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SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS FORMAT OF BLENDED LEARNING AS A WAY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING IN PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WITH SPECIFIC STUDY CONDITIONS

Abstract. *This paper focuses on the main aspects of using blended learning for the English language training in the Ukrainian professional military education institutions. It examines the major challenges and key problems while implementing blended English language training, introduces the recommendations for further developing the synchronous and asynchronous formats of training in the professional military education institutions, analyzes the peculiarities of synchronous and asynchronous formats of blended learning, which provide flexibility in choosing the time of self-education for cadets and increase the effectiveness of English language training of cadets and students of language courses.*

Keywords: *blended leaning, synchronous and asynchronous formats of training, professional military education institutions, a cadet.*

The problem in educational sphere caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine involved all educational civilian and military institutions into distance training and mixed education partially. But there are certain features of studying in Ukrainian professional military education (PME) institutions. In addition to its educational function, a military educational institution is also a military unit where

military service, daily and educational activities of servicemen are organized. Therefore it is not possible to transfer cadets completely to distance learning with exemption them from military service. That's why Ukrainian PME institutions work in the usual format: classes are held for whole cadet units. However, there are some innovations in the educational process, which are analyzed and actively implemented in other higher education institutions, which in turn reduces the time when teacher distributes information orally, modernizes the work of cadets in classrooms and at the time off, and increases the possibility of quick feedback between the teacher and the cadets. Finally, the work of the teacher becomes more flexible by the minimizing the time of testing the teacher tasks etc.

So, such indicates the need to find such pedagogical approaches and teaching methods that would minimize the loss of quality of education through complete or partial refusal of direct contact in the educational process. One of the main approaches to achieve this objective is to transform the ELT from residential instruction to blended learning that has proved its advantages comparatively to purely face-to-face or online classes (C.Rao, 2019; DEEP Report, 2020). The current pandemic caused by Covid-19 has become an additional catalyst for developing the hybrid teaching methodology in the PME institutions.

The purpose of the article is to research the effectiveness of the blended leaning for the English language training (ELT) in the Ukrainian professional military education (PME) institutions according to the specialties and current challenges.

Our research is based on the theoretical methods, such as *analysis of literature, documentation and research* which helped to analyze effectively process a large amount of information concerning the blended learning, its formats, compare and systematize the information, and *modeling* as a method of creating the introduction of blended learning in the educational system of higher education.

The issue of blended learning and its effectiveness in the educational process has been studied by a number of foreign and domestic scholars. There are many approaches to defining the concept of blended learning and implementing its various models in the educational process, namely C.Dziuban, Rau and Sridhar, Darling Painter, Allison Rossett and Rebecca Vaughan Frazee, S.Hrastinski, C. Whittaker,

Michael B Horn, Heather Staker, J. Watson, E.V. Kostina, P.V. Stefanenko, B. Shunevich, C.Rao etc.

The term "blended learning" was originated more than 17 years ago and still does not have the ultimate definition (C.Whittaker, 2013).

Thus, Darling Painter proposes to understand blended learning as a combination of strong formal learning tools - working in classrooms, learning theoretical material - with non-formal, such as discussion and learning using websites and videos and online conferences.

Arbaugh, Dessai, Rau and Sridhar consider that "it combines online learning with traditional classroom activities in special pedagogical-value manner, where from 20% to 70% of content is delivered to the student by the Internet (Arbaugh et al.,2010) .

Allison Rossett and Rebecca Vaughan Frazee argue that blended learning combines such opposite approaches, such as formal «teacher-student» communication and «online» guided and self-directed communication.

As we see in the issue of blended learning, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to its application. In this paper we consider blended learning for the ELT as a pedagogical approach that aimed to improve the English language teaching efficiency through flexible, thoughtful fusion of resident instruction with online and "mobile" activities of cadets (C.Dziuban et al., 2004; E.Banados, 2006; P.John, 2011; C.Whittaker, 2013; C.Rao, 2019). This approach allows extending the ELT "beyond the classroom walls and facilitates better access to learning resources" (cited C.Rao, 2019).

The implementation of modern educational technologies into the educational process allows us to respond to the challenges caused not only by the global pandemic, but also by the peculiarities of the educational process itself. So that, we cannot abandon classroom classes with different levels of foreign language knowledge of cadets, where as a result is only a small number of cadets can achieve the quality of learning a foreign language and with the peculiarities of the educational institution (training and service). But it can be argued that by combining modern educational technologies of online learning, you can significantly improve

the quality of knowledge of a foreign language.

Let's consider aspects of this integrated approach. First of all, the initial training of a cadet should include not only a high level of English language proficiency, but also practical skills of interacting with applied computer programs used in distance learning: browser settings, computer hardware, etc. In addition, the distribution of the scope of the discipline should take into account the increase of not only practical classes component, but also self-study of educational material. The role of high-quality electronic educational and methodological support is growing, which requires an increase in its part compared to printed publications, which in turn provides opportunities for cadets to access electronic educational resources. Teacher distancing can be achieved by using of developed and implemented platforms for distance test assessment of cadets' reading, writing and listening skills.

