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**ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЙ ПОТЕНЦИАЛ
СЕРВИСА “ТЕЛЕГРАМ”
В ОБУЧЕНИИ ИНОСТРАННЫМ ЯЗЫКАМ**

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Аннотация. Платформа «Телеграм» исследуется как продуктивный дидактический ресурс медиаобразования при изучении английского языка. Определены и проанализированы способы подачи контента блогеров-преподавателей, представлены значимые характеристики лингводидактического блога как эффективного ресурса при изучении иностранного языка. Отмечается значимая роль визуальной поддержки для эффективного восприятия изучаемого продукта. Развлекательный формат подачи контента характеризуется как наиболее востребованный при предоставлении изучаемого материала в блогах.

Ключевые слова: Телеграм, сервис веб 2.0, мобильные технологии в образовании, социальные сети, обучающие ресурсы, изучение английского языка, языковой блог, юмор в обучении, подача контента

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Original article

**EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF TELEGRAM
FOR TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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Abstract. The article deals with studying the educational capability of Telegram as an educational tool in learning a foreign language. Telegram is viewed as an efficient English teaching resource in the media space. The methods of delivering the content in teachers' blogs as well as relevant peculiarities of a teaching blog as a productive teaching resource have been revealed and analysed. Visual aids play a significant role while presenting the content for learners in the blogs. The humour compo-

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ment is to be characterized as the most highly-demanded type of presenting the language content to be taught.

Key words: *Telegram, mobile technologies, social networks, English language learning, teaching blog, content delivery*

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Introduction

Education sector extensively gathers pace and follows a transformation trend. Information and communication technologies amplification has led to emerging new learning and teaching forms. Current generation tends to use web services designated for communication, amusement as well as learning and teaching [Novoseltseva, 2017, p. 173; Proskura, 2020, p. 159; Drygina, 2018, p. 319]. The trending e-resources which are exploited for learning purposes are called «Web 2.0» [O'Reilly, 2021]. These are social networks, blogs, viki-projects, sharing services. Digitalizing all the areas of human performance including educational environment causes demand for embracing new educational technologies [Zolotukhin, 2013, p. 41]. The **relevance of the study** is specified by expansion of widespread mobile technologies and a rapidly growing tendency to mobile learning.

The paper deals with studying the educational potential of the Telegram service pursuing **the purpose** to carry out a functional analysis of Telegram as an effective educational resource for learning a foreign language (herein English). The research stipulates **specific tasks** detailed in studying the opportunities of the platform for foreign language learning purposes, defining the learners' attitude to Telegram as an educational tool, examining the teaching approaches and content delivery peculiarities, eliciting the specifics of certain tutorial blogs. The research **material** is taken from English teachers' blogs on the Telegram platform. In the study general descriptive and observational **methods** are used as well as survey and comparative analysis of teaching methodology.

Analysis and Results

In order to define relevance of using Telegram the survey was conducted among the students who had been studying English for not special purposes for one or two years (112 students). It was figured out that each learner daily used Telegram service. The survey shows more than half (55%) students assume the platform is applicable for learning English, either they use the content submitted by blogging English teachers and/ or Native English speakers (not only teachers). Prior to completing the questionnaire, all the students were informed they were supposed to choose the most popular web service they used in their daily life as well as a service for learning the English language. In accordance with the survey data, it emerged that Telegram has lately become the most popular among other learning resources (along with Youtube, WhatsApp, Viber).

