



A Model of the English Language Course “Around The World in 180 Days”: Module Technology in Teaching

Irina Zh. Vinokurova 1

Anastasya Denisova 2

Regina Yuzmukhametova 3

Tatiana Green 4

1 Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, Mirny Polytechnic Institute (branch) of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Russia.

2 Graduate student, Mirny Polytechnic Institute (branch) of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Russia.

3 Graduate student, Mirny Polytechnic Institute (branch) of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Russia.

4 Graduate student, Mirny Polytechnic Institute (branch) of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, Russia.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Original Research Paper

Received Dec. 2018

Accepted Feb. 2019

Keywords:

module technology,
foreign language teaching,
case study,
blended learning

ABSTRACT

Today the goal of teaching foreign languages in universities must be based on international requirements for specialists who will be able to integrate into the world market and scientific community. The article is devoted to the problem of development and implementation of effective and advanced pedagogical methods. Nowadays module technology teaching is of great theoretical and practical value as it has become an essential part of curriculum in the system of higher education. The article makes an attempt to cover the question of how to combine effectively face-to-face traditional learning with the advantages of distance learning systems. At first, a brief review of results of research on such basic notions as “cultural-linguistic personality” and “modular learning” is given. Then, the authors share their own project of teaching English for Bachelor students of non-linguistic departments. The project was designed as a case study which is aimed at increasing language competence of the university students. The project was successfully discussed and approved within the workshop of championship in the National University of Science and Technology MISIS, Moscow.

1. Introduction

The relevance of the work is determined by the need to develop teaching methods as to enable specialists with higher professional technical education to understand, accept and interpret the linguistic and cultural phenomena of the country of the foreign language. The building of such linguistic and cultural background is a challenge in a way, as it involves the joint activity between a teacher and a student. Modern requirements in the educational process imply combination of traditional methods of teaching and a set of progressive means, methods and trends in teaching. On the one hand, it is widely accepted that smart or digital technologies may offer a big variety of teaching tools. On the other hand, many university teachers, as well as students, find it quite difficult to completely abandon the traditional way of teaching and learning in the mode of lecture and tutorial. This paper offers a possible perspective of mixed or blended teaching.

2. Literature Review

The problem of teaching foreign language to university students has been raised in a number of domestic scientific works on pedagogy. Professor V. Furmanova speaks of the cultural-linguistic identity of a student at a technical university and offers to view the step-by-step process of its formation and development in the form of the following levels:

1) the normative-adaptive level, which characterizes a cultural-linguistic personality of a student by the fact that he has background knowledge about a foreign language culture and a set of elementary communicative skills;

2) the socio-adaptive level, according to which a cultural-linguistic personality can communicate in a foreign language environment with a native speaker predicting and avoiding possible sociocultural interference;

3) a creative level that characterizes a cultural and linguistic personality from the point of view how it can compare several different cultures, interpret cultural phenomena in the process of implementing direct and indirect intercultural communication (quoted from Kovalyava, 2010).

Much academic research of foreign scientists has focused on weakness and strengths of distance learning, blended learning, using digital technologies in teaching (Dann, C, 2018; Henderson, M, 2017; Sukrawan, Y, 2018). The results of this research clearly shows the necessity of reassessing what has worked and what has failed, in other words, there is urgent need of integration of both methods: traditional and advanced.

The question is how the formation of a cultural-linguistic personality of a technical university student occurs in the process of learning a foreign language? To answer this question, we searched for effective pedagogical technologies aimed specifically at teaching students a foreign language at a technical university. These technologies include modular learning technology.

Currently, modular learning is implemented in a number of domestic and foreign universities. Modular education is considered by most scientists as a fairly effective pedagogical technology, the main focus of which is on the students' autonomy in achieving their didactic goals and objectives.

A distinctive feature of modular learning is that it is successfully combined with the traditional learning system, while humanizing the pedagogical process as a whole, i.e. fundamentally elevating the teacher and student to a new level of relationships.

The essence of modular training is that each student can work with the individual curriculum offered to him, which contains a target program of actions, a bank of information and a methodical guide to achieving the set didactic goals. At the same time, the functions of a teacher can vary from information-controlling to consultative-coordinating.

According to the research of Yulia Kovaleva the modular training is regarded as a special didactic system, which is a combination of various forms and methods of teacher and trainee joint activities organized in special process units (modules) in order to master the learning material effectively and improve the quality of education in general (Kovalyava, 2010).

In order to get a complete picture of the technology of modular foreign language teaching, it is necessary to define what is meant by a module. The module is treated as the main structural unit of the modular foreign language teaching program, which:

- can act as an independent program of training, individualized by content, teaching methods, level of

independence, the pace of student learning and cognitive activity;

- consists of several blocks of educational material, united by one theme and intended to be studied by students with different levels of proficiency in foreign language communicative and cultural competence;

- includes a target action plan for a student, an information bank and a methodological guide for a teacher to achieve a set of didactic goals by a student;

- allows you to carry out step-by-step monitoring of the success of learning and learning a foreign language in order to make timely adjustments to the educational and training activities of the student and teacher (Kovalyava, 2010).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants involved a teacher and a group of graduate students of the English Language Department of Mirny Polytechnic Institute, the branch of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University. The students took part in CUP MISIS CASE, which was held in November, 2018. The objective of this championship is to promote innovative linguistic methods of communication in pedagogical, engineering and management spheres in Russian business schools.