The implementation of all the aspects above requires the training of academic staff, aimed at developing electronic interactive learning tools for existing educational platforms such as MS Teams, Google Meets, Google Hangouts, Zoom, Webex, Gotowebinar, GotoConference, GoToMeeting, ClickMeeting, Jitsi, Adobe Connect, BigBlueButton and Moodle, etc. and forming of tasks for distance knowledge testing and criteria for assessing their execution.

All models of blended learning, such as: face-to-face, online learning and self-study learning are effective within our study only in a combination of face-to-face and e-learning formats (synchronous, asynchronous). They must be based on communicative and individual approaches to learning and use the format of interaction in blended learning that is the best suited to the conditions, features and restrictions of such institutions. And it is Ukrainian PME institutions, in accordance with the conditions of their serving and studying at the same time, it is advisable to combine synchronous or asynchronous formats of interaction between the subjects of study.

Blended learning allows the retention of general principles of learning in a traditional higher educational process. The idea of using the elements of asynchronous and synchronous formats in blended learning means that a certain part

of the class the cadets learn in traditional forms of learning and the other part - by network learning technologies. The ratio of asynchronous and synchronous parts in blended learning is determined by the readiness of the PME institutions as a whole to such process construction, as well as the desire and technical capabilities of cadets. This approach involves the widespread use of information and communication technologies and the Internet in the ELT.

Synchronous format involves the interaction between the subjects of learning, during which participants are simultaneously in the educational environment or communicate through audio and video conferencing. In other words, it could be conducting foreign language classes in real time using interactive teaching methods.

Asynchronous format means the interaction between the subjects of learning, in which participants interact with each other with a delay in time, using interactive educational platforms, e-mail, forums, social networks and more. This is a mode of more independent learning, which, at the same time, is supported by the teacher with the use of appropriate digital interaction tools. For the cadet it means the involvement him (her) in the educational process through the new communication learning models, high interactivity of learning, which increases the interest in quality knowledge.

The teacher must skillfully manage the combination of classroom and extracurricular work of cadets PME universities, stimulate their team work and create online support for them. Depending on chosen model of combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning, it is possible to fill these components with educational activities in different ways. For example, you can start classes synchronously, reviewing the material and to repeat the material of the previous lesson by proposing a pre-recorded video lesson to the cadets of PME universities and lead to practical exercises and tasks that can already be processed asynchronously. At the end of the classes, cadets return to the shared online space, clarifying the problems, answering some questions, sum up the results and so on.

If a cadet is absent due to service duties, the studying of the material for him (her) is asynchronous by practicing vocabulary orally, analyzing another cadets' work. The teacher can plan the synchronous format in a way of examining cadets of

PME universities during whole session. In this case it is advisable to divide the group into small teams so that some cadets' work with a teacher, answering questions individually or in a small group and another team works asynchronously using pre-prepared tasks. For the next classes the cadets go up to the opposite teams.

There is a need to specify the use of blended learning between language activities according to the peculiarities of learning a foreign language, in particular its division into four types of these activities: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. All of them can use synchronous and asynchronous formats in blended learning. The training materials are presented orally or in writing, including with the use of digital technologies; learning interaction (synchronous format) takes place in the classroom; asynchronous online interaction is carried out as needed for personalized learning; for those who are absent it is advisable to provide online consultations (synchronous format). N.V. Morse argues that the teacher can't be only the source of information for the cadets, but must prepare and place all the necessary materials, provide cadets with access and guidelines for repetition or consolidation (asynchronous format) of full-time study material. During the self-study, when the cadets are provided with an educational platform, the teacher allows access to the material needed to complete the task. In order to prevent academic dishonesty of cadets' side and ensure the objectivity of assessment it is expedient to carry out control of mastering in the classroom under the supervision of the teacher or unit commander.

The blended learning system works perfectly in the case where the asynchronous format is used before the synchronous one. In this case, the complex of their components reinforces each other. For example, the cadets' training with the theoretical information on a certain topic allows the teacher to save a lot of time during the group classes due to the fact that they are already acquainted with the theory and they are in the same content field. As a result, the class acquires a practical focus, as the teacher uses the free time for the practical processing of knowledge.

The implementation of blended English learning in Ukrainian PME universities has great prospects, as it involves the integrated use of traditional and computer-

oriented methods, tools and forms of training. All sides of ELT must be motivated and appropriate under certain conditions of the educational process. (Stefanenko P., 2002; Shunevich B., 2006)

Thus, it can be stated that in the case of careful planning of the lesson and a reasonable selection of tools, blended learning is much more effective than other forms of learning and gives the cadet more chances to acquire deep knowledge of a foreign language.

A teacher and cadets work together to ensure the quality of ELT, organizing the online component of blended learning in different combinations of synchronous and asynchronous modes of interaction, enhancing their respective benefits and accompanying the learning process with an independent, useful, effective and motivating approach.

Synchronous and asynchronous formats of blended learning allow organizing the most productive time management of a teacher and cadets that makes the ELT more interesting and accessible.

The implementation of blended learning requires some changes in the regulatory framework, investment in the development of the necessary educational content and retraining. In fact, blended learning can be one of the key areas for modernizing Ukrainian PME universities.

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