Telegram is presented by the list of the contacts (contacts from the mobile device), each shows the feed with posts including metadata: the name of the contact, headlines, subheadings, main text, images, videos, hyperlinks, graphic ele-

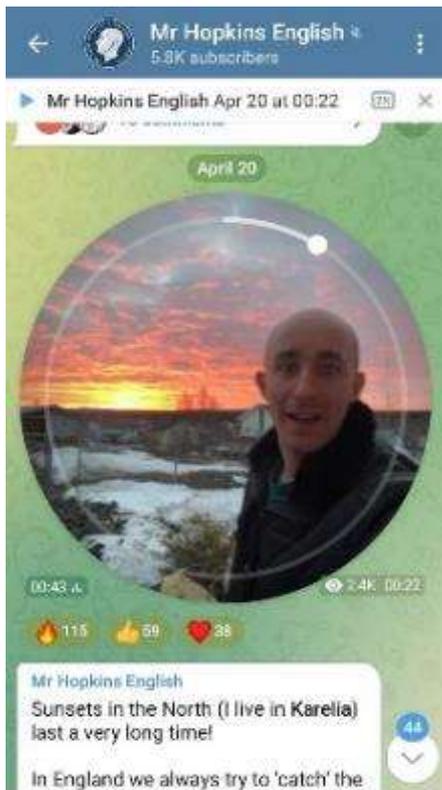
ments. Telegram posts embrace texts accompanied by pictures and videos placed by the users of the web service. Telegram composes vertical layout for posts which is approved to be quite convenient for swift rolling and viewing. Life circle of the content is as long-term as the user keeps it, so posts are saved in the Telegram feed for good (unless the user deletes it). The feed content involves a mixture of text, space for comments, graphic elements, audios, videos, pictures, which is more preferable to human eye as a visual aid rather than just text (posts). The great importance of visual support in course materials is remarked by many scholars stating incorporation of visual representations in the classroom curriculum has been must-have in current terms of the competitive environment [Evagorou, 2015; Ferreira, 2021; Munoz, 2017]. Metagraphemic means (Pic. 1.) in electronic space appear to be significant as they supplement visual elements and perform informative, illustrative, emotive functions which proved to be relevant for education process [Kuchina, 2020, p. 239].



Pic. 1. Fragment of the blog (Uchilka Angliyskogo)

Besides, presenting the video content in Telegram posts seems to be inviting to the eye and more attractive since it can be designed in the shape of a circle. In order to watch the video with sound a follower needs to click on the video circle which enlarges the view size of the video along with sound on. The learners are up to pause or rewind the video around the circle which is also perceived uncommon and interesting according to the survey (Pic. 2).

For Telegram users the technical capabilities of making posts are vast and enable users to apply various ways of making and presenting the content: archiving the content in the feed, function of publishing the text of different colours, size, pictures or videos used as background, applying a wide range of colours, animated elements, visual effects, recording audios (like user's voice messages) etc.



Pic. 2. Fragment of the blog (Mr Hopkins English)

As according to the survey Telegram as a content provider is considered to be illustrative and visual. It is believed students perceive information through visual illustrations including a little text more effectively and in short order [Vasbiyeva, 2016, p. 194]. When we glance at a picture immediate grasp occurs in our mind and logic connection between the illustration and the text is found simultaneously. Therefore the information we have received is better comprehended as well as memorized. [Vetchinova, 2013, p. 62]. Due to visibility and compactability the Telegram channels are found to be very productive pursuing educational purposes including foreign language learning. A great number of channels are devoted to teaching the English language.

The Telegram channels are operated by teachers of the English language. Some particular directions of blogging among those accounts can be differentiated as following:

- 1) lexical approach in teaching English (Alex from London, Alyona Sudnik, Uchilka angliyskogo, English.online.maria);
- 2) mastering English phonetic specifics (InEnglish s Innoi, RIPITPLIZ?! YES!);

- 3) English grammar peculiarities (Mr Hopkins English);
- 4) focus on listening and comprehension skills (Haha land)
- 5) methodology and other content for English teachers (Teach_with_zaza).

The survey analysis reveals that the channels applying the lexical approach in teaching English seem the most interesting and attractive to the students. The Telegram channels dealing with lexical approach submit the material by various ways. One of the most frequent ways of presenting the content is a video imaging the teacher-blogger parting in and commenting on lexical units where as there is a simultaneous or consequent analysis of the complete text or practiced lexical units with (or with no) translation which follows the video explanation in the same or separate box. Then the active vocabulary examples shadow. The teacher may encourage students to share their own examples so a feedback from learners is supposed to occur in the comment box (Pic. 3).



