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Olena Kononova*

Lecturer

Separated Structural Unit “Maritime Applied College of Kherson State Maritime Academy”

73000, 14 Nezalezhnosti Ave., Kherson, Ukraine

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1386-6590>

Formation of communicative competence of future ship engineers using critical thinking technologies based on the “World Café” method

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Abstract. The transition to a new educational model that will ensure the independence of thinking and speech activity of the future mechanic-officer is a strategic vector of improvement and change in the educational space, which will help maintain the competitiveness of both the teacher and the student. The purpose of this study was to exchange experience of theoretical and practical application of the World Café method as a tool for critical thinking in the context of formation of communicative competence of future ship engineers. To fulfil this purpose, the survey method was used to collect and analyse information on the development of productive critical thinking of education students during discussion in English language classes for professional orientation. The main characteristics and requirements for critical thinking in the professional training of future ship engineers were defined, namely: clarity, accuracy, validity, logic, impartiality. It was proved that the process of forming critical thinking is a necessary condition for independent and responsible actions of maritime specialists in problematic situations. Critical skills such as analysis, evaluation, explanation, and summarisation were highlighted, which are important when discussing professional situations. It was substantiated that critical thinking requires active learning and does not tolerate passive learning, and therefore classes should be interesting and exciting, productive, and motivational. It was emphasised that the main purpose of modern maritime education is not just the accumulation of knowledge and skills, but the training of cadets as independent subjects of educational activities capable of learning and improving their knowledge. The study described the advantages of the World Café method. It was noted that in distance education, “the world cafe” method is widely used in online classes on the Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Whiteboard Miro platforms for group work and knowledge sharing. The practical value of this study is that its results can be used by teachers in preparation for classes in English (for professional purposes), literature, history, etc

Keywords: ability to analyse; online classes; independence; decision-making; professional education; maritime English

*Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have seen the beginning of a new phase in the teaching of English at a technical university. This stage is characterised by innovative approaches to defining the purpose, content, means of teaching and practical implementation of these approaches in addressing particular issues related to the achievement of new goals. In the new

communication space, increasingly more attention is being paid to the development of communication skills, including professional communication.

The formation of a new level of specialist involves the use of methods of activation and problematisation of language learning that develop creativity and independence.



The introduction of the latest technologies also raises the question of training a future mechanic-officer who will be able to find a solution to a problem in the context of professional activity, i.e., to teach them the ability to think through solutions to any situation, looking for a variety of options. Therefore, the problem of developing critical thinking skills in students is important and relevant today. A person who does not take anything for granted and thinks critically can observe and be attentive to details; carefully study information; identify the important, ignoring the secondary; and substantiate their opinion.

As students are increasingly writing tests using information technology, and control questions contain answers, they (students) are deprived of the opportunity to solve problematic tasks independently, using logical thinking operations (Kononova & Yurzhenko, 2019). And if critical thinking is the ability to evaluate different concepts and draw conclusions based on evidence, then the student must be taught to think independently (analyse, evaluate, establish objective truths) to master the problem and find the only correct solution, to express oneself competently, to be convincing (Mataniari *et al.*, 2020)

The purpose of education is an independent, creative person capable of self-development, not only of learning but also of using the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in real life. Critical thinking requires active/interactive learning and does not tolerate passive learning, it is not a natural skill or skill set, and is therefore improved over many years through practice (Dewi *et al.*, 2022). Proceeding from the purpose of critical thinking, teachers should engage their students in interactive activities, and the quality of arguments and thinking should become a personal practice of using English and critical thinking at the same time (Chen, 2022). Since students mostly have no prior experience and can only rely on information from the cases they read, it is still necessary to engage students in “thinking through and finding solutions” (Butler & Halpern, 2020). The introduction of the interactive technology “World Café” in the educational process affects the change in the type of thinking and the level of creativity of students (Skrypnyk & Rybak, 2022). This technology, as a process that increases the effectiveness of large groups, today includes many methods and techniques used by teachers in various educational institutions (Arisoy & Aybek, 2021).

The World Café method is one of the tools for developing critical thinking. The exact time of the method's emergence is unknown, but most opinions agree that the date of birth can be considered 1995, when business owners and scientists met at the home of Juanita Brown and David Isaac in Mill Valley, California to discuss the future of economic development. They worked in mixed groups and then discussed their findings. Many interesting solutions emerged from the discussion, and the methodology has been applied in different countries and in different areas of activity (The World Café format as a tool for community development, 2017).

