

BLENDED LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The article brings forward the definition, based on the analysis of both domestic and foreign scientists' views; structure components of blended learning with account taken of university-specific character.

Methodology: Blended learning process is presented as a model consisting of 9 successive stages, each of them represents a logical sequence of measures ensuring the dynamics of system development.

Results: The developed by the author model result in the recommendation to proceed to "blended learning" which is conceptually based on the constructive potential of a teacher, on searching ways of its building on the basis of communicative, person-centered and interactive approaches, increasing organizational changeability of the educational environment.

Applications of this study: This research can be used for the universities, teachers, and students.

Novelty/Originality of this study: In this research, the model of the Blended Learning in University Education is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

Keywords: *foreign language, linguistics, learning, speakers, classroom, teachers.*

INTRODUCTION

With the development and implementation of new technologies into our lives, researchers have begun to think that these technologies could be useful in education too. The introduction of these technologies into training academic plans and curricula required a complete reorganization of the educational environment and reconsideration of teaching and learning experience. Ensuring modern quality of education on the basis of maintaining its fundamental nature and compliance to relevant and perspective needs of the personality, society and the state is defined as the main task of the Russian educational policy today.

The tools that we use in the learning process have changed and multiplied. Computers, the Internet, interactive and educational resources and technologies have begun to be used. Different types and forms of education as open, flexible, life-long, distant, interactive, autonomous and other ones have emerged. Considering each form of education, we can distinguish the advantages and disadvantages, the effectiveness of one or another field of knowledge. Despite the popularity of open education in the world (open education appeared in the 1960s of the last centuries, in particular, in 1969 the world's first Open University was opened (Open University of the UK), after such kind of universities have appeared in other countries – the United States, Portugal, Germany, Australia, etc. According to RIA Novosti to March 2018, about 70 million students around the world were trained in on-line courses ([Curriculum: IFMIB Dentistry, 2018](#)), ([Abdullina, et al. 2019](#))), the emergence of flexible education in foreign language teaching, where the main purpose of education is communication modern technologies are very important undoubtedly, but any virtual communication will not replace live or face-to-face interaction. In our opinion blended learning meets the modern needs of individuals and society and is the most effective when studying languages.

The aim of this article is to clarify the definition of "blended learning" and to determine its nature and structural components. The object of research is modern effective technologies of education in the higher educational institutes. Due to the emergence of new educational technologies educational space is expanding in accordance with the needs of individuals, but at the same time, its fundamentality and quality remain the main task of the Russian educational policy. The balance of modern distance or open technologies and communicative and interactive methods make up blended learning. The model of blended learning at a higher educational institute is one of the most effective solutions for the development of student autonomy and high-quality training at a higher educational institute.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in research is theoretical, empirical. The author used methods of collecting data, description and processing the results of research. The research focuses on three key areas: English language teaching at non-linguistic institutes that imply studying of state and normative documents, curricula and expecting results of training; materials and resources of open online courses; the volume of discipline. The collected experimental data during the study has allowed outlining advantages and disadvantages of using online resources in educational process. The results of Kazan Federal university case study give good results in achieving student's higher level of English language skills and define techniques, methods, and ways to reach excellence in this field.

BLENDED LEARNING

The term "blended learning" is relatively new. Currently, there is no universally accepted definition of this term. In the works of Russian and foreign scientists, the definition of "blended learning" is mainly descriptive. For example, A.G. Picciano defines blended learning as "the use of media technologies in addition to traditional teaching methods". D. Painter believes that this is a combination of formal and non-formal means of education, i.e. the study of theoretical material and discussion of it through Internet technologies and classroom work ([Abdullina, et al. 2019](#), [Johnson & Johnson, 2018](#)). V. Purnima suggests blended learning as a combination of all possible methods and ways of teaching based on electronic technologies, which can be used to inform students with educational materials alongside with the collaboration with the teacher ([Purnima, 2018](#)). A. Rossett and F. Vaughan believe that blended learning combines controversial approaches, such as formal and non-formal learning, face-to-face training and online learning, guided and autonomous actions ([Rossett, & Vaughan, 2018](#)). D. Clark defines blended learning as a blending of face-to-face work and e-learning in a way ([Bonk & Graham, 2012](#)). C.J. Bonk and C.R. Graham believe that blended learning combines the merits of two types of learning: face-to-face and e-learning ([McSporran & King, 2005](#)). M. Mcsporrnan and C. King define it as the use of two or more different teaching methods, in other words, combination of methods that meet the requirements of students regardless of the subject being studied ([Kudysheva, & Kudyshev, 2013](#), [Badrul Munir, et al. 2018](#)).

