TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING

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Abstract: This article deals with the effectiveness of using the blended learning method in teaching English. It represents benefits and advantages of blended learning which creates the responsibility of the learning process to both the teacher and student.

Keywords: approach, benefit, learners, online, programme, maximize, improve, opportunity.

Introduction

Teaching foreign languages for professional purposes is considered to be the priority in updating engineering education in Russia. The ability to communicate in other languages is becoming an integral part of professional competence of any specialist, no difference what field he/she works in.

With changing requirements to specialist training there is a need to overhaul the content and approaches to teaching foreign languages to nonlinguistic students.

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 life long 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.

Blended Learning has become one of the most common ways to teach EFL due to its double component, which integrates Face-to-Face classes with virtual learning in order to offer students a wide range of materials and resources organized in a methodological way. This article seeks to present some integrative components of Blended Learning and how they have been applied in several researches done in different contexts as well as to present some considerations to keep in mind when designing, implementing and evaluating this model. Besides, it encourages teachers to reflect upon Blended Learning as a potential and different way to approach learning EFL, taking advantage of all the emerging pedagogical tools. The key to a successful blended learning approach is to use the strengths of each medium appropriately, combining the two different learning environments in an integrated way so that each medium complements the other. Blended learning as an approach is not new. Distance learning courses have long combined blended learning through a mix of self-access content and face-to face/telephone support. 'Traditional' course shovel ways combined a variety of 4 delivery modest hat combine contents has lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops and group work to give learners a range of learning opportunities. And of course, 'good teachers will always use more than one method or approach

in their teaching, and good learners will always combine different strategies in their learning. So we could say that the term 'blended learning' refers to every time teachers mix different media (e.g. print, audio, and video) with classroom interaction, maximizing authentic input in order to support learners' output and skills development.What is new is that today,technology combines all the different media with in one environment: online. The online space facilitates learner–learner interaction, encourage since dental and exploratory learning and allows learners and teachers to stay connected outside the classroom, if they so wish. Learners can benefit from the fact that space and distance do not matter anymore. There are many definitions for blended learning, but they all have the following in common: they refer to two different learning environments ——face-to-face and online;and they refer to combining those two learning environments in a complementary way to deliver a programme of study so that learners can be supported both within the classroom environment and outside of it. In other words, the term blended learning refers to any programme of study that is delivered by appropriately combining both synchronous interactive study and asynchronous (individual) study. Some benefit sofa blended approach for learners and teachers: 1.Responding more appropriately to learning styles. Teachers know that each learner has generally a mix of learning styles and preferences. Traditional schooling used mainly linguistic and logical teaching methods. This does not suit everyone. With blended learning, students have the opportunity to work in a way that suits them without distracting others, since they work asynchronously for part of their studies. It is easy for the teacher to prepare programs of study that take into account such learning styles as:•visual or aural (I .e. preferring to use pictures, images and sounds) through, for example, watching videos/listening to audio • verbal(i. e. preferring to use language) through, for example, reading a text 5 or asking learners to prepare a spoken or written text • logical by, for example, using an inductive approach to grammar. 2. A deeper approach to learning. Being able to watch a video or listen to an audio text as many times as possible without feeling inadequate or reading a text quickly to get the gist without feeling rushed makes for deeper learning. This is increased by the possibility that within an online course learners can choose their path way through the most appropriate entry points according to their needs and interests, knowing well that they can go back to refresh their knowledge if need be before moving forward. 3. More individual attention. Any teacher is familiar with having to face at least three levels in any classroom at any given time. The top 10% made up of faster learners; the bottom 10% made up of slower learners; with the 80% bulk representing the majority of the classroom population. Faced with these differing levels, pressed by time and the syllabus, it is only human that many of us tend to forget about the top and bottom 10%. Blended learning helps teachers give all learners the attention they deserve by developing a course that will take learners' needs more closely into account. The high flyers are encouraged to expand their knowledge and go beyond what is required in the examination by searching for answers to their own questions online or preparing next week's topic in advance of the class. The slower learners are provided online with the extra help they need through structured and graded activities, are able to revise and consolidate online everything that has been presented in the classroom at their own speed and in their own time or are also encouraged to read a text, view a video or listen to an audio text before the following week's lesson to be better prepared and thus be able to participate fully in the classroom interaction. And finally, the use of a Learning Management System in a blended approach gives teachers a quick graphic over view of individual learners' progress, thus granting the possibility and opportunity of giving feedback to learners (to help improve their performance),as 6 well as the ability to update and tweak course material to respond to learners' needs whenever appropriate 4. Maximizing social interaction in the classroom. The classroom environment offers the social space where communication as a social activity can be best served. Blended learning maximizes social