Pic. 3. Fragment of the blog (Alex from London)

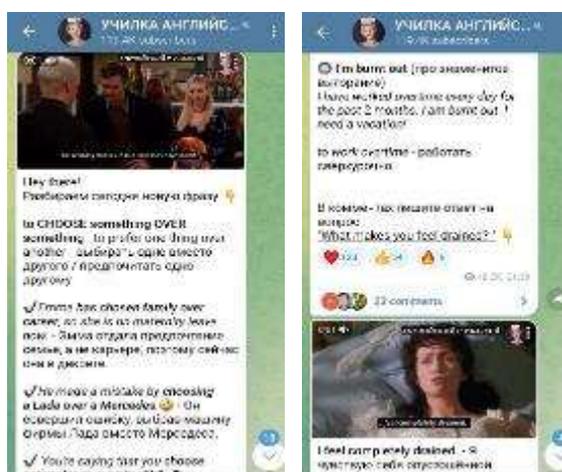
The next step is regularly a type of testing such as matching words, multiple choice exercises, word building, synonym and antonym exercises, sentence translation exercises, filling the gaps, comprehension tasks etc. Telegram is provided with a variety of the technical features that enable users (channel hosts) to tailor various kinds of testing such as special boxes for multiple choice quizzes, questions and answers etc. (Pic. 4).



Pic. 4. Fragments of the blogs (Uchilka Angliyskogo, InEnglish with Inna, English.online.mariya, Mr Hopkins English)

Multiple choice is found to be the most popular type of testing among others. The test commonly consists of 3 or 4 alternatives for picking one correct option. Either it normally practises the vocabulary (or grammar) which was submitted by the blogger before, or it is a comprehension task for training listening/ reading skills.

Another prominent way of enriching the vocabulary is submitting a video that images a several seconds piece of an episode from popular series or films. Such a visual aid lets the active phrases come under scrutiny once more as well as helps learners master them more effectively. The teaching blogger might welcome answers to the question containing the active phrase, so learners can submit feedback in the comment box and by doing so work it out again (Pic. 5).



Pic. 5. Fragment of the blog (Uchilka Angliyskogo)

It is remarkable that bloggers frequently place posts about their private life along with the educational stories. This is due to a tendency to self-identification among the bloggers as well as an urge to inspire confidence of the audience in or-

der to gain credibility with their subscribers and attract more ones. After the introduction of the post involving the events of teaching blogger's private life in Telegram feed the teachers suggest practising the active lexis via the various ways of testing to check new vocabulary mastering, feedback with examples using the active vocabulary in the comment box (Pic. 6).



Pic. 6. Fragment of the blog (Mr Hopkins English)

One more preferred principle for presenting educational content is to use realistic visual support to enhance memorizing effect of learning the active vocabulary. For example, behind the text "dishwasher" the video shows a dishwasher working in the kitchen. The video containing the active word "fold up" shows the teacher folding up the napkin. Besides, it's accompanied by the sound of the rustling napkin that additionally serves as assistance to grasp the active vocabulary (Pic. 7).

Such integration of the active lexis into the situation of real life makes an effect of participation whilst visual aid of graphic and text elements as well as sound enable learners to comprehend and memorize the vocabulary more profoundly.

The teachers actively apply a combination of three elements in their blogs: a video displaying the blogger that comments on a news event or a situation from their private life which includes analysis of the active vocabulary units with the text covering the video and possible animated graphic elements placed in front of it. For instance, the blogger (alexzueva) shares the information about her condition after a long exhausting stroll around London: *"It has been a long walk. I am so*

much shattered” highlighting an active lexical unit with the red colour in contrast to bright background. It should be noted that the picture is followed by the active vocabulary review containing morphological analysis, translation, vivid examples of the word usage which allows students to comprehend the units on their own without information support and practise them in effect. Alongside the word can be graphically displayed in a supplementary picture, therefore it is to be additionally practised by a learner. In case of the situation with the blogger being “shattered”, the active word goes along with the image of a tired rabbit.

