

## OPINION

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associate professor in the field 3.7 Administration and Management (Management in  
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for obtaining the scientific degree “Doctor“

in the field: 1.3. Pedagogy of ...

Scientific specialty: Methodology of Modern Language (English Language) Teaching  
with candidate Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova

### 1. Scientific and applied significance of the research

In recent years, a number of factors have made it necessary to increasingly implement information technologies actively in education. The PhD student Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova's research activities are in this context, namely – improving the English language teaching methodology in order to meet the new challenges. The PhD thesis **“E-portfolio-based Formative Assessment Model in an English for Specific Purposes Context”** focuses on a topic which is unexplored in our country – the implementation of electronic portfolios in the English language teaching, learning and assessment processes for university students in the field of economics. PhD student Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova is a lecturer of English at UNWE, author of scientific studies and workbooks, with significant theoretical and practical experience in the outlined research field.

### 2. Display of clearly stated research aims and objectives

The PhD thesis objectives are clearly and precisely defined in two points: constructing and testing a model for formative assessment through e-portfolios in the teaching of English for specific purposes.

The tasks in the PhD thesis logically follow the set goals and encompass the processes of constructing and testing the model: a theoretical analysis of the specialized scientific literature, the technological steps in creating a model for formative assessment through e-portfolios, conducting a pedagogical experiment and mathematical-statistical processing of the collected data, and drawing conclusions about the model applicability.

### 3. Compliance of the research methodology and research methods with the set aims and objectives

In the research theoretical and methodological foundations, the PhD student reasonably considers the specialized English language as a subcategory of foreign language teaching

and to this effect looks for the specificities of the communicative approach, in line with the students' needs and goals in a certain professional field. An in-depth analysis of the main learning models using digital technologies has been done. I agree with the PhD student's statement that in the analyzed types of learning involving the use of ICT, the differences mainly refer to the degree of their integration in a traditional context.

The PhD student successfully substantiates the reasons for using the ADDIE model for pedagogical activities within e-learning. Stanley's principled approach to developing the proposed e-portfolio-based formative assessment model has also been applied appropriately. The chosen methodology is a logical basis for the PhD student's research activities in the area of English for specific purposes (ESP) formative assessment. I share Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova's opinion that formative assessment allows to track learners' progress and to support their effective learning. In the search for alternative formative assessment options, the electronic portfolio is a proven tool for teaching, learning and assessment.

#### **4. PhD thesis contributions of scientific and applied nature**

- A theoretical analysis of the scientific literature on the research problem has been conducted.
- A methodological model for the implementation of an electronic portfolio in the ESP formative assessment has been developed and tested, which has the potential to enhance its quality, students' academic success rates, as well as their motivation and autonomy.
- A methodological toolkit, in English and Bulgarian, has been developed for self-assessment of the language competence in specialized English for students of economics.
- A list of specialized platforms and websites has been compiled, for creating own or using ready-made authentic resources to be employed in the ESP learning for students of economics.
- A rubric has been developed for evaluating the functional, technical and pedagogical aspects of tools for electronic foreign language learning in higher education.
- A database of authentic learning materials and tasks has been created, aimed at practising target language skills in the students' professional field.
- A media library has been set up, containing digital ESP resources, characterized by authenticity, interactivity, adaptability and portability of its content.

#### **5. Evaluation of the publications on the PhD thesis: number, type of journals in which they have been published.**

On the PhD thesis topic, the PhD student has published the following:

- two workbooks aiming at developing business English skills, published by UNWE in 2020 and 2022;
- an article published in the Yearbook of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures, NBU, 2021;



- an article in the Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching (JRSP-ELT), 2023, and
- a co-authored paper from an international scientific conference, held in 2020.

## 6. Opinions, recommendations and notes


The presented methodological model for formative assessment through an electronic portfolio is in conformity with the curriculum and the educational goals set for the development of the professional communicative competence of students of economics. The design of the innovative model for formative assessment provides a contemporary learning environment based on the constructivist principles and is aimed at promoting learner activity and motivation. The model features a variety of forms of assessment of integrated skills, which enhances assessment objectivity and provides opportunities for development of higher-order cognitive skills and transfer of the knowledge and skills acquired by students in real-life situations.

The methodological model for formative assessment through an electronic portfolio can be successfully adapted and applied to other lecture courses in the higher education system.

## 7. Conclusion with clearly stated positive or negative assessment of the PhD thesis

Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova's PhD thesis **"E-portfolio-based Formative Assessment Model in an English for Specific Purposes Context"** is an in-depth scientific study that fully meets the requirements for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy". In conclusion of the present opinion, I propose to the respected scientific jury to evaluate the scientific contribution of the PhD research and award the PhD student Lilyana Todorova-Ruskova the scientific degree "Doctor" in the field 1.3. Pedagogy of..., scientific specialty "Methodology of Modern Language (English Language) Teaching".

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