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Решение проблемы качества обучения иностранному языку студентов неязыковых отделений вузов с помощью смешанного курса по английскому языку

Solving the Problem of Quality in Teaching Foreign Languages the Students of Non-linguistic Departments with the Help of a Blended Learning Course

Аннотация

Статья посвящена вопросу повышения качества обучения иностранному языку студентов неязыковых отделений вузов в условиях небольшого количества аудиторных часов, что актуально в свете все большей востребованности хорошего знания английского языка специалистами самых разных отраслей. В статье рассматривается возможность внедрения смешанного обучения в образовательный процесс.

Abstract

The article is dedicated to the issue of improving the process of teaching English the students of non-linguistic departments under the condition of not sufficient full-time classes number. This is very important because nowadays more and more specialists of different fields need good knowledge of English. The article also considers the possibility of using blended learning in the teaching process.

Ключевые слова: смешанное обучение, неязыковые отделения вузов, аудиторные занятия, самообучение, общеевропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком.

Key words: blended learning, non-linguistic departments, full-time classes, self-study, Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The objective of our research is the study of didactical and pedagogical features of developing a blended-learning course for teaching English the students of non-linguistic departments, and as an example we are going to develop such a course for the students from the department of Physics, Maths and IT of our university, in particular for the students who take a course of mathematical support and administration of information systems. Humanity has already entered the information-oriented society era, when, according to V. Gritsenko, S. Kudryavtseva, V. Kolos, E. Verenich “producing and consuming information becomes a very important kind of activity, and information becomes the most valuable recourse.”[Gritsenko, Kudryavtseva, Kolos, Verenich, 2004: 8]. Knowledge nowadays becomes the highest value.

What is more, globalization sets its rules, and specialists of different fields face the necessity of high-level knowledge of English. Thus, to communicate admissibly with foreign colleagues, correspond with business partners, solve unconventional problems a person requires the knowledge of English not lower than C1 according to CEFR. As a rule, the majority of freshmen in non-linguistic departments have level A2 according to CEFR (Frumina & West, 2012), so, to reach C1, they will need not less than 600 teaching hours.

N. Esenina in her book “Theory and Practice of Using ICT in Teaching Foreign Languages in a Technical University” points out that “teaching foreign languages, as well as the formation of professional oriented communication skills under the condition of a small number of teaching hours given by state educational standard on learning a foreign language in a non-linguistic department shows the necessity of intensifying the educational process” [Esenina, 2012: 128]. Our observations confirm this point of view.

We have analyzed academic plans for the course “Mathematical support and administration of information systems” of Kursk State University. Learning English here is planned in all the years of studying, from the first till the forth. All in all students are supposed to have 396 hours of English, that is 204 hours less than required for C1 level. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity to increase the amount of full-time teaching hours, that’s why we see the solution of this problem in the adoption of blended learning, which, according to J. Kapustin, “allows using the pros of full time studying and distant learning technologies, first of all, joint and allocated forms of activity organization”[J. Kapustin, 2007: 5].

Developing a blended-learning course has got several aims:

1) Increasing the amount of teaching hours through using distance learning component,

2) Organizing unassisted student work;

3) Increasing the quality of learning by providing the opportunity of feedback.

We consider it reasonable to develop teaching materials consisting of two components: a guide for the teacher and students that can be used during regular classes and a distance learning course that will be connected with the guide and include extra practice material and homework. Thus, our course will make the teacher’s preparation for the classes easier, as well as it will optimize the process of homework checking.

Apart from developing a course for the students who take a course of mathematical support and administration of information systems we are going to introduce a universal plan of developing blended courses for students from other non-linguistic departments. Here it is:

1) Analyzing the programs for a particular specialty. Figuring out the difference between the amount of teaching hours in the plan and the amount required to learn English at C1 level.

2) Analyzing the course books that are used now and the opportunity of using them in the distance learning component of the course.

3) Scheduling on basis of the teacher’s plan, course books and the amount of teaching hours with a glance of distance component.

4) If required, making a special intensive course for a weaker group, which includes the students with level of English lower than A2. This group needs a bigger amount of distance learning material for them to achieve C1 level in the end of learning.

5) Elaboration of indoor and distance components, putting the distance components into LMS Moodle, making tests for key points of the programs. Elaboration of a guide for teachers and students.

6) Testing the course and holding a pedagogical experiment..

We hope that the course and the universal plan that we are elaborating will be useful for teachers working in non-linguistic departments and universities.

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