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ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТИ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В АКАДЕМИЧЕСКИХ ЦЕЛЯХ (EAP) В РОССИЙСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Обучение английскому языку для академических целей (EAP) в российских университетах приобретает все большую значимость, которая объясняется возрастающим вниманием к глобализации в разных сферах жизнедеятельности человека. Опыт показывает, что, с одной стороны, обучение английскому языку в нелингвистических университетах зачастую сводится к освоению так называемого общего курса языка, что не дает будущим специалистам инструмента международного взаимодействия. С другой стороны, английский язык, становясь языком международного академического общения, трансформируется в особую учебную дисциплину, становясь и средством, и содержанием обучения. История развития и становления учебной дисциплины «Английский язык для академических целей» в российском образовании не имеет устойчивого базиса, что затрудняет выстраивание эффективного учебного процесса. Таким образом, перед преподавателями английского языка ставятся новые задачи, одной из наиболее важных является поиск эффективных технологий обучения английскому языку для академических целей, который может стать профессиональным инструментом для специалистов разного профиля. Полагаем, что одной из таких технологий может стать педагогическая технология использования различных форм смешанного обучения академическому английскому языку, основанная на информационных коммуникационных технологиях (ИКТ). Внедрение ИКТ в учебный процесс обучения английскому языку для академических целей на основе веб-инструментальной поддержки курса описывается в предлагаемой статье.

В ходе исследования были проведены обзор эмпирических данных и теоретический анализ интеграции смешанного обучения, описан проект внедрения смешанного обучения в учебный процесс по английскому языку в неязыковом университете. На основе результатов интервью преподавателей и студентов, анкетных опросов и наблюдения наряду с положительными были выявлены и неожиданные спорные моменты об эффективности смешанного обучения, которые нашли свое отражение в обсуждении результатов исследования.

Ключевые слова: ИКТ, веб-проекты, английский для академических целей, LMS, Wiki, SNS.

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EXPLORING EFFICIENCY IN TEACHING EAP WRITING AT RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Russian universities is becoming important nowadays because of the increasing attention to globalization. In education globalization is occurred through internationalization of education where EAP plays a crucial role. The authors of the article argue that, on the one hand, teaching English in non-linguistic Russian universities is often reduced to mastering the so-called general course of the language, which does not provide students with a tool for international communication in professional spheres. On the other hand, the English language, becoming the language of international academic communication, is transformed into a special academic discipline, becoming both a means and a content of learning English. Thus, new tasks are set for teachers of English, one of the most important is the search for effective technologies for teaching EAP. This article describes implementation of information communication technologies (ICT) in EAP course at Russian nonlinguistic universities. The aim is to carry out the theoretical analysis of the integration scheme of blended learning into the curriculum of Russian universities includes the research on the efficiency of wiki based EAP teaching experience and examines the pros and cons of various forms of blended learning opposed to the traditional classroom education and puts forward the issues of blended learning.

The article reflects the stages of the project based on technology enhanced teaching EAP to undergraduate students by means of Web 2.0 tools. The article contains a detailed description of the project, its mission and respondents' feedback gained via quantitative and qualitative research methods. Based on the professors' and students' interviews, questionnaires and observation, it has been found out to be in demand among the students who are digital natives and long for ICT assisted language learning and is subject to some criticism along with numerous benefits, which are also reflected in the results and findings of the study.

Key words: ICT, web projects, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), LMS, Wiki, SNS.

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of various information communication technologies into educational process is complex and challenging thought it is very beneficial. When integrated into the learning process web tools are becoming essential modern professionals' learning tools. They assist traditional education, accelerate exchange of urgent information and provide free flow of feedback. However, there are some issues that are controversial and slow down their use in teaching practice.

The main purpose of this article is to offer the way to enhance the process of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) language learning by implementing Web 2.0 tools which will allow blended learning in peer to peer or teacher to student collaboration. In order to improve Academic writing skills and acquiring decent level of English in the experimental groups the students are to use ICT means such as LMS, Wiki and SNS. And the control group where education was based on traditional ways was under the thorough observation to prove the following hypothesis-if the project of Web based learning is a success it will result in closer teacher to student and peer to peer cooperation, better AE final results. To assist the abovementioned project web-based AE teaching an e-learning environment making use of LMS, wiki sites and SNS was created.

Exploiting the idea for massive education regardless of geographical location the Web Based EAP Writing project has been created in order to provide all the

students with the opportunity to share educational and cultural information and remotely work under the same project simultaneously. Subsequently various means of information communication technologies was used including wiki, LMS and SNS tools, which have a clear and user-friendly interface and are in open access.

