

Section: Pedagogical sciences

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### **Blended Learning in English for Specific Purposes**

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) differs from teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). This difference is closely connected with ESP students' learning objectives. Mostly they are highly motivated people as they work with language materials which they find interesting and useful in their professional communication and performing particular job-related functions. The more students focus on the meaning and functioning of the language that they will use in their fields of specialty or jobs, the more they are motivated to attend their classes. Thus, ESP learning is more like acquiring language in the subject-matter context than learning isolated grammar and language structures. In this view, ESP teacher is responsible for selecting, designing and organizing course materials, and for creating a learning environment which supports the students.

The specific purpose for learning English determines not only learning content, but also language skills which are most needed by the students. Actually, while in ESL all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are stressed equally, an ESP program might emphasize the development of specific skills. ESP teacher usually works with students whose English is on different levels or quite limited. Moreover, students nowadays expect to be able to fit learning into their busy lives.

These circumstances force teacher to integrate into the language classes technology which allows individuals to work in their own learning styles, time needs and interests. The great opportunities of personalization lie in a blended learning approach, that originated in the business world in connection with corporate training, then was employed in higher education and lastly it appeared in language teaching and learning. The literature offers many different practical definitions of blended learning. Most people agree that blended learning combines teaching and learning methods from

both face-to-face, mobile and online learning and that it includes elements of both synchronous and asynchronous online learning options. Learning initiatives such as Podcasts for taxi drivers (Bursa, Turkey), A blended learning course for the aviation industry (Melbourne, Australia), A part-time blended adult Cambridge Preliminary Business English class at intermediate level (Warrington, England), English language blend training to military personnel in the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina etc. reflect the educational global policy of 21st century. The majority of blended-learning programs resemble one of four models: Rotation, Flex, A La Carte, and Enriched Virtual.

In Ukraine the attempts of analyzing the definitions of the term blended learning have been done by following scientists: V. Barkasi, S. Barkasi, N. Hodovanets, H. Dziman, I. Kuzmina, I. Maksak etc. Using a blended learning approach to designing ESP courses in our country has become possible due to creation of Ukrainian platforms for online courses, the most widely known of which are Prometheus, Ed-Era, etc. In 2016 the Association of Innovative and Digital Education in Ukraine launched a social project called “Lingva.Skills”, which is aimed at providing opportunities for learning English, and in perspective of other languages, by civil servants, teachers, doctors and also by socially disadvantaged categories of population. Social learning tools are a great way to engage students and connect the home to school. These tools resemble other social networking websites like “Facebook” and “Google+”. They are designed to support classroom activities and provide a protected learning-focus environment. Wiki also offers an easy way to build online learning opportunities for students. Wiki includes any website that is collaboratively created or edited. It can be used to organize a learning experience for students or students may be asked to build a Wiki to demonstrate specific knowledge and skills.

As ESP courses are often restricted in the number of contact hours and in content, adding an on-line component would compensate for these limitations, allowing students to concentrate more on developing special skills during face-to-face learning. While students learn on-line, they can improve their grammar, digital literacy, practice and collaborate. Pedagogical richness, access to knowledge, social interaction,

personal agency, cost-effectiveness, and ease of revision are the main reasons why blended learning approach should be chosen to design ESP courses. At the same time, a number of challenges for teachers and students to implementing blended learning strategies is to be taken into account:

1. *Developing blended learning pedagogy.* Teacher should prepare his/her students for the blended learning style, discuss the new roles and responsibilities. The teacher needs to acquire different teaching skills, re-designing the curriculum and managing the learning content both online, in-class and beyond the classroom walls.

2. *Teacher support and professional development.* Teachers incorporation new technologies into teaching and learning programs may depend on support from IT staff and additional professional development. Professional development includes adding new competencies to the curricula, assessment schemes more suited to blended delivery, and graduate training to encourage blended teaching and learning approaches across all curriculum areas. Other options might include motivating or rewarding teachers for the innovative use of blended learning approaches.

3. *Technological challenges.* Access to technical assistance and ICT training opportunities remains an issue for most Ukrainian teachers.

4. *Student preparation and support.* The important role of teacher in blended learning is in combining the explanation of theoretical contents with activities, and encouraging interaction. Students can also engage paraprofessionals to assist with specific content teaching.

5. *Assessment considerations.* The way in which teachers assesses student outcomes in blended learning can vary. For example, technologies that enabled frequent feedback allowed for differentiated intervention.

6. *An innovative culture.* The success of any blended learning projects depends on a culture that encourages innovation. In general, students should accept changes and risk and look to overcome issues and to challenge themselves to do better.

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