When it comes to defining blended learning, Russian scholars divide it into two groups. One group defines it as teaching and studying achieved by implementing traditional education into the structure of distant educational courses ([Mohova, 2005](#)). The second one believes that blended learning is traditional education with implementing of distant educational elements (synchronous and asynchronous) ([Kapustin, 2005](#)).

National standard of the Russian Federation "Information and communication technologies in education. Terms and definitions", approved by the order of the Federal Agency for technical regulation and metropolis of December 27, 2006, № 419-St and put into effect on January 7, 2008 (GOST R52653-2006) give the definition of blended learning as "a combination of online learning with face-to-face or autonomous learning".

L. V. Desyatova defines blended learning as a system of teaching that combines merits and advantages of classroom work and distance learning, creating courses publicly available and comply with the students' requirements where the educational process is a system consisting of different parts, continuously functioning with each other, forming whole ([Berezovska, 2015](#)).

Some authors suggest the definition of blended learning as "a combination of distance learning with the use of modern information and telecommunication technologies and face-to-face (classroom) learning at the annual sessions at the University" (Russian symposium, 2007). During the Russian symposium "Blended and Corporate learning" blended learning was named one of the major directions in increasing the quality of professional training and was defined as an effective using method of a combination of distant, traditional educational technologies and innovative teaching methods" ([Desyatova, 2010](#)).

RESULTS

It is possible to allocate the following components of blended learning used worldwide:

- Online collaborative learning – it is an online work of students with a teacher, using Internet technologies (saves time and removes some educational, social and communicative limitations) ([Abrosimova & Kondrateva, 2017](#));
- Face-to-face learning – it is a work of students with a teacher in the classroom as if in traditional learning ([Shirvani, et al. 2015](#));
- Self-study learning – it is an independent work of students, for example, searching for new information ([Andreeva, 2018](#)).

Thus, the analysis of Russian and foreign scholars' opinion according to definition of the "blended learning" and regulatory documents led to the conclusion that blended learning is a learning model (Figure 1) that combines the interaction of controversial elements, such as elements of formal and non-formal learning, classroom work and independent work, modern technologies and elements of traditional learning, and there is an interaction between students, the teacher and interactive sources of information, and every element of this model continuously interact with each other, forming a unit which meets all needs of students.

Case study of Kazan Federal University

Modern teaching and learning requirements set more and more difficult tasks for both teachers and students. Teaching a foreign language is one of the most important components of training the modern and competitive person in our University and the goals we are aimed to are:

- To instill self-development and self-realization skills in our students;
- To teach them to use their creative potential, tolerate social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences, to work in a team and to conduct scientific researches ([Latypov & Bobyreva, 2015](#)).

- To achieve all these goals, we use blended learning.