Although there are many studies on this topic, it is still relevant to consider the feasibility of using this method in

teaching maritime English, as the problem has been understudied. The purpose of the article is to substantiate the feasibility of using the “World Café” method as a tool for building communicative competence and developing productive critical thinking when learning English at a maritime college, both in the classroom and online.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a set of interrelated methods: empirical (observation, survey), theoretical (analysis, generalisation, comparison). A pedagogical experiment was conducted to introduce the World Café method into the educational process. It was attended by 83 cadets of the mechanical department of the separate structural unit of the Maritime Applied College of Kherson State Maritime Academy (men, 17-19 years old, with various levels of English, with the same learning environment and curriculum).

The students were divided into two groups: 45 (experimental group) and 38 (control group, in which this method was not used in the classroom).

The observation method was used to monitor the implementation of the World Café method in the English language teaching and learning process. Using theoretical analysis, scientific sources were reviewed in terms of the relevance and prospects of implementing this method in various fields of activity today, including for students of several types of institutions; methodological developments of English language classes and educational activities for ship engineers were prepared. A pre- and post-experiment survey was conducted to determine productive critical thinking using a survey on the LMS Moodle platform (Fig. 1). The survey was conducted anonymously in class, online (September, December 2021). Students, answering questions of varying levels of difficulty, had to choose one or more of the options (level 1). The questions of the 2nd level of difficulty contained the following tasks: to determine the correct answer (to explain their opinion); to substantiate a true or false statement; to describe actions in the proposed situation (fuel spill; extinguishing a fire in the engine room/ on the upper deck; bunkering, etc.).

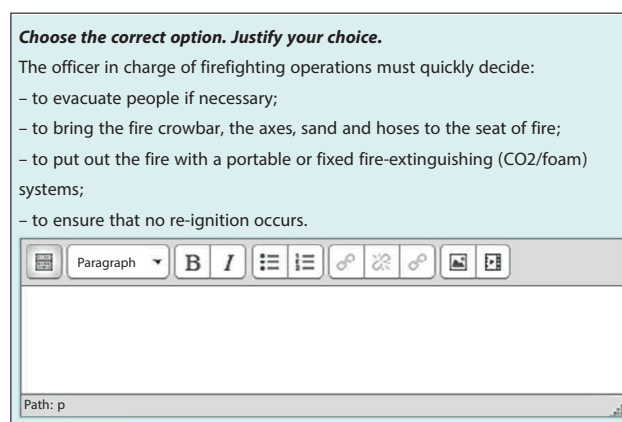


Figure 1. Tasks from the LMS Moodle platform (2nd level of difficulty)

Source: screenshot of the Moodle LMS platform window

The methods of generalisation and comparison were used to make a quantitative and qualitative analysis of

the results obtained. The results were processed using the answers on the Moodle LMS platform (Fig. 2).