3.2. Material

On the first stage we did research of recent trends, threats, challenges and prospects in education. According to the results of pre-task stage we were admitted to the final of the championship including 10 teams from different universities and secondary schools of Russia. The goal of our participation was to design and discuss our project which is aimed at increasing the academic mobility of the university students. The project is designed as a case study for the 1st year Bachelor students of non-linguistic departments. We proposed the following title for the case study “A model of the English language course “Around the world in 180 days”.

4. Results and Discussion

Nowadays, the English language is the international language and it unites all the continents of our planet. It is the language of politics, economics, science and education. In all countries, knowledge of the English language is one of the features of a successful person. It is important for Russian youth to be aware of this fact and learn English even if they are students of a non-linguistic department.

In order to speak English really well, schooling is not enough and students have to take additional courses. But very often it is difficult for students to find a really interesting and effective program after which they will not be afraid to speak in a non-native language.

Our course is designed for bachelor students of non-linguistic departments. The entry level of students is B1 and after our course they can become B2 speakers.

According to the official CEFR guidelines, someone at the B2 level in English:

1. Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization.
2. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
3. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue

giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

4. Can discuss common political situations and the behavior of politicians and use appropriate language in social situations, including praising and expressing sympathy.

The idea of our course is quite innovative as it is divided into 6 modules, each of which is associated with one of the continents of our planet.

At first, students begin to study the first module which is called *North America*. After completing the first module, students continue their journey through *South America*, *Africa*, *Australia*, *Eurasia* and *Antarctica*, which is the final module of our course.

Each module includes 4 weeks of study. Every week students attend three face-to-face classes and watch one webinar right at home. Each lesson lasts two hours and after passing each module students are tested using a featured learning game on internet “Kahoot”.

The only modules that differ from others are *Eurasia* and *Antarctica*. The *Eurasia* module lasts six weeks and is divided into *Europe* and *Asia*. Such a division will help students better perceive the material and assimilate it at the proper level.

The *Antarctica* module lasts two weeks and is dedicated to the final testing of students and their work on their own projects, which they must defend at the end of their studies. The theme of each project is connected with world problems and students will offer their solutions to these problems.

As we have mentioned before, students will have 3 face-to-face lessons and 1 webinar class per week. Each week of each module will be devoted to a specific topic, for example:

Plan for each module (except *Eurasia*):

- 1 week – The history of the continent;
- 2 week – Education systems;
- 3 week – Culture and traditions;
- 4 week – Policy and economics.

Plan for *Europe* & *Asia*:

- 1 week – The history of the continent;
- 2 week – Education systems;
- 3 week – Culture and traditions.

Module 1 – “North America”			
WEEK 1 – The history of the continent			
Grammar	Vocabulary & Cross-cultural issues	Listening competence	Writing & Speaking

- “there is”, “there are” constructions; - Past Simple Tense & Past Perfect Tense;	- specific words which are related to colonization of North America: <i>abolitionist, segregation, ally, electoral college, suffrage</i> and etc.	- webinar with a native speaker about the historical facts of British colonization of Americas;	- topic and debates “Conflict between Americans and Colonists”
WEEK 2 – Education system			
- modal verbs <i>can, should, must, need, have to, ought to</i> ; - Present Simple tense, Past perfect Tense (continuation) & Past Perfect Continuous.	- specific words which are related to education of North America: <i>GPA (grade point system), trimester, prerequisite course, major</i> and etc.	- video of a speech of a native speaker about the development of the education system in the North America (teacher);	- modal verbs <i>can, should, must, need, have to, ought to</i> ; - Present Simple tense, Past perfect Tense (continuation) & Past Perfect Continuous.
WEEK 3 - Culture and traditions			
- passive voice; - Present Perfect & Past Perfect Continuous.	- words which are related to lifestyle and custom of the North America: <i>bespoke, inheritance, Aztec Empire, totem, toboggan</i> and etc.	- webinar with a native speaker about culture & traditions;	- topic “Indigenous population of the North America: their custom & traditions.”
WEEK 4 – Policy & Economics			
- ‘will’ and ‘going to’ for prediction; - Future Simple Tense & Future Perfect;	- economic terms: <i>rise, decrease, inflation, urban, brainstorming</i> and etc.	- video-interview of a well-known politician;	- make up an interview (interviewer - politician): “Health care policy”

During face-to-face lessons students will learn the necessary vocabulary and the grammatical rules, according to which they are to do the exercises at home. Homework assignments should be sent to the teacher’s e-mail. In our opinion, a massive homework check is a waste of time that can be more productive. We are in favor of all the tasks being checked personally by the teacher and in the class he/she would point out the most common mistakes and answer students’ questions about the tasks.

