

# ON USE OF INTERACTIVE WHITE BOARDS IN UNIVERSITY ESP TEACHING

**Valdmanová, K.**

*Institute of Language Competences, University of Prešov, Slovakia*

## **a) Introduction**

It is generally known that use of an interactive white board (IWB) can increase engagement and motivation in the classroom. Students are more focused, involved, and participate more when IWB is being used. This new technology tool is used by teachers and pupils at primary schools in a large extend. Teachers of second language learners can also benefit from IWB when preparing phonics and vocabulary exercises, and teaching grammar and structure patterns. The central objective of my article is to analyse possibilities of effective use of IWB in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) at university.

## **b) Advantages of IWB**

IWB gives students the opportunity to obtain information in multiple formats, i.e. not only via written words of a textbook, and oral speech of a teacher. Lessons can be prepared in advance as power point presentations and enhanced by integrated videos, graphics, charts, animations, and audios. If computer is connected to the internet, relevant websites can be easily accessed to strengthen the topic being studied. The biggest advantage of IWB is the ability to create presentations using variety of colours and fonts. Prepared lessons can automatically be saved and printed, emailed or even pasted into a website. The contents of monitor, or its selected part can be saved as a picture as well, and included into another application, such as Word, PowerPoint, etc. The use of this relatively new technology enables the teacher to teach – to comment on what students can actually read, see and hear, instead of spending a lot of time writing on a chalkboard and letting the students wait for information.

## **3. Activities involving IWB in the foreign language classes**

There are a lot of activities teachers can include in their lessons plans, such as games, colouring, rhymes, dragging objects, matching pictures to words, etc. but most of them are suitable for primary school pupils or young learners of foreign language. Martinková (2010) divides learners' participation in IWB presentations into active and passive ones. The former means that learners enter directly into the material being presented and solve tasks on IWB individually or in small groups. This fact opens the question of IWB use in ESP courses for university students as they mostly work with textbooks, listen to CDs or cassettes, occasionally watch a short videos, play roles and perform various group work activities. Their "work" on/with any kind of board is almost exclusively passive. They watch and listen to

their teacher's presentations. The only exception to this "passive role" are their own PowerPoint presentations done by more advanced classes.

I see the active IWB use by ESP university students questionable but they might profit if it is used by their language teachers. According to analysis performed by Gerard, Green and Widener SMART Board supports the teaching process of foreign languages in three main ways:

- 1) it helps the presentation of new linguistic and cultural elements,
- 2) it supports interaction with the class and
- 3) it promotes the teacher's organizational skills.

My task as a member of the KEGA project team focusing on the introduction of the IWB use in foreign languages (English, German and Latin) for specific purposes (caring professions, and management and marketing) is to elaborate teaching modules for ESP in nursing, midwifery and dental hygiene. What I have been doing now is the analysis of the current ESP curricula, and the real communication needs of students. Based on this analysis and my long-term teaching experience I see the following possibilities of the IWB use to enhance ESP students' productive and receptive language skills:

- teaching vocabulary by means of static or interactive pictures
- practicing correct pronunciation
- enhancement of listening skills and
- teaching grammar.

IWB with internet access is "a tool promising applications in foreign language learning, especially for the vocabulary memorisation. The integration between the sound, the written word, and the image of presented objects is considered to enhance memorisation considerably." (Frankova, 2011, p.52).

IWB can also facilitate teaching of English grammar as students are encouraged to visualize grammar structures, interpret their meanings and manipulate grammar forms. Grammar can be taught in context, and interacted by highlighting words, phrases and sentences. Texts or their parts can be moved, deleted or substituted.

#### **4. Sources of activities involving IWB in the foreign language classes**

Teachers of ESP courses have several options at their disposal:

##### **a) Use of self-compiled materials**

Teachers can create their own lesson plans and different activities involving a smart board. Except many advantages, such as tailoring activities to meet real vocational language needs of students, or increasing students' learning capacity through connection of words with sounds and images, time consumption and technical skills needed for their preparation seem to be a significant disadvantage.

##### **b) Use of copyright-cleared content**

Teachers can browse the SMART Board Exchange websites, download digital lessons, assessments, and copyright-cleared content that might suit individual ESP

curricula. They need a free membership to access lesson resources and are expected to share their one's own activities and ideas with other teachers. There are many IWB lessons web sites teachers may share for free, but they often need the Smart Notebook software installed on their computers to download and use them.

#### c) Use of paid resources

There are many web sites containing resources compiled by teachers that cover many fields of science, such as physiology, microbiology, evolution, etc. They often include supporting PowerPoints, lecture videos and scientific animations. Their disadvantage is that teachers or their schools have to pay for them.

### 5. Conclusion

Interactive white board makes an important contribution to more interesting teaching and more effective learning. No doubt it has its place in ESP courses but as use of language is a social activity including interaction of people – communication of the teacher with their students, and students among themselves technology should not predominate over human aspect of teaching and learning.

### Bibliography

1. FRANKOVÁ, E. 2011. *Interactive whiteboard use in primary education*. Dissertation thesis. University of Presov in Presov. 2011. p.
2. MARTINKOVÁ, A. 2010. *Tvorba učebních pomůcek pomocí interaktivní tabule Smard Board*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita. 2010
3. GERARD, F., GREENE, M., WIDENER, J. *Using SMART Board in foreign language classes*. Retrieved on 3 February 2013. Available on <  
<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED432278.pdf>>

### Summary

Interactive white board makes an important contribution to more interesting teaching and more effective learning. No doubt it has its place in ESP courses but as use of language is a social activity including interaction of people – communication of the teacher with their students, and students among themselves technology should not predominate over human aspect of teaching and learning.