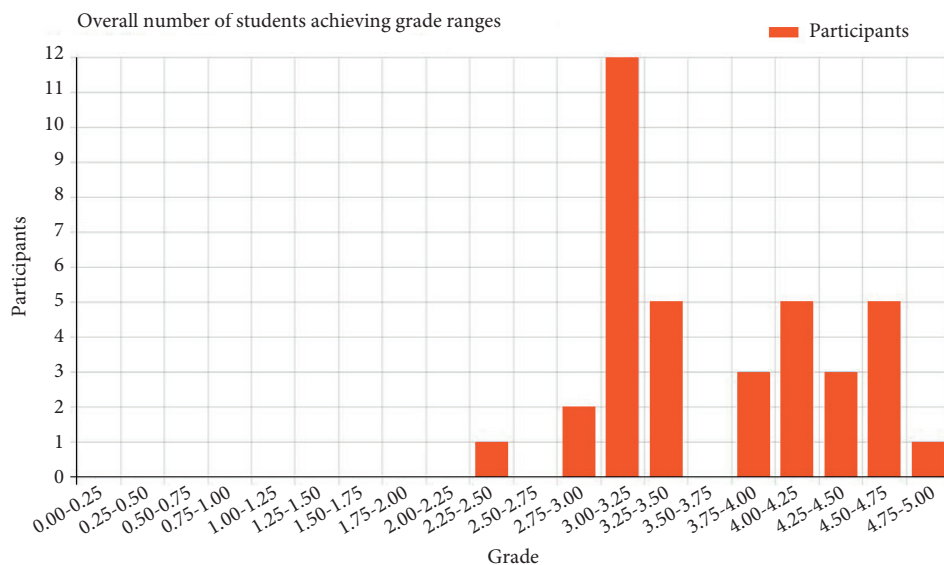


Figure 2. Graph of responses received on the platform

Source: screenshot of the programme window with the results

All processes conducted in the study comply with ethical standards, do not violate the honour and dignity of respondents; the psychological characteristics of students, including age, were considered. During the experiment, no one's rights were violated, and anonymity was preserved following the recommendations on the ethical aspect of conducting pedagogical research developed by reputable organisations, including the American Educational Research Association (2011) and the British Educational Research Association (2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the module, each teacher uses different methods and techniques (role-playing, discussions, conversations, brainstorming, etc.) to improve the memorisation and enhance students' knowledge. In the English for Specific Purposes classes, teachers try to create a problem situation that is close to the conditions of professional training of ship engineers. Therefore, it is vital that learners try to think and express their opinions (working in groups or pairs), choosing the best solution to the problem (Raj *et al.*, 2022). Shifting from conventional homework, such as completing an exercise, to more creative tasks, such as creating a project, can help with learning and critical thinking.

The World Café method allows for a lively discussion in small groups, which should lead to an optimal solution (to a task, problem, or situation). This method is an active assistant to gather information, share knowledge or experience, freely share ideas and opinions, and hear what others think about it. This allows each participant to be involved in the discussion and speak frankly and on equal terms (Tunjungari & Takwin, 2021). All this should teach future ship engineers to work in a team and respect each other's opinions.

This method makes it possible to work and move between desks, writing down theses, filling in tables, diagrams, or mind maps (to optimise the process, one can find a large sheet of paper, coloured pencils, or markers at each desk) (Fig. 3).

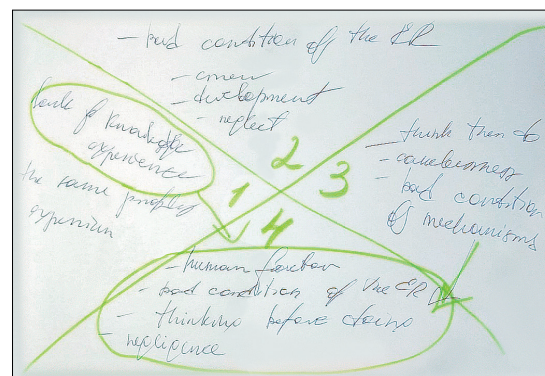


Figure 3. A sheet of paper with theses written down
Source: photographs taken by the author of this study

This method can also be used for distance learning. Different platforms allow students to work as a separate subgroup or together. For instance, Zoom and Moodle have separate "rooms" for discussion, while the Whiteboard Miro platform allows students to take notes, use drawings, fill in tables, and present their posters. Students can work on one or several topics at the same time, i.e., each subgroup works on a particular issue that is discussed and worked on.

The role of the moderator and team leaders is particularly important. Future specialists may not consider opinions and facts that are not inherent in their views, i.e., during the discussion they reject information that may be

important for solving a problematic professional situation (e.g., in the engine room). Therefore, the moderator's task

is to set up friendly work in groups (Fig. 4), preventing criticism of ideas (Saukh, 2021).

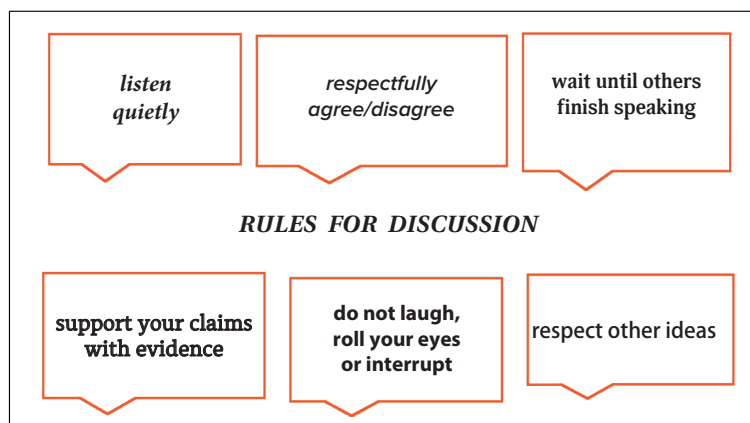


Figure 4. Rules for organising friendly work in groups

Source: developed by the author of this study

A dialogue or discussion in the format of a World Café involves several steps:

