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INTEGRATING BLENDED LEARNING IN PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION: ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL SPEECH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

***Annotation.** In evaluating the technological advantages of blended learning (BL), the active utilisation of the flipped model is based on the inversion of traditional teaching methods. It is argued that the content field of BL is viewed as an interactive space that serves as a catalyst for educational synergy, promoting holistic interaction between students, teachers and curriculum in a structure that covers a repertoire of synchronous and asynchronous learning modes that can be configured in such varieties as synchronous-individual, synchronous-group, asynchronous-individual, asynchronous-synchronous (asynchronous-group). The model of flipped learning, involving the presentation of material outside the educational institution and determining practical cooperation in and out of the classroom, is one of the leading forms of developing professionally focused speech communicative competence of pre-service English teachers. Professionally focused speech competence (PFSC) suggests that the speech competence is tailored towards a professional context. It implies that the student has developed their speech skills with a particular focus on their professional field in the discipline «Practice of Speaking and Writing in English». The segments of BL are outlined, based on the preparatory, advanced, main and final stages.*

Key words: *stages of blended learning, flipped model, pre-service English teachers, professionally focused speech competence.*

Анотація. *У вимірі технологічних переваг змішаного навчання (ЗН) активне використання перевернутої моделі здійснюється на основі інверсії методів традиційного викладання. Змістовне поле ЗН розглядається як інтерактивний простір, що слугує каталізатором освітньої синергії, сприяючи цілісній взаємодії між студентами, викладачем та навчальною програмою у структурі, що охоплює репертуар синхронних та асинхронних навчальних режимів, які можуть бути налаштовані у таких різновидах як: синхронно-індивідуальний, синхронно-груповий, асинхронно-індивідуальний, асинхронно-синхронний (асинхронно-груповий). Модель перевернутого навчання, яка реалізує подання матеріалу поза межами закладу освіти й детермінує практичну співпрацю як поза аудиторією, так і в аудиторії, є одним з провідних шляхів формування професійно орієнтованої мовленнєвої компетентності майбутніх учителів і викладачів іноземних мов. Стверджено, що професійно орієнтована мовленнєва комунікативна компетентність адаптована до професійного контексту майбутніх фахівців. Це означає, що студент розвиває свої мовленнєві уміння з особливим акцентом на професійну сферу на заняттях з навчальної дисципліни «Практика усного і писемного мовлення англійської мови». Окреслено сегменти ЗН, у основі яких – підготовчий, просунутий, основний та заключний етапи.*

Ключові слова: *етапи змішаного навчання, перевернута модель, майбутні вчителі та викладачі англійської мови, професійно орієнтована мовленнєва комунікативна компетентність.*

Introduction. The necessity for ensuring the accessibility and effectiveness of continuing education, regardless of time and regional restrictions, has become increasingly pressing in the context of the special conditions (pandemic, war, etc.) that have made traditional classroom learning impossible. The boundaries of fixed premises and fixed schedules are becoming increasingly blurred. The traditional tasks

of teachers are being modified, diversified and expanded, and the content of the system of professional training of future specialists is being rethought in the light of this scenario. The transformation of the role of the teacher in the educational space of higher education by reducing the share of traditional face-to-face interaction and increasing the share of communication with students through electronic educational resources under martial law serves to confirm the relevance of BL. By promoting self-directed learning, this approach opposes superficial teaching methods, leading to a deeper educational experience.

The aim of the article is to reveal some aspects of enhancing professionally oriented speech communicative competence through blended learning for pre-service English language teachers.

Research results. Global education is characterised by a significant proliferation and intensification of pedagogical research and development that prioritises active and conscious student learning 'for long-term growth' [3]. Given that higher education is usually the final stage of formal education for future professionals, a focus on developing and improving the professionally focused speech communicative competence of pre-service English teachers is particularly important.

The analysis of contemporary publications of the last five years shows that modern researchers pay considerable attention to the issues of developing students' communicative competence in foreign languages. Thus, they have proposed: a methodology for the interrelated formation of professional competence in speaking and information and communication competence of future English teachers using web quests, modern Internet technologies (YouTube, Google Hangouts, Google Classroom, Skype); a methodology for teaching academic writing to military specialists using a mixed model of teaching academic writing in English and using the online platform Google Classroom; a methodological system of autonomous learning of professional communicative competence. Despite the diversity of scientific research and its undoubted theoretical and practical significance, we can state that the problem of PFSC formation in BL remains insufficiently studied both theoretically and practically.

BL of pre-service foreign language teachers' professionally focused communicative competence is interpreted as a technology of purposeful acquisition and systematisation of knowledge, formation and improvement of their speech, linguistic, socio-cultural, pedagogical and strategic competences with a professional component, characterised by an integrated paradigm of distance and traditional learning, which effectively enriches the educational process and at the same time actualises students' self-study. Promoting a multi-channel approach covering generic concepts of BL, our study defines interactive interaction in three segments: 'student-student', 'student-content' and 'student-teacher'. The content area of BL is considered as an interactive space that acts as a catalyst for pedagogical synergy, promoting holistic interaction between student, teacher and curriculum in a structure that includes a repertoire of synchronous and asynchronous learning modes that can be configured in varieties such as: synchronous-individual, synchronous-group, asynchronous-individual, asynchronous-synchronous (asynchronous-group). The latter type is based on previous scientific and theoretical research [1].

When using the technology of BL in the teaching of the subject 'Practice of Speaking and Writing in English', we consider it useful to distinguish stages that involve the gradual complication of the level of professionally oriented (quasi-professional) tasks, the expansion of learning activities and the integration of the speech components of the professionally focused communicative competence.

