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## INVESTIGATING BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF ESP DISCOURSE TEACHING

**Summary.** Blended/hybrid learning also known as technology-mediated/web-enhanced/mixed-mode instructions, combines traditional classroom learning with online educational activities. As a kind of hybrid methodology this educational approach is of particular interest nowadays due to the possibilities given by information and communication technologies. Since blended learning is also used in professional development and training settings its strategies are worth regarding in the framework of Tertiary education ESP discourse.

The paper is aimed at investigating the hybrid methodology concerning blended learning i.e. collaborative face-to-face and online learning and its environment in the context of ESP teaching discourse within Tertiary education.

The new teaching paradigm evolved due to Information and communication technology being part and parcel of modern education. Blended learning has become one of the most critical approaches to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) due to its two-fold component combining Face-to-Face classes with virtual learning in order to introduce a wide number of resources for the students via effective methodologies. Blended learning as a practice of combining different learning methods and strategies was successfully implemented into distance learning courses via a mix of such content as print/video/TV/radio and face-to-face/telephone support.

Blended learning incorporated into ESP discourse teaching process turned out to be most successful with the students of Computer Science specialities such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Robotics etc. providing appropriate effective feedback.

Thus, allowing personalized education the hybrid methodology of blended learning and its strategies provide more autonomy, self-regulation, and independence improving cognitive components of students' communication practice. Collaborative face-to-face and online learning proved to be quite beneficial in the context of Tertiary education ESP discourse teaching in general concerning Computer Science students in particular.

**Key words:** hybrid methodology, blended learning, blended learning environment, discourse, ESP.

**The problem.** Blended/hybrid learning also known as technology-mediated/web-enhanced/mixed-mode instructions, combines traditional classroom learning with online educational activities. Being a kind of hybrid methodology this educational approach is of particular interest nowadays due to the possibilities given by information and communication technologies. Since

blended learning is also used in professional development and training settings its strategies are worth regarding in the framework of Tertiary education ESP discourse.

**Analysis of the recent publications on the issue being under consideration.** Best practices and research of blended learning and its environment have been regarded in many publications [1; 2; 3]. A multi versatile study of the hybrid methodology concerning blended learning is presented in 'The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs' edited by Curtis J. Bonk and Charles R. Graham [4]. The work is dedicated to corporate/Higher education blended learning models and perspectives as well as Multinational blended learning perspectives and the issues of transforming learning with Mixed and Virtual Reality technologies in Higher education and workplace learning settings. The book contains cases of Blended Learning in Higher education from around the world including United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico etc. The processes of learning technologies integration into European education and training systems as well as blended e-learning in the context of Internet development from the point of view of Global perspectives and local design of e-courses are also paid a considerable attention to.

**The aim of the paper.** The paper is aimed at investigating the hybrid methodology concerning blended learning i.e. collaborative face-to-face and online learning and its environment in the context of ESP teaching discourse within Tertiary education.

**The body of the paper.** Blended learning has become one of the most critical approaches to teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language) due to its two-fold component, which combines Face-to-Face classes with virtual learning in order to introduce a wide number of resources for the students via effective methodology.

The paper 'A Blended Learning Approach to Course Design and Implementation' by Natasa Hoic-Bozic, Vedran Mornar and Ivica Boticki, describes a way of teaching courses in Information Science using an e-learning model based on blended learning, as a combination of independent learning, online discussions, and problem-based learning [5]. The authors dwell on the new teaching paradigm evolved due to Information and communication technology being part and parcel of modern education. They analyse the use of the blended e-learning model based on a mixture of collaborative learning, problem-based learning as well as independent learning and realized as a combination of a face-

to-face environment and online learning. Because of the increased personal responsibility and concentration in learning regarded model, applied in a learner-centered environment, proved to be successful as it stimulates students' interest in independent learning and prepares them for lifelong learning requiring constant active participation during the academic year. The findings show that this approach 'reduces the time needed for preparing the exam, ensures deep-level learning, contributes to more success in the exam and enhances the course's student retention' [5, p. 29].

The results of modern studies in the field of ESP teaching have shown that blended learning is also of significant importance; it is the methodology that gives the possibility to use many different approaches and strategies in ESP teaching and learning.

Indeed, blended learning as a practice of combining (blending) different learning methods and strategies is not that new. It was successfully implemented into distance learning courses via a mix of such content as print/video/TV/radio and face-to-face/telephone support. Purely 'traditional' courses have always blended different teaching forms that combine lectures, seminars, practical classes and group work to produce more capabilities for studying. 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" [6, p. 3].

The novelty in the blended learning today is incorporated in the fact that online strategies combine all different means of interaction within one global setting. The online perspective makes learner-learner communication easier, enables learners and teachers to stay connected outside the classroom. Learners become aware of the fact that space and distance do not matter much any more.

We could go on and say that the key to a successful blended learning approach is to use each mode up to the point, organizing the two different learning environments in an integrated way: using the classroom environment for introducing new topics, explaining important language points for meaningful communicative activities, while the online environment is to be used for preparing the next topic (by watching a video/reading a text, etc.). Both these modes of learning and teaching put the student at the centre of the learning process [7]. As Marsh [6] also remarks, "Today blended learning can refer to any combination of different methods of learning, different learning environments, different learning styles. In short, the effective implementation of blended learning is essentially all about making the most of the learning opportunities and tools available to achieve the "optimal" learning environment" [6].

Before analyzing the pros and cons of blended learning it would be useful to mention the key pedagogical approaches in English language teaching and learning (ELT) thus underlying blended learning approach. In teaching two concepts are critical: first, what to teach; second, how to teach it. Different linguistic theories of the past have led us to understanding the issues that are in focus today which are being solved in modern language teaching and learning.

