An Interactive Database “English for Ecologists” as a Key Element of Motivational Stimulus

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Abstract. The real area of interest for classroom practitioners nowadays is not so much the nature of ‘motivation’ itself, but the variety of different techniques or strategies that can be employed to motivate students. To create language classes more inspiring, to supplement dull teaching material innovative lecturers should start using new tools in their daily lives. To demonstrate how this could be achieved the author of the article exploits her own original database (virtual learning environment) “English for Ecologists”, as a model, specially created and designed by the author at Blackboard vista WEB CT platform for Vilnius University Ecology students to help them consolidate the skills learnt during the lectures and to prepare them for the final examination at the Faculty of Natural Sciences.

The aim of the article is to explore and present the virtual learning environment (VLE) and to show its adaptability research results, which suggest that VLEs specially oriented and relevant to particular learners act as a key element to motivational stimuli. To reach this aim the following research objectives have been set: 1) to give a short overview of the motivational stimulus theories; 2) to present the structure and the idea of the VLE; 3) to analyze the respondents’ results and viewpoints about the VLE and to show how this creates a motivational construct.

The results of the questionnaire distributed to the users of the VLE reveal the questions of novelty, practicality, interest and problems using the programme. The research demonstrates that students show a great interest in using this new self-study tool in their daily lives for consolidating their English skills and checking their progress autonomously. It is concluded that the research data made it obvious that databases (VLEs) presented in the article are ideally suited for the present day technologically-minded students who are inquiring, demanding, striving for perfection and prone to innovations. With the help of modern technologies teachers can create the learning environment more stimulating and satisfying not only for their students but also for themselves.

Key words: stimulus, interactive, motivational construct, autonomous learning, blended learning, technogeeks.