

The implementation of these tasks, in addition to purely methodological techniques, is directly assisted by the language material of textbooks with a system of lexical selections, special exercises and texts [Ibid.].

Thus, when teaching dialogue speech in foreign language lessons, both traditional methods (“top-bottom” and “bottom-top”) and non-traditional ones (plot games, dramatizations) are used. From this we can conclude that the most effective is the combination of these methods and their alternation. Such a combination will be more conducive to the development of dialogue speech as a means of developing communication skills.

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*N. V. Letkina (Saransk, Russia)
National Research Mordovia Ogarev State University*

On the Issue of Using the Technology of Blended Learning in English Classes at the University

В статье представлен анализ способов использования технологии смешанного обучения со студентами университетов, изучающими английский язык как иностранный. Автор приходит к выводу, что одна из технологий смешанного обучения – учебная платформа Skyes University – обладает множеством преимуществ и может быть эффективной как при очном, так и при дистанционном обучении.

Ключевые слова: смешанное обучение, дистанционное образование, учебная платформа, Skyes University

The article provides analysis of ways of using blended learning technology with university students who are learning English as a foreign language. The author concludes that one of the blended learning technologies such as the *Skyes University* learning platform has multiple benefits and can be effective both in face-to-face teaching and distance education.

Keywords: blended learning, distance education, learning platform, Skyes University

Information and communication technologies have brought significant changes in education, and higher education in particular. The Covid-19 pandemic boosted the integration between traditional face-to-face learning practices and e-learning. The lockdown forced most universities in Russia to reconsider their approaches to the implementation of educational programs and to focus on the use of distance learning technologies in the educational process.

In order to make distance education accessible, effective and convenient in September 2020 at the National Research Mordovia Ogarev State University a digital educational environment *Skyes University* began to be used. *Skyes University* is a digital learning platform containing online courses for learning English. The main course is based on *The Skylike* textbook (A2/B1) which was specifically developed for universities in collaboration with Cambridge specialists. All other courses are designed in accordance with the European system of foreign language proficiency levels and aimed at the formation of communicative competence, which is very important when organizing training at a university) [2], [3], [5].

During the first term the platform was used by teachers of English only for online classes. Then, during the next three terms, it was used in a mixed way: both off-line and online. So the strategy of blended learning has been used. Blended learning is a combination of learning in a traditional form, i.e. face-to-face learning in the classroom with the support and assistance of a teacher in real time, and learning carried out using modern technologies via a computer [1]. The terms *blended learning*, *hybrid learning*, and *combined learning* are considered synonymous, interchangeable. In our article we will use the term "blended learning", which is most commonly used in the higher education system.

So blended learning is a strategy that creates a more integrated approach to teaching learning process where different learning environments are mixed with a goal to provide the most efficient and effective instruction experience. And one of the important tasks of a teacher is to create educational space by means of online courses, without which it is difficult to imagine the educational process at a present period [4], [6].

As for the number of students who used *Skyes University* platform was about 600 (undergraduate students of full-time and part-time departments, students enrolled in specialty programs, as well as undergraduates). Such a wide coverage was due to the variety of courses offered by the platform, as well as an excellent opportunity to combine the teacher's contact work with students and a great option to organize independent remote work of trainees (the courses are designed for more than 1,500 aca-

demic hours of training). Implementing the blended learning method the teachers can use the tools of the digital service to create groups, select tasks for independent work and monitor their implementation remotely, conduct online testing. The digital educational environment automatically checks assignments, scores and keeps statistics of progress for each student, and all this information can be downloaded to a stationary computer, stored and presented on demand. The teacher can send assignments as for the whole group, and select individual tasks (from more than 20 courses) in accordance with the needs and level of the group to increase number of hours for language practice. It is possible to form tasks for different skills thanks to the competence filter, for example, to increase vocabulary, one student can be asked to repeat vocabulary on the simulator, and another grammar tests.

Thus, the use of blended learning technology in English language classes at the university has many advantages, namely:

- combination of traditional and innovative forms of education;
- free access to materials online;
- variety of resources and integrative possibilities of educational materials;
- automated accounting of academic performance and student engagement;
- ability to build individual educational trajectories.

The use of the digital educational environment of Skyes University proved to be effective and has prospects for further use for English classes at the university. The basic principles of effective blended learning that include the need to build the learning process, placing the student at the center of the educational process, focusing on competencies, personalization and development of personal responsibility for the results of their own activities have been implemented.

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