1. The preparatory (extracurricular) phase is responsible for identifying specific contexts and issues related to the field of study and the future profession of a language teacher. The topics are chosen both by the teacher and by the students themselves. When students research professional contexts on their own, they should collect authentic materials (e.g. articles, videos, documents), work on specific vocabulary and phrases used in these contexts and prepare to use them in practical tasks. In mini-groups, students prepare interviews, quizzes or role-plays that simulate their professional obligations. A quasi-professional task is a partial analogue of a professional task they may encounter in a professional setting.

The preparatory phase is asynchronous-individual and asynchronous-synchronous (group, interactive) independent work of students where they summarise information, systematise professional knowledge in the field of pedagogy, methodology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, etc. Students can interact in pairs (mini-groups) asynchronously-synchronously (Melnik, 2024), jointly preparing drafts of presentations, vlogs, questionnaires, interviews, etc. This simulates professional scenarios and provides immersion in the practice of foreign language communication.

Since there is no perfect textbook to explain a particular topic, the teacher selects thematic material and creates micro-video clips to optimise learning outcomes and develop and improve professionally focused speech skills in reading, speaking, listening, writing and mediation. To facilitate the processes of research, presentation and feedback, all materials are pre-loaded on the MS Teams platform. The use of interactive teaching methods makes it possible to bring the learning process as close as possible to real-life situations in the context of profession. It should be noted that the PFSC of Master students, as prospective professionals, can be developed through the use of modern information technologies, in particular digital applications Padlet, Mentimeter, Miro, Chat GPT, Gemini, which can simulate remote interaction and create a comprehensive and personalised learning process.

Students work through the materials, carefully following the instructions (information from the textbook, electronic reference and information system (electronic dictionaries, thesauri, glossaries, electronic encyclopaedias used as reference in foreign language teaching, etc.); listening to podcasts, watching videos, screencasts; completing comprehension tasks in the form of online tests, questionnaires, written quasi-professional tasks. The material may be reread or supplemented with references from other sources until students understand it. Students take notes on important aspects and material they do not understand. The results are published on a common learning platform.

2. The advanced (extracurricular) stage is the stage of preparation of projects, quasi-professional tasks after the preparatory stage, when students focus on styles of professional oral and written communication, professional linguistic and socio-

cultural information that is scientific and practical and scientifically significant for students in the context of their future professional activity and personal scientific interests. This may include reading articles from English and Ukrainian periodicals, specialist texts analysing, in particular, problems of pedagogy, psychology, methods of foreign language teaching, linguistics and sociology. The peculiarity of the study of scientific articles is the critical reading, which is more detailed than the study.

3. The primary phase is an interactive synchronous learning experience in the classroom or via videoconferencing, which allows students and teachers to interact in real-time or virtually. The initial step is to assess the students' comprehension of the material presented (quizzes in the form of test tasks, problem-solving exercises, etc.). Subsequently, students engage in small-group discussions, during which they provide feedback on the quasi-professional task materials published by their classmates. They analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches used, discuss alternative strategies, and synthesise the key points of the problem that proved to be most effective in each professional context. Additionally, they analyse the professional relevance of the strategies used, focusing on how well they met the objectives of the task. Comprehension tasks may also be employed to assess students' performance, with the objective of deepening their knowledge and applying it in practice. Other activities include problem situations (dilemmas) and their discussion in a group, role plays, question and answer sessions, exchange of opinions, comments, analysis, comparison, advantages and disadvantages of each proposed solution, debates, and conclusions.

One of the most effective methods for developing the speech competence of master students is the use of the method of 'mutual reading' [2], which is traditionally a form of cooperative learning. The teacher first selects a scientific article and divides it into four parts. The text of the article is then offered to the students, who work in four mini-groups. Each mini-group is responsible for a specific task. For instance, the initial group is tasked with identifying and elucidating pivotal scientific terminology, jargon, and concepts presented in the article. The subsequent group develops a series of queries based on the article's content. These queries should facilitate a more

profound analysis of the methodology, the significance of the outcomes, and the implications of the study. The third group responds to the queries posed by the research team, while the fourth group summarizes the article, emphasizing the principal conclusions and the significance of the research. Subsequently, they proceed to the subsequent article and transfer their responsibilities. In this manner, each pupil has the opportunity to assume all four roles. All participants are afforded the opportunity to cultivate cooperative and collaborative skills, as well as the capacity to work effectively in a team.

4. The final stage of the programme is the stage of homework, which takes place after the main synchronous stage. This stage requires the completion of creative tasks, including professionally focused vlogs, research projects, essays, and abstracts for participation in conferences, webinars, and online forums related to the professional field. Students reflect on their work and the feedback they received at the main stage. Furthermore, students should consider how they might apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired to future professional scenarios. This process encourages critical thinking. The results are submitted to an agreed platform for analysis by the instructor, who provides written or video feedback to enhance student learning outcomes.

Conclusions. Summing up the above, we can conclude BL has the potential to be effective in today's university education, as it supports the necessary interactivity, aligns with educational content, and provides ample time for self-study. It facilitates a learning environment close to real-world, quasi-professional activities, optimizes the teacher's time, and enhances the efficiency of developing prospective English teachers' PFSC. This competence can be developed through the use of modern information technologies that simulate remote interaction and create a comprehensive and personalized learning process. Within the framework of BL, a set of tasks has been created and defined by the method of interaction (asynchronous-individual, synchronous-individual, asynchronous-synchronous (collaborative), synchronous-asynchronous (collaborative) and the place of implementation (in-class stage (synchronous online and/or offline learning) and out-of-class stage (online and/or

offline modes)). Further research in the study will be devoted to the problem of enhancing professionally focused educational and strategic competence at the tertiary level.

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