1) the participants divide into groups and choose a leader (there should be a balance between strong and weak students);

2) having understood the main goals and objectives of the discussion, the group proposes their ideas, the “scribe” records them; the discussion takes 15 minutes (it is useful to provide students with indicative questions to guide their thoughts in the right direction);

3) the leaders move to another desk and introduce the participants of the other group to their work, refine ideas, reject unsuccessful ones, suggest new ones; after 15 minutes, the next desk is changed, and so on – until the leaders return to their groups;

4) the leaders (with their original teams) share the results of their work and choose the best ones (10 minutes);

5) after that, poster presentations from each group are followed by a discussion (the discussion can be continued by forming a single large circle) (World café: how discussion in small mixed groups helps to find solutions. 2021)

The rules can be changed: it is not the leader who goes from desk to desk, but the group itself, and then communicates with its leader; perhaps each group is given a piece of text (different in content, but on the same topic; beginning, middle, and end), and, going between desks, each group fills in, e.g., a table, at the end getting a complete picture of the topic for discussion. One can change the name of the café, e.g., when discussing environmental protection, it can be called a “green café”, when studying the topic of “main and auxiliary mechanisms”, “rules of conduct in the engine room” – a “professional café”, etc.

The best way to teach critical thinking is to teach students to ask a lot of questions during a discussion and to look for answers on their own. Questions stimulate critical thinking, and by answering them, students analyse information, build hypotheses, and defend their opinion

(Tiaglo, 2017). The World Café discussion methodology is suitable for revisiting a completed module to gain a common understanding of a particular situation or to address various issues (e.g., bunkering stages or team actions during a fuel spill/fire, etc.) At the end of each module of the textbook, senior students have a “Case Study” or “Maritime Accident Report” – selected texts with a problematic quasi-professional situation on board a ship. After reading the “case”, future ship engineers should solve the problems (in the form of a discussion) by answering the main questions: how or because of what/who did it happen? what was the plan for the task? who was responsible for the task? what should be done to remedy the situation? what are the conclusions to prevent such a situation in the future?

At the end of the discussions, students can be asked to write an essay or a letter to a friend as homework, asking them to answer the following questions: what experience did you have during the class discussion; did you change your opinion after hearing another opinion, or, on the contrary, did you try to convince someone; did you feel comfortable during the discussion; what did you learn? It was found that the experimental and control groups (before the experiment) had almost the same indicators: critical thinking (10% difference), dogmatic thinking, i.e., they did not try to refute the opinion of another, but only to prove their own position, thus possibly leaving out the only correct opinion of the interlocutor (16% difference), and do not have their own opinion (25% difference) (Fig. 5). The purpose of the next step of the experiment was to find out the level of academic achievement. Having analysed all these questions for the second time (after using the method), students show understanding of the problem, seek reliable information, choose the best result among the available ones, substantiate their opinions and make decisions (61% discrepancy), dogmatic thinking (45% discrepancy), students who agree with everyone and do not have their own opinion (35% discrepancy) (Fig. 5).

