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# Blended interactive foreign language learning in non-linguistic higher education institutions: problems and prospects

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**Abstract.** This article touches upon the current topic of distance and blended learning in the study of English in a non-linguistic university. Particular attention is paid to the difficulties that arise during the transition to online learning. The author offers ideas and recommendations to simplify this process. The advantages and disadvantages of distance and blended teaching of English in a non-linguistic university are considered. As a research task, the author defined an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of blended learning in first year students of a non-linguistic university. The purpose of the article is to determine what format of classes is the most effective in learning English by students of technical higher educational institutions. In the course of the study, a mixed form of education was proposed, combining face-to-face classes with distance learning, as the most promising and effective.

**Keywords:** *interactive methods, innovative methods, foreign language teaching, non-linguistic university, multimedia course, foreign language training, information and communication technologies, blended learning, interactive whiteboard.*

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The educational standards of the latest generation require the preparation of specialists who are sufficiently proficient not only in their specialty, but also in the skills of professional communication in oral and written form. In other words, modern graduate of a higher educational institution must also possess communicative competence, which allows him to carry out professional activities in the framework of oral and written communication in a foreign language. State educational standards for almost all specialties proceed from the fact that a foreign language is an integral component of the professional training of a modern specialist and provide for the use of interactive teaching methods in the educational process. In essence, we are talking about the formation of interactive competence, which involves

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productive, creative educational activities of both the teacher and students at all stages of the educational process, stimulation of search activity, development of the ability to build their own model of activity, change and develop it.

In most non-linguistic universities, the implementation of these tasks is complicated by a number of objective and subjective factors. Among them, it is enough to mention the following: the minimum number of classroom lessons in the discipline "Foreign language" in the curricula of most universities; the distribution of teaching hours during the first two years of study against the background of the absence of profile and special disciplines studied, as a rule, in senior courses, and as a result, low motivation of students; significant differentiation in the level of language training of graduates of secondary schools, lyceums and gymnasiums.

Obviously, in such conditions, the teacher of a foreign language faces the task of using effective teaching methods, including innovative educational technologies that stimulate the assimilation of educational material, ultimately aimed at preparing a qualified specialist and educating a holistic, comprehensively developed personality. Among the most effective and currently in demand teaching methods are the following: the modular principle of constructing a curriculum, the use of multimedia and Internet technologies, collaborative learning, the project method, etc.

In recent years, considerable experience has already been accumulated in the use of these methods in the educational process of non-linguistic universities. However, the new didactic paradigm in the field of language education shifts the main focus towards the priority of foreign language communicative competencies acquired both in the field of general language and in the field of language for special purposes. Therefore, the optimization of the process of teaching a foreign language is impossible without the comprehensive and consistent application of various innovative methods and educational technologies in the perspective of an interactive approach, the purpose of which is the maximum interaction of all participants in the communicative act.

At the present stage of Informatization of education, the process of foreign language training at a university is unthinkable without the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), which create a global information space, providing a huge educational potential and the opportunity to

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improve the level of foreign language proficiency, build a personal learning trajectory. The use of ICT in education is inextricably linked with a change in the roles of the teacher and student, which, in turn, leads to the organization of the educational environment using new forms, methods and teaching aids. [1]

Blended learning technology is becoming the most popular when studying a foreign language at a university. [2] The term blended learning is ambiguous, it is defined as: combining traditional and Internet learning; a combination of various tools used in the e-learning system; a combination of approaches to learning, regardless of the technologies used. In this article, blended learning is considered as the integration of face-to-face learning and interactive educational technologies.

On the one hand, blended learning includes the use of rigorous formal learning tools (classroom sessions, studying language course material) and informal ones (discussion of the most important aspects of the language through Internet resources). On the other hand, it is a combination of various ways of presenting educational material face-to-face, online learning and self-study learning.

Blended learning can be aimed at the formation and development of students' skills necessary for their future professional activities: knowledge of information technology, productive independent activity, constructive, critical and creative thinking and teamwork skills based on the implementation of collective projects, communication, research skills and abilities to find solutions in computer-simulated situations.

