ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to teach English and other languages with online courses

Language learning is based on four specific skills. Here is how to teach how to read, write, speak and understand English in eLearning mode.

Language skills and the starting and target level are the basis for all types of learning, whether in-presence, distance or self-taught. In order to learn English or any other foreign language, you need to work on all four language skills: listening, reading, writing and oral expression. This classification of skills is the basis of the **QCER**, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. It is an important tool to determine one's level of knowledge of a language, ranging from beginner level A1 to more advanced level C2, comparable to that of a native speaker. What is the difference between a classic language manual and an online English course? Thanks to eLearning multimedia, you can teach languages in a totally engaging way. Here are some examples for a B1 level distance learning English course in corporate training.

Teaching English at a distance: listening

The most intuitive way to enhance listening skills is to offer podcasts to your students. By accessing their LMS, learning management system, students can find short audio clips on a specific topic: it can be news about their business sector, expert conversations about products or services related to their field... Videos are also an excellent tool to enhance listening and understanding in general. At the end of the track you can strengthen the content and test the knowledge you have learned with quizzes that include audio and written texts related to the podcast or **video**.

Teach English by skills: reading

Reading is one of the most widely used passive skills in language courses in business environment. Instead of the usual generic Business English book, you can use authentic materials, i.e. taken from reality. For example, there are excerpts from scientific journals that can be used for pharmaceutical language training. eLearning offers the possibility to present the written content in the form of a story, according to the principles of storytelling. You can choose a character and follow their vicissitudes in the company and outside. For example, our character must participate in a trade fair abroad on behalf of his company. Students will read his presentation, his presentation, that of the other competitors and learn the technical language suitable to describe their products and services. While abroad, our character will take the opportunity to meet local people and students will be able to follow him/her as he/she faces everyday situations. All this can also be presented as a branched scenario, with different outcomes depending on the student's choices.

Teaching English by playing online: Writing

With writing you get into the heart of active skills. With eLearning it can become a game, where students earn points if they can use the new technical and generic vocabulary learned in a written text. Again, authentic material from the company can be used: for example, students can answer customer complaints, questions about products and services in English. This can also be done through a **videoconference**, dividing the class into two groups representing the client and the company's staff respectively.

Speaking English in the virtual classroom

Finally, the active skill par excellence is the ability to express oneself orally in the foreign language. Together with listening, it is certainly one of the most difficult skills to acquire. With a virtual classroom, students can practice oral communication, speaking and listening to the teacher and other colleagues. If the training is aimed at companies based in different countries, an internal language exchange can be organized where, for example, native English speakers can practice conversations in Italian and Italian speakers can practice English.

While it is true that without the four language skills it is difficult to think of communicating without difficulty in a foreign language, it is also true that this learning process can be more engaging, thanks to eLearning. Between podcasts, videos, quizzes, simulations, branched scenarios, webinars and virtual classrooms you can use authentic materials, storytelling and play to teach English in an interactive way.

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