Due to enforcement of educational cooperation and different team players collaboration the project has had a great impact on peer to peer assessment and motivation growth. The leaders of the project accomplished some of the various roles [Kudryashova et al 2016, P.460] but particularly the roles of a moderator to assign responsibilities among the participants of a project team, appoint the students' responsibilities, and monitor the implementation of the project and meeting the deadlines.

1. BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

The contemporary high education is in the process of providing students with strategies for active learning and for search of relevant information followed by its further practical application. In this regard arranging teacher-student collaboration by means of ICT is fruitful as it provides evident merits from the point of view of a teacher. In other words, socialization, sharing, creativity, authenticity and collaboration are increased [Peachey 2014, p. 14].

Moreover, computer enhanced course helps deliver information instantly; give an easy access to the pool of the ready-made materials and open up the opportunity to store, edit and update them. Any student may share the plans, slides, e-versions of elaborations on the site administrator's permit.

Learning a foreign language is a real challenge including knowledge of grammar rules, acquiring lexical units with variety of collocations, fixed phrases, idioms etc. Moreover, it calls for constant improvement of listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. Bearing in mind the requirements and time restrictions, one should optimize the process and bridge the gap in English teaching without any technical assistance to IT specialist who are experts in ICT. Thus, the authors of the article have created a special the model which combines conventional and web-based ways of teaching to be implemented in universities but initially tested in terms of its efficiency.

Emerging of this transformation by means of information communication technologies is a part of electronic learning scheme which uses various technologies, forms and components as its primary means of learning and teaching [Rosenberg 2001, p. 33], [Zheng et al 2003, p. 286]. The classification based on the amount of time the students spend on-line (in percentage) for educational purposes [Smith 2007, p. 467] differentiates **Web Technology** (only fragmentary), **Blended learning** (45 % of e-learning and 55 % of face to face one), **Hybrid learning** (45−80 % on line) and **E-learning** (more than 80 % in real time on the network).

The given project, though, as it focuses mostly on partial ICT incorporation into the curriculum combining the traditional and innovative teaching techniques corresponds to blended learning according to the above mentioned division.

2. METHODOLOGY

The authors have developed an algorithm including 4 stages in order to implement the web-based model into the teaching process of Bachelor AE training.

At the first, **organizational** stage, there is an introduction to technology enhanced English learning the types and genres of academic communication in English and a critical literature review on the research topic is given in order to provide the theoretical foundation for the feasibility of the project.

This stage includes 6 classroom sessions where students of the IT department perform preparatory (training) exercises to create the wiki site which enables them to edit and add new content in English in the form of team work while interacting with each other, choosing the most interesting issues and topics that would be included in the project of both general and professional use. The students get acquainted with the existing educational sites, perform creative tasks and upload the results of common projects in the form of presentations on specific topics. Within the framework of Business Informatics, Program and Software Engineering training English scientific terms are to be learnt and it is necessary to summarize academic papers to acquire scientific style.

The purpose of the second stage − the **methodological one** − is the presentation to the students of the following issues: general scientific research methods; new insights on Bloom's taxonomy [Anderson et al 2001, p. 46]; the methods aimed at achieving a scientific result in a certain professional field; face- to- face classes and distance work when students present the project in the form of a slide show using a wide range of scientific methodology, which, in turn, helps improve the skills of written and spoken English language.

Stage 3 is **reproductive**. This stage is the longest, because covers blended learning scheme with various tools: (1) Multimedia set, (2) LMS, (3) «wiki sites», (4) SNS use. Preparation of a scientific report in a foreign language. Differences in written and oral speech in the conditions of academic communication «, (4)» Presentation of the scientific report in the format of presentation. Making a presentation». For each topic, graduate students / trainees are given assignments to create an individual project and conduct classroom discussions. Firstly, they are presented with exercises of a lexical nature, speech clichйs, collocations and figures of speech are discussed, tasks are given to create a theme-рйма sequence of text (Bussmann, 1998) s. A meaningful construction of written speech should be based on the competent expression of the author's thoughts. Written and oral annotation helps trainees evaluate the effectiveness of the student's transfer of the content and information of the source text in English with a specific task structure. At the final stage, students prepare projects on the topics of scientific research and protect them in front of colleagues.

The scheme ends with a **reflexive-evaluation stage**, at which students evaluate their creative tasks performed by their colleagues, indicate the positive and negative aspects of the work. This stage includes remote assignments, when students write reviews and peer review on the papers and then discuss the outcome of the projects.

While collecting empirical data for the validity of the project the fourth-generation evaluation principles were used [Mason 2002, p. 28−30]. The most frequently used ones were semi-structured techniques and methods including focus groups (groups of students of various ages and teaching staff) discussions. In addition, individual interviews were held and opinion polls were carried out to assess the common trends and views on the use of web tools in teaching practice.