One of the effective means of such training in the process of foreign language training of students is an interactive whiteboard, which increases the degree of involvement of students in the educational process, their motivation, cognitive and professional interest, improves concentration.

An interactive whiteboard is a modern multimedia tool that, having all the qualities of a traditional school board, has more opportunities for graphic commenting on screen images; allows you to control and monitor the work of all students at the same time; naturally (by increasing the flow of presented information) to increase the teaching load in the classroom; ensure ergonomic training; create new motivational prerequisites for learning; conduct learning based on dialogue.

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The interactive whiteboard is one of the powerful audio-visual tools, the effectiveness of which has been proven by research in the field of psychology. People after two weeks remember 10% of what they read; 20% of what they hear; 30% of what they see; 50% of what is heard and seen at the same time, 70% of what is said; 90% said and done at the same time. [3] This allows us to conclude that the memorization process is more productive when students are involved in active activities. The interactive whiteboard, thus, contributes to the effective assimilation of educational material by students, influencing them through visual, auditory, kinaesthetic perception systems.

Teachers can put into practice various methods (problem method, project method, information resource method, collaborative learning, etc.) of teaching a foreign language thanks to the main functionalities of the interactive whiteboard, which include:

- active commenting on the material: highlighting, clarifying, adding additional information using electronic markers;
- full-fledged work on the translation of the text and individual sentences, indicating the connections and relationships between words;
- typing by means of a virtual keyboard, customizable in the board software, any text of the task in any application and its demonstration in real time;
- the ability to use vivid illustrations that help to understand an unfamiliar word, make the work with the material more vivid;
- demonstration of websites, educational videos through an interactive whiteboard to all students;
- use of conference calls;
- the ability to move objects on the board, group them according to certain criteria;
- saving, viewing or printing of all changes made;
- use of group forms of work, joint work on documents, tables or images.

An interactive whiteboard can be used at various stages of a lesson at a university and in teaching various types of speech activity, as well as in organizing extracurricular independent work of students.

The formation of reading skills and understanding of foreign language speech by ear based on authentic texts from the Internet is carried out when performing such tasks as:

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"Make correspondences", "Restore the text", "Fill in the gaps in the text", "Select the necessary information", etc.

When teaching speaking to first-year students, the following tasks have communicative value: "Unfinished sentence", "Establishing correspondences", "Correlation of replicas in the dialogue", "Voicing of the video", "Description of pictures". When teaching written speech, the following tasks are effective: "Filling in the gaps", "Restoring the text", "Text with gaps".

To expand the professional vocabulary of first-year students, the most effective are: "Distribution of words into groups", "Remove unnecessary", "Match", "Fill in the gaps", etc. When working out the grammatical material, the following tasks are used: "Find a mistake", "Remove unnecessary", "Fill in the gaps", "Text with gaps" and "Create diagrams". The "Shutter" function allows you to organize control quickly and efficiently, "Transparency" allows you to highlight the correct options.

An important advantage of the interactive whiteboard in the process of organizing "blended learning" in a foreign language is the involvement of students in an authentic context that reflects the ways of applying language knowledge in practice in situations of everyday and professional communication. The ability to access the Internet expands the boundaries of project activities, allowing students to participate in Internet projects. Students can communicate with foreign contemporaries in real time, discuss their concerns, get acquainted with a foreign culture and lifestyle.

Despite the obvious advantages of using an interactive whiteboard, teachers face a number of difficulties: the time-consuming process of planning lessons, the incompatibility of software and interactive whiteboards, and the required sufficient level of computer literacy, both teachers and students. [4]

Nevertheless, the practice of working with an interactive whiteboard proves its effectiveness in the process of foreign language training. On the one hand, blended learning using an interactive whiteboard contributes to the development of all types of speech activity; on the other hand, it acts as an important means of creating a positive psychological climate in the process of constructive cooperation between the teacher and students, increases motivation, and also forms the personal and professional competencies of future specialists.

