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ENGLISH E-LEARNING VOCABULARY: ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

The rapid development of information technologies in the 20th and 21st centuries has produced a new phenomenon of modern civilization – digital reality. One of its integral components within the educational system is e-learning, defined by innovative teaching methods based on modern information technologies. The transformation of education, the emergence of new learning forms, and the creation of specific terminology are viewed by many researchers as a natural and positive stage in the evolution of contemporary education.

The term *e-learning*, derived from the phrase electronic learning, was defined by UNESCO experts as «learning conducted via the Internet and multimedia tools» [1, p. 22]. It appeared in the English language in the late 1990s, initially used in the corporate environment of the United States to

describe digital training programs for company employees. Over time, numerous synonymous terms emerged in the English language – *web-based learning*, *online training*, *virtual learning*, *cyber learning*, *Internet-based learning*, and *digital learning* – reflecting the diversification of learning formats in the digital age.

Although these terms are often used interchangeably, researchers differentiate between e-learning, online learning, and distance learning. Online learning refers to structured education delivered digitally, while e-learning covers any form of instruction mediated by information and multimedia technologies. Distance learning, in turn, emphasizes independent study guided by an instructor.

The first online schools appeared in the U.S. and Canada in the mid-1990s. Today, online education is widespread and integrated into national educational systems worldwide. Its success is driven by accessibility, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and the acceleration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made e-learning a core component of modern education.

A major institutional development has been the creation of virtual universities, both public and private – such as the Bavarian Virtual University (Germany), the Open University (UK), and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (India). These institutions consolidate educational resources and expand access to global learning opportunities. Private projects like the University of Phoenix (USA) also serve hundreds of thousands of students worldwide.

The spread of e-learning has fostered the formation of a new layer of English professional terminology. Alongside *e-learning*, expressions like *computer-based training*, *technology-enhanced learning*, *computer-assisted instruction*, and *ICT-based learning* demonstrate ongoing conceptual refinement. The shift from *based* to *assisted* or *enhanced* reflects a perceptual evolution – technology as a facilitator rather than the focus of learning.

As M. Desai notes that e-learning represents not just a technological tool but an educational paradigm with its own methodology [2, p. 329]. R. D. Garrison emphasizes that «the ‘e’ in e-learning stands for education – not electronics» [3, p. 16]. The terminological field has recently expanded with blended learning and hybrid concepts, such as m-learning (mobile), v-learning (virtual), r-learning (rapid), x-learning (cross-platform), and *c-learning* (*constructive/classroom*). These so-called «forecast terms» illustrate the dynamic evolution of the field and its adaptability to technological progress.

Linguistically, e-learning terminology demonstrates synonymy, homonymy, and neologization, typical of emerging terminological systems. The productivity of the prefix e- (*e-commerce*, *e-health*, *e-government*, e-

recruitment) highlights the influence of digital technologies on English word formation and signifies the ongoing transformation of global communication through the language of technology and education.

Thus, the evolution of English e-learning terminology reflects the deep integration of digital technologies into modern education and communication. The emergence of numerous synonymous, homonymous, and neological terms demonstrates the field's linguistic dynamism and adaptability to technological innovation. The productivity of the prefix *e-* signifies the ongoing expansion of technology-related vocabulary in English, while the conceptual shift from technology as a tool to technology as an educational medium highlights a broader transformation in learning philosophy and global communication.

References

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