, and more. Research papers published by M. Conroy, T. I. Koval, R. F. J. Lekawael, M. McLuhan, M. C. Pennington, Ye. S. Polat, P. Stapleton and P. Radia, M. Warschauer and many more [3; 1; 5; 6; 7; 3; 8; 10] describe mostly advantages of computer based and Internet based tools in the context of different aspects of language learning.

According to M. McLuhan, online learning has such advantages as access, flexibility, response, repeatability, durability, modality, specificity, and cost as opposed to classroom based learning and private tutoring resources and services [6].

M. Warschauer believes that Internet resources may enhance English language learning as it is consistent with communicative principles of meaningful interaction which is the basis of communicative approach of learning a foreign language [10].

R. F. J. Lekawael states that computer applications and Internet tools can ensure self-assessed language learning as they may provide learner's autonomy and encourage them to personalize the learning process, as well as reflect on their work; this, in its turn, presupposes taking more responsibility for their own learning [5, p. 256].

New tools and methods of English learning should fully correspond to current needs of social, professional, and other spheres of modern life. This calls for reconsideration of requirements to activities and resources used at English lessons. Specifically, K. Hyland highlights the necessity to apply 'learner's needs analysis' at the stage of devising a language course syllabus [4, p. 58]. Speaking about foreign language writing activities, the researcher insists on considering and analyzing both present situation and target situation when constructing and/or choosing tasks and activities in class, as they should meet the real-world demands and pedagogic requirements [4, p. 113].

We believe that this attitude can be applied in terms of any language aspect, including pronunciation. The necessity to speak clearly and comprehensively is becoming a more demanded feature in the age of rapidly developing information and communication technologies and cross-cultural communication. Career prospects and interpersonal relationships growingly depend on person's ability to transfer their ideas by means of oral speech, while errors in pronunciation may lead to misunderstandings or even communication breakdown.

Information and communication technologies influence all spheres of human life, and computer assisted learning is offering a wide range of tools and applications to be used for language learning purposes. In terms of improving pronunciation the following online tools and applications may be used to complement English lessons: online interactive activities, electronic textbooks, online courses, online applications, video chat and learning platforms, media resources, and more.

As a part of independent study, students may practice oral communication with native speakers by means of a video chat on communication platforms, such as *HelloTalk*, *Go Speaky*, *Busuu*, *Coeffee*, *Coffee Strap* and many more. Each of them has its unique features and algorithms, as well as integrated additional tools, such as dictionaries, spellcheckers, multilanguage keyboards, etc. For example, *Coffee Strap* uses matching method that helps a learner find a partner to engage in a conversation for seven minutes, after that a different partner joins the conversation to continue speaking practice. Despite obvious benefits of this tool, learners' activity in this case is by no means guided by a teacher and it is impossible to evaluate their progress and contribution.

Electronic textbooks have long been the object of interest of researchers in the sphere of methodology. They are esteemed as effective, easy to design and use, and multimodal, as they allow integrating media resources and necessary tools into the canvas of a textbook. Advantages of organizing the language learning process by means of an electronic textbook on the basis of a learning platform, such as MOODLE, were discussed by T. I. Koval, who described the basic principles and peculiarities of developing an electronic textbook for the language learning purposes [1].

Guided by these principles we have developed an online pronunciation course on the *Canvas* platform – '*English Pronunciation*' – for foreign first year students studying English at Kyiv National Linguistic University. The online course covers the phonological material required for A2 language users and guides students through 6 Units illustrating sounds and intonation patterns, recording students' speech and providing feedback from a teacher who administrates the course. The phonological material for the course was selected on the basis of the data received from a survey and observations of students' participation during English lessons, as well as the results of the comparative research on the phonological systems of English and students' native languages.

Interesting supplementary tools in the form of speech-to-text software was suggested by J. Tooley, who experimentally proved that a software engine is able to evaluate accent and speech clarity almost equally to a human listener [9].

In conclusion, online tools and applications present a fast growing source of language learning activities and organizational forms. As the object of research, it continues to attract attention, as well as provides endless pedagogical opportunities and inspiration. We believe that electronic textbook on the basis of an educational platform can be viewed as the most effective way of organizing the pronunciation training process as it allows combining different tools and applications most suitable for language learning purposes.

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