In the middle of 70-s Chomsky considered the difference between "competence and performance" underlining that competence is a linguistic system of language. In 1972 Hymes put forward the concept of "communicative competence" [8].

In 1976, researchers Halliday and Hasan promoted the concept of 'discourse competence' that joined both notions of Chomsky's linguistic system and Hymes' language teaching systems in use.

This modification made language users be discourse-aware. Van Ek's investigations considered in his book 'The Threshold Level' (1976) moved the research closer to the "communicative approach" to language teaching promoting social component in language learning. It is also based on learner's needs, learner's centeredness and primacy of the functionality of language use [9].

In 1990-s six scales of proficiency (from A1– C2) have been developed to assess communicative language competences and the courses based on learner's needs, i.e. "what to teach and how to teach", were designed.

Speaking about blended learning approach we can state that it is in tune with many approaches and strategies mentioned above in historical excursus as it is based on teachers' and students' needs, students' knowledge, on teachers' skills, and certainly on the positive thinking of students regarding modern technologies. It also involves upper level thinking skills such as creativity, problem solution and critical thinking. Self-directed learning, technology readiness and learning motivation influence social, learning and cognitive components of students' communication practice. These characteristics report that proper blended learning setting enhances cohesive communication among students, self-directed learning playing a critical role in cognitive presence of students in blended learning environment.

A. King [7] introduces in her article eight main benefits of blended learning approach:

1. *Responding more appropriately to learning styles*: that means that students have the opportunity to work asynchronously (online), that is, not disturbing others and have free space and time.

2. *A deeper approach to learning*: this approach means that any time duration for learning (no rush) is embedded into the blended learning.

3. *More individual attention*: it can be explained that blended learning helps pay attention to learners' needs by means of developing courses with online additional help. The use of a Learning Management System (a software application) in a blended approach gives a quick and effective graphic observation of learners' progress.

4. *Maximising social interaction in the classroom*: blended learning arranges social communication in the classroom by wise time distribution between the teacher and the learner.

5. *Creating confident learners*: a blended approach allows learners to prepare and practise on their own online before a class, "at their own pace and in their own time and as a result come to class much better prepared for speaking activities" [6, p. 16].

6. *Access to rich interactive input*: blended learning is based on extensive interactive multimedia input by means of video, audio, texting and visuals/graphics necessary for learner's needs.

7. *Getting just-in-time support*: a blended approach technology offers just-in-time support both in a synchronous (in the class) and asynchronous (online) way.

8. *Encouraging discovery and fostering autonomy*: blended learning is particularly suitable for encouraging learner discovery. By searching the internet, by meandering from one page to another, by transferring from one activity to another, learners discover something not only known (which they are looking for) but also unknown.

It should be noted, though, that because of its strong dependence on the technical resources blended learning requires high-quality technical support, reliable Internet and good wi-fi connection.

Blended learning incorporated into ESP discourse teaching process turned out to be most successful with the students of Computer Science specialities such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Robotics etc. providing appropriate effective feedback.

**Conclusions.** Allowing personalized education the hybrid methodology of blended learning and its strategies provide more autonomy, self-regulation, and independence improving cognitive components of students' communication practice. Collaborative face-to-face and online learning proved to be quite beneficial in the context of Tertiary education ESP discourse teaching in general concerning Computer Science students in particular.

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**Байбакова І.М., Гасько О.Л. Вивчення середовища змішаного навчання в контексті викладання дискурсу англійської мови фахового спрямування**

**Анотація.** Змішане або гібридне навчання поєднує традиційне навчання в аудиторії і навчальну діяльність

із використанням інтернет-технологій. Як різновид гібридної методології, цей навчальний підхід особливо цікавий завдяки сучасним можливостям інформаційних і комунікаційних технологій. Оскільки змішане навчання також використовується у професійному розвитку та навчанні, ця стаття має на меті вивчення гібридної методології та відповідних стратегій, що стосуються змішаного навчання в контексті викладання/вивчення дискурсу англійської мови фахового спрямування в рамках вищої освіти.

Нова парадигма викладання розвинулась завдяки інформаційним і комунікаційним технологіям, які є невід'ємною частиною сучасної освіти. Змішане навчання стало одним із найважливіших підходів до викладання EFL (англійської мови як іноземної) з огляду на його подвійний компонент традиційного і віртуального навчання, що має на меті надання студентам доступу до великого обсягу ресурсів шляхом впровадження ефективних методологій. Змішане навчання як практика поєднання різних методів та стратегій навчання було успішно впроваджено в курси дистанційного навчання за допомогою поєднання такого контенту, як друк / відео / телебачення / радіо та підтримка «віч-на-віч» і по телефону.

Змішане навчання, застосоване в процесі викладання/вивчення дискурсу англійської мови фахового спрямування, виявилось найбільш успішним зі студентами спеціальностей «Комп'ютерні науки», таких як Штучний інтелект, Інтернет речей, Робототехніка тощо, котрі зуміли забезпечити належний ефективний зворотний зв'язок.

Таким чином, уможливіючи персоналізовану освіту, гібридна методологія змішаного навчання та відповідні стратегії розвивають більшу автономність, саморегуляцію та самостійність, тим самим покращуючи когнітивні компоненти комунікативної діяльності студентів. Змішане навчання виявилось досить корисним у контексті викладання дискурсу англійської мови фахового спрямування в рамках вищої освіти загалом та для студентів різних спеціальностей напряму комп'ютерних наук зокрема.

**Ключові слова:** гібридна методика, змішане навчання, середовище змішаного навчання, дискурс, англійська мова фахового спрямування.