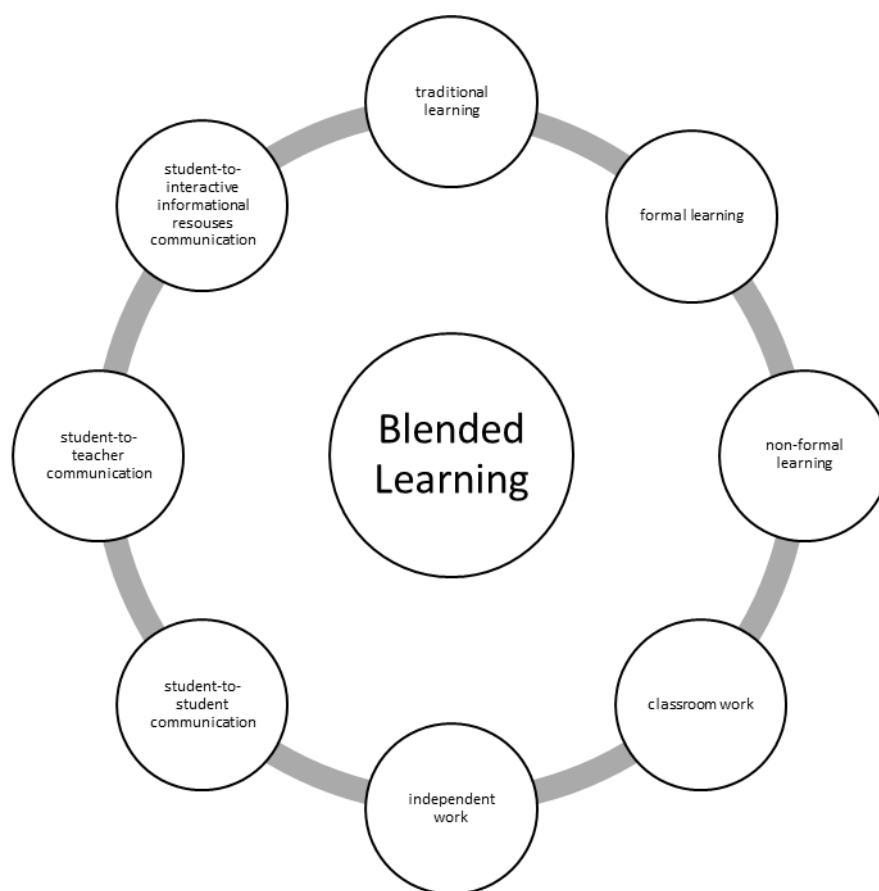


Figure1: Blended learning model

According to Kazan Federal University (KFU)' curricular for students of the non-language department (Institute of Medicine and Fundamental Biology), 351 hours are given to study a foreign language, including 216 classroom hours and 135 extracurricular hours (Villalobos, 2018). Classroom hours are an element of formal learning which contains elements of traditional learning, communication between the student and the teacher and between the students themselves, as well as elements of blended learning using audio and video materials, podcasts, news sites, online dictionaries and other online resources (Coursera, EdX, MITOPENCOURSEWARE, Khanacademy, Harvard Open Courses, Breaking News English, TEDxESL, TED-Ed, News, British Council, YouTube, Quizlet, Lyrics Training, Storybird, Make Beliefs Comix, Listen and Write, Write and Improve, Vocaroo, etc.) and numerous products made by university staff too. Extracurricular time due to its freer structure is an element of non-formal education with independent student work. This work involves the use of various sources of information, including interactive, as well as work with electronic educational resources (EER) of the University, with massive open online courses and other open educational platforms and resources. Using such resources students fulfill many projects and do many reports, learn to make presentations with visual aids, rule the discussions and express opinions on many issues. Such kind of additional work leads to self-education and self-organizing their time of education, in other words to learning autonomy. It also allows students to increase their language knowledge on the subject and present interdisciplinary studies very often.

Since blended learning brings together elements of different forms and approaches of learning, it has the number of important, key benefits, meets the requirements noted above, and allows us at the University to create program courses, which are:

- Up to date as they use modern technologies;
- Form a comfortable educational environment;
- Expand the audience in comparison with traditional learning due to use e-technologies;
- Multimedia technologies and various sources of information along with the traditional knowledge assessment system reduce the cost of learning compared to e-learning and distance learning;
- The possibility of computer simulations allows to "look inside" of the studied processes;
- Cultivate self-learning, self-reflection and self-control skills;

- Increase students' motivation which leads to more active, autonomous learning;
- Lead to updating and improving curricula;
- The opportunity to master the theoretical material in advance contributes to a more efficient work of the teacher with the group;
- Provide opportunities to practice skills more, to make lessons more exciting and intense ([Medvedeva, 2015](#), [Phandey, 2012](#), [Ajallooeian, et al. 2015](#)).

All of these positive aspects of blended learning give us a competitive advantage because learning process involves the acquisition of a large number of practical skills, soft and hard, moreover, students have more opportunities to simultaneously conduct production activities, which will positively affect their competitiveness to obtain prestigious work. But it should be noted that along with the advantages we faced the disadvantages too, for example:

- Complications with the implementation of a blended learning course.

This affects both the teacher and the students because the course has to meet all needs of students and meet the requirements of the curriculum;

- Courses are created by certain teachers or a group of teachers, and only they can teach in this course, therefore if they leave, the course has to be redone which leads to more financial and time expenses;
- Lack of competent teachers in creating courses and necessity in retraining them in order to master their skills to create quality blended learning courses on their own;
- Usually, teachers use old methods with new technologies which adversely affect the quality of the course;
- The high cost of computer hardware and software;
- Many materials should be used with the permission of the copyright holder, but this may become a complicated, expensive and time-consuming process since sometimes it is difficult to determine the owner or the time can pass before they answer ([Medvedeva, 2015](#), [Phandey, 2012](#)).

CONCLUSIONS

Despite everything, blended learning retains its status of a more practical model of learning in the modern world. It allows using the merits of different forms of learning; using modern innovations and technologies, while not abandoning the proven methods and approaches of traditional learning.

Accordingly, blended learning courses become more and more popular around the world and there is no wonder because of them:

- Are complement traditional forms of education with ICT (information and communication technologies);
- Allow teaching a large number of people at once, more widely distribute and fully master knowledge and skills;
- Make the learning process more flexible;
- Decrease the educational expenses in comparison with traditional form.

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