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques of collecting numerical data were applied to generate statistics and practical outcomes. Contradictory attitudes given by the project participants have enlightened general patterns as to prove thebg zcf efficiency of web tools use in teaching EAPfor writing purposes. Quantitative data collection methods included various forms of surveys (n = 100) − on-line surveys, paper surveys, face-to-face interviews; Google forms polls and systematic observations.

3. TEACHING EAPWRINING BY WEB 2.0 TOOLS
3.1. LMS projects

Initially, about 5 years ago LMS platform was used to implement common projects aiming at helping students in foreign language learning activities. In order to assist it synchronous and asynchronous interaction was launched to arrange effective teacher-student collaboration outside the classrooms. While extracurricular cooperation the students have acquired team work skills.

Regardless of the kind of common projects be it scientific or business one the students disseminate information on the project via LMS functions. They allow appointing the tasks for every participant or assign the group project; monitor the speed, frequency and the quality of students' performance. Using the enclosed calendar, the teacher can set the deadlines and check its meeting. Moreover, the grade book traces the tuition progress. In general, there are many promising project management programs such as Project Management, Smart Extranet, Live Project, Work section etc. which possess a user-friendly interface, open access and broad functionality Working with them the administrator delegates responsibilities among the project team players, finds the persons in charge of certain operations, supervision of the project upon the whole.

The first trial version of web-based AE teaching was launched in the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) via learning management system (LMS). It implied General English and Business English modules as a divided into 4 subprojects starter and went under the heading of a code (10804-BE 3rd year).

The first stage lasted from September to November 2013. It was devoted to academic writing basic knowledge starting with paragraph writing rules, definite topic sentence, providing evidence and cross references. While making up abstracts special attention was given to cohesion and logical sequence of thoughts and creative ideas. They practiced in writing a structured composition with obligatory4-5 passages making up introduction, main body and the conclusion. Simple may it seem but for the majority of learners it is a great challenge.

The second subproject was devoted to mastering critical thinking. It took two months (November − December 2013) for training in expressing agreements or disagreements with the statements. The task was to speculate upon world famous people's quotations using active vocabulary and clichйs. Typing the answer via LMS using evidence, dwelling on both for and against arguments was more time consuming and complicated.

The third subproject (from January to February 2014) was linked with the students' group projects. The assignment was to enlarge piece of writing referring to the part written by the previous student and incorporate the passage of your own. It involved not only putting AE knowledge into practice but also creative thinking. Following the proper register was of special concern.

The fourth subproject dealt with students' presentations creation. It began in April and finished in May 2014. The students used visual aids and professional software to make the presentations vivid and impressive.

Web based project AE teaching fulfilled a didactic purpose through detailed development of a problem, which should be completed by a real, fruitful result described in accordance with strict the rules of English writing for academic purposes. It combines active learning concept and computer assisted learning due to simultaneous use of ICT in education and project learning essence which offers a relative novelty in its technique.

3.2. Wiki project

Writing projects in English develops students' research and exploratory skills inspired by cognitive motives and interests. The task of a teacher is to form the environment which will provide necessary conditions for creativity. The issue that requires to be considered in project learning is the development of critical thinking. Students are given the ability to enquire knowledge in order to navigate in the educational space independently.

In 2016 in order to support the Academic English, writing for the fourth year students in particular, an educational site, which contains several pages on project proposals, on peer reviews, on presentations and manuals and tutorials on successful writing production, was created which both students and teachers could use at convenient time for educational information search or peer assessment (https://sites.google.com/site/academicwritingprojectproposal).

The exam results of the groups taking part in the experiment have justified the hypnoses that web tools can optimize the process of education and that Wiki

enables project-based learning in real time, when all participants distantly can cooperate in teamwork. Wiki spaces allow both formal and informal communication in different role models and dimensions like (a student-a student, a student -a teacher, a teacher- student groups).

Project based learning via wiki sites highlights the idea of students' collaboration and cooperation during the learning process. It creates favourable environment for the development of their various qualities. Necessary autonomy and initiative in education is evoked. It motivates to develop personality and the ability of team work along with responsibility for the group.

3.3. Education while collaborating via Social net sites

Originally the term «social network» implying a web of relationships or social interaction in small groups by was introduced by social philosophers of XIX—XX centuries [Moreno 1932; Radcliffe-Browne 1952]. After a number of transformations, the meaning of the social networks appeared which is perceived in its narrow sense as a communication via social network sites (SNS).

Social networks ("Facebook", "Linkedin", VK) are gaining not only popularity among teenagers and youngsters but also a form of obsession which threatens to substitute real communication with the virtual ones for many children and adults. According to them it outnumbers the advantages of the personal contacts.

