



THE SIGNIFICANCE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF BLENDED LEARNING IN THE INSTRUCTION AND ACQUISITION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses blended learning's benefits and drawbacks, as well as how frequently it can be used in the classroom and in relation to foreign experiences. The modern, information-driven society is slowly adapting the traditional educational system to the rapid advancements in technology. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously update and enhance both the curriculum and teaching strategies to continue to prepare the "new generation of engineers," who will be able to apply critical thinking and creative approaches to their work as well as take on decision-making responsibilities. These all seem to indicate a strong commitment to ongoing education and personal growth. Apart these skills, the crucial competence of engineers is the ability to use at least one foreign language, very often it is English, as a tool for professional communication in the national and international labour markets. In spite of understanding the language importance, Russia has problems with language competence that is expressed in low ability of young specialists to be involved into international projects and research.

Introduction. The goal of modernizing engineering education in Russia is deemed to be teaching foreign languages for professional purposes. According and understanding multiple languages is becoming a crucial component of any specialist's successful career, regardless of their line of work. The curriculum and methods for teaching foreign languages to nonlinguistic students need to be revised in light of the need for specialized training.

In the frame of the limited class hours new methodological teaching approaches should be based on individualization or autonomy that will serve the purpose of recognizing commitment to lifelong learning. The popular motto of higher education nowadays is "to learn how to learn". No university can graduate a specialist prepared to independent professional career; people become specialists in the process of their personal professional development. So, in this way, autonomy can be considered as a necessary condition, in which



a student uses endless potential of a human brain and modern technologies, including information ones, to attain knowledge faster, with higher efficiency and less effort.

Methods and Materials.

Method of Blended Learning. One of the most popular areas of modern education is blended learning, which was formerly primarily utilized by university correspondence program students, who could theoretically learn and practically study their area of specialization at the same time. [9]. It is assumed that, given the current state of social development, the combination of conventional classroom instruction with elements of independent e-learning—which employ certain technologies like computer graphics, audio, and video—as well as interactive elements—will continue to be relevant in the future.

The purpose of this paper is to consider blended learning as a synergistic interdisciplinary technology to answer the question how to improve the quality of training future technical specialists in a modern non-linguistic university using the example of teaching a foreign language, and if blended learning will allow more effective use of the advantages of full-time and e-learning, mutually compensating for the disadvantages of each of them [1]. The peculiarities of modern economic development in our country and the epidemiological situation with the coronavirus have led to the need to apply blended education not only in the correspondence department of the university, but also in full-time, too. Undoubtedly, one of the advantages of this type of training is the simultaneous acquisition of both practical and theoretical skills. While writing this article, we relied exclusively on practical experience of working with full-time and part-time students of our university, which allowed us to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning. In the course of practical work, we identified the following advantages:

1. unlimited time to receive feedback from the teacher, the possibility of interactive handling of educational materials (textbooks developed by the teachers of the department).
2. a large amount of information posted on electronic media.
3. hypertext structure of information presentation (the ability to add text prompts, compact placement of large amounts of information and grammatical comments to the texts).
4. when preparing materials for students' self-learning, they are offered texts on their specialty, which arouses their interest and motivates them to study professional vocabulary.
5. students develop the ability to creatively rethink available information.

Now let's consider some of the disadvantages of blended learning in educational process:

1. low degree of individualization.
2. low ability to communicate with classmates.
3. insufficient development of listening skills

The discipline "Foreign language" is included in the basic block of disciplines for teaching students, both fulltime and at the correspondence department of the Samara Technical University, carried out by the Department of Foreign Languages. The discipline is aimed at developing the ability of graduates to communicate orally and in writing in foreign languages to solve the problems of interpersonal and intercultural interaction. The content of the discipline covers a complex of issues related to the professional orientation of the discipline "Foreign language", focused on the mastery of professional vocabulary in the profile



of training. Teaching the discipline provides practical training and self-learning of students. The following types of control are used: current control of progress in completing assignments in practical classes and intermediate discipline control, which takes the form of a test or exam and includes testing in the Moodle distance learning system. The basic principle of building classes in classrooms with students can be characterized as learning through the action of learning-by-doing. That is, students do not engage in boring, inactive study of theory on the grammar of a foreign language in practical classes, but already directly apply their theoretical knowledge of grammar or vocabulary, acquired independently, while completing the teacher's tasks, which are predominantly communicative. The entire training program is based on a synergistic approach that contributes to the formation of students' value attitudes towards a foreign language. The program is designed so that students know the basic norms of a modern foreign language, they know how to use basic reference literature and dictionaries of a foreign language, have the skills to make literate and logically consistent dialogical and monologue statements in a foreign language and basic skills in translating specialty texts. This scheme or project for the course represents those types of communication exercises, in the course of which students consistently come to the achievement of the main task, namely, improving the quality of mastering a foreign language through action in a blended learning environment. The question is whether blended learning will make it possible to more effectively use the advantages of face-to-face and e-learning, mutually compensating for the disadvantages of each of them. Since the article has a practical focus, we analyze the use of blended learning methods in teaching foreign languages to full-time and part-time students at a technical university. The Department of Foreign Languages of the University has developed a whole series of teaching aids for both full-time and part-time students, including a variety of lexical and grammatical tasks for students of technical specialties. Practice shows that students are quite successful in this type of work. The blended learning program provides for a limited number of classroom hours compared to self-learning, which is given priority. Self-learning of students consists of studying additional literature recommended by the teacher and doing homework. The organization of independent work of students is combined with all teaching methods used in a technical university, and together with them it constitutes a single system of means of acquiring knowledge and developing skills. In addition, we invite students to take tests to assess their knowledge, skills and abilities.