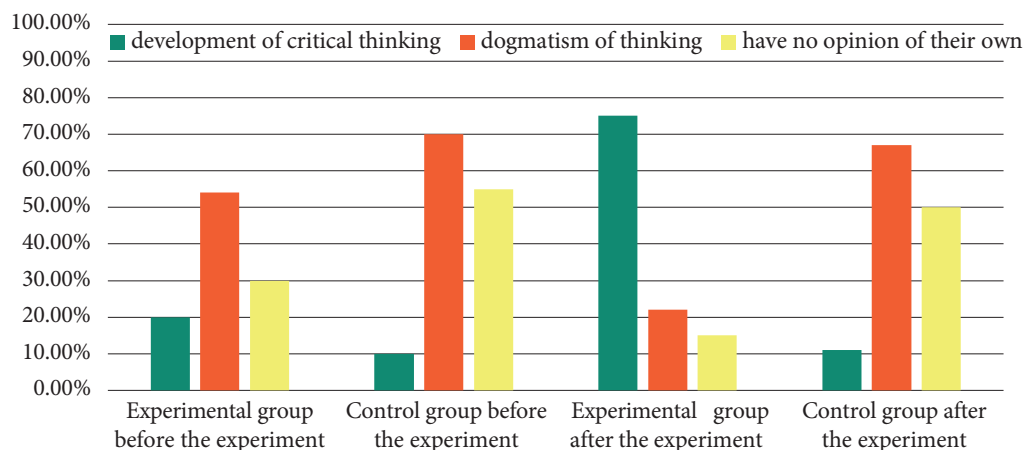


Figure 5. Diagram of the experiment results

Source: developed by the author of this study based on the findings

If the World Café method is implemented in the educational process of teaching English (for Specific Purposes) and is used purposefully and systematically in final classes and at educational events, the level of students' academic achievements will increase.

Many foreign and Ukrainian scholars have addressed the issue of developing critical thinking in general and the use of the World Café method in classes of different age groups and in the study of various academic disciplines. The researchers provided additional characteristics to better understand the concept of critical thinking, its importance and approaches to its formation. According to H.A. Butler and D.F. Halpern (2020), critical thinking is directed and balanced; Y.N. Dewi *et al.* (2022) consider it independent and well-founded; R.W. Paul (1993) – sceptical attitude towards the generally accepted; H.A.E. Shamboul (2022) considers it a productive and cognitive process of a person. S. Terno (2020) emphasised the importance of the dialogue model of learning for the effective development of students' critical thinking in collaboration. S. Skrypnyk and V. Rybak (2022) believe that the introduction of the interactive technology "World Café" in the educational process contributes to a change in the types of thinking, levels of creativity, which is the fundamental basis for improving the level of student achievement. The World Café method can be an effective educational practice that contributes to the formation of professional competencies (Arisoy & Aybek, 2021), a powerful tool for working on strategic tasks in decision-making (Mihail, 2022), combining many opinions for in-depth study of a problem (Saukh, 2021), helps to see the multilayered nature of the problems being worked on and multiple options for their solution (Tunjungsari & Takwin, 2021). The key to the success of this technology is a relaxed atmosphere, mutual respect, and the ability to listen and hear each other's opinions. This is one of the main factors that will contribute to the growth of the creative process and is the ideology of the "café" technology (Diahyleva *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the results of this study fit well into the general context of

scientific research and, specifically, once again confirm the need to develop critical thinking in students, and that the World Café method has proven to be an effective tool to help successfully accomplish this task.

Experiments related to those presented in this study have been conducted by other scientists. S. Skrypnyk and V. Rybak (2022) note that this approach will ensure a change in critical thinking and affect the levels of creativity of students, which was tested during the formative experiment. H. Ivanenko *et al.* (2022) believe that the use of these pedagogical technologies in the educational process will increase the overall effectiveness of the educational process; improve student activity in practical and seminar classes; increase motivation to acquire knowledge; and develop the necessary competencies. The World Café is a flexible and effective method for facilitating knowledge sharing, small group discussions to develop understanding and collaborative learning about a topic of interest, where all participants contribute to the discussion, have the knowledge and skills to address the issues and do not need to rely on an "external" expert judgement (Schiele *et al.*, 2022).

The use of technology has a positive impact on the scientific and creative activities of students. Everyone learns to work independently, develop their own intellectual, cultural, and ethical development, and demonstrate their creative potential, which underlies further professional development and individual success (Skrypnyk & Skarupa, 2022). The advantages of this method are as follows: it is suitable for exploring ideas and problem situations; it provides an opportunity to express many ideas in a short period of time; summarising the project; planning group work; it can involve 15 to 50 or more students in the discussion (I-III years for the final stage, e.g., "English Week").

The World Café method should not be used when dealing with material that the group has not studied before (or the first lesson of a module), because there is not enough material to compare with and students will not be able to find what to compare with what, or what arguments to make.