The popularity of the interactive approach in the

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methodology of teaching foreign languages has been increasing recently for a reason. The interactive model provides for the involvement and active participation of all students, their direct interaction, as well as individual and collective responsibility for the success of joint activities. In the process of interactive teaching a foreign language, a multicultural educational environment is created, which is characterized by openness, focus on personality-oriented interaction, creative and productive nature of learning. Moreover, the interactive approach provides a practical orientation in teaching a foreign language, which is quite difficult to organize in a non-linguistic university.

For quite a long period of time, role-playing was considered the main method of interactive learning. The effectiveness of this method for reproducing professionally significant situations, stimulating the motivation of students and developing interpersonal skills does not require proof. However, in recent years, such techniques as multimedia presentation, electronic textbooks, electronic written communication, etc. have become more widespread. Indeed, modern information and computer technologies provide ample opportunities in organizing both the learning process and monitoring results.

Experience shows that electronic textbooks have a number of advantages: they allow you to systematize a large amount of information of a different nature (grammar rules, texts, audio or video materials, illustrations, diagrams, various types of tasks, including tests); can be used for various types of classes; allow the transformation of educational material in accordance with the tasks or needs of students. Not to mention the fact that in connection with the spread of distance learning, the only possible form of presentation of educational material is an electronic textbook.

One of the most effective means of optimizing the teaching of a foreign language today should be recognized as a multimedia professionally oriented course. As you know, the basis of all multimedia learning tools is the simultaneous impact on several channels of information perception – visual, auditory and motor. A multimedia presentation, as a rule, includes authentic text, as well as audio or video materials created and presented electronically by native speakers. Thus, a multimedia textbook not only reflects the functioning of the language in situations of real communication, but also allows you to perceive foreign language speech in a



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combination of computer animation, graphics, images and sound.

Multimedia tools stimulate the interest of trainees; increase their motivation to learn a foreign language; activate mental processes (attention, thinking, memory, emotions), and also contribute to the creation of a more favourable psychological climate in the classroom. The involvement of video materials recorded in the country of the language being studied helps to create a multicultural learning environment, involving students in the process of activities and communication in a foreign language. Moreover, video material is a means of demonstrating certain patterns of both speech and non-speech behaviour of native speakers of the studied foreign language.

With the modern variety of various sources of information, as well as teaching methods and technologies, it is possible to select educational material not only depending on the language training of students and the subject of communication, but also in accordance with the communicative situation or professional task. Thus, the method of discussion or an impromptu exchange of opinions allows not only to check the understanding and assimilation of the educational material, but also forms such communication skills as the ability to actively express and argue one's position, conduct a discussion with opponents, consistently defend one's point of view, etc. Debates on professional issues contribute to the development of a culture of communication, as well as the mastery of various methods of argumentation and persuasion. The method of "brainstorming" or the case method should be used when solving specific professional problems.

So, modern innovative educational technologies make it possible to transform a multimedia presentation into an effective interactive tool. [5] The teacher gets the opportunity to create or simulate various professionally significant situations, while in the course of training certain models of interaction are considered and tested. In other words, the use of the interactive method in combination with multimedia tools not only contributes to the development of interpersonal communication skills, but also allows you to "play" various professional situations or job roles. It is the use of interactive learning technologies that makes it possible in this case to bring the educational process as close as possible to the real conditions of foreign language professional communication.

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The advantages of multimedia tools for teaching a foreign language are not only that they allow you to effectively combine different types of visualization with audio or video materials, but also to organically integrate the development of various language skills into the general paradigm of forming the professional competence of specialists.

The experience of using multimedia electronic products has shown that the educational material presented in this way is assimilated more easily and efficiently, while simultaneously stimulating the active cognitive activity of students and contributing to the expansion of their background knowledge and professionally significant competencies.

Thus, the use of blended learning in the educational process in a foreign language helps to increase the efficiency of the educational process, as it allows solving a number of tasks that are important not only for teachers, but also for students. Firstly, with a reduction in classroom hours, blended learning provides an opportunity to devote as much time to learning a foreign language as it seems appropriate in each case. Secondly, it allows reducing the gap in the level of foreign language proficiency between students through an individual approach to learning. Thirdly, it corresponds to the main trend in the development of the modern educational system through the use of information educational technologies in the educational process.

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