Appearance of the information technologies in teaching foreign languages led to appearance of a relatively new method, called blended learning. The term is most commonly defined as a combination of online and face-to-face 2003; Based on the definition by C. Graham (2005) three components of blended learning can be singled out:

- face-to-face learning that represents a traditional format when instructors and students meet during classes;

self-study learning that assumes different types of activities, such as search on the Internet, webquests, etc, performed by students unassisted;

- online collaborative learning

- an online cooperative work of students and instructors in forms of webinars, wikis, Skype conferences, etc.



For the needs of this article blended learning can be defined as a method of teaching that combines

the most effective face-to-face teaching techniques and online interactive collaboration, both

constituting a system that functions in constant correlation and forms a single environment.

The system will work effectively only if its components are balanced and methodically adequate to program educational objectives. In our opinion blended learning can be used to achieve the following pedagogic goals:

1. To prepare students to independent productive activity develop the following skills:

- constructive and algorithmic thinking;
- creative thinking due to decreasing the amount of reproductive activity;
- communicative skills on the basis of performing team projects;
- ability to find solutions in computer-simulated situations;
- research skills;
- skills of information culture and information processing.

2. To implement the social order:

- to prepare specialists to working with information technologies;
- to prepare specialists to independent lifelong learning by means of information technologies.

3. To intensify all levels of the educational process:

- to increase effectiveness and teaching quality due to the use of information technologies;
- to expose and use stimuli of cognitive activity promotion;
- to deepen interdisciplinary connections.

Several tutors concur that students perform better when they receive both in-person and online instruction in addition to traditional classroom instruction. The article supplies guidance on how to use online learning platforms and explains the role of a tutor in using these platforms to teach English to learners who are not native speakers.

Discussion and Results.

Strategies of Guidelines with Moodle. Despite having limited time, teachers make a lot of attempt to enhance the learning process. In doing so, they use resources that can store a lot of information, offer a variety of options, and be mobile for ongoing improvement. Stated differently, they make use of resources that can arrange the framework for students to work independently. Examine Moodle as an example of one of these resources in use. A virtual learning environment is meant by this.

Moodle supports a learning model where a tutor acts as a course moderator. The platform provides an individual approach to each student by creating a virtual environment for group collaboration. For instance, at TPU we developed an English grammar module integrated into a General English course. This course was created for constant mastering of grammatical skills. In a theoretical part of the course the rules are given in attempt to explain the essence of one or another grammatical phenomenon, and show its place in the language system. Students learn to analyze grammatical structures, define regularities



and become aware of exceptions. This part of the course provides student's autonomy in learning and revising any material missed and badly acquired during guided lessons. A practical part of the course is devoted to working through and polishing grammar material of the theoretical part. The Moodle platform also enables flexible organization of the educational process. The platform gives an opportunity to focus on more complex sections of the course leaving simple pieces for self-study. Automation of the learning process can extremely facilitate teachers' work. All the results are checked and stored in the gradebook.

Multimedia effects are the next appealing component of Moodle courses. Besides the traditional textual and graphical information e-learning involves multimedia tools: animation, video, audio and color. This provides visualization of the teaching material and allows using most mechanisms of perception the new information by humans. However, Moodle environment has certain disadvantages. Computer-aided learning will never replace direct teacher-student interaction; pure e-learning is impersonal. Providing extensive automation of education, e-learning cannot take into account individual characteristics of students' intelligence and temper. This does not mean that the new technology should be rejected.

Individualized Instruction. On-line learning allows taking into account individual characteristics of students, thus creating optimal conditions for revealing their individual potential. Moodle assignments can be adjusted to students'

individual needs and abilities, such as foreign language proficiency, memory capabilities and communication skills. These activities help weak students get engaged in a collaborative work and impose high requirements to the strong ones. The cyberspace can be more appealing to shy students, who feel more confident at home in front of their computers than in a classroom. Therefore, Moodle increases the level of activity of each student thus contributing to the efficiency of knowledge and skill acquisition in the process of learning a foreign language. Learning in Moodle environment contributes to development of student autonomy. Students become more active, demonstrate interest to the subject and teaching methods, and critically assess their skills through group discussion of problems and reasoning while defending their points of view. Student autonomy ensures transition from completing reproductive tasks to individualization of learning, characterized by high level of motivation.

Blended learning is focused on individualized instruction of each student and regular self-assessment through online collaboration. Stimulation of reflection is very important in this model. Reflection trains methods that helped in achieving the best results, promotes systematization and generalization of specific ways of activity. This method creates favorable conditions for integral development of students' personality and self-study

Conclusion .

The use of computers to facilitate language learning is growing in popularity when teaching foreign languages. These days, many students anticipate their courses featuring an online component or support. As a result, a lot of schools provide online learning opportunities to enhance in-person instruction. Based on current research, blended learning appears to yield the best outcomes. Convenience, flexibility, and time saving money are all benefits of blended learning. It has a great deal of potential for teaching foreign languages



because it provides a way to combine the latest technological innovations in online learning with interaction and participation from the best conventional methods.

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