interaction (communication) in the classroom by freeing up time for both the teacher and the learner. The teacher has more time to create engaging learning experiences for their learners, secure in the knowledge that learners have had time to 'rehearse' online. The teacher often takes a back seat and lets them take Centre stage, lets them 'act' in the classroom reengage in real-time communication with their peers, i.e. use their language productively. In the face-to-face environment, the learner is also able to ask questions of clarification on points of language (grammar, register, usage etc.) oral times may even take on the role of the teacher themselves by answering questions raised by their peers. The teacher also has more time to listen intently to the learners, which allows them at times to deviate from their carefully prepared plan and respond appropriately to learners' needs at a specific moment in time 5.Creating confident learners. It is well known that a significant obstacle to learning a second language is the fear of speaking in class based on concerns of making mistakes and looking foolish in front of one's peers. A blended approach allows learners to prepare and practice on their own Learning Management Systems (LMS) is a software application for the delivery of e-learning including functions such a stacking (student progress) and reporting (on student work) together with administration and documentation. A blended approach can also be used by learners to revise and consolidate classroom or simply to practice more what they have learnt in the 6.Access to rich interactive input Blended learning offers rich interactive multimedia input that is accessed through authentic video, audio, texts and visuals/graphics providing meaningful content relevant to learners' needs and 7 interests, either pre-selected by the teacher or discovered by learners when surfing the internet. This rich input is one of the major elements which helps teachers devise a course that can respond to different learning styles, as mentioned above. 7.Getting just-in-time support. Access to appropriate support is an important part of the learning process and is known to increase motivation and maximize learning. In a blended approach, technology offers just-in-time support in a synchronous way by giving immediate feedback, by having conferencing as appropriate, and by putting many learning tools at learners' disposal, such as language functions, many different types of activities, cultural notes, grammar notes, a glossary etc., which are accessed when needed. Just-in-time support, like flexibility of access, puts the onus to learn on the learners themselves by increasing their decision-making, thus putting them more in control of their learning. This in turn is a great motivational driver and can encourage autonomy in learners. 8. Encouraging discovery and fostering autonomy. We learn in many different ways. We learn intentionally and through serendipity. Blended learning is particularly suitable for encouraging learner discovery. By surfing the net, by meandering from one page to another, by jumping from one activity to another, by choosing their learning journey, by going where their fancy takes them, learners use serendipity to discover for themselves or just what they were looking for. This in turn makes them reflect on what they know and what they have learnt and then build on it. This ultimately helps them develop further. A learner will slowly but inevitably move away from the teacher as they become a more proficient and the refore more confident and independent learner. The best teacher–learner relationship is one that tends to fade away because that means that both teacher and learner have fulfilled their roles —the teacher by supporting their learners' needs and wishes and the learner by taking responsibility for their own learning. A blended approach, when its elements are combined effectively, helps both teacher and learner fulfill their ultimate roles. Far from seeing their rolled diminished and 8' replaced' some how by technology, in blended learning the teacher plays a central role and is omnipresent throughout the learning process. Blended learning gives the teacher the opportunity to stay in communication with learners outside the classroom, thus continuing to support their learning journey. They are present in conceiving blended programs of study that take into account learners' needs and wishes, their previous knowledge and language learning experience, their learning styles and

motivations and any constraints imposed by the institution. They a represent not just as teachers in the traditional sense but also as content experts, monitoring student progress, acting as mediators, as facilitators, as guides —as learner support. Blended teaching delivers numerous benefits. First, it allows form or personalized learning, enabling both the advanced students and the at-risk students to work at their own pace, which reduces stress and increases retention and motivation. Secondly, blended teaching allows for more flexibility and efficiency. Moving instruction, focused practice, and homework online allows teachers to create a rich collaborative environment in class and to spend more time engaging students in interactive activities that build up their communicative and critical thinking skills. Finally, the availability of student data allows teachers to respond to students'need more efficiently. In short, blended learning is worth trying because it increases learner autonomy and creates better learning opportunities for students, which in turn results in improved student learning out comes.

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