The interpretation of the results of the social research conducted among the students of the 1—4 courses of the department of Mathematics and Soft Engineering lead to the following findings. The overwhelming majority of respondents, including 120 people, have given the priority to the national social net site VKontakte making the biggest share of three fourths (As the most popular social nets among the students of the observed group VKontakte was mentioned by 75 % of the respondents), followed by the next but one Facebook with namely 15 %, Instagram and reddit.com compile a considerable part (2,5 %) in comparison with Twitter (1 %), Googlet (1 %), Prinstagram (1 %), Imessage (1 %) Researchgate (1 %).

Judging by the survey results visible in the pie chart below Facebook and Instagram are topping the list of preferences among the overseas SNS. But the priorities among the Russian ones are VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Moj mir etc (see Figure).

The bigger part of the respondents (75 %) is symbolized by the lower level, the second level is occupied by 20 % of the respondents meaning that they spend 10 hours and less on social networking, the upper level belongs to 5 % who are most passionate and durable users of SNS.

Thus, the statistics show that SNS are very popular among the students of Russian university. They use social networking in daily activity. The purpose can be private or educational. While socializing with a teacher in SNS students are more open-minded and relaxed. SNS creates positive educational environment and inspires more than traditional command and control link with a teacher in the classroom.

4. CONCLUSION AND THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Research results evaluation of using LMS, Wiki site and SNS in teaching Academic Writing to university students have justified the hypothesis and proven the efficiency of the given web project. Though, unexpectedly, some criticism has taken place. It turned out that not all lectures and teachers approve wide use of web tools and red-carpet welcome of blended learning. Primarily the elderly detest web based English courses, usually due to the lack of ICT knowledge or computer literacy, considering the whole idea of e learning improbable and useless. It can be seen in the comment by a 61-year-old English teacher «What is the use of these technologies? I can do without them, by means of face to face session and working at the blackboard».

In the students' feedback the following benefits were mostly highlighted:

— Blended — learning proves to be more student-centered by giving freedom in individual pace and flexible time scheme;

— It allows to be massively taught and given instructions remotely saving time and money on travel costs and commuting time;

— The course can be once delivered and regularly updated;
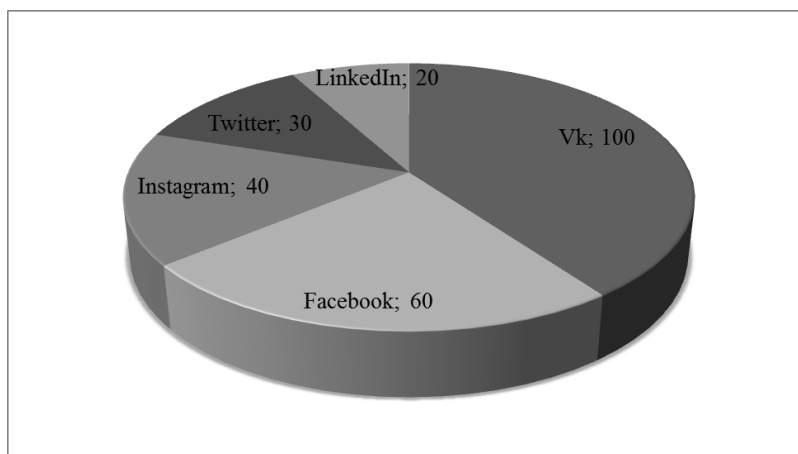
Table

The students' feedback on rating of teacher-student extracurricular collaboration and personal relations

Department	Number of respondents	Teacher-student interrelation (average score)	Extracurricular teacher-student collaboration (average score)	Deviation
Math and Soft Engineering	17	4.82	–	0.38
Math and Soft Engineering	16	–	4.75	0.56
Law	33	4.45	–	0.96
Law	32	–	4.38	0.93
Management	18	4.83	–	0.37
Management	17	–	4.65	0.48

− Web platform on the basis of wiki or LMS can be used by various target audiences;

− Open access to all the materials and use friendly interface;

− Wide geographical coverage and applicability worldwide;

Thus, web-based learning is significantly advantageous compared to the classroom EAP learning. Moreover, the proposed model increased not only the level of AE knowledge but teacher student collaboration at that. By way of illustration the table given below provides official statistics which proves the side effect of SNS use in terms of efficiency of teacher-student collaboration outside the classroom by means of web tools in particular. (Official statistics from the NRU HSE site on Dr. Frolova's work with students https://www.hse.ru/user/#tab-main) (see Table).

Thus, the statistics has proven the positive students' feedback on incorporation of web-based course of EAP for writing purposes, which led to creation of a platform for teacher-to students and peer to peer cooperation on the basis of LMS, wiki site and SNS groups. As the result, the efficiency of the given project has been approved by both the theoretical and empirical data collected by means of the qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting students' and teachers' feedback on this innovative cooperation. Consequently, it is a promising area of research and calls for further surveys to be done.

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