Once a week students will have a webinar class. It will be video lecture in which the teacher or maybe an invited speaker (a native speaker is preferred) will give the audience the additional information in English on the topic of the week – some interesting facts, statistics, news and etc. It will promote listening skills and students can get used to authentic English speech. Such lessons can be downloaded and watched in any place using any kind of device. This additional information may be helpful for final projects. Thus, lessons will be maximum productive and still students will get plenty of comprehensive information.

Next lesson can be started from the discussion of the video. It will help to develop communication skills of the students – sharing opinions, learning others’ views, being able to debate and etc.

Likewise, we propose organization of the language event with the tea-party part with the native speaker as a guest at the end of each module. Students should make short performances about the certain continent and act it out for a teacher, guests and other students. They will show their pronunciation and skills of team-working with learned information. During the tea-party a native speaker will comment on performances, answer questions and talk with students. It will also promote communication skills of the students and, moreover, it will help to destroy language barrier and let students use English in a real speech.

Learning English is like conquering new heights, opening new horizons. Antarctica is the most unexplored part of our planet and a mystery for the brightest minds. That's why we decided to organize the final projects in this module. It means that students should do a big and detailed research work.

The final project helps to learn about students' knowledge, their level of language and to examine their development at the end of whole study course. It can easily show obtained knowledge or some gaps.

Doing final project students are offered to work on particular themes such as:

- *Comparison of the education systems in the world.*
- *Unemployment problem in the world.*
- *Problem of the extinction of rare species.*
- *What is depression and how to cope with it?*
- *Artificial Intellect in the 21st century.*

The final project also helps to develop individual skills of every student. According to Professor Todd Rose personalized studying can be defined as prioritizing the needs of individual student. Students work at their own pace, often independently on the teachers. Technology may be used to allow students to access online materials, work through topics, find additional resources and to assess and monitor their progress. Students are encouraged to be active learners and teachers are encouraged to work with students one to one or in small groups. Personalized learning allows students to move ahead when they are ready or take a slower pace until they fully grasp the material. Teachers have access to data from student assessments and feedback in real-time so they can adapt materials and intervene to help students if necessary so that students remain on track to completion. After the final work a student acquires such skills as:

- Setting the goal;
- Managing time;
- Identifying learning style;
- Developing a study plan;
- Reading skill;
- Developing effective note-taking techniques;
- Attending classes regularly;
- Create mind maps;
- Surrounding yourself with learning;
- Applying memory techniques;
- Using all intelligences (Todd, R, 2018).

In case of checking students' knowledge there are a lot of tools. Technology is being increasingly integrated into teaching environments in view of enhancing students' engagement and motivation. Nowadays one of the most convenient and qualitative methods of checking students' knowledge is the application of modern Apps such as Kahoot.

We propose using Kahoot at the end of each study module.

Kahoot (a game-based classroom response system) offers educators engaging way to test the learning and knowledge of their students. Its game-based system is very entertaining. Learners of all age can benefit from Kahoot. Today, many students possess smart devices, and by using Kahoot on their own devices, students can actually make group learning fun. The game is designed to bring emotion into the learning experience - through game mechanics, music and visual design, creating memorable moments that help learners unlock their potential.

The final grades are based on whole studying process of a student. Grading system includes: attendance, work in the classroom, homework, short plays, result of “Kahoot” and final project.

To get high grades is to consider the entire length of the course as a pre-exam, preparation period.

At the end of the course and after the final project students have to take the English Test B2 according to CEFR.

5. Conclusions

The suggested course of teaching English to non-linguistic departments can serve as a good example of effective tools for implementing innovative and interactive method which is aimed at improving language competence and cross-cultural knowledge of students and contributes to formation of friendly environment where a teacher and a student are equal participants of educational process.

References:

1. Kovalyava, U.U. (2010). Module program of teaching a foreign language to students of technical university. *Periodical of Chelyabinsk State Pedagogical University*, 11, 82-93.
2. Henderson, M., Selwyn, N., Aston, R. (2017). What works and why? Student perceptions of ‘useful’ digital technology in university teaching and learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42 (8), 1567-1579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1007946>
3. Dann, C.E. (2018). Blended learning 3.0.: Getting students on board. *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, 99, 214-223.
4. Sukrawan, Y., Soemarto, Komaro, M. (2018). Blended learning development for vocational education. *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering*, 434 (1), article number 012262. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/434/1/012262>
5. Exam English: Free Practice Tests for learners of English. Retrieved from <https://www.examenglish.com/B2/index.php> / Accessed 12 Nov.18.
6. Kahoot! Retrieved from <https://kahoot.com/> Accessed 12 Nov.18.
7. Todd Rose: How to Drive Personalized Learning in Higher Education. Retrieved from <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/02-05-18-how-to-drive-personalized-learning-in-higher-education> / Accessed 12 Nov.18.