CONCLUSIONS

Facilitative methods of teaching English and their use in combination with conventional approaches to the organisation of learning activities are the key to the formation and development of students' qualitative communicative competence. They maximise the potential of all participants in the process, stimulate the activity and initiative of students and improve their learning. The educational value and pedagogical effectiveness of the introduction of the interactive technology "World Café" in the educational process was proved in the experiment, the results of which suggest that in the experimental group, after a series of classes and educational activities with the introduction of the interactive technology "World Café", critical thinking skills increased (by 55%) and the indicators of dogmatic thinking decreased (by 32%) and the number of those who did not have their own opinion decreased (by 15%). Therefore, the implementation of the World Café method in the educational process of teaching English (for Specific Purposes) to ship engineers is effective. It was substantiated that it affects changes in the type of thinking and the level of creativity of students. The World Café method was chosen for the study because it offers significant opportunities to improve the effectiveness of group decision-making (i.e., analysing the situation; identifying options for solving the problem; choosing the best option); increase the level of involvement of each student in the discussion process; stimulate initiative; encourage personal responsibility for the

process and the result, ensure the exchange of experience between participants; and promote personal development of discussion participants. It was found that students prefer situational modelling, which stimulates them to develop, express themselves freely and use their English language communication skills in various professional situations.

The purpose of this study was fulfilled, the updated results confirm that the implementation of the World Café method in the educational process of teaching at final classes and educational events increases the level of academic achievement of students. During the experiment, the necessary conditions were provided in order not to distract students from work, not to constrain their actions, but to make them more natural. The participants in the experiment were third-year cadets of the separate structural unit of the Maritime Applied College of the Kherson State Maritime Academy. The respondents answered questions of varying levels of difficulty (where they could choose from the answers provided or express their own opinion).

The prospect is to develop methodological recommendations for the implementation of this methodology in teaching English (and other disciplines) in various courses.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Олена Юрїївна Кононова

Викладач

Відокремлений структурний підрозділ «Морський фаховий коледж Херсонської державної морської академії»

73000, просп. Незалежності 14, м. Херсон, Україна

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1386-6590>

Формування комунікативної компетентності майбутніх судномеханіків за допомогою технологій критичного мислення на основі методу «Світове кафе»

Анотація. Перехід до нової освітньої моделі, яка буде забезпечувати самостійність мислення та мовленнєву активність майбутнього офіцера-механіка, – стратегічний напрям удосконалення та змін в освітньому просторі, який сприятиме підтримці конкурентоспроможності як викладача, так і здобувача освіти. Мета дослідження – обмін досвідом теоретичного та практичного застосування методу World Café як інструмента критичного мислення в контексті формування комунікативної компетентності майбутніх судномеханіків. Для досягнення поставленої мети використовувався метод опитування, завдяки якому зібрано та проаналізовано інформацію щодо розвитку продуктивного критичного мислення здобувачів освіти під час дискусії на заняттях з англійської мови за професійним спрямуванням. Визначено основні характеристики та вимоги до критичного мислення в професійній підготовці майбутніх судномеханіків, а саме: чіткість, точність, обґрунтованість, логічність, неупередженість. Доведено, що процес формування критичного мислення – необхідна умова для самостійних і відповідальних дій морських фахівців у проблемних ситуаціях. Висвітлено критичні навички: аналіз, оцінка, пояснення та підсумовування – важливі під час обговорення професійних ситуацій. Обґрунтовано, що критичне мислення вимагає активного та не терпить пасивного навчання, тому заняття мають бути цікавими та захопливими, продуктивними та мотиваційними. Наголошено, що головна мета сучасної морської освіти – не просто накопичення знань і вмінь, а й підготовка курсантів як самостійних суб'єктів освітньої діяльності, здатних навчатися та вдосконалювати свої знання. У статті описано переваги методу «світового кафе». Зазначено, що в дистанційній освіті метод «світового кафе» широко використовується в онлайн-заняттях на платформах Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Whiteboard Miro для групової роботи та обміну знаннями. Практична цінність дослідження полягає в тому, що його результати можуть використовувати викладачі в підготовці до заняття з англійської мови (за професійним спрямуванням), літератури, історії тощо

Ключові слова: здатність аналізувати; онлайн-заняття; самостійність; рішення; професійна освіта; морська англійська мова