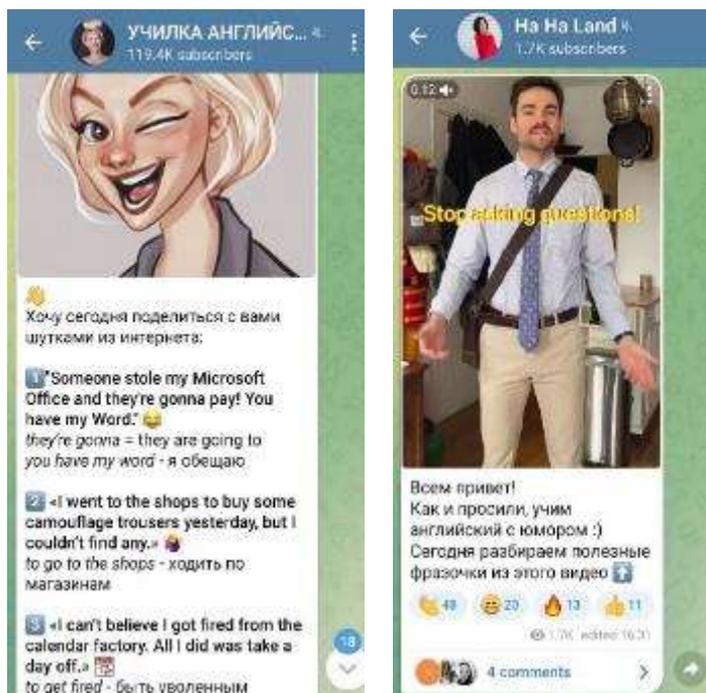


Pic. 7. Fragment of the blog (Mr Hopkins English)

One of the frequently used way of presenting the educational content in the blog by Uchilka Angliyskogo is an amusing style of giving the material as well as using humour in the content itself: the active vocabulary is played up in the video sketches where the blogger takes part of a character. The teacher often uses slang speaking native language as well as English (eg. *easy-peasy, yikes, besties, spill the tea, Gucci* etc.) which attracts attention of the audience and enhances credibility of the blogger. The humour component along with an emotional one produce a special psychological effect, the content seems more captivating, urges emotional reactions that tends to grab the audience’s attention to the content as well as make it more visible helping learners memorise the lexis (Pic. 8).

Lately humour has been applied more regularly by teachers which can be found in teaching methodology, so there is the tendency to use the humour component as a supplementary teaching element for explaining lexical and grammar aspects [Van Shuang, 2019, p. 20]. It should be noticed the aforementioned teaching blog holds the most numerous audience (about 120 thousand followers) among all the English teaching blogs represented in the paper and those which were found in

the Telegram platform. That leads us to the prospect that this blog combining both lexical approach and humour concept of presenting the teaching content is considered to be the most stimulating, favourable and useful for English language learners.



Pic. 8. Fragment of the blog (Uchilka Angliyskogo, Ha ha Land)

Findings

The list of the aforesaid ways of teaching and learning foreign languages is not complete, there are much more of those which are to be under onward analysis. The study of the educational materials on the Telegram platform reveals the enormous potential of the social network acknowledging it as an effective resource for learning foreign languages. Learners manifest their positive attitude to the platform as it proves to be efficient, interesting and visually supportive.

Educating in Telegram is a special form of teaching and learning a foreign language, application of the service Telegram as an educational tool intensifies knowledge gaining process. Based on the survey data submitted by English language learners and the teachers' blogs content analysed, Telegram demonstrates significant language education prospects and is to take the lead among current educational resources. Lexical approach turns out to be the most common and effective among teaching bloggers. The format of posting the various types of educational content is viewed as the most efficient for catching learners' eyes and holding their attention. Humour component alongwith emotionally covered submission positively effects the audience and proves to be most prominent as well as brings